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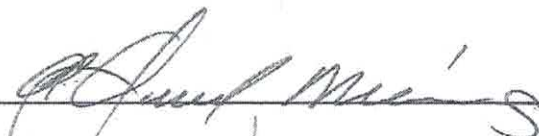
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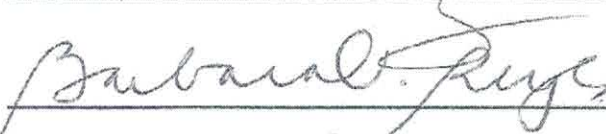
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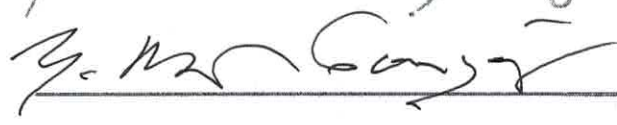
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*Approved by the Dissertation Committee:*

 \_\_\_\_\_, Chairperson

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**MORE THAN A FIESTA:  
CINCO DE MAYO CELEBRATIONS AND THE  
TRANSBOUNDARY LINK IN AMBOS NOGALES**

by

**KRISTEN S. VALENCIA**

B.S., Retailing and Consumer Sciences, University of Arizona, 2003  
M.S., Mexican American Studies, University of Arizona, 2009

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy  
American Studies**

The University of New Mexico  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

**July 2019**

## DEDICATION

To all the professors, academics, and scholars in the fields of Mexican, Mexican American, and Chicana/o/x Studies, thank you for carving out a path for me to take. For those who come after me, *dale gas*.

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**ABSTRACT**

In a contemporary context, the United States-Mexico border raises concerns regarding undocumented migration, drug and human trafficking, and cartel or gang violence. While these are material realities that come, at times, with grave consequences and outcomes, they are not the only characteristics or facets of the border region. The intention of the border is to delineate and separate, however, this ignores the stationary communities along the territorial demarcation which interact with and demonstrate the fluidity of life at the line. Transboundariness, as defined by Lawrence A. Herzog, provides the framework with which to examine cross-boundary connections that result from economic exchanges and in turn foster social and cultural relationships beyond the border (1990). As a means for understanding the social relationships which grow from transboundary connections, this study examines the *Cinco de Mayo Fiestas of Ambos Nogales* both Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, Sonora from 1941 through the 1980's. The transboundary Fiestas are demonstrative of a historically significant relationship built prior to the construction of the border. In the context of the Ambos Nogales community,



the construction of a physical demarcation between Mexico and the U.S. has only fueled their continued connection. Contemporary politics and perceptions of the U.S.-Mexico border often occur at a distance and with little consideration for the communities that exist along the international line. This disconnect results in distinct national perceptions of the border versus local lived realities and experiences. A national focus on border security and policing of the boundary between Mexico and the U.S. ignores the potential for public commemorations, such as the Cinco de Mayo, to maintain transboundary linkages.

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## Introduction

The United States-Mexico border is one of the most contentious borders in contemporary global society. It is often considered the gateway between a third-world Latin America into the westernized first-world. As a territorial demarcation, it is highly militarized and monitored by the U.S. government as a wild and dangerous corridor for drug smuggling, cartel violence, and human trafficking. Since the terrorist attacks of 9/11, we have seen a rise in military-like weaponized agents and technology that seek to defend our nation from perceived outside threats. Historically, the news media and academic inquiry have fixated on the specific communities of San Diego, California-Tijuana, Baja California and El Paso, Texas-Juarez, Chihuahua as main corridors for border-crossing concerns. This focus is not unfounded, as these are the two largest ports of crossing with a higher population density and experience increased activity as a result. Attention to these border communities has come through extensive news media reports, television shows such as *Border Wars*, and a higher concentration of U.S. Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) agents. In recent years, as the entirety of the U.S.-Mexico territorial line has entered discussions of national security a growing concern of an untamed and dangerous southern border prevents it from being considered anything else.

In recent years, the third largest port of crossing along the United States-Mexico border in Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, Sonora has come into focus as drug cartel violence catapulted it into the arena of U.S. national security and drug smuggling concerns. Negative attention be it through the media or reports of threats to national security, has served to cloud and ignore the historical partnership between *Ambos Nogales* which continues to inform their present relationship. As noted consistently in an

in-person interview by Nogales, Arizona Mayor, Arturo Garino, “When the news media focuses on issues of security, what they do not realize is that the presence of law enforcement and Border Patrol, makes this one of the safest places to be,” (Personal Interview, 2013). In the face of security concerns, Nogales’ proximity to Mexico allows culture and people to move beyond the territorial divide, and the reality of life on the border is that there is no true separation between north and south. This is evident in the utilization of *Ambos Nogales*, or both Nogales, which each city employs in order to identify the cross-border community as one. While a line in the sand may exist, this does not prevent the passage of humans and cultural information across the line. Ambos Nogales is evidence of a transboundary community who shares in their economy, local politics, and society. The vertical relationship between the U.S. and Mexico fluctuates through levels of rigidity, but it does not remove the historical connection and contemporary cooperation of horizontal lives on the line.

Further evidence of a blurred boundary line in Ambos Nogales was most apparent during their joint *Cinco de Mayo Fiestas* which began in 1941 and occurred annually for almost forty years. The Chamber of Commerce offices from Nogales, Sonora and Nogales, Sonora would work together to plan and execute what became a multi-day elaborate Fiesta filled with baseball games, bullfights, dances, binational parades, and a Fiesta Queen competition. The success of the Fiestas each year depended on the ability for Ambos Nogales to work together both throughout the year and in the planning of the annual celebration. Had their connection in the face of the border not existed the Fiestas would not have reached the level they did.

The joint Cinco de Mayo Fiestas of Ambos Nogales came to an end in the 1980's; however, they were revived in 2010 as a means for preserving a local connection in the face of growing national security concerns. Trepidations related to security at the U.S.-Mexico border perpetuate a longstanding perception of the territorial demarcation as a site where the civil and savage meet, and as such, would require policing. A task Frederick Jackson Turner sought to theorize and explore via, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History." In his "Frontier Thesis," Turner argues that the very nature of American society rests in encountering the frontier of society, settling and westernizing as quintessential characteristics of a United States way of life (1894). While Turner's work was instrumental in defining what it meant to be American or of the United States, and in many ways the mentality he described continues to inform contemporary national U.S. perceptions about the border, there are elements lacking from his considerations. The westward expansion, colonization, and settlement largely ignored the human component, in particular Native American and Mexican populations. In addition, Turner's hypothesis ignores the exploitation of these populations as part of a larger nation-building process and the impact they had and continue to have culturally and socially.

As a means for further probing the manner in which the Cinco de Mayo Fiestas of Ambos Nogales demonstrate cross-boundary collaborations, Lawrence A. Herzog's work, *Where North Meets South: Cities, Space, and Politics on the U.S.-Mexico Border*, opens a path for recognizing "transfrontier linkages," which develop as a result of economic exchanges at a border (1990, 8). Economic interactions lead to inevitable socialization during the exchange of goods, training of employees, use of technology, and

shared capital across the boundary (1990, 56). This overlapping of economy at the border leads to what he terms transboundariness and a partnership between the U.S. and Mexico, which are greatly reflected in the relationship between cities along the border (1990, 56). As a result of this reality, it is possible to see where Turner's hypothesis is lacking when it comes to human interaction at a border, or frontier, as he calls it. As much as a border seeks to separate populations, there is interaction at and beyond the boundary. The place where cultures and society meet can then be considered a space of exchange and a site of cultural knowledge production.

Carlos Velez-Ibañez' concept of "Cultural Bumping" is useful in this context as he describes the manner in which no culture is "pristine": people inevitably move, interact, and share information when they "bump" into each other and change localized culture (1996, 5-6). This is most evident today along the border region and the area defined as the Southwestern United States where Native American, Spanish, Mexican, and Anglo cultures meet and have influenced one another through architecture, politics, language, food practices, familial and social ties, and economy. While interactions amongst these populations were not without violence and fluctuate through waves of extreme racial and ethnic tensions, their cultures and methods of survival had a lasting impact on the landscape and one another.

The economic exchanges and transboundary linkages addressed in Herzog's work mark out daily interactions that make the border permeable. The result of this permeability is then placed center stage in Ambos Nogales, in particular during their joint annual Cinco de Mayo Fiestas. In order to showcase their connection, camaraderie, and generate tourist income with a jovial celebration, the sister cities worked together to



develop the tradition. Had it not been for the presence of transboundariness in Ambos Nogales, these celebrations may not have occurred. The continued transboundary link within the community could have dissipated. As national perceptions of U.S.-Mexico border have worked to transform and reinforce the demarcation, the transboundary connection in Ambos Nogales has not disappeared and the Fiestas continue today as best as they can with the border acting as an inevitable backdrop.

### **Impetus for Study on Ambos Nogales and Methodological Approach**

While conducting research for a separate topic, I uncovered information related to the Cinco de Mayo Fiestas in Ambos Nogales. As a Nogalense myself, I had no knowledge that the celebrations had occurred and took up the task of researching the annual tradition further. Officially, the joint Ambos Nogales Cinco de Mayo Fiestas began in 1941 and fizzled out by the 1980s. Memory of the celebration had been overshadowed by national concerns regarding border security and undocumented migration. Various factors led to the end of the Cinco de Mayo Fiestas in Nogales, Arizona, although the Fiestas, as might be expected, continued in Nogales, Sonora.

By the 1990s, the Ambos Nogales community witnessed the restructuring of the border from a chain link fence to reinforced concrete and steel as part of Operation Gatekeeper. As time progressed and growing national concerns over border security continued to foreground discussions of the U.S.-Mexico border, life in Ambos Nogales remained relatively stable, with local economies benefiting from one another, and a local mindset based on partnership rather than division. In 2010, Nogales City Council member, Esther Melendez López, moved to reinvigorate the Fiestas as a form of

collective tradition. No longer in their original form, an altered version of the Fiestas in Ambos Nogales has been held every year since.

In order to gather information pertinent to the Cinco de Mayo Fiestas and understand their importance to the Ambos Nogales community, oral history interviews were conducted with Nogales, Arizona Mayor Arturo Garino (March 21, 2013), City Council members Esther Melendez Lopez (April 14, 2013) and Nubar Hanessian (March 20, 2013), and a previous Cinco de Mayo Queen contestant, Delia Holler Baffert (March 17, 2009). As a Cinco de Mayo Queen contestant in 1942, Mrs. Baffert provided a substantial account of her experience as an active participant in the Fiestas, as well as an attendee during later events. Nogales, Arizona City Council members Esther Melendez Lopez and Nubar Hanessian provided brief memory of the Cinco de Mayo Fiestas, with more emphasis on the motivation for the resurrection of the Fiestas in 2010, and a focus on contemporary distinctions between local and national perceptions of the border. Mayor Garino provided a brief account of his memory of the Cinco de Mayo Fiestas, with additional attention on current events and the issues facing a political official at the U.S.-Mexico border today. Informants were selected on the basis of willingness and availability. A limitation encountered while working on this study rested on the passing away of potential informants who were either active agents in planning the Fiestas or queen contestants, thus their personal experience could not be recorded.

Coupled with oral histories, is the utilization of the *Nogales International*, the major periodical in Nogales, Arizona. As primary sources, the personal accounts and newspapers provide a historical record of events as they occurred. Secondary sources related to history of southern Arizona and northern Sonora, beauty pageants, celebrations,

and border communities provided a larger view of events and their relationship to and similarity to Ambos Nogales. In an effort to analyze the events of the past and understand their cultural and social implications, a variety of academic theoretical texts regarding the border are also employed within this study. As a generative site of analysis, the U.S.-Mexico border has provided literal and theoretical understandings for the border as a site of knowledge production and inevitable overlap between the two countries that impacts identity, social processes, and economic systems. Various theoretical understandings of the border have been included within this study in order to demonstrate the breadth of analysis the border is able to provide.

Where necessary, personal observation has been included to provide first-hand account of national policies as they came to be enforced locally, while also offering experience as a *Nogalense*. The term *Nogalense* has come to hold two meanings, the first is to label all residents of Nogales, whether they live in the U.S. or Mexico. The second embodies a sense of duality that exists as a result of interaction between the political, economic, and social systems of Mexico and the United States. Specifically, this duality is presented in the daily use of bilingualism (Spanish and English), monetary exchanges requiring either the Mexican peso or U.S. dollar, and a consistent movement through the border leading to interaction with officers and agents from the U.S. and Mexico. While this is not the only community along the U.S.-Mexico border, Ambos Nogales is consistently overlooked, allowing Nogalenses to observe the activity within Mexico and the United States, and to create new forms of knowledge production and understanding in a cross-boundary manner.

## **Historical Occurrences and Perceptions of the Border**

The history of the U.S.-Mexico border often begins with the end of the Mexican-American War in 1848, the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo<sup>1</sup> and the U.S. acquisition of the region now considered the Southwest including California, Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Colorado, Texas, and portions of Oklahoma, Wyoming, and Kansas. Acquisition of this land fulfilled the concept of Manifest Destiny and often came with an incorrect assumption that the lands were vacant (Chávez 1984). Mentioned previously, Turner's Frontier hypothesis rested on the notion of expansion into the unsettled region as quintessential to U.S. purpose and identity. The reality placed Native American, Spanish, Mexican, and Anglo peoples in contact with one another on lands that had long been settled and considered home to cultures and peoples that were different from those in the eastern United States.

At a national level, the concern with initial constructions of the border rested on ensuring access to mines in Mesilla, New Mexico and further reach of the railroad, while local concerns focused more on land disputes, protection from Apache and Comanche raids, and an adjustment to a new U.S. way of life. Not unlike today, concerns about safety at the border launched the U.S. to dispatch more than eight thousand troops to the region in order to maintain peaceful relations, which at that time, was required under Article XI of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and cost the U.S. upwards of 12 million dollars. In conjunction with the aforementioned issues, land surveyors encountered errors with maps that were drafted incorrectly, causing confusion over where the international boundary was actually located. In order to remedy issues the U.S. was facing and prevent further costs resulting from Article XI of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the Gadsden

Purchase or *Tratado de Mesilla* was signed between the U.S. and Mexico, ceding the territory of present-day southern Arizona and a southwestern portion of New Mexico to the U.S., and ending the requirements of Article XI of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. This ceding allowed the U.S. access to further territory and expansion of the railroad in connection with the gold discoveries in California (Griswold del Castillo 1990, 57-59). The finalization of the Gadsden Purchase in 1854 solidified the territorial boundary between the U.S. and Mexico into the almost 2,000-mile boundary which includes present-day southern Arizona.

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and the Gadsden Purchase did not bring an end to land disputes, banditry, or smuggling along the border, however, these treaties offered a platform for border communities to negotiate and compromise when it came to these challenges. While imperfect, the outcome of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and the Gadsden Purchase provided occasions for partnership between Mexico and the U.S. based on the qualities of neighborliness. A distinct component to the U.S.-Mexico border, one that has not changed since its creation, is the geographic distance from the political centers of Mexico and the U.S. Decisions made at a distance have to be negotiated and implemented in a manner suited to localized communities.

The change experienced at the U.S.-Mexico border over the course of the twentieth century is bookended by two differing yet violent situations. The Mexican Revolution took place from 1910 to 1921 and brought violence to the border region that occasionally spilled over from Mexican cities into the U.S. Most notable is the attack by Pancho Villa and his troops on Columbus, New Mexico, which was a means for uncovering corrupt connections between the Mexican and U.S Governments that, if

proven correct, would have resulted in a loss of Mexican sovereignty. Villa lost between 90 and 100 men, while the U.S. experienced roughly two-dozen injuries and casualties. U.S. President Woodrow Wilson demanded Villa's capture, dispatching military troops to the border and into Mexico to retrieve him, dead or alive.

Almost 80 years later, under the Clinton Administration, U.S. troops were once again dispatched to the U.S.-Mexico border as part of Operation Hold the Line in El Paso, Texas. This plan sought to demonstrate a show of force and halt undocumented crossings. U.S. Customs and Border Protection found their program successful and launched a similar 1994 program in the San Diego, California sector of the border with Operation Gatekeeper (U.S. Customs and Border Protection, 2018). Both operations were prevention through deterrent strategies that relied heavily on Border Patrol Agent presence in order to thwart undocumented crossing. The implementation of these border security tactics had a funneling effect on undocumented traffic into the Sonoran Desert, where summer temperatures can reach 118 degrees Fahrenheit. In keeping with the prevention through deterrent strategies, the U.S. government and Customs and Border Protection officials relied on the notion that the deaths that would inevitably occur in the desert would work as a means for hindering undocumented migration. From 1990 to 2017, there have been 2,884 documented deaths in the Arizona desert, leading to one of the largest humanitarian crises in the world (Martínez, 2018).

As the 20<sup>th</sup> century came to an end, undocumented migration was a major national concern when it came to perceived issues associated with the U.S.-Mexico border. This concern, and fear was only bolstered in 2001 after the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center. The assumption then became that terrorists would easily traverse the southern

border. By 2006, a rise in Mexican drug cartel violence had entered into national discussions of U.S.-Mexico border security, causing undocumented immigration/migration and drug smuggling to be amongst the major concerns related to the U.S.-Mexico border. National remedies to the issues of drug smuggling, undocumented migration, and drug cartel violence came in the form of heightened border security, militarization of the border, and reinforcements to the fences along the territorial line.

The intention here is not to gloss over the long and innumerable historical events that occurred at the U.S.-Mexico border throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but to illustrate national responses to events that relied on local implementation at the boundary line. Communities along the border had to adjust to national decisions that impacted their local economies, politics, social ties, and cross-border interconnectedness. Both in a historical and contemporary sense, national and international dealings with the U.S.-Mexico border rely on local communities and individuals to act upon decisions made outside of their community. As such, narratives about the border are generated by national decisions, and not comprised by or of the directly impacted communities astride the line.

### **Nation-state Divide versus Sister City Connection**

In his text *Border People: Life and Society in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands*, Oscar J. Martínez asserts that there are universal commonalities present in border communities across the globe and through his borderland models; Martínez is able to locate the level of interaction that creates an interdependent connection at the U.S.-Mexico border specifically (1994, 5-9). Interdependence occurs, “when a border region in one nation is symbiotically linked with the border region of an adjoining country[...] made possible by

relatively stable international relations and by the existence of a favorable economic climate that permits borderlanders on both sides of the line to pursue growth and development projects that are tied to foreign capital, markets, and labor,” (Martínez 1994, 8). Ambos Nogales blossomed out of a merchant community established during the construction of the railroad in that region. Economic gain allowed for a development of community engagement and a foundation for partnership. Their proximity to one another, allowed Ambos Nogales to build and sustain an interdependent economic connection.

The shift in perceptions as a result of World War II transformed the manner in which the United States interacted with Mexico and added to the economic and social conditions that reinforced an interconnected relationship along the U.S.-Mexico border. At a national level, “territorial disputes declined appreciably, allowing formerly tense border zones to attain stability and to turn former location disadvantages into assets for achieving growth and development,” (Martínez 1994, 3). While the community of Ambos Nogales had long been relying on one another locally, the international partnership between Mexico and the U.S. was positively linked when Mexico proclaimed its support of the U.S. in declaring war against Japan in 1941. Declaring alliance with the United States allowed Mexico an opportunity for economic development and industrial production by providing metals such as copper, zinc, mercury, graphite, and lead to the U.S. The foundation created to funnel these materials to the U.S. from Mexico laid much of the infrastructure still present in Mexico’s economy and linked the two countries.

In addition to Mexican industrial production and economic growth during World War II, military assistance and training occurred in a transnational manner. Mexican nationals living in the United States enlisted in military service while Mexico’s air



squadron, the Aztec Eagles, trained and flew missions alongside the U.S. Air Force. Because of the large quantity of individuals enlisted in and dispatched internationally to war zones through various branches of the U.S. military, a guest worker agreement known as the Bracero Program provided a temporary agricultural and industrial labor force from Mexico into the United States.<sup>2</sup> The Bracero Program ran from 1942 through 1964 with an estimated 4.6 million labor contracts signed throughout the time period and laid a foundation for a continued U.S. use of migrant labor for low-paying jobs. The Bracero Program itself did much to strengthen a partnership between Mexico and the U.S. via immigration, international relations, labor organization, and agriculture (Dowling 2010). In Ambos Nogales, much of the economy depended on brokerage firms dealing in agricultural export from Mexico into the United States, which was bolstered during World War II. Increase in economic gain established new economic and political partnerships at the border, while also opening the communities along the territorial line up to a new tourist economy. WWII shifted leisurely travel from overseas to its southern neighbor. According to the report, “Ambos Nogales, On the Border: A Chronology,” compiled by R. Paul Sokota for the Udall Center for Studies in Public Policy at the University of Arizona, the first local account of the binational Cinco de Mayo Fiestas in Ambos Nogales is recorded as a means for rejuvenating its economy via tourism after the Great Depression and during WWII. (1990-1991, 16, 44).

The Cinco de Mayo Fiestas became an annual commemoration of a shared localized culture, as well as an opportunity for a jovial celebration of social ties that had grown out of economic partnership across the border. The relationship between Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, Sonora has always been one of a sisterly bond connected through

local partnerships built on economic unions, social ties, and political efforts to work together for the betterment of the cross-border community. It is this transboundary existence that provided the foundation for the Ambos Nogales Cinco de Mayo Fiestas to flourish.

The transboundary relationship being so evident the general assumption prevailed that a sister city relationship had long been formalized in the past, but it was not until 2011 when the Mayors of Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, Sonora realized their connection had not been officially recorded. According to Sister Cities International, President Dwight D. Eisenhower encouraged cities within the United States to develop cultural diplomacy with other cities within the country and the globe as a means for bringing about “peace and prosperity by fostering bonds” throughout global communities (Sister Cities International 2018). In Ambos Nogales, the notion of a sister city connection based on cultural understanding, mutual respect, and cooperation had been occurring since the creation of the cities themselves. Indicative of this reality, is the story reported in the *Nogales International* on February 4, 2011, entitled, “Sisters at last: Mayors Sign Historic Record”:

The close-knit relationship that existed for decades – and that many presumed to have been officially recorded somewhere already – was formalized Thursday when Mayors Arturo Garino and Jose Angel Hernandez Barajas signed a sister city agreement during a ceremony at the Mexican Consulate in Nogales.

The push for formalization of the Ambos Nogales Sister City agreement occurred as a result of the mayors of both cities viewing it as an opportunity to make their partnership official. While national news of border security concerns, undocumented migration, and drug smuggling swirled around them, the Mayors of Ambos Nogales came together to sign an official sister city agreement and document the local partnership that existed and

persists in the face of a structure to divide them. At a state level, Governor Jan Brewer had signed Senate Bill 1070 in 2010, which was viewed by many as a promotion of racial profiling and anti-immigrant legislation that would allow any law enforcement agent to question a person's citizenship status on the basis of their racial appearance. SB1070 caused much debate in Arizona and critics described the manner in which Jan Brewer did not conceive of the partnership between Mexico and the U.S., in particular in Arizona and Sonora. The legislation was viewed as a method to reinforce a division at the U.S.-Mexico border. For the mayors of Ambos Nogales and the Mexican and U.S. consulates in both cities, the Sister City accord came at a time when it was important to "institutionalize a relationship of sisterhood...between two cities that not only share the same name, but also the bonds of history, culture, commerce, friendship, and family," (Clark 2011).

### **Historical Significance of Ambos Nogales**

Miguel Tinker Salas' work, *In the Shadow of the Eagles: Sonora and the Transformation of the Border during the Porfiriato*, was instrumental in providing an initial historic examination of the factors that contributed to contemporary transborder linkages in Ambos Nogales. However, in many cases, Ambos Nogales, or discussion of each city separately, has most often been relegated to geographic markers or one-line mentions, as contained in James E. Officer's, *Hispanic Arizona, 1536-1856*, Thomas E. Sheridan's *Arizona: A History*, and *Arizona: A Cavalcade of History*, by Marshall Trimble.

Specific publications on Nogales, Arizona include an overview of history in Jane Eppinga's *Nogales: Life and Times on the Frontier*, and a case study of nine murder trials

in Hattie Wilson's *Murders Tried in an Arizona Courthouse*, with the former mentioning the Cinco de Mayo celebrations from the 1930s in one line and the latter including no mention at all. Innumerable texts focused on the U.S.-Mexico border have been published regarding international relations, economy, environmental issues, migration and immigration, and most recently humanitarian concern with deaths in the Sonoran Desert. As described previously, focus on the San Diego-Tijuana and El Paso-Juarez ports of crossing garner much more attention than that of Ambos Nogales and often paint Ambos Nogales in a light similar to that of a miniaturized El Paso (Sheridan 1995, 362). As a result, a main task of this study is to locate additional history of the region, in addition to the Cinco de Mayo Fiestas in Ambos Nogales, in particular as they provide evidence of long-term transborderness beyond an annual celebration that remains evident today.

Ambos Nogales should properly be understood as a sizeable land mass, one without a political border slicing it into two halves as might be seen on a current map. The area was once a small portion of the Rancho de Nogales Elías family land grant that stretched from Imuris, Sonora to Tumacacori, Arizona. Spanish for walnut, the large quantity of Nogal trees provided an appropriate name for the places known as Nogales. Sale of land by the Elías family divided the grant up until a portion of it was acquired by the United States and subsequently separated by the national boundary. Mining and ranching were prevalent industries prior to the arrival of the railroad in the 1880s. The extension of the railroad from Sonora into Arizona in 1882 brought significant change to the area that is still recognizable today. As the train traveled from Hermosillo, Sonora to Tucson, Arizona, it would stop in Ambos Nogales allowing merchants and brokers to establish a binational economic foundation in the area by selling food and products to

people passing through. The merchant community flourished by importing products from Mexico and Latin America and selling to shops and vendors in the United States. The increase in settlement led the community to establish itself under one name and municipality in 1899, Nogales, regardless of national ties to either the United States or Mexico.<sup>3</sup>

A defining moment for Ambos Nogales came in 1895, when city officials worked binationally to plan and execute a joint Latin American Carnival, similar to a Mardi Gras celebration in New Orleans. The event was a success, as noted by Tinker Salas, “the sight of Americans and Mexicans dressed in costumes, riding carros alegoricos, and ‘throwing flour on each other’ even attracted the attention of the *New York Times*, which described the event as an ‘international episode of the commendable sort,’” (1997, 160). The success of the binational events during the Porfiriato prompted further annual celebrations in an effort to increase political interaction and generate tourist income. Porfirio Diaz was working to open Mexico to foreign investment, in particular regions closest to the border. The public commemorations in Ambos Nogales set the tone for political meetings with presidents and governors from Mexico and the U.S. often meeting in the jovial border town to discuss potential trade deals and politics.

After the Great Depression and the beginning of World War II, the Chamber of Commerce offices from Nogales, Sonora and Nogales, Arizona looked to reinvigorate the festivals of the past as a means for public unity and economic recovery. Having witnessed the success of previous Cinco de Mayo Fiestas in Nogales, Sonora, the timing, weather, and theme led Nogales, Arizona officials to join in on the annual festivities. It is important to note the ethnic makeup of Nogales, Arizona contributed to the success of

joint Cinco de Mayo Fiestas, as the community has remained largely of Mexican descent with most recent data indicating 95% of people identify as Mexican or Latino (U.S. Census 2017). Had the population of Nogales, Arizona not remained predominantly Mexican, it is possible the Fiestas may not have occurred or experienced the success which they did.

The joint Fiestas started as a single day of celebration and graduated into five days of bull-fights, boxing matches, baseball games, dances, an international parade, and a Fiesta Queen competition. When the event would end, planning for the following year's event would begin, and for almost 40 years the fiestas provided the residents of Ambos Nogales a chance to enjoy a binational celebration that took place astride the U.S.-Mexico boundary line. A most alluring component of the Fiestas was the Fiesta Queen competition. Young women from both sides of the border would compete against one another for the Cinco de Mayo Fiesta Queen crown. During their candidacies, contestants would wear elaborate Mexican ensembles in order to demonstrate their cultural pride. The Fiesta Queen contestants would ride elaborate floats in the binational parade in order to garner votes. The parade would travel in a loop from Nogales, Sonora into Nogales, Arizona and back, in order to allow the participants and attendees a chance to take in the Mexican culture and community pride.

Cinco de Mayo celebrations have become quite common however, and the Fiestas of Ambos Nogales bear some differences when compared to commemorations occurring away from the border and outside of Mexico. In a contemporary context, Cinco de Mayo has largely become a commercialized celebration in the United States, often confused as Mexican Independence Day.<sup>4</sup> Its reality was an unlikely victory for Mexico against

France during the Franco-Mexican War in a battle at Puebla in 1862. This triumph took shape as a celebration for Mexican resistance and endurance in the face of war and adversity. Racial tensions and residual issues related to the Civil War led Mexican and Latino populations to form a bond of collective experience celebrated during the Cinco de Mayo. In contrast, Ambos Nogales utilized the Cinco de Mayo Fiestas as a neighborly commemoration and celebration of their link across the boundary between Mexico and the U.S.

A similarity between Ambos Nogales Cinco de Mayo celebrations and those occurring elsewhere in the U.S. was the utilization of newspapers as a means for disseminating and gathering community announcements. Information was largely shared through Spanish-language newspapers that were still in circulation during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, creating a form of unification between Mexican and Latino populations. The commemoration of Cinco de Mayo gained popularity in the United States as a Latino celebration shared amongst various Spanish-speaking populations. The celebration itself lost a connection to a Mexican victory over the French, however, and took shape as a form of solidarity amongst Latinas and Latinos in the U.S. (Hayes-Bautista 2012, 11). When announcements of Cinco de Mayo Fiestas were published in these bilingual periodicals, Mexicans and Latinos saw it as a moment for a celebration of a collective identity as Latino Americans living in the United States. As noted by Hayes-Bautista in, *El Cinco de Mayo: An American Tradition*, “it is also vital to understand how Latinos viewed the issues of the American Civil War – freedom versus slavery, broad-based democracy versus elitist oligarchy,” (2012, 11), and these facets infused the Cinco de Mayo fiestas that followed.

Information regarding initial Cinco de Mayo celebrations in early U.S. society via newspapers and periodicals provides much detail in regard to the community, or communities, who produced them. The Spanish-language newspapers of California offer us a view of solidarity through dialect, but it is important to note that, “in an area as large as the Southwest, Spanish-language print discourse developed at different times, at different places, and with differing purpose,” (Meléndez 2005, 4). A consistent element across all periodicals, though, is the relationship between writers and readers, as members of the same community. Periodicals and newspaper publications provided much of the information for this study on the Cinco de Mayo Fiestas in Ambos Nogales, and as primary sources offer a glimpse of the manner in which the sister cities memorialized their partnership in print and in a manner appropriate to their readership.

The *Nogales International*, the major periodical in Nogales, Arizona, has been in circulation since 1925. As such, this publication has provided much information for this study as both an account of Cinco de Mayo celebrations of Ambos Nogales’ past and a reflection of the community’s experience. Details about the Cinco de Mayo Fiestas in Ambos Nogales cannot be found elsewhere, thus allowing the *Nogales International* to provide details and historical documentation of the celebrations that might not be easily recalled from personal memory. The limited historical information about Cinco de Mayo Fiestas of Ambos Nogales largely informed the goal of this study.

### **Chapter Outline**

The chapters that follow seek to provide further understanding of transboundariness in Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, Sonora, while exploring the Ambos Nogales Cinco de Mayo Fiestas. Chapter One entitled, “The Border and



Transboundariness,” provides a historical view of the Ambos Nogales region and the manner in which the cities came to be. Including their existence prior to and after the construction of the U.S.-Mexico border. Their transboundary link was established by cross-border economic partnerships placed center-stage during the Cinco de Mayo Fiestas.

Chapter Two, “Ambos Nogales and the Cinco de Mayo Fiestas,” offers a description of the joint fiestas and the manner in which they came to occur from 1941 to the 1980s. At their height, the Fiestas offered much to attendees in regard to entertainment, parades, and a Fiesta Queen competition. The fiestas ended in Nogales, Arizona, but continued on in Nogales, Sonora, bringing an end to the joint Ambos Nogales Cinco de Mayo Fiestas, until their reinvigoration in 2010 by Nogales, Arizona city council members.

Chapter Three, “The Border Paradox,” explores the importance of focusing on the Ambos Nogales community as a location of transboundary inquiry. In the face of intended division, the physical U.S.-Mexico border works as a connecting force. When considering the literal nature of the border, it is necessary to explore the figurative qualities it possesses which allow for academic interrogation and further knowledge production.

Chapter Four, “The Contemporary U.S.-Mexico Border,” is a review of recent occurrences at the border under the Trump Administration. Larger border issues of undocumented migration, drug and human trafficking, and cartel and gang violence have taken precedence in discussions about the border. The national perceptions of the border vary and contrast greatly from local realities astride the line. In the face of the material

concerns related to migrant and refugee lives, this chapter seeks to explore how the contemporary form of Ambos Nogales Cinco de Mayo Fiestas continue and work in tandem with changes at and militarization of the border.

The U.S.-Mexico border is a generative site of inquiry as it has changed and become increasingly policed and monitored while still existing as a home for families and collective lived experiences. For the Ambos Nogales community, the border is a daily reality that has come to be negotiated with as a means for maintaining transboundary connections strongly rooted in the region. The Cinco de Mayo fiestas in Ambos Nogales demonstrate the permeability of the wall while reflecting the transboundary nature of economic, social, and cultural life on the border. By examining the Cinco de Mayo Fiestas and the historical connection that informs a present reality in Ambos Nogales, it will lead to a better understanding of transboundary lives on the boundary line.

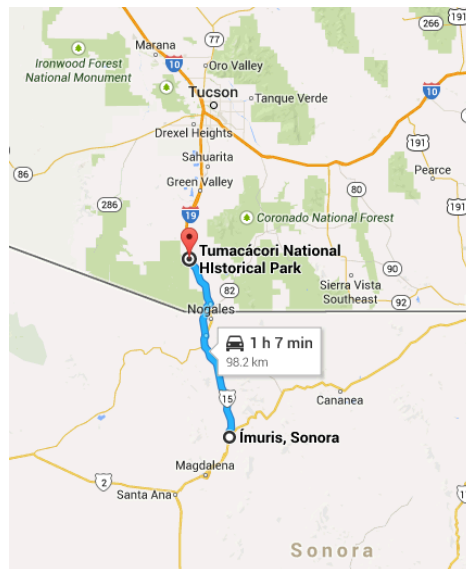
## **Chapter One – The Border and Transboundariness**

Prior to the influx of settlers and colonists who would bring the construction of United States-Mexico border, the Pimería Alta region, comprised of southern Arizona and northern Sonora, was utilized as a passage way for Kumeyaay, Pai, Cocopah, O’odham, Yaqui, Apache, and Kickapoo peoples. According to Bernard Siqueiros, Education Coordinator for the Tohono O’odham nation, it is only in recent years historians and anthropologists have been able to trace the existence of at least 63 O’odham communities between Nogales and Tucson (2018). Mistakenly referred to as the Pima or Papago people by Spanish colonizers, the O’odham peoples continue to reside in the area and interact with the U.S.-Mexico border.

The indigenous peoples of the region had been defending themselves against Spaniards who entered the area until Padre Eusebio Kino, vehemently opposed to the enslavement of indigenous peoples, was able to negotiate peaceful agreements with the O’odham people. In 1687, he established the mission of Nuestra Señora de los Dolores in Cosarí, Sonora (Roca, 1967). Padre Kino went on to establish missions in Tumacacori, Tubac, and the San Xavier Mission in Tucson, which is still in operation. By 1711, Padre Kino had worked with indigenous peoples in Baja California, Sonora, and Arizona in order to establish 24 missions.

The missions led to the formation of small silver mining settlements, which were dismantled by the Tohono O’odham in 1751 (McWilliams 1949, 82-83). Roughly 23 miles north of present-day Nogales, Arizona, a garrison was established in Tubac in 1752 that fell under Apache attack leading to abandonment of the settlement. Along the area that became the Arizona-Sonora portion of the border, activity largely occurred at a

distance from present-day Ambos Nogales. Settlement in areas currently known as Arivaca and Tubac in Arizona, and Magdalena and Altar in Sonora garnered historical record. By 1856, the Arizona-Sonora frontier remained fairly unsettled, with less than 300 Mexicans fleeing to Tucson to seek refuge from Apache attacks (McWilliams 1990, 82-83). The isolation experienced by the majority of the border region, was significantly greater in Arizona, as it remained distant from the waterfront ports in California and Santa Fe Trail in New Mexico.



*Figure 1. Map. Distance between Imuris, Sonora and Tumacacori, Sonora. Courtesy of Google Maps.*

The area from present-day Imuris in Sonora to Tumacacori in Arizona comprised what became the Elías family land grant, of which Nogales was a part. In the seventeenth century, various Spanish settlements in North America were the foundations or base camps for exploratory expeditions and settlement of what became the Northern Frontier (Fox 1999, 2). Juan Bautista de Anza, Spanish commander at the Tubac settlement, assembled a group of 300 explorers in 1775 in an effort to prove that a land route into Alta California was possible. This group of explorers traveled through Ambos Nogales.

Charting out land access to the San Francisco area was crucial in order to funnel protection into the Spanish settlements against Russian and English ocean-front access.

In 1776 the Spanish King, Carlos III, named José de Gálvez Minister of the Indies in the court of Spain, where he moved quickly to create *La Comandancia General de las Provincias Internas* (The General Command of the Interior Provinces). The development of this Command would require the officials from regions in Texas into California to report to Gálvez, who reported directly to the King (Officer 1989, 53). Eventually, Gálvez acquired the title of Marqués de Sonora and placed his capital seat in the small town of Arizpe within Sonora, providing the few wealthy and prominent families within the area a close connection to the Spanish crown.

The effort at the time was to pacify and Catholicize indigenous communities in the area and encourage further Spanish settlement and colonization, although tensions between Spaniards and Apaches often led to violent and deadly outcomes. In 1781, the establishment of a mission in Yuma was met with revolt and protest by the Yuma people resulting in the death of 100 Spaniards. It became common for some settlements not to be reestablished after situations such as these. Largely, populations that remained in the region were located in Tubac, near the Tumacacori Mission, and in Tucson, where there was protection from Apache attacks within the presidio walls.

### **Creation of the U.S.-Mexico Border**

The establishment of the state of Sonora in 1833 generated land regulations directly impacting the Elías land by requiring formal documentation and title to the territory listed within the grant. It was not until 1841 that a request for a survey of land was made for the formal Elías family land grant, also known as Los Nogales de Elías or

the Rancho de Nogales. Laying the foundation for to the cities now known as Ambos Nogales. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, signed on February 2, 1848, finalized the Mexican-American War and brought with it the initial construction of a portion of the political and territorial divide between the United States and Mexico. Territorial disputes between landowners and the U.S. government often resulted from confusing language in the treaty and a lack of accurate land surveys that would allow some land grant families to maintain titles to their land. The solution to territorial disputes and tensions between Mexicans, Mexican Americans, and Anglos as a result of the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was La Venta de Mesilla, better known as the Gadsden Purchase of 1853. This treaty transferred Mexican land in southern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico to U.S. possession, stretching the 1,933-mile-long border over communities, families, and human existence in the name of national consolidation, Manifest Destiny, political, and economic power.

The Gadsden Purchase was thought to correct some of the language errors in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo as well as solidify territorial disputes in Arizona and New Mexico. According to James E. Officer, an Anthropologist and author of *Hispanic Arizona, 1536-1856*, observed the Elías Land Grant's lack of accurate boundary information within their Mexican records, which was required under Title VI of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. As such, the U.S. acquired the territory north of the new national boundary (1989, 294). Upon the death of her husband, Ana Salazar de Elías, divided the remaining portions of land amongst her children. An estimated 2,000 people remained in southern Arizona after the Gadsden Purchase and the American Civil War

took military troops from the new Arizona-Sonora border (McWilliams 1949,1990, 82-83).

The Tohono O'odham lands came to be separated with the finalization of the Gadsden Purchase. According to Bernard Siqueiros, Education Coordinator for the Tohono O'odham nation, the tribe was never made aware of the Purchase, nor were tribal leaders contacted by the U.S. government when the treaty and territorial take over occurred (Bernard Siqueiros). The 2.8 million-acre Tohono O'odham nation was split with part of the reservation on the Mexican side and a larger portion on the U.S. side.

The placement of the border, while a gain for the U.S. solidification of territorial lines, put a strain on Native American and Mexican populations. The new borders not only charted out U.S. land, but they provided social and racial marginalization of Native Americans and Mexicans. The establishment of the boundary line did not eliminate the geographical distance of the region to either the U.S. or Mexican political centers in Washington D.C. and Mexico City. The Tohono O'odham residents continued to interact over the territorial line. Cities along the borderline were either divided in half or reestablished on either side to maintain cross-boundary connections. Local dependence for economic survival, social or familial ties, or religious practices continued in the face of a national desire to define one country from the other.

### **Advent of the Railroad**

Prior to the arrival of the railroad, the border region remained fairly isolated from the rest of the U.S. and cities along the border often had to depend on trade relations with their Mexican neighbors in order to survive. This was not without challenge, though. In his work, *Border People: Life and Society in the US-Mexico Borderlands*, Oscar Martínez

describes the, “bandits, filibusters, smugglers, cattle thieves, chasers of runaway slaves, trigger happy lawmen, and desperados [who] found a haven on the isolated,” frontier (Martínez 1994, 32-33). He goes on to note that race relations between Mexicans and Anglos along the border caused tensions regarding manners of conducting business and running cities (1994, 33). Residents of the border region encouraged peaceful relations through economic partnerships, kinship ties, and social interactions as a means for livable conditions. Border residents had grown increasingly close as a result of the isolation from the rest of the U.S. and Mexico, and by the late nineteenth century had experienced steady population and economic growth (Martínez 1994, 33). The border’s isolation both from the U.S. and Mexican political centers coupled with the proximity of border towns to one another provided the venue for accommodation and reciprocal relationships to form along the international line (Martínez 1994, 33).

The construction of the railroad from Sonora into Arizona in 1877 created a new economy and potential for further settlement as a result of brokerage and trading abilities at the U.S.-Mexico border. The railroad had initially been drafted to extend from Mexico north into Texas. The limitations presented by the landscape, cost, and the rate of railroad construction from Santa Fe and California prompted re-evaluation of the tracks from Sonora into the U.S. through Arizona. As observed by historian, Miguel Tinker Salas:

Within two years, rail lines reached deep into the Arizona Territory, advancing east along... Tucson. The road from San Francisco to Arizona ended the American territory’s near-total isolation, connecting it to West Coast supply centers. With a railroad, American producers could now afford to provide the area with inexpensive consumer goods as well as luxury items. Access to American products in Arizona and Sonora further vitiated the development of manufacturing in the Mexican state, (1997, 116).



The 1880s were a time of early settlement in Nogales by railroad workers and merchants seeking to benefit from the temporary population. Legal officials in the U.S. and Mexico saw Los Nogales as a provisional stop, thought to dissipate once railroad construction was complete (Tinker Salas 1997, 149-162). Mexican agents patrolling the border did little to prevent illegal entry into the state of Sonora, and instead looked forward to the purchasing abilities they would have with the vendor movement through the boundary (1997, 116). I take this as early evidence of the kind of systemic and layered activity that Public Affairs scholar, Lawrence Herzog's would later come to call the framework of transboundariness. The economic interaction at the border took precedent over the intended separation of the territorial boundary.

### **Economic Growth in Nogales**

In 1880, three years after the arrival of the railroad, Jacob Isaacson, a San Francisco merchant, established a trading post in Nogales, Arizona. Quickly becoming a powerful and influential economic broker, he moved to Arizona and founded the township as Isaactown. The primary residents of Isaactown, "included a sizeable number of aspiring merchants as well as former government officials seeking to take advantage of expanded ties with the U.S.," (Tinker Salas 1997, 153). Many affluent Sonorenses traveled to Nogales during the summer in order to avoid the heat in Hermosillo and Guaymas. Their extended stays spurred a desire to establish the border retreat as a city, which would provide infrastructure and institutionalized economic and political structures. This included a decision to formally name the cities. Early efforts to name the townships concentrated on their proximity to the border as a means for indicating geographic location in the title. Line City became a popular name until Ambos city

officials decided to retain the original name of the area in an effort to, “underscore the growing interrelationship between the two towns,” (1997, 155). Ambos Nogales remained.

During these years an elite Mexican group of entrepreneurs grew out of the new business opportunities between Arizona and Sonora. International brokerage firms took root in Ambos Nogales, bridging mining, agriculture, and money exchange between the two states. Ambos Nogales retained a distinct merchant population based on agricultural and consumer goods. Tinker Salas argues that the stability of the economic relationship in Ambos Nogales is due to the lack of direct competition in the region; products that Mexican merchants could not obtain, U.S. merchants could and vice versa, thus balancing levels of consumerism between each city (1997, 156). In addition, border region had been marked a free trade zone where tariffs on the European products coming in through Mexico were considerably more affordable than in other parts of the U.S. (Tinker Salas 1997, 156). Further bolstering consumer purchasing power.

Despite formal trade arrangements, traffic shifted in informal and extralegal trade and became one of contraband more evident between Arizona into Sonora. The region was marked by merchant trains falling victim to thieves and bandits. The relationship between the two states moved to one of outlaw justice in order to recover stolen goods. Between Hermosillo and Tucson trains were robbed of denim, printed cotton cloth, sugar, flour, chocolate, coffee, dried fruit, sardines, rice, and ham (1997, 119). The merchandise being stolen altered the culture at this particular stretch of the U.S.-Mexico border. The diet along the 389-mile border changed making *menudo*, *tripitas*, *lengua*, and *cabeza*

regional delicacies. This banditry only fueled further brokerage of goods back and forth from Arizona into Sonora yielding new employment opportunities (1997, 125).

Regardless of the product source, prospective economic gain led a variety of merchants to establish their storefronts in Ambos Nogales. Vendors adopted business hours similar to those on the Mexican side and accepted both pesos and dollars as payment (1997, 157). Merchants in Tucson did not accept Mexican currency as a form of payment, thus relegating Mexican purchasing power to the Nogales port. In addition to accepting currency from either country, businesses, periodicals, and city officials recognized the importance of being bilingual as it would, “double [the] advantage of business and pleasure,” by furthering communication between potential buyers and sellers (1997, 158). Many Nogales, Arizona city officials went so far as to send their children to private schools and universities in Mexico City in order to ensure the bilingual capability of Ambos Nogales’ future leaders. As businesses solidified their relationships, social interactions in the form of Women’s Clubs, a binational Masonic Lodge, and social clubs were established to bring Ambos Nogales residents with similar interests together (Tinker Salas 1997, 158).

The physical distance of the border region from the national centers of each country provided the momentum for communities to form their own methods of survival. Oscar Martínez’ lists of features in border communities during this time insists that, “Isolation, weak institutions, lax administration, and a different economic orientation prompt people on the periphery to develop homemade approaches to their problems,” thus yielding a specific border community and identity based on coexistence and resourcefulness (Martínez 2006, 4). Ambos Nogales developed and maintained a specific

binational and bicultural connection because of its geographical distance from each political center as well as their proximity to one another.

### **Transboundary Link in Ambos Nogales**

Tinker Salas points to an illustrative case of the transnational relationship between Ambos Nogales as reflected in an 1893 letter from the leaders of the Masonic Lodge in Nogales, Arizona to the Nogales, Sonora city council president, Manuel Mascareñas, in which they:

...recognized that petty international questions are almost unavoidably owing to our peculiar international situation. We believe that such questions, not affecting the dignity of either nation, can best be settled among ourselves without involving our respective governments in vexatious international controversies (1997, 158).

This form of localized cooperation promoted a strong sense of interdependence where residents of Ambos Nogales recognized their binational relationship was difficult for outsiders to comprehend. At this juncture, transboundariness is completely evident. The economic interactions led to a social environment where the cities of Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, Sonora were inextricably linked in all manners.

Additionally, Tinker Salas' re-articulation of Brickwood's Saloon in the 1800s, demonstrates the transboundary qualities of social and economic interactions:

...Patrons could evade the laws of either country by simply moving from one side of the room to the other. By sitting astride the border, Brickwood's Saloon, known as the 'Exchange,' developed an ingenious method of circumventing the laws of both countries. For instance, if American customers wished to purchase imported cigars prohibited in the United States, they simply moved over to the Mexican side of the counter to make their purchases (1997, 156).

For some, the intention was to circumvent the law, however Brickwood's is demonstrative of the ease with which residents could navigate life at the U.S.-Mexico border. The ideology of a nation-state, when placed in a room in Ambos Nogales, was as

simple to negotiate as walking from one side to another. On a national scale, efforts to define the nation's borders were stringent; in Ambos Nogales the border was and is permeable and negotiable. In this manner, preserving a local interdependent relationship was more important than adhering to federal laws that did not fully encompass local interests.

Efforts to maintain a harmonious binational relationship were of utmost importance to the residents of Ambos Nogales as they, “spoke of a growing interrelationship with the Mexican town,” (Tinker Salas 1997, 156). In order to maintain the transboundary relationship, periodicals from Nogales described the two towns, “as one, for they are really such, being divided by an imaginary line only,” (1997, 157). Language regarding their partnership was apparent through various periodicals calling Ambos Nogales friends, partners, and more commonly, sisters. Further indicative of their connection was the common occurrence of binational legal matters to be handled locally between Arizona and Sonoran officials in order to avoid outsider or national implementation that devalued local interests. Transfer of arrests was common between the sheriffs of Ambos Nogales, where a Mexican criminal who had traveled into Nogales, Arizona was often handed over to the sheriff of Nogales, Sonora, and vice versa, without the filing of federal paperwork (Tinker Salas 1997, 160-161). Mexican and U.S. officials perceived this local relationship negatively, in particular when plans to build a binational railroad inspection station reached Mexico City. One half of the structure was to be built on the Arizona side, and the other on the Sonoran side. Mexican authorities refused to approve the plans for the structure, however, merchants of Ambos Nogales agreed that, “placing the station astride the border represented good business practices – questions of

sovereignty did not intrude into their thinking,” (1997, 162). The transboundary relationship in Ambos Nogales was perceived negatively for quite some time. It was not until government officials from each country traveled to the border community and realized the benefits of the binational partnership in Ambos Nogales that negative perceptions subsided.

Outside opinions about Ambos Nogales did not falter though, in particular as the Mexican Revolution gained momentum. The distinction between national border security reactions on the part of the U.S. and local efforts to maintain the peace are still in existence when examining present-day Ambos Nogales. Relations between the U.S. and Mexico border residents remained fairly tranquil and cooperative until national perceptions and outside tensions regarding the Mexican Revolution led to a deadly scuffle. Had the situation been handled by local Ambos Nogales law enforcement, the outcome may have been different. On August 27, 1918 carpenter, Zeferino Gil Lamadrid, was making his way from Nogales, Arizona into Nogales, Sonora carrying a package he did not declare to the U.S. military officers at the line. As he made his way south and set foot on Mexican soil, a U.S. customs agent asked him to declare said package. Being that he had already landed on Mexican soil, he was ordered by Mexican celadores or watchmen to continue on into Mexico. The confusion over which authority he should yield to led to a verbal scuffle between the Mexican guards and U.S. Troops. As the commotion ensued, a shot rang out, causing what is now known as the Battle of Ambos Nogales. It was believed Lamdarid had been shot and a Mexican guardsman shot in retaliation, at which point gunfire was exchanged between U.S. military troops, Mexican guards, and Mexican civilians. Nogales, Sonora Mayor Felix B. Peñaloza attempted to

bring an end to the shooting with a makeshift white flag but was shot and killed in the process. His death led to a cross-border shoot out. Gunfire ceased after Mexican officials agreed to raise a white flag over the border inspection station. The economic partnerships between U.S. investors and Mexican businessmen fueled the desire to preserve peaceful relations in the face of a situation such as this (Parra 2010, 19). After military officers from the U.S. and Mexico agreed to a truce, operations in Ambos Nogales went back to normal. This battle prompted a renaming of the Sonoran border city to Heroica Nogales, Sonora. The renaming of Nogales, Sonora did not change its relationship with Nogales, Arizona, but the Battle of Ambos Nogales serves as a reminder of the distinction between national perceptions about the border and local realities.

### **The Porfiriato at Ambos Nogales**

Mexican President, Porfirio Díaz opened the door for foreign investment in Mexico, increasing potential profits in trade from mining, ranching, and agriculture industries (Martínez 1994, 34). According to historian Sonia Hernandez, the development of these industries, most often just south of the U.S.-Mexico border, allowed for population growth, and as such, a need for consumer goods and a rise in demand for clothing, food, beer, and glass (2014, 62). The industrial development at the border generated much employment and new modes of human labor, which bridged transboundary connections in various locations along the U.S.-Mexico territorial line. In order to maintain production and a steady binational labor force, efforts by cross-border communities, local officials, and foreign investors pointed to a sustaining a workable environment. Nationally, the Good Neighbor Policy implemented by Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1933, intended to pacify relations with the U.S., Latin American, and

Caribbean countries, adding to local moves towards reciprocity. The Good Neighbor Policy was an effort to boost trade and cooperation between the U.S. and Latin America and avoid military involvement or force.

National debates over immigration extend from the 1920s through our present moment, however, concerns related to migration and immigration at the U.S.-Mexico border were not as prevalent as they are today. The creation of the U.S. Border Patrol in 1924 was a federal response to the Volstead Act, or Prohibition, and initially included inspection stations sprinkled along the border. While there was an inspection station placed astride the line in Ambos Nogales, it was Nogales, Arizona that utilized this as an opportunity to market the city as a tourist destination. The Nogales Wonderland Club, an organization focused on developing business and increasing tourism, created brochures detailing, “Nogales’ climate, proximity to Mexico, and the ability to enjoy an alcoholic beverage without traveling too far from home,” (Nogales Wonderland Club, Inc). When issues arose, more often than not, local Border Patrol agents and law enforcement worked together to create more immediate solutions, rather than file paperwork that would require federal input and a lengthy process (Tinker Salas 1997, 160-161). For example, if a U.S. citizen had run into problems with Mexican authorities, they would be handed off to officials without any paperwork filed to document the exchange.

The 1930s brought a different sense of understanding in regard to the border and immigration. Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodriguez recount the difficult reality of the forced deportation of Mexicans living in the United States in, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s*. The Great Depression caused many to search for a scapegoat regarding a lack of jobs and economic decline, which landed on



the Mexican community. It was believed that many, if not all, Mexicans were immigrants or undocumented and occupying positions that could belong to U.S. citizens. Under the direction of then U.S. president Herbert Hoover, mass deportations of Mexican populations, or repatriations as they came to be called, occurred at a massive rate. Most often the Immigration Service in the U.S. focused on higher concentration of Mexican populations in cities such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York, Boston, Detroit, Chicago, and Denver. In Arizona, the focus of Mexican repatriation occurred in Phoenix, with deportations facilitated by the railroad directly into the state of Sonora (Balderrama and Rodriguez 1995, 101).

Many of the immigration and deportation concerns fell by the wayside after World War II. Gaps in the labor force were often filled by temporary employment contracts with Mexican and Latin American nationals. Even though it was a war time, the labor force required to sustain the supplies was filled by women and a migrant labor force that led to the creation of the Bracero Program. Travel overseas was hindered by the war, boosting tourism in Mexico and U.S.-Mexico border towns. Mexico pledged their alliance to the U.S. in 1941, opening a path for the transboundary Cinco de Mayo celebrations which occurred for almost 40 years.

### **The Inception of Binational Celebrations in Ambos Nogales**

Local relationships in Ambos Nogales were most evident through their public celebrations, initially through Christmas dances and posadas, where Arizona residents would travel into Nogales, Sonora to engage in the community events. Mexican celebrations commemorating the Battle at Puebla (Cinco de Mayo) and Mexican Independence often drew local residents in addition to tourists from the larger Arizona

and Sonoran states. As described by Tinker Salas, Ambos Nogales city officials partnered to plan a Latin American Carnival in 1895, which was such a success that it garnered attention from the *New York Times* (1997, 160). The success of the binational events prompted annual celebrations in an effort to increase political interaction and generate tourist income. The public commemorations in Ambos Nogales set the tone for political meetings with presidents and governors from Mexico and the U.S. often meeting in the jovial border town to discuss trade and politics. The public celebrations provided Ambos Nogales with the opportunity to showcase their transboundariness for outsiders to enjoy.

The Fiestas de Mayo had been occurring in Nogales, Sonora for a number of years under the title of Fiesta Primavera before Nogales, Arizona joined the celebration. During the Great Depression national and international economic crises generated much concern. The mentality about the U.S. during the time was a fear that it would become a marginal country when compared to the rest of the globe. At the country's margins, however, the tools and techniques for survival and resourcefulness that informed so much of their history were utilized in order to push forward. Jane Eppinga, a local author on Arizona history, describes a moment in 1930 when Ambos Nogales pooled their resources and put on a joint Cinco de Mayo celebration, which has been noted in periodicals as, "their best one ever," (2002, 133). Consistent joint Cinco de Mayo fiestas did not occur in Ambos Nogales until 1941. The cities joined together to celebrate various holidays and special occasions during the year, however their Cinco de Mayo celebrations became their most notable as they developed into a multi-day celebration requiring special permission from the federal government to open the border for free passage during the festivities.

## **History of Cinco de Mayo**

Cinco de Mayo is often mistaken as Mexican Independence Day, but its historical importance is not so different when speaking of resourcefulness and resilience required to live at U.S.-Mexico border. In 1862, Mexico found itself financially exhausted and recovering from their war for independence from Spain that lasted from 1810-1821 and the Mexican American War from 1846-1848. Its debts to the U.S. had been settled with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 and the Gadsden Purchase of 1853-1854, yet debts to Spain, France, and England remained outstanding. France, under Napoleon III's rule invaded Mexico at the Gulf Coast in the state of Veracruz in an effort to collect their debt and expand their empire. The U.S., with Abraham Lincoln as president, was in the midst of its own Civil War at the time and unable to provide any assistance or auxiliary troops. Texas born Mexican, General Ignacio Zaragoza Seguín assembled what historian T.R. Fehrenbach referred to as a, "ragtag force," that included farmers and indigenous men with little to no military training (1995, 428-429). Some advantages to Mexico's encounter with the French was the knowledge of the climate and terrain, and the stone forts of Guadalupe and Loreto at Puebla. The 4,500 Mexican men, armed only with bayonets, were outnumbered by the 6,500 highly trained French soldiers as they headed into battle on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May. Fehrenbach goes on to note General Zaragoza Seguín's reminder to the inexperienced soldiers that, "your enemies are the first soldiers in the world, but you are the first sons of Mexico. They have come to take your country from you," (1995, 428-429).

After three attempts to take the Mexican forts, the French retreated finding themselves in a moment of defeat. The Battle at Puebla was a small victory for Mexico,

as France later dispatched more troops to Mexico in order to take control of Mexico City. The triumph in Puebla on the Cinco de Mayo in 1862 provided a glimmer of hope and was celebrated as a strong Mexican resistance to French Imperialism. The reality of their ability to make do with the weapons and little combat knowledge they had, generated a celebration of Mexican resilience and fervor in a moment of extreme struggle. As news of the Battle at Puebla reached the north, U.S. born Mexicans fighting in the Civil War used the Cinco de Mayo as inspiration in defending the Union.

The annual celebration of Cinco de Mayo has become increasingly popular, especially in the United States. David Hayes-Bautista attributes this popularity of the Cinco de Mayo in the U.S. to the Californios and Mexicans who remained in Southwest after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and the Gadsden Purchase. This, coupled with General Zaragoza Seguín's roots, has transformed the Cinco de Mayo into a distinct Mexican American celebration. Latinos facing similar racial, political, and social hurdles in the U.S. found solidarity through Spanish-Language newspapers and, "as of 1850, the officially mandated use of the Spanish language by state and local government," allowed linguistic commonality to work as a unifier (Hayes-Bautista 2012, 14-15). Announcements and news of celebrations circulated in said newspapers prompted participation from a larger audience (Hayes-Bautista 2012, 15). Originally a celebration of a Mexican victory, Cinco de Mayo became one of commonality and collective identity in the U.S.

### **Factors Allowing for Rise in Binational Fiestas**

The celebration of the Cinco de Mayo provided a foundation for communities in California, New Mexico, and Arizona to come together in a joyous occasion. In Ambos

Nogales, the Cinco de Mayo celebrations had previously only been held on the Nogales, Sonora side with lively music and dances. As Ambos Nogales worked together to celebrate during Christmas and had shared such a successful Latin American carnival-themed event, a jointly commemorated Cinco de Mayo celebration was a seemingly natural progression. On a local level, citizens of Ambos Nogales constructed and maintained a working relationship that flowed back and forth through the border as a result of business and political interactions. The “revolving door immigration policy” allowed individuals to pass through the border as required for labor on either side of the boundary line (Nevins 2005, 5). The border fence did not hinder the business and cultural interactions, and instead created a place for cultural scripts and histories to convene and move through. During the 1920s, more than 487,000 Mexican immigrants obtained legal citizenship as defined by U.S. government standards (2005, 5). As migration increased and benefited both country’s economies, the interdependence in Ambos Nogales required this relationship to be maintained in order to sustain local markets.

Nationally, the Good Neighbor Policy had gone into effect in 1933 and continued to enforce the U.S. presence in Latin American and Caribbean countries. As this policy was continually utilized as a method to highlight U.S. goodwill to other countries (Black 1985, 59-85), it provided the foundation and stage for Ambos Nogales’ binational fiestas. The politics of war fueled tense macro interactions between the U.S. and other countries, while Ambos Nogales demonstrated interdependence on a micro level. The major periodical in Nogales, Arizona expressed the importance of the Cinco de Mayo fiestas as, “another golden link in the neighborliness of Ambos Nogales, in the mutualness of

festivity, as well as the daily success of common enterprises,” (*Nogales International* 1948).



Figure 2. "When Border Relations were at their Best." *Nogales International*, May 23, 1984.

As the world headed into a Second World War, Ambos Nogales maintained their connection in order to support one another through the global crises that they anticipated would impact them locally. Shortly after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the U.S. government granted Mexico the ability to move their troops onto U.S. soil. Military forces along the coast of Baja California served to protect the coast from an attack. The troops traveled through Ambos Nogales en route to California. So excellent were relations between Mexico and the United States at the time that civic and government leaders from Ambos Nogales greeted and honored the Mexican troops with a special banquet at the popular Cavern Café in Nogales, Sonora. The toast that evening in honor of the citizens of both countries offered, “expressions of the most sincere friendship,” (*Nogales International* 1942).

World War II provided an opportunity for Ambos Nogales to highlight their location, jovial atmosphere and interconnected nature through the Cinco de Mayo fiestas. For individuals with the financial means to travel, vacations to Europe or overseas were simply not possible. Travel to Mexico and the border region offered a sense of the exotic without the distance or danger of traveling overseas at the time. Ambos Nogales took this as an occasion to highlight their community as a tourist attraction via the Cinco de Mayo Fiestas, while increasing economic gain, and strengthening social ties.

## **Chapter Two – Ambos Nogales and the Cinco de Mayo Fiestas**

The purpose of a Cinco de Mayo Fiesta is to celebrate an unexpected Mexican victory over the French during a battle at Puebla in 1862, which highlights a valiant Mexican resilience when odds appeared to be against them. Initially, Cinco de Mayo fiestas were celebrated in Mexico, and in the southwest United States, where large populations of Mexicans resided. As the celebration became an annual tradition, early Cinco de Mayo fiestas of the twentieth century served as moments for Mexican populations to convene and partake in a festive environment away from social interactions or labor relations that were often alienating in dominant United States society (Alamillo 2006, 92). The popularity and draw to Cinco de Mayo Fiestas for Mexicans in the United States served as a means for strengthening traditions and maintaining cultural roots, while reaffirming a collective identity away from the mainstream (Tatum 2001, 239). In Corona, California, Cinco de Mayo Fiestas served as a community organized event with the intent and, “purposes of uniting Mexicans for their general uplift and betterment,” (2006, 92).

Cinco de Mayo Fiestas came to serve a different function for Latina and Latino populations in the U.S. due to unification through use of the Spanish language or bilingual capabilities. This inclusivity allowed for Cinco de Mayo Fiestas to become annual rituals of “respite from the onus of everyday life,” (Obeler and Gonzalez 2005, 346). Over time, Cinco de Mayo fiestas have come to be celebrated throughout the U.S. as a means for marketing to Mexican and Latina/o populations and capitalizing off the sale of Mexican clothing, food, and alcohol across the country. The trajectory of Cinco de Mayo Fiestas in the U.S. has placed the annual celebration on par with that of St.



Patrick's Day, making it a larger commemoration north of the border than that in Puebla or elsewhere in Mexico.

This study is preoccupied with Cinco de Mayo Fiestas celebrated at the United States-Mexico border in the Ambos Nogales community, where the boundary line represents a permanent fixture during the annual festivity. Throughout the year, the transboundary nature of the Ambos Nogales community was reflected in their economic trade, social interactions, and familial relationships that passed back and forth through the border. During the Fiestas, however, the reality of the transboundary interactions in Ambos Nogales were visible in a binational parade route, cross-border organization of the event, and the Fiesta Queen Coronation stage placed overlapping the line between the U.S. and Mexico. The ease and flow of the celebration at the border line is indicative of the transboundary nature of the community and its residents, and it includes guests and tourists who made their way to partake in the festivity and camaraderie shared in Ambos Nogales.

Ambos Nogales residents from the northern side of the border had long traveled to the southern side of the border to partake in the celebratory events. As global and national events shifted economy, politics, and quotidian life, local realities adjusted to the change that the Great Depression and World War II brought them. The first account of Ambos Nogales celebrating the Cinco de Mayo jointly was in 1941, documented locally as an attempt to rejuvenate the economy after the Great Depression, and nationally after Mexico announced it was joining the U.S. in its declaration of war on Japan (Sokota 1990-1991, 16, 44). World War II caused global change and tragedy, however, on a local scale, the war provided Ambos Nogales with an opportunity to increase the size of its

binational Fiestas and celebrate its distinct community identity along the U.S.-Mexico border.

The Chamber of Commerce offices from the Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, would work together to plan the fiestas and take months to build parade floats, order décor, and ensure the ambiance was appropriately set for the festivities. The very nature of planning the fiestas was a transboundary one, as the coordination of the fiestas depended on the partnership between the Ambos Nogales Chamber of Commerce offices. What began as a one-day joint celebration, transformed into five-day long annual fiestas where visitors could move freely between Nogales, Sonora and Arizona enjoying baseball games, boxing matches, bull fights, and dances. In the days leading up to the fiestas, and during the fiesta days themselves, a parade with elaborate floats, marching bands, and cultural groups from Ambos Nogales made its way in a loop from Nogales, Arizona into Nogales, Sonora and back again. The transboundary nature of the parade was indicative of a characteristic of everyday life on the border and demonstrated the ease and permeability of movement across the territorial line and through the border.

A large portion of the fiestas was occupied by a Fiesta Queen competition, where young Nogalense women from Arizona and Sonora would compete against each other for the role. The queen would be crowned on a stage set on the border where, much like the previously mentioned Brickwood's Saloon, the young woman would enter the stage on U.S. soil and exit on Mexican soil, further indicative of the ease of transboundary movement at the U.S.-Mexico border. The role of the Fiesta Queen was to be both a visual and cultural representative chosen by the binational community to preside over the

events of each day. If the Fiesta Queen happened to arrive late, they would not begin an event without her, making her presence and promptness vital to the fiestas.

Although businessmen organized the fiestas to increase economic gain and interdependence, it was the cultural and social relationships expressed publicly through the fiestas that demonstrated the community connection between the U.S. and Mexico in Ambos Nogales. The Cinco de Mayo Fiestas were a manner through which Ambos Nogales could demonstrate a particular form of binationalism that supported U.S. and Mexican cultural ideals as they exist and persist on the border. Young women who competed for the role as Fiesta Queen came from the Arizona and Sonora sides of the border, and while their U.S. and Mexican cultural identities were evident to residents in Ambos Nogales, public performances of binationalism solidified the cultural interdependence found in this cross-border community.

### **The Cinco de Mayo Fiestas as a Unifying Process**

In 1942, Ambos Nogales used the Fiestas de Mayo as a major opportunity to join the Alianza Hispano-Americana (AHA) in its effort to celebrate the, “progress of the blending of our civilizations in the Southwest,” during the Alianza’s meeting to discuss hemispheric solidarity (*Tucson Daily Citizen* 1942). Based in Tucson, Arizona and founded in 1894, the Alianza Hispano-Americana became one of the largest Mexican American *sociedades mutualistas* or fraternal benefit societies to gain a sizeable membership throughout the present-day Southwest United States. Its major goal was to offer life insurance and economic assistance when the government did not offer dependable social security programs, labor unions, or commercial life insurance if a family were to lose the major household provider (Texas State Historical Association

2018). While offering beneficial services, the goal of the AHA was also to offer social programs that aided in preserving and honoring the culture of its members. The meeting organized by the AHA in 1942 brought numerous politicians, government officials, and community members together to discuss health, education, and the war effort, all set to the backdrop of the Fiestas de Mayo in Ambos Nogales. Young women from both sides of the border maneuvered through the meeting attendees dressed in, “patriotic costumes,” while offering defense bonds and stamps for sale (*Tucson Daily Citizen* 1942). It was at this moment that Ambos Nogales city officials realized they could highlight all their cities had to offer during the joint Fiestas, while promoting tourism revenue, political collaboration, and a jovial atmosphere that could lead to future business partnerships.

The 1942 Fiestas de Mayo did not come without issue, though, and in many ways earned the binational fiestas a permanent stamp of tragedy during one of its promotional parades. Prior to the Cinco de Mayo Fiestas, young women from Ambos Nogales were announced as Fiesta Queen contestants, and their campaign committees would hold dances and promotional processions in order to gain votes and earn monetary donations. The donations were given to the Chamber of Commerce offices of each city in order to help fund future Fiesta events. During the days leading up to the Fiestas, contestant parades could be seen traveling south on Morley Avenue in Nogales, Arizona. The young women would sit on the back of convertible automobiles and wave at the crowd whilst wearing elaborate traditional Mexican attire or dresses of chiffon and tulle. During one of the contestant parades in 1942, favored queen candidate, Delia Siqueros of Nogales, Sonora, rode along in the parade accompanied by her friends. They would light small firecrackers in order to draw attention to their car. One of her friends lit a firecracker that

appeared to be defective no matter how many times she tried to light it and so she set it down on the car seat next to her, and without warning, the firecracker lit up, setting Siqueros' chiffon and tulle dress up in flames immediately. She was taken into an alley, away from the parade, in order to guard her and the crowd from her injuries, before being taken to a hospital in Nogales, Sonora, where she died several days later from the impact of the burns.

Competing against Siqueros was Nogales, Arizona contestant, Delia Holler Baffert, who was confused for Siqueros in the chaos of the moment as a result of their namesake. Prior to the Siqueros tragedy, Baffert described her being approached by high-profile businessmen who convinced her to compete for Fiesta Queen as the Nogales, Arizona contestant. Baffert's experience points to an interesting dynamic between Fiesta attendees from different sides of the border, as she recalls, "I was called gringita by many people during the fiesta parades, it did not matter to me, I know who I am and where I came from, my mother is Mexican, as am I." While the criticism she received may have been in jest as a result of the Fiesta Queen competition, it was the interaction amongst the young women that Baffert remembers most, recalling Siqueros as a very polite and naturally beautiful young woman (Delia Holler Baffert). Baffert reflects on the early Cinco de May Fiestas as a time of, "real friendship and community," between both sides of Nogales. Her description of Ambos Nogales highlights their interdependence and cultural coexistence as individuals cross the border daily bringing culture with them and taking culture when they return to their homes. When confronted with the memory of the 1942 Cinco de Mayo fiesta, she expresses, "as a U.S. citizen, I felt like an intruder on a

Mexican Holiday. I was happy we were allowed to share Mexico's celebration," (Delia Holler Baffert).

### **The Cinco de Mayo Fiestas after 1942**

The Cinco de Mayo Fiestas that followed did not contain the obstacles of the 1942 celebration. The front page of the *Nogales International* featured the 1945 Fiesta schedule, which began the evening the Fiesta Queen was crowned, and was accompanied with the following description:

Never before was our sister city so beautifully decorated for a fiesta. A profusion of lights are suspended across all of the main thoroughfares and bulbs arranged in the Mexican national colors of red, white, and green, give the city a Christmas appearance. The word beauty does not appropriately describe the scene. On both sides of the line, citizens have gotten the fiesta spirit and are decked out in wide sombreros and other Mexican attire, (1945).

Within the periodical's pages were entire spreads featuring sponsors from Sonora and Arizona who offered well wishes to the Ambos Nogales community, and expressed hope for a successful Fiesta. Most notable from the multi-page sponsor features, was a description of both the place and event as a, "...Celebration in Romantic Old Mexico and Ambos Nogales... sponsored by the following spirited advertisers who are always interested in the advancement of Ambos Nogales," (*Nogales International* 1946). This points to the underlying economic gain and business-building opportunity the Fiestas had to offer the Ambos community, while also allowing for a tradition to grow with annual gathering of the community. Essentially, the occasion allowed for economic advancement, while also allowing for social ties and bonds to be built, which in turn strengthens business partnerships across the territorial divide and sustains the community.



Figure 3. Frontpage of *Nogales International*. May 4, 1945

Each year, as crowds increased, Ambos Nogales worked together to prepare for the anticipated audience and put on an event that was aimed to demonstrate their ability to work together and provide a venue fit for the festivity. The fiestas of 1946 brought the, “newly erected and elaborately-decorated rostrum astride the international line,” where a street dance initiated the celebration and christened the new stage (*Nogales International* 1946). The stage was used as a place to present the candidates for fiesta queen, in addition to her crowning as a commencement to the multi-day festivities. The placement of the stage straddling the border is indicative of the binational nature of the fiestas and the ease of flow and interaction between each country within the Ambos Nogales community.

In 1947, an agent of the Pacific Exhibits Company from Phoenix arrived in Nogales, Arizona in order to discuss decoration of the city in preparation for that year’s fiesta. The agent’s plan included numerous lines of banners strung across Morley Avenue in Nogales, Arizona with red, white, and green decorating the light poles down the street

leading into Nogales, Sonora. The Chamber of Commerce offices from each city highly encouraged attendees to dress in, “Western or Mexican costumes,” in particular when attending the pre-fiesta dance (*Nogales International* 1947). Local clothing businesses and merchants recognized a need to carry costumes and clothing appropriate for the fiestas. In order to offer support for local business, the Chamber of Commerce offices from Ambos sides would urge, “get your Mexican or cowboy clothes together now... Let’s all get behind this fiesta and make it the best in years!” (*Nogales International* 1947). As the years passed and the fiestas built up momentum, it became increasingly popular, and then mandatory, to dress up in costumes on every day that the fiesta was held. This generated an economy within the fiesta where the demand for Mexican and Western wear increased, and the local merchants of Ambos Nogales were happy to provide a supply of sombreros, china poblana skirts and blouses, and cowboy-style clothing. It became common for monetary awards to be given to the best-dressed men and woman in fiesta attendance. Anyone who was not in Fiesta garb was presented before a kangaroo court and placed in a makeshift jail cell atop a flat-bed truck and taken around the city in order to be mocked by the fiesta audience. My grandmother, Josephina Mendoza, often said that this was the best way to take in the splendor of the fiesta, as you could see everyone in attendance, who they were with, what they were wearing, and the fiesta décor each city had carefully placed for the public to enjoy. It was common for my grandmother and her sisters to attend the fiestas out of costume in order to ensure they rode around in the faux jail cell.

It became evident that the task for the residents of Ambos Nogales was to make each year’s celebration better than the last. This generated more activities and increased



the 3-day fiesta to a 5-day event with bullfights, baseball games, dances, horse races, basketball games, polo matches, golf tournaments, a fiesta queen coronation and an international parade. The route of the parade would begin in Nogales, Sonora cross into Nogales, Arizona on Grand Avenue, it would circle through the U.S. side, before making its way back into Mexico (*Nogales International* 1947). Just as the fiestas became more elaborate with each passing year, the parade floats formed an impressive spectacle during the multi-day celebrations. Local businesses would sponsor floats for the parade that required much funding and construction in order to showcase a theme that would commemorate the Cinco de Mayo. La Ville de Paris, an upscale department store near the pedestrian border crossing on Morley Avenue, garnered much attention with one of their parade floats that included a large-scale Mexica (Aztec) Calendar. Crowds would assemble to take in the parade, and as costumes had become required of the attendees, the performers would rise to the occasion as well. The Nogales High School Bugle Corps and Drill Team changed their uniforms in order to honor the Cinco de Mayo festivities by including a charro-style ensemble for the men and sequin floral appliqués for the women.



*Figure 4. Cinco de Mayo La Ville De Paris Department Store Parade Float, 1941. Pimería Alta Historical Society Photographic Collection.*

In 1948, the Pacific Exhibits Company from Phoenix was once again contracted with the city of Nogales, Arizona to decorate the city streets in preparation for the fiestas. It was this year that the Chamber of Commerce from the Arizona side encouraged residents and businesses to hire the company for their décor needs and the city was to be outfitted for the Fiestas two weeks prior to the 5<sup>th</sup> of May. It was this year that store fronts along Morley Avenue were encouraged to compete by decorating their windows in a Mexican, Western, or Historical theme in order to partake in and contribute to the atmosphere of the fiestas. A judge's panel consisted of Chamber of Commerce secretaries from other cities within the state (*Nogales International* 1948). The invitation and inclusion of Chamber of Commerce officials from various cities throughout Arizona began to increase tourist interest in the Cinco de Mayo Fiestas of Ambos Nogales. As the fiesta celebration came to a close in 1948, the *Nogales International* featured a special thank you for the public and the organizers of the fiestas: "Hail to the Fiestas de Mayo, 1948, another golden link in the neighborliness of Amos Nogales, in the mutualness of festivity as well as the daily success of common enterprises (1948)." This public reflection of the community about its connection to Nogales, Sonora further shines a light on the social ties and transboundary relationship that was born out of economic connection in Ambos Nogales. They are linked not only through their economies, but through their strong social relationships, something the fiestas were intended to highlight.

### **The Fiesta Parades**

Parades, whether a makeshift jail or an elaborately decorated float, were a staple during the Fiestas de Mayo, both as promotion of the Fiesta Queen and as a component to the celebration. The Cinco de Mayo parades in Ambos Nogales were intended to reflect

community unity and a specific binational camaraderie central to the Nogalense relationship. Parades can draw us in, and provide a moment of connection for a community, both as attendees taking in the performance, and as a collective group coming together to celebrate, memorialize, and highlight symbols of meaning. Ronald Grimes (1976) calls parades direct images of how a city wishes to project itself (5) and an action or spectacle that must be seen in order to have symbolic meaning to the audience (Grimes 1976, 38). In the case of the Fiestas de Mayo Parade, there is a sense of cultural pride and community celebration reflected from the parade floats and participants onto the attendees, which only further solidifies a sense of both social and cultural belonging within the context of binational community merriment.

Parades serve multiple functions for both participant and audience by organizing the community on the basis of solidarity or a collective ethnic consciousness (Obeler and Gonzalez 2005, 122). The content of the parade serves as a means for social inclusion and a reflection of shared cultural values. As a form of ritual, parades involve the same human action of, “showing, giving, receiving, and moving through space in a symbolic manner,” (Grimes 1976, 28). The Cinco de Mayo Fiesta parade of Ambos Nogales represents the reality of life on the border, moving through and over the territorial line, interacting with residents, economy, and culture on either side, and moving back through the line, in a continuous loop. The parade is symbolic and reflective of the community, providing the public with a direct image of itself, in festive attire and in celebration mode.

The parade floats during the Fiestas de Mayo were elaborate and celebratory of a Mexican American cultural identity that is very common in U.S.-Mexico border

communities. Through the years parade floats featured the Mexica (Aztec) Calendar, the eagle and serpent of the Mexican flag, and in many cases the Mexican and U.S. national flags flown together at the same height and with the same pride, in order to honor both countries, and their residents in a similar fashion. The parade itself was binational and possessed transboundary characteristics, as well, traveling down Grand Avenue in Nogales, Arizona, crossing the international line into Nogales, Sonora, where it would loop around and come back into Nogales, Arizona. Major department stores in Nogales, Arizona would sponsor floats, such as La Ville de Paris, often the store where Fiesta Queens ordered their dresses, and Bracker's Department Store, as well as local Rotary Clubs, Mariachi bands, and the Pride of Nogales – Nogales High School's marching band.

### **Contrast in Site Specific Fiestas**

While not the only border community to hold celebrations, Ambos Nogales possesses a distinct manner of executing their fiestas that differs from that of its fellow border cities. In Laredo, Texas, an annual celebration of George Washington's Birthday began in 1898 as a moment for economic negotiations to allow social ties to take root. At that moment in history, in order for Mexican Texans to maintain title and ownership of their land, they had to prove citizenship under the U.S. Constitution, which could sometimes prove complicated when racial tensions arose. Elite Mexicans of the landed class were able to traverse racial boundaries because they held the majority of the wealth and community members were able to mingle with Anglos and participate in public commemorations to honor Washington and showcase their American patriotism. This allowed elite Mexican families to contribute to the commemoration by instilling Mexican

ethics and decorum into a party intended to celebrate U.S. ideals. A component to this celebration included a debutante ball for the young women of elite families in Laredo.

The Society of Martha Washington developed as a means for refining young women and ensuring they obtained, or at the very least appeared to reflect, a ladies' education similar to that of Martha Washington that included music, art, dress, demeanor, and household management which would be showcased in a colonial-themed debutante ball as part of the George Washington celebration (Ibarra and Campoamor 2014). Participation in Las Marthas, as they came to be called, could cost anywhere from \$15,000 to \$30,000 for a dress alone, creating a community consciousness of class and social status as a result of determining who was wealthy enough to take part as actors in the event and the accompanying celebratory functions.

Just as the Fiestas de Mayo in Ambos Nogales took multiple days to celebrate, so did the George Washington Fiestas of Laredo, with celebrations sometimes lasting a month. Their parades were intended to showcase the elaborate dresses and put Laredo elite on display, which in many cases included wealthy and upper-class groups visiting from across the border in Nuevo Laredo (Ibarra and Campoamor 2014). Contemporary critique of the ongoing George Washington birthday celebration in Laredo often comes with an attempt to understand why and how Mexicans, who represent the majority of the population, could honor what some consider an Anglo oppressor. In Laredo, a third space often rests on Mexicans existing outside of Mexico, but not fully included as part of the United States. In particular for Mexicans and Mexican Americans of the landed class, some of which eventually found oil on their land, they could bond with Anglo society as

a result of their wealth, allowing them to inject a distinct Mexican panache into the George Washington Fiestas that continue today (Ibarra and Campoamor 2014).

The commemoration in Laredo, while possessing some similarities, is markedly different than the fiestas in Ambos Nogales as a result of audience and community involvement and participation. Where the George Washington event sought to put elite and upper-class community members on display, the Cinco de Mayo Fiestas of Ambos Nogales sought to bring the entire community together by incorporating dress-up days for residents (*Nogales International* 1947). The manner in which the Ambos Nogales community came together to celebrate was reflective of the transboundary relationship that existed permanently. The Cinco de Mayo Fiestas were a time to commemorate a historic victory in Mexico's history and simply celebrate the way things were in Ambos Nogales. Because Nogales, Arizona was so small in comparison to Nogales, Sonora, there was, at one time, one school or one church, allowing the commingling across class groups. The blurring of these class distinctions generated a collective cohesion on the basis of Nogalense identity, that did not necessarily include a hierarchy of class and wealth as it existed in Laredo.

These connections and interactions in Ambos Nogales were highlighted during the Cinco de Mayo Fiestas and accepted as a form of jovial connection. The attention to the fiestas from a larger U.S. audience did not garner criticism, as much as it was a moment to celebrate the positive qualities a transboundary community had to offer. The fiestas continued in their traditional fashion until the 1980s when the Cinco de Mayo, "almost came and went unnoticed on the U.S. side of the border," (*Nogales International* 1984). The Cinco de Mayo Fiestas remain a collective memory to the Nogalenses who

recall the events and fun they had, but in large part have not been written about or noted in an archive, until now.

### **The Cinco de Mayo Fiestas as Political Meeting Place**

As 1950 approached, Ambos Nogales dove into annual preparations for the Cinco de Mayo fiestas. That year, Governor Dan Garvey of Arizona, and Governor Ignacio Soto of Sonora were in attendance and presented with honorary keys to their respective border cities. They lead the international parade atop a float constructed specifically for the both of them. A formal ball was planned in honor of the Fiesta queen and the governors, in addition to luncheons and salutatory ceremonies (*Nogales International* 1950). These annual festivities set the tone for future governors of each state to continue the tradition and attend the fiestas in Ambos Nogales. In 1953, the Arizona Secretary of State Wesley Bolin, Sonora Secretary of State Ramon Corral, U.S. Colonel John S. Hardy Davis-Monthan Division Commander, Tucson Mayor Fred Emery, and the mayors from Ambos Nogales, were guests of honor (*Tucson Daily Citizen* 1953). As the presence of political figures increased, so did public attendance of the event where an estimated 30,000 people gathered to partake in the 1953 fiestas. It was commonly reported that spectators and parade floats donned the U.S. and Mexican flags and there was a general goodwill theme.

As time progressed, the fiestas garnered attention from the politicians of Arizona and Sonora, international notoriety, and participation from fellow border communities. In 1954, the El Paso Capin's Department store entered their float, "bearing flags of both U.S. and Mexico made of flowers and having an international good will theme," (*Nogales International* 1954). El Paso, Texas, which shares a border community with Juarez, Chihuahua, has often been seen marketing itself as the, "Capital of the Border" in

promotional billboards along Interstate-10. Further pointing to a shared identity along the U.S.-Mexico border, and one to be celebrated, is the cross-border relationship that sustains the communities along either side of the 1,954-mile territorial divide.

The popularity and news of the fiestas reached the Arizona state capitol, and in April of 1955 a delegation from Ambos Nogales was invited to appear on the Academy Theater Television program to promote the upcoming Fiestas in Phoenix, Arizona. The group consisted of both presidents of the Chamber of Commerce offices from Ambos Nogales, a mariachi band, and Nogales, Arizona candidate for fiesta queen, Georgina Ruiz. They appeared on three television programs over the course of two days, in addition to providing a seemingly impromptu concert in the lobby of the Valley National Bank in Downtown Phoenix. The performance was featured in every periodical throughout the state the next day and garnered an invitation from Tucson's Channel 4 for an appearance later that same week (*Nogales International* 1955). The increased publicity, political and civic officer presence, and general interest in the annual fiestas had increased tourism spending in the area. Many of the dances and events had transitioned from traditional Mexican or Western Wear to formal gowns and suits as reflected in the advertisements for the Nogales, Arizona Bracker's Department Store (*Nogales International* 1955). Prominent families in Ambos Nogales would hold dances or sponsor events during the fiestas, these were bulked up if a daughter was competing for Fiesta queen, as larger dances and parties would garner more votes for her crown.

Over the course of the 1950s, many out-of-town entertainers traveled to Ambos Nogales to partake in the festivities including the Tucson Vigilantes, a 144-piece band and marching unit from Tucson High School; a band from Fort Huachuca; Indigenous



groups and dancers from Mexico; and military bands and schools from Hermosillo, Sonora. An internationally famous duo of sky dancers, Betty and Benny Fox, arrived to perform atop a high pole in Nogales, Sonora (*Nogales International* 1957). The major components of the fiestas did not change, as the international parade and queen coronation framed the activities the commemorated the fiestas over the multi-day celebration. As the fiestas gained momentum over the years, Bud DeWald, a writer for the *Nogales International* in 1958 he took it as a moment to reflect on the reality of the fiestas' foundation. His article, "Cinco de Mayo—A Symbol of International Friendship," points to the connection and sense of reciprocity that seasons the transboundary connection in Ambos Nogales:

When a Mexican yells "ole," he's not calling to a Swede friend. He yells it when he sees something he likes, such as a parade, bands of strolling musicians, a plaza full of color and people, or a bullfight. All these things add up to fiesta and the biggest fiesta of them all-Cinco de Mayo- is scheduled in Nogales May 3-5. This is the time when the gates at the international border swing open to let friendly invaders from deep in the interior of Sonora pass as paraders. Norteamericanos in a counter-invasion can get the feel of the interior without getting more than a quarter of a mile out of the United States. It is a time of fun and international friendship and a time when Ambos Nogales-both Nogalenses- really means something.

This portion of DeWald's report points to the transnational nature of the border as individuals from both sides are able to pass back and forth and gain a sense of both countries without having to travel too far into each.

### **The Fiesta Queens**

A highlight and major component to the Cinco de mayo Fiestas were the Queen processions, where young women would showcase some of their beautiful dresses and do their best to earn votes and gain community support. Throughout the 1940s and 50s, photos of queen contestants dressed in Mexican embroidered blouses or traditional China

Poblana outfits graced the cover of the *Nogales International*, the local major periodical, prior to the coronation. For queen candidates, choices of dress could potentially influence voters to support their candidacy. There is a consistent trend in Mexican, even Indigenous, attire for young women competing for queen.



During the 1947 Fiesta Queen competition, Leticia Mabante of Nogales, Sonora was featured in periodicals wearing a traditional Mexican embroidered blouse, holding what appears to be a hand-painted floral platter. She is said to have won by receiving over a million votes, well over the combined population of Ambos Nogales at the time. Norma Amelia Espinosa, of Nogales, Arizona, was featured as candidate for queen in 1950. Her costume consists of an elaborate feathered headdress, sequin embroidered huipil blouse with the Mexica (Aztec) Calendar, and skirt with the symbol of the Mexican flag.



By 1954, there is a shift in attire, particularly between the outfits donned while competing, and those worn once a candidate was crowned as Fiesta Queen. While campaigning for the crown, Nancy Neumann is featured holding a fan while wearing a lace mantilla, which is a head covering influenced by Catholic tradition. However, upon receiving the crown, the new Fiesta Queen exchanged her traditional garments for a dress more suitable for a cotillion or debutante ball. It is here that we see the performance and embodiment of cultural tradition as an effort to gain access to the Fiesta crown. Performance of Mexican cultural identity that is valid enough to be crowned as a visual representation of the community culture is reflected in the cultural ensembles the young women choose to wear. Once crowned, it is almost as though they are now being introduced to society, just as they would in a cotillion or debutante ball, as young upstanding Mexican American women of the U.S.-Mexico border region.

Critique is consistently made of beauty pageants or queen competitions, however, when examined historically, we find that some of the most prominent beauty pageants in

United States history resulted during or after major horrific events or wars. For example, the Miss America pageant began in 1921 during Prohibition in the U.S., shortly after World War I, a post-war time often described when U.S. society was leaning far into decadence and festivity in order to get away from the negative and depressing reality the war had caused. The first Miss America pageant had been considered an event of controversy with young women of poor morals competing for the crown, however, as World War II raged on, it caused audiences to switch their attention to the pageant in search of lighthearted fun, additionally, beauty pageants incorporated national patriotism as a component of contestants' characteristics, an increasingly important ideal to uphold during wartime (Cohen, et. al. 1996, 4). As a result of this attention, the Miss America pageant has remained one of the most popular, despite criticisms of race and class distinctions and defining high ideals of whiteness as sole signifiers of a woman's worth and beauty in the U.S. (Watson and Martin 2004, 1-19). In Ambos Nogales, the Fiesta Queen competition became a component of the Fiestas as a mode for inserting young women of prominent families onto a binational stage in order to showcase all the positive aspects of the U.S.-Mexico economic, social, and political relationship. In particular, Mexico's alliance to the U.S. during WWII through economic and political interdependence caused a separate shift in public perceptions of patriotic citizens that included allies. Thus, transforming the format of a singular U.S. beauty queen pageant, in exchange for a dual representation of Mexican and U.S. partnership, was demonstrated during the Cinco de Mayo Fiestas in Ambos Nogales.

An integral component of the Fiesta Queen competition required city officials, prominent Nogalense families, and the Chamber of Commerce to endorse young women

competing for the crown. In Arizona and Sonora, women competing for queen were highly involved in extracurricular and scholastic activities that would propel them into society as upholding members of the community. This coveted position garnered much press and community recognition that caused elite families of Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, Sonora to support or endorse their daughters' entry into the queen contest. Mayors of each city would occasionally chair a queen campaign committee if the young woman competing came from a prominent family and could aid in maintaining or securing their candidacy. As the fiestas gained momentum, leading businessmen in Ambos Nogales chaired campaign committees and funded social gatherings to promote a queen candidate while the Chamber of Commerce offices from both sides of Nogales worked together to ensure scheduled events occurred for the queen to preside over.

In addition to the performance and embodiment of culture, young Fiesta Queen contestants entered a stage set astride the U.S.-Mexico territorial line where they reenacted a binational and bicultural performance of everyday Nogalense life. The ritual of entering the stage on the U.S. side and exiting on the Mexican side is an act that is permanently attached to Nogalense cross-border existence, reality and identity, requiring the navigation of the two simultaneously and as seamlessly as walking across a room, or as in this case, a stage. Performance in this scenario is as important as the visual appearance of each Fiesta Queen and their choices of attire, as they are communicating to and asking the audience to view a specific Nogalense identity that is worthy of a Fiesta Queen title. As Goffman describes in, *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*:

When an individual plays a part, he implicitly requests his observers to take seriously the impression that is fostered before them. They are asked to believe that the character they see actually possesses the attributes he appears to possess,

that the task he performs will have the consequences they are implicitly claimed for it, and that, in general, matters are what they appear to be, (1969, 17).

With regard to the Fiesta Queen competition, the theory of performance can be seen the moment a young woman wears traditional Mexican clothing and exhibits the qualities of resilience and Mexican cultural identity commemorated and celebrated on the Cinco de Mayo. She is embodying the culture, both in attire and identity. At the same time, once a young woman is seen in a more contemporary cotillion dress, she is displaying the duality of cultural identity found at the U.S.-Mexico border, with the influence of commercialized style promoted in dominant forms of U.S. media and popular culture. Essentially, what we see sartorially during the Fiesta Queen competition is rich Mexican culture, coupled with U.S. style of dress, further reflective of identity at the border, rooted in duality.

In 1957, visual representations of Mexican cultural identity through attire begin to switch to more contemporary forms of dress. Young women featured in Nogales, Arizona periodicals had exchanged the Mexican blouses and sombreros for ball gowns and bob hairstyles. Their performances of cultural identification during the fiesta demonstrated their ability to exist within U.S. and Mexican cultures, while their photographs provided audiences with visual representations of Mexican culture influenced by U.S. style trends. Often, beauty contests or pageant contestants are considered public depictions of nationalist ideals, however, in Ambos Nogales, the nationalist loyalty contained both U.S. and Mexican cultural imagery. As observed in *Beauty Queens on the Global Stage*, “these contests showcase values, concepts, and behaviors that exist at the center of a group’s sense of itself and exhibit values of morality, gender, and place,” (Cohen 1996, 2-3). The manner in which the Fiesta Queen contestants presented themselves to the

public had to reflect the community itself, and their cross-border community ideals. As the young women competed in the contests, their ability to demonstrate their own social and cultural identity provided audiences with a reflection of a shared collective cultural identity. Most beauty contests are judged on the ability to publicly display a specific identity, culture, and physical appeal (Cohen 1996, 2-3), which was most definitely utilized by Nogalenses as a means for determining whom an appropriate binational Cinco de Mayo Queen could be.

By 1959, the Cinco de Mayo Fiestas had become a staple in the local community, and an event to be celebrated at the state level. The Chamber of Commerce Office Inter-City Relations Committee of Phoenix, Arizona honored the Fiestas Committees of the Nogales, Arizona and Sonora Chamber of Commerce offices in a special luncheon in April of that year, which included: Arizona Governor Paul Fanin; Publisher of the *Phoenix Gazette*, Eugene Pulliam; Managing Editor of the *Arizona Republic*, Orion Fifer; Earl Mayer of the Prescott Chamber of Commerce; Mayor of Nogales, Sonora, Otilio Garavito; Rodolfo Leyva, President of Nogales, Sonora Chamber of Commerce; Fiesta Committee Chair of the Sonora Chamber of Commerce, Manuel Vasquez; Mexican Fiestas Committee and Bull Fight Impresario Pedro Gonzales; Herschel Clerk of the Nogales, Arizona Mountain States Telephone, Co.; and Frank L. Ruiz, Master of Ceremonies Fiesta Committee for the Phoenix trip. Fiesta Queen Candidates Rosita Vasquez of Nogales, Sonora and Marta Navarro, of Nogales, Arizona traveled to Phoenix accompanied by a mariachi group and Mexican entertainers in order to join in the acceptance of the state honor. Their trip to Phoenix included various radio and television

appearances in order to highlight the event and its importance to the State of Arizona and Sonora (*Nogales International* 1959).

### **Open Border for the Fiestas**

The frontpage headline for the 1960 Fiestas came with much excitement, as the cities of Ambos Nogales had received federal permission to allow the border fence to remain open for the duration of that year's festivities:

For the first time in current history, border crossing at Nogales will be wide open during the annual Fiestas de Mayo, and Ambos Nogales will in fact be one community. The local U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service has received authority for Mexican nationals to be admitted to visit Nogales, Ariz., without passports, visas, or other documentary requirements from 9 a.m., May 4 to 12 midnight, May 7, according to Earl Hill, Officer in Charge. The Nogales Chamber of Commerce with a view to strengthening the friendly relations between the border communities of Ambos Nogales during the Fiestas de Mayo, requested both the American Consulate at Nogales, Sonora and the U.S. Immigration Officer in Charge at Nogales, Arizona, to take such steps as were necessary to obtain permission to open the border gates so that all Mexicans coming to Nogales, Sonora during the Fiestas de Mayo could also visit Nogales, Ariz., without the normal requirements, (*Nogales International* 1960).

An important item to note here is that the U.S.-Mexico border fence from 1941 through 1960 was not the fence or wall that we know it to be today. There was no major obstruction to a binational parade or Fiesta Queen coronation stage until the actual construction of a stable fence in the 1990s. The Ambos Nogales community relied heavily on officers from the community to monitor and police the Fiestas. As we reach a time of much national unrest resulting from U.S. participation in the Vietnam War, and the Civil Rights Movement gains momentum, the shift in U.S. Immigration policy causes further enforcement at the border brought on by a dominant U.S. pressure to protect its national borders. Along the border, communities were progressing with life as usual, and some had come to follow Ambos Nogales' lead by holding their own Cinco de Mayo



celebrations in places like Bisbee, Arizona and Naco, Sonora (*Nogales International* 1960).

### **Historical Connection in the Face of Change**

The Fiestas of 1961 and 1962 provided a moment to recount a historical foundation to the celebration rooted in 20 years of annual binational partnership in the planning and execution of the event. Major periodicals from Nogales and Tucson, Arizona emphasized the history of the Fiestas de Mayo, and the importance of Mexican resilience that led to the victory at Puebla on the Cinco de Mayo 100 years prior. A governor's banquet followed the Fiestas of 1961 in order to celebrate cross-border dignitaries and chief executives of Sonora and Arizona (*Nogales International* 1961). While the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights Movement were impacting the rest of the United States it was business as usual in the Ambos Nogales community, as they continued to demonstrate their connection and interdependence in the face of the border fence.

By November of 1963, racial, ethnic, and political tensions being felt at a national level had come to land on the Ambos Nogales community. President John F. Kennedy's assassination on November 22 in Dallas, Texas, prompted an immediate shut down of the U.S.-Mexico border so as not to allow his attacker an opportunity to flee south. Mexico issued a ban on entry from the U.S. ports of crossing, which was lifted by the time newspapers hit the stands on November 25 (*Tucson Daily Citizen* 1963). Copies of periodicals and microfilm of 1964 are missing from archives, preventing any view of the manner in which the Ambos Nogales community may have dealt with border security and enforcement in the months following the President's assassination.

Further national impact on the border came in the form of the Immigration and Naturalization (Hart-Celler) Act of 1965, when the quota system was abolished in favor of immigration policy that sought to unify families and attract skilled labor. This led to increased enforcement along the U.S.-Mexico border as migration and immigration into the U.S. shifted to include more people from numerous countries. The 40 years following the policies implemented in 1965 shifted United States demographic by increasing immigration from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Europe. National tensions regarding ethnic and racial interactions played out during the protest and demonstrations of the Civil Rights Movement, which was a national activist effort to eliminate discrimination, stop police brutality, and end the Vietnam War.

The frontpage of the *Nogales International* in April of 1965 shows seemingly no change in the festivity and Fiesta Queen competition. A marked difference, though, is the inclusion of goals and aspirations of Dee Dee Thomas, Nogales, Arizona candidate, and her future enrollment in Arizona Western College in Yuma, Arizona (1965). Demonstrative of a shift in gender roles that now included college enrollment. Nogales, Sonora candidate and eventual Fiesta Queen, Lorena Miller is listed as the sister of previous Fiesta Queens Thelma Miller in 1953 and Margarita Miller in 1959. While the traditional Mexican outfits were no longer featured in the photos of the Fiesta Queen contestants, it is evident that many of the young women who were crowned were from Nogales, Sonora. Rosario Roldan crowned in 1966 and Maria Dolores Irastorza crowned in 1970, which points to a correlation between Mexican cultural identity and the quality necessary for a proper Cinco de Mayo Queen to have.

The joint fiestas began in the 1940s, during a time, “of real friendship and harmony between the Nogales sister cities,” (Baffert 2009). Businessmen and politicians from either side of the border worked together in order to make Ambos Nogales a community. “As the fiestas continued through the 1970s, people would throw beer bottles and trash at queen candidates,” (Baffert 2009). As the binational celebrations came to an end, the role of the fiesta queen switched from a cultural representation of a U.S.-Mexico Border community to an example of aesthetic beauty. This shifted the meaning of the fiesta and moved it toward the capitalist celebration that serves to increase profits from beer and alcohol sales.

After 1970, there is a decline in periodical attention to the Fiestas de Mayo until Don Smith reflected on the manner in which a rich history shared between Ambos Nogales was now silent on the U.S. side of the fence (*Nogales International*, 1984). A special selection of parade photos accompanied Smith’s story, as he recounted an, “atmosphere of enthusiasm and excitement,” that had once filtered into the Ambos Nogales corridor every May since 1941. Interest in reviving the Fiestas came in the form of pledges from Chamber of Commerce offices in Ambos Nogales, as well as local businesses and newspapers, but fell short of the necessary steps to make the event happen.

The Immigration Reform Act of 1986, under the Reagan administration, granted amnesty to an estimated three million undocumented migrants who could prove they had resided in the U.S. prior to 1982. This brought a strict increase in Border Patrol Agents along the U.S.-Mexico territorial line and generated a close enforcement of immigration policies in order to prevent falsified documents and illegal attainment of citizenship. By

this time, the Cinco de Mayo Fiestas in Ambos Nogales had come to a complete end and were now only celebrated on the Mexican side of the border. As the Clinton Administration made further border enforcement moves with Operation Gatekeeper in 1994, Ambos Nogales saw the construction of territorial divide take the shape we know it as today. The United States Army descended upon Nogales, Arizona, and as a young girl in 1993 and 1994, I watched the chain link fence come down, replaced with reinforced steel and concrete.

### **The Contemporary Cinco de Mayo Fiestas**

A reinvigoration of the Cinco de Mayo Fiestas occurred in Ambos Nogales during a time when national calls for heightened border security, stricter immigration laws, and the war on drugs were foremost concerns regarding the U.S.-Mexico border. In Ambos Nogales, their economies remained linked, their social ties still binational, and relationship of symbiosis still fueled their desire to work together. This was reflected in an undated journalistic special report entitled, "Ambos Nogales y el Cinco de Mayo," authored by Thomas B. Lesure, in which he describes, "... Cinco de Mayo in Nogales symbolizes a happy international condition in this season of world crises. Here the people of two nations, people with two languages, [still] meet as one," (n.d., 2). The recent Cinco de Mayo Fiestas started out small in 2010 with a binational fiesta queen competition and soccer tournament. Each of the qualifying games played in Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, Sonora with residents having to cross the border with appropriate documentation in order to take part in the events. The mayors from Ambos Nogales attended and encouraged the public to take part as a means for breathing new life into an Ambos Nogales tradition.

The 2010 fiestas, spearheaded by Nogales, Arizona City Council member, Esther Melendez López, in cooperation with the Mexican Consulate office based in Nogales, Arizona included a Fiesta Queen competition. “I wanted to open the Fiesta Queen competition to anyone who wanted to compete, regardless of income. The young women needed to provide their qualifications based on academic performance and community involvement,” explained Melendez López (2013). This move transformed the Fiesta Queen competition of the past into a scholarship program of the present. Contestants had to provide evidence of a 3.5 Grade Point Average (GPA) or higher, volunteer work, and community service. Similar to the fiestas of the past, the Queen competition remained open to any young woman from either side of the border. The intention of reviving the Fiestas was to, “rebuild tradition and provide a sense of community pride,” that many in Ambos Nogales have long forgotten. “Much in the way a family comes together to celebrate traditions and reconnect,” the Fiestas de Mayo in Ambos Nogales were a time when that symbolic partnership was put center on a binational stage (Melendez López 2013).

Writing in the *Journal of Economics*, María Luisa Palma, Luis Palma, and Luis Fernando Aguado, their article about spring fiestas in Seville, “Determinants of Cultural and Popular Celebration Attendance: The Case Study of Seville Spring Fiestas,” examine the importance of geographic location to the purpose of a collective celebration. Specific place in respect to the location of a fiesta or fair provides understanding of cultural and social interactions that allow the celebration to occur. Their study focuses on the annual celebration as a means for tradition building, tourist inclusion, and social cohesion, while also examining the importance of the cultural and social interaction that adds value to a

fair or festival beyond a monetary value (Palma et. al. 2013, 90). Just as the Spring Fiestas of Seville offer a manifestation of cultural traditions and roots that can only be felt in that specific space, the Ambos Nogales Cinco de Mayo Fiestas offer a transboundary ambiance that can only be felt or experienced within the context of its U.S.-Mexico border locale. The ability of the Fiestas to provide a moment for social cohesion, rests on the reality that the traditions and specific culture of that space are indicative of the identity, tradition, culture, and daily life of the city. In Ambos Nogales, the Cinco de Mayo Fiestas were an effort to bring the community and tourists together, both as audience and participants in a manner that reflected their friendly transboundary interaction on a daily basis.

People of the United States traveled to the, “natural gateway between Mexico and the U.S.,” in order to gain a tourist experience, and they left with a better understanding of the relationship between Mexico and the U.S. on the border (*Nogales International* 1958). Conversely, Mexican Nationals were and are targeted by U.S. companies in order to increase their spending in Arizona, which Geographer Daniel Arreola, calls a method of cultural tourism (Arreola and Curtis 1993, 86). The development of museums, theaters, and trendy restaurants influenced Mexicans in Nogales, Sonora with the consumer culture of the U.S. The reciprocal exchange of social and economic cultures between the U.S. and Mexico caused a development of new social norms unique to a border town. This connection allows for the development of new cultural scripts and transboundary ethnic identities only found in a border community.

The economy in Ambos Nogales remains intrinsically linked and interdependent in the face of a reinforced border structure. While public celebrations may not traverse

the border as they once did, there is still transboundary movement that would encourage a new and different manner to celebrate in Ambos Nogales. As is a characteristic of the border region and the Cinco de Mayo, it will be their ability to make do with what they have that will form a new way for Ambos Nogales to continue to celebrate their transboundary connection and transnational community.

### **Chapter Three – The Border Paradox**

The function of the United States-Mexico border is to indicate where one country ends, and another begins. From a national perspective, this delineation is perceived as a distinct separation. In a local manner, the Cinco de Mayo Fiestas of Ambos Nogales have come to demonstrate a connection in the face of this border divide. This presents a paradox, where the border intended to disjoin has come to serve as a bridge or connection. Particularly when it comes to Ambos Nogales.

Since the 1980s, national perceptions regarding the U.S.-Mexico border have completely overshadowed knowledge of the Cinco de Mayo Fiestas in Ambos Nogales. Locally, Mayor Arturo Garino recalls the Cinco de Fiestas with fondness and hope that contemporary Fiestas come to hold similar significance for the community (Arturo Garino). Being that Ambos Nogales comprises a portion of the U.S.-Mexico border, national and outside knowledge on the issues of migration and drug trafficking dominate the stories produced about communities astride the line. Many times, ignoring the local communities living along the horizontal border line.

#### **The End of the Fiestas in Ambos Nogales**

The Cinco de Mayo Fiestas in Ambos Nogales brought many opportunities for transboundary economic, social, and political collaboration in the face of the border fence. Tourism played a large part in generating moments of economic gain between the two cities. During World War II, and the early years of the Cinco de Mayo Fiestas in Ambos Nogales, limited travel to Europe increased travel and leisure time spent in U.S.-Mexico border towns or in Mexico, Central or South America. The U.S. influence on clothing, food, music, and capitalist modes of production often impacted the lives of



people in other countries, but at the border specifically, Nogales, Sonora was often referred to a place that was no longer Mexican enough because of its proximity to and influence by its U.S. neighbor (Arreola and Curtis, 1993). The same was said for Nogales, Arizona; its proximity to Mexico no longer made it enough of a United States city. In Ambos Nogales, the influence of each side of the border was evident in language and code switching, business dealings, and political interactions. As the Fiestas de Mayo occurred, the transboundary nature of the border is reflected in the Chamber of Commerce offices working jointly to plan the annual celebration. Due to their proximity, Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, Sonora engaged in business and economic partnerships that inevitably led to social interactions further strengthening willingness to work together for mutual financial gain and stability. The Fiestas de Mayo allowed this binational partnership to be celebrated and opened a consistent annual event that generated tourist interest and further opportunity for economic profit on both sides of the border.

Shifting circumstances during the 1980s brought a temporary end to the Cinco de Mayo Fiestas in Ambos Nogales. Many locally owned businesses which previously contributed funding and assistance to the planning of the Fiestas had closed. Replaced with large corporate-owned stores such as Wal-Mart and K-Mart. This created a gap in funding that had not existed in prior years. A devaluation of the Mexico peso in 1981, and again in 1995, did much to prevent financial support of and participation in the Fiestas. The decline in funding or financial ability to participate in the Fiestas was coupled with rising concerns over immigration. Higher traffic, both of people and product, caused the centralized ports of crossing to shift away from the Morley Avenue

pedestrian crossing and the DeConcini port of entry to allow for higher volumes to move through the Mariposa crossing. The movement of a centralized port to a location more than 2-miles west of downtown Nogales took business, people, and traffic away from a once bustling city center.

The border would often be open for a number of days during the Fiestas and allowed for undocumented migration to occur, most notably in the time leading up to the signing of President Reagan's Immigration and Reform Act of 1986. This legislation granted amnesty to immigrants who could prove they had been living in the U.S. prior to 1982. The Act also included a substantial increase in border security in communities at and along the line. The movement of the port and new immigration legislation were factors resulting from actions and decisions made by officials outside of Ambos Nogales, yet directly impacted the local community.

Further changes to the construction of the physical structure of the U.S.-Mexico border reached Ambos Nogales in October of 1994, when the Clinton Administration implemented Operation Gatekeeper along the San Diego-Tijuana sector of the line with the intention of curtailing undocumented migration from the south into the north. As a federal plan, Operation Gatekeeper brought the U.S. Army to the border region in order to construct and reinforce the physical barrier between the United States and Mexico, as well as heavily police the San Diego Sector of the border and force undocumented migrants through the Sonoran Desert. The belief rested on a prevention through deterrence strategy where the treachery of the desert leading to potential death would curtail undocumented migration completely. This was the first step in the militarization process of the border region in order to protect national concerns regarding drug

smuggling and undocumented migration/immigration. On a local level, though, border communities accustomed to the flow through the U.S.-Mexico border would now need to comply with federal regulations in order to make their way back and forth through the territorial line.

Any opportunity for the Cinco de Mayo Fiestas to occur as they once had, ended with the construction and reinforcement of the physical fence between the two countries. The Ambos Nogales Cinco de Mayo Fiestas had originated in Nogales, Sonora and remained an annual celebration there after the construction of a more elaborate fence. Nogales, Arizona residents could travel south across the border to attend the events now that they were absent from the U.S. side of the border. This would operate in a manner similar, though in different directions, to Las Marthas in Laredo. The annual commemoration of George and Martha Washington had long established roots on the U.S. side of the border, with residents from Nuevo Laredo traveling north to take part in the festivity.

### **The Border and Identity**

From a national perspective, conceptualizations of homeland security, territorial control, and political power play out along the boundary line, whereas a local viewpoint leans more towards partnership, friendship, and mutual concerns for survival. While our current political climate concerns itself with undocumented migration and immigration, or drug smuggling and cartels, the historical relationship between families and communities along the territorial demarcation informs a present reality of connection rather than division. The characteristics of the Ambos Nogales community, while influenced by national ideals of Mexico and the U.S., embody interconnectedness and

duality on an extremely local level. A nation-state's definition of citizenship cannot not be constructed to encompass the overlap of two separate nations. In as much, I assert that the residents of Ambos Nogales develop their own transboundary methods of social and cultural inclusion, under which they consider themselves Nogalense.

In an interview conducted by the author on March 20, 2013, Nubar Hanessian, a local entrepreneur and Nogales, Arizona City Council member, expressed the disconnect between those who reside at the border when compared to those who are at a distance. "Phoenix is a city of new or non-native Arizonans who do not understand Nogales," and therefore cannot comprehend the transboundary interaction which informs a Nogalense identity (Nubar Hanessian). When the, "rest of the U.S. sees the border residents as they were in the past, as bandits and thieves wearing sombreros and zarapes," it is a clear indication of the misunderstanding when it comes to, "cross-border families and ties to neighborhoods across the border," (Nubar Hanessian). For families who remain in the area and continue to raise new generations of children in Ambos Nogales, the "familial relationship" can be felt in the continued negotiation with the border (Nubar Hanessian). Outside misconceptions regarding the border somehow reside in visions of the past, as opposed to a recognition of the progress that comes with being able to navigate the economies, societal structures, and languages of two distinct countries.

The Nogalense identity is deeply rooted in historical connections which continue to inform a present reality. What was once a simple line in the sand to cross, has been converted into a militarized geopolitical structure. For a Nogalense, the ability to fluctuate understanding and adapt to new requirements and methods of crossing the border is a component of everyday life. In his work, *Border Citizens*, Eric Meeks details

Julia Bustamante's border crossing as she, "remembers when there was no boundary. We...just came and went as we pleased," (2007, 76). In addition to Bustamante's account of border crossing, Silvia Parra, describes her experience as a time when, "we never had problems coming and going...there was no fence. My grandparents had no idea of U.S. lands and Mexican lands," (2007, 76). As such, my grandmother, Josephina Mendoza, recalls times when the, "border was represented by a pile of rocks and I didn't have to show my papers or crossing card to anyone." The lack of a barrier points to the concept of a border as something ideological, and even though the border has taken the form of a large fence, it is still negotiable and permeable through legal and illegal means. This is not to say that the border does not exist or generate material realities that are hindered, impacted, or directly influenced by its very development however it has also provided a historical foundation for a community identity which continues to live and interact at and beyond the border as though it is not a major limitation. The manageability of the border was a key ingredient to the Cinco de May Fiestas occurring in the manner in which they did. Had it not been for an easy of negotiation with the territorial demarcation, the Fiestas may not have occurred at the rate that they did.

In Nogales, Arizona, specifically, the rise of brokerage firms accounts for the majority of jobs held in the city (U.S. Census 2017), as a result of its proximity and trade partnership with Nogales, Sonora. Brokerage firms, or middlemen as they are commonly referred to, deal in a contemporary billion-dollar international trade industry that includes the import of the majority of fruits and vegetables distributed to grocery stores across the United States. Various computer parts, automobile components, livestock, clothing, cardboard, garage door openers, and a myriad of products we all use on a daily basis

traverse the border. The trade between Mexico and the U.S. was a focal point of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) signed between Mexico, Canada, and the United States in 1994. This contributed greatly to the significant growth in Nogales, Sonora, courtesy of U.S.-style capitalism and establishment of *maquiladoras*, or factories on the southern side of the border. The factories constructed and operated by U.S. and Canadian corporations in Mexico, were able to benefit from inexpensive labor, lax environmental regulations, and low operating costs. This is a reality explored in Luis Carlos Davis' 2009 film, *389 Miles: Living the Border*, where employees of *maquiladoras* in Nogales, Sonora describe the pitfalls of NAFTA in their immediate community as a result of U.S. and Canadian companies closing their factories. Once production or financial goals had been reached, companies would shut down, leaving local communities without the infrastructure promised under NAFTA. Infrastructure, mainly plumbing and water lines, promised to the communities in Nogales, Sonora, went empty. The resulting rise in unemployment left many with the difficult decision to head north for employment opportunities. In some cases, doing so without the proper documentation to cross or reside in the U.S. permanently (Davis 2009).

### **Literal and Figurative Understandings of the Border**

The border takes on a new mode of analysis as both a literal and ideological site, thus allowing it to become a tool with which to analyze figurative borders. In dominant U.S. society, a deviation from the norm or status quo is often relegated to the margins of society. It is this act that allows the U.S.-Mexico border to become more than a site of political or territorial analysis. The margins become a site to be unpacked when examining the borders of race, class, culture, religion, politics, and nationality. Garcia

Canclini called the border the living laboratory of post-modernity, it is the place where the rules are tried, stretched, and potentially broken in order to make way for multiple ways of learning, knowing, and living (Vila 2003, xxi). The U.S.-Mexico border is a place where social hypotheses can be tested, lending itself to higher forms of knowledge production.

These transnational (and, dare I say, transideological) attributes of the border region often lead scholars to conclude with the notion that the borderlands are a “third country” where Mexican and U.S. qualities meet to generate a new or separate community (Martínez 1994, 304). Miguel Tinker Salas opts to call the combination of Mexican and U.S. cultural values a layering, as opposed to that of a third country or hybrid identification. Oscar Martínez is apprehensive about adopting the framework of a third country when describing the borderlands, as it indicates dual interaction with the political systems (i.e., legal citizenship) of each country. He views the interdependence and “hybrid” characteristics of the border region as something decidedly binational and bicultural where individuals interact on the level of interdependence and not a separate entity outside of U.S. and/or Mexican federal goals (Martinez 1994, 304-305). Martínez describes a third country analogy where, “tourism, assembly industrialization, job commuting, binational consumerism, and smuggling,” are the main tenets of another or third space (1994, 304-305). Conversely, “transnational social and cultural activities that promote hybridization include bilingualism, biculturalism, intermarriage, and cross-border school attendance,” fuel his conceptualization of a borderland and “borderlander” identity (Martinez 1994, 304-305). Martínez’s definition of a borderland is similar to that

of Claire Fox's use of a polyvalent site, in that the border and its residents are "deeply rooted in duality," (Martinez 1994, 305).

The border perspective and identity are encapsulated best in Martínez' observations and discussion resulting from conducting oral histories in border communities, indicating that:

The border is predictable and unpredictable; it divides and unifies; it repels and attracts; it obstructs and facilitates. In a bipolar environment, it is not surprising that border society manifests such contrary tendencies as conflict and accommodation, poverty and wealth, social rigidity and fluidity, racial animosity and tolerance, and cultural separation and fusion. Mexico pulls from one direction and the United States from the other, and while the border exerts a force to separate the two national systems, it also generates a power to bring them together. (1994, 305)

The assertions Martínez makes throughout his work are indicative of border residents' lives that involve consistent negotiation with U.S. and Mexican societies. In other parts of the U.S. and Mexico, where interacting with "foreigners" is not a daily occurrence, residents of the border region can and do so with ease and comfort (Martinez 1994, 305). For many Mexican and U.S. nationalists, identity is assumed to contain one national or cultural definition, for border residents, identity is more fluid and cooperative with a strong ability to diffuse cultural conflict or misunderstanding.

The active agents of the borderlands who Martínez is most taken with, are those individuals who rely on the belief, "that the boundary should be perceived not as a barrier but as a bridge to greater human contact, not as a divider, but as a unifier of different styles of life, not as a symbol of rejection, but as one of acceptance," (Martinez 1994, 305). He labels these individuals as core "borderlanders" who are able to see the border as a permeable passageway between two or more cultures (Martinez 1994, 306). Core "borderlanders" have developed, "attitudes, values, and behavioral strategies that allow



them to move swiftly from one cultural group to another; they are able to speak Spanish one moment and English the next,” (Martinez 1994, 306). Informal networks and methods allow core residents of the borderlands to achieve more than the national goals set forth by Washington and Mexico City because of their transnational experiences and collective interdependence (Martinez 1994, 306). The traits indicative of a transboundary border community, coupled with the ability to maintain high levels of communication, has allowed residents of the border to construct a life with manageable conflict.

In her seminal text, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, Gloria Anzaldúa describes the border as both the geopolitical space between Mexico and the United States, as well as the site where elements such as race, gender, class, or ethnicity meet. The intention of a border is to create a separation and define one place from another. In many cases, the notion has emerged that a border defines the safe from the unsafe or the wild from the civilized. Anzaldúa ruptures this notion by describing the productive nature of a border. The place where two countries or ideologies meet does not mean that one ends and another begins, but they interact and engage one another, and a higher level of understanding and knowledge production occurs. Anzaldúa calls the place where Mexico and the U.S. meet a third country where a border culture emerges as a result of their proximity and interaction with one another, even if those interactions might be uncomfortable or negative (1987, 25).

Anzaldúa’s work points to the amalgamation of culture, social understanding, and critical thought that emerges in border culture. Duality or a bicultural identity extends the concept of transboundariness also addressed by Walter Mignolo’s notion of border gnosis or border thinking, with the ability to navigate cues in both U.S. and Mexican society.

Border thinking does not separate the space and place where two forms of knowing occur but generates a new site where both forms of knowing exist, interact, and generate new perceptions (2000, 6). Border gnosis acknowledges the subaltern (Other) perspective, using it as a lens with which to examine our social and political structures. This is not to say that border gnosis seeks to demolish the dominant or colonial manners of thinking, however, elaborates that knowledge in order to further understand the complexities of the individuals living within and outside of the margins of society. The border between the margin and the dominant social sphere allows for more profound social and cultural analysis to occur.

Chicana/o scholars use a form of border thinking to erase the border through recognitions of Aztlán, at the same time invoking the Borderlands where the border represents a “liminal zone” (Fox 1999, 46). The literal and metaphorical border, in this case, is a polyvalent site that is urban and rural, national and international with a high tendency for coexistence (Fox 1999, 46). Guillermo Bonfil Batalla describes this concept through duality where bicultural individuals have each foot firmly planted in either world with the mind interacting actively between both (1996). Where the nation’s borders are considered marginal to the interests of the nation-state, identity construction on these margins is just as critical as the collective memory, social experiences, and cultural cues generated at the nation’s core (Bejarano 2005, 21). Geographically, politically, socially, and economically, the border defines the southwestern region of the U.S. and the northern region of Mexico and is often politically and ideologically regarded as the margin of the dominant social structure of each country.

The reality of the border region is much more profound than the common misconception that it is merely a place of passage or space of temporary occupation as individuals travel south to north and vice versa. The border is a literal margin (i.e., the space that surrounds content), however, that space is not vacant and possesses content as much as the areas surrounding it. Individuals, who live at and move through the international border, extend the border with them as they travel away from the border carrying social and cultural cues as they actively engage in U.S. and Mexican societies and economies, further evidence of transboundariness. This shift and movement contribute to the transboundariness of the border where life extends beyond the boundary line and cultural identity, politics, economies, and social relationships exist.

Over time, the U.S.-Mexico border has taken on a physical structure in a geographic location that experiences consistent movement of people, product, and cultural information across it. While the intention of the border was and is to create a barrier and separation that indicates where one country ends and the other begins, the reality is that it has fueled much transboundary interaction between permanent sites at the borderline. Cheryl Temple Herr's work on critical regionalism provides an analysis of the importance of the built environment in conjunction with the development of settlements or communities as people migrate. Herr's analysis points to the notion that a place of transition is thought to lack traits or characteristics of permanence as people and culture move to their static locations (1996, 18). The U.S.-Mexico border, in this context, should be a site of movement or passage lacking the qualities of permanence, yet there are long-established communities along the border that have remained in the face of the placement of the territorial divide. The transboundary interaction and shared cross-boundary

communities are reflective of the paradox of the border. Its intention to separate continues to spur transboundary interaction amongst communities astride the line. Even in the face of heightened and added security.

It was believed that after the construction of the railroad, the community that became Ambos Nogales would disappear and move in conjunction with the laying of tracks. The railroad, though, provided the foundation for the merchant and vendor potential in the Ambos Nogales community and its roots took hold at the boundary line site. The establishment of the border, the railroad, and the subsequent structure that came to accompany the territorial line is the built environment that led to the growth of a community. Even though the border is thought to be a temporary site of passage, the border structure itself contributes to the static community. Herr's analysis of the establishment of culturally significant regions relative to their built environment is somewhat of a paradox when considering Ambos Nogales. As a site of movement and temporary passage, Ambos Nogales is also a static U.S.-Mexico border town worthy of study and further interrogation.

### **Shifting Realities at the U.S.-Mexico Border**

The figurative analyses of the U.S.-Mexico border are productive and generative as the literal structure and the perceptions accompanying it become further complex and complicated. Federal and national changes reached border communities immediately following the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center of 9/11 (September 11, 2001). The U.S. responded with the creation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in 2002 and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in 2003. These two organizations proceeded to heavily policing the Southern U.S. border, as well as targeting Mexican

populations within the United States. While there has been no evidence that terrorists have entered through the border shared between Mexico and the U.S., there is a marked difference between the manner in which the southern territorial boundary has been dealt with, when compared to the northern boundary shared with Canada.

As a result of both Operation Gatekeeper and a post-9/11 existence, the border region changed due to heightened security and border militarization. In the El Paso-Juarez border corridor 370 women's bodies had been found raped and mutilated from 1993 to 2008, bringing much attention to that specific region of the border. Theories about the women's murders placed blame on the industrialization and rise in maquiladoras on the southern side of the border after NAFTA, where 80% of the assembly workers were women (Staudt and Campbell 2008). Even though there was higher presence of law enforcement on the U.S. side, they could not intervene with the investigations of femicides on the Mexican side of the border. Media attention from both countries zeroed in on the El Paso-Juarez border in order to pressure authorities on both sides of the border to locate the person or persons responsible for these heinous acts.

In 2007, Jennifer Lopez starred in the film, *Bordertown*, as Lauren Adrian, an undercover journalist who was building an exclusive report on the Juarez femicides. The film depicts a foreign and corrupt maquiladora owner, who has the ability to silence police and investigators because of his financial influence. The media reports of the femicides in Juarez coupled with the release of the film permeated media outlet streams and ignored any activity at different ports of crossing at the border. A most interesting aspect to the film, though, was that a portion of it was filmed in Ambos Nogales, then considered the safest of the border communities. The use of Ambos Nogales as a site is

reflective of the transnational nature the film industry was attempting to convey on screen. Today, while the quantity of murders has decreased, women and men in Juarez go missing every day, and the culprit or culprits of the femicides in Juarez remains at large.

Similar to the time frame of the femicides in Juarez, the Arizona-Sonora stretch of the border brought reports of the loss of human life. Between October 1, 1999 and December 31, 2016, Humane Borders, a non-profit corporation based out of Tucson, Arizona estimates that there have been 3,087 deaths along the Arizona-Sonora border (2017). Operation Hold the Line and Operation Gatekeeper heightened security along the San Diego-Tijuana and El Paso-Juarez border corridors in order to funnel undocumented migrants and immigrants through the Sonoran Desert along the Arizona-Sonora border. The prevention through deterrent strategy rested on the notion that enough individuals would die attempting to cross through the desert and would prevent undocumented individuals from attempting to cross the border (Rubio Goldsmith, et. al. 2016). The government strategy did not work, and while estimates of deaths in the desert range from 2,884 to over 3,000, the U.S.-Mexico border region is now experiencing one of the largest humanitarian crises in our contemporary global community (Humane Borders, 2017).

During the Fall of 2008, as a master's student in Mexican American Studies at the University of Arizona, I joined then Sociology PhD candidate, Daniel Martinez's research team on a project called the, Migrant Border Crossing Survey. The goal of the project was to interview migrants who had recently been deported, or repatriated, to Nogales, Sonora, record their lived experience crossing the Sonoran Desert, and gain an understanding of interactions with Mexican or U.S. government officials, volunteer

organizations, human rights groups, coyotes, and fellow migrants. The work with the Migrant Border Crossing Survey forced us as a research team to examine the difficult truth of what it meant and means to have privilege, simply on the basis of having been born on the northern side of the line and possessing documents indicative of U.S. citizenship. For myself, working as part of that research team forced me to examine the difficult reality of the border, my home, and the characteristics it has as the meeting place between the U.S. and Mexico, a temporary site of passage, and a place that can experience high instances of both good and evil. The results of the Migrant Border Crossing Survey provide the most contemporary data on migrant experience and Daniel Martinez, PhD continues to work on this research and data as professor in Sociology at the University of Arizona.

During our work on the Migrant Border Crossing Survey, violence between Mexican law enforcement and drug cartels was on the rise. Ambos Nogales was one of the last cross-border communities to experience that violence first-hand, and when it did, our research came to a screeching halt. On November 2, 2008, members of a drug cartel attacked Sonora State Police Chief, Juan Manuel Pavón Félix, with gunfire and grenades outside of his hotel (*Arizona Daily Star* 2008). In 2010, the Assistant Police Chief of Nogales, Sonora, Adalberto Padilla Molina, and his bodyguard, Iván Sepúlveda Espino, were shot while driving, three miles away from the U.S.-Mexico border (*Arizona Daily Star* 2010).

In the midst of the news of Mexican law enforcement battles with drug cartels, Nogales, Arizona was catapulted into the national spotlight as its Mayor, Octavio Garcia Von Borstel was being investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for

bribery, theft, fraud, and money laundering (*American City and County* 2010). After his arrest, multiple national news agencies arrived in Nogales, Arizona for a press conference being held by the members of the City Council in order to explain the charges and the sentence Von Borstel would face. As representatives from CNN, Fox News, and others aimed their cameras at the scandal, Nogales City Councilman, Nubar Hanessian recalls, “it became obvious that they were shocked to find we all spoke English,” (Nubar Hanessian). The story of a crooked border town mayor fit well into national misconceptions that all dealings at or across the territory line are fraught with corruption.

Wick Communications, the umbrella periodical company for the *Nogales International* in Nogales, Arizona and *The Daily Territorial* in Tucson, Arizona, released a special report in December 2010 entitled, “Who Owns the Border?” which offered a juxtaposition of perceptions versus realities when it came to the U.S.-Mexico boundary. In 2010, much concern related to drug smuggling and cartel related violence had dominated media reports concerning the U.S.-Mexico border, when Border Patrol Agent, Brian Terry, was shot northwest of Nogales, Arizona and Cochise County rancher, Robert Krentz, was found gunned down on his ranch northeast of Douglas, Arizona. These events prompted new immigration enforcement measures Senate Bill (SB) 1070 and House (HB) 2162 to be signed into law by then Arizona Governor, Jan Brewer, when it was believed the shootings were committed by “smugglers and bandits” who had crossed the border illegally (Cole 2010). The state-level immigration enforcement added new crimes and penalties related to immigration. SB 1070 caused much controversy across the state of Arizona by allowing any law enforcement agent to require a person to present proof of citizenship, which would promote racial profiling. HB 2162 was passed



in order to address racial profiling concerns but did not calm the apprehension Arizonans had regarding the manner in which the laws would be enforced or cause a sense of second-class citizenship. In order to showcase the safety and efficacy of the U.S. side of the border, mayors and city officials on the Arizona side of the line reached out to the governor. However, during her tenure as Arizona Governor from 2009 to 2015, Brewer never visited the U.S.-Mexico border, despite many invitations made by Nogales, Arizona Mayor, Arturo Garino (Arturo Garino).

On April 23, 2010, Brewer made a visit to Tucson the day before she signed SB 1070 into effect. A political committee comprised of attorneys, including the former chairman of the Pima County (Tucson) Democratic Party, formed in response to and in opposition of the bill. The committee entitled, Start Our State, encouraged surrounding and like-minded counties to join southern Arizona in seceding from the rest of the state as a result of conflicting ideologies with the northern part of the state, particularly populations and the legislature in Phoenix which had “gone too far to the right,” (Bodfield and Kelly 2011). The state would be named Baja Arizona and comprised of the territory acquired by the U.S. under the Gadsden Purchase. National concerns regarding drug smuggling and undocumented migration/immigration had set the tone for public demand of legislation, at the state level in Arizona, there was an increase in pushback from counties and residents who did not believe legislation was serving a valid purpose. David Euchner, Libertarian, public defender, and treasurer for the Start Our State committee, offered a concern that, “every bill we’ve heard about here is either anti-abortion laws or anti-Mexican laws. These are not laws that are geared toward solving the real problems that we have,” (Bodfield and Kelly 2011). Euchner’s sentiment was echoed

in Santa Cruz County and in smaller cities closer to the U.S.-Mexico border, as they believed the new immigration legislation would hinder economic exchanges that had long existed in their transboundary community and sustained their existence.

### **National Perceptions versus Local Realities**

The political and ideological tensions at the national and state levels occupied much of the dominant discussion about the U.S.-Mexico border and the concerns it brought in terms of increasing security and solidifying the international boundary. In Ambos Nogales, though, the dominant discussion rested on the ability to maintain their transboundary connection in the face of outside decisions. For decades, Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, Sonora had referred to themselves as sister cities as a result of their close ties and ability to work together. When Nogales, Arizona Mayor, Arturo Garino, found that no such document existed, he and the Mayor of Nogales, Sonora, Jose Angel Hernandez Barajas decided it would be beneficial to formalize and document their sister city connection. On February 4, 2011, the cities of Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, Sonora signed their sister city agreement. This move came at an unexpected time and when it would appear there was much violence and negativity being exchanged between the U.S. and Mexico. For Ambos Nogales, the instances of violence and occurrences that would otherwise cause division, provided moments for the cities to demonstrate their ability to work together to rectify these issues in a manner befitting them locally.

John Dinkelman, U.S. consul in Mexico, reacted to the news by saying that, “it is as if two people who knew each other and who have been together for many years surprised you by telling you they finally decided to get married,” and later referred to the agreement as a “natural culmination of the geographic and social realities that already

exist in this region,” (Clark 2011). Mayor Hernandez Barajas, who referred to Mayor Garino as his “brother mayor,” believed that the formalization of the sister city agreement was beneficial in promoting economic development specifically related to industrial, produce, and tourist industries, while offering praise for many of the binational manners the cities already work together to address environmental concerns, such as flood control and wastewater management (Clark 2011). The signing of the formal sister city agreement between Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, Sonora not only pointed to a connection at the U.S.-Mexico border, but also indicated the necessary involvement of the community and public in making the relationship work. Mexican consul general in the U.S., Jaime Paz y Puente, was in full support of the formalization of the sister city agreement as it, “institutionalizes a relationship of sisterhood that has existed since time immemorial between the societies of two cities that share not only the same name, but also bonds of history, culture, commerce, friendship, and family,” (Clark 2011). National and state political debate continued, but when it came to the U.S.-Mexico border in Ambos Nogales, the concern was in upholding their transboundariness and ability to maintain their cross-border partnership.

Illustrative of their continued interconnected nature, many of Ambos Nogales operations and city relations depended on their ability to work together because of their geographic location and ability to combine resources that would benefit both. On occasion, if a fire caught in Nogales, Sonora, but the Nogales, Arizona Fire Department could reach it or offer auxiliary support, they would and vice versa. The proximity of the cities allowed them to work together in the face of a U.S.-Mexico border fence intended to separate them. In August of 2013, the police departments of Nogales, Arizona and

Nogales, Sonora came together to train together in an effort to, “maintain good relations with our partners in Mexico,” as described by Nogales, Arizona Police Chief, Derek Arnson. Similarly, Nogales, Sonora Police Commander, Alberto Lopez described their joint training as, “important...to have communication and an exchange of ideas. We can share and learn from each other. When we have unity between the two departments, they get stronger. It’s healthy, beneficial for both,” (Woodhouse 2013).

In keeping with their ability to work together, Ambos Nogales officials came together to create a localized remedy as a result of decisions made at the national level. In 2014, a large number of Latin American minors and youth migrants were transferred from detention centers in Texas, and placed in the care of officials in Nogales, Arizona. The children had been traveling on their own into the U.S. in order to reunite with their families. As the children reached the U.S.-Mexico border, they were detained in Texas by Border Patrol and Customs agents. At the time, U.S. President Barack Obama directed the migrant children to be moved to a facility in Nogales, Arizona, but it was left to the Border Patrol agents and Ambos Nogales community to locate a facility to house 800-900 children in order to ensure they would be taken care of properly, work with the consulates of Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras, and establish humanitarian assistance to provide clothing (Cuomo 2014). The youth being detained had not traveled through the Ambos Nogales port of crossing, and Nogales, Arizona had not seen the quantity of people that they were being directed to house, protect, and aid in locating families. Local volunteers from Ambos Nogales came together to offer and fulfill the humanitarian aspect of the situation by holding clothing drives or offering to work at phone banks where undocumented youth could reach family in order to be reunited with

them. Just as historical decisions about the U.S.-Mexico border had been made at a distance, the transfer of the undocumented youth from Texas to Nogales occurred with little direction and communication. Nogales, Arizona Mayor, Arturo Garino, found himself in a situation where the local community, “[had] to find ways of how to manage this,” while being concerned with the livelihood and well-being of the children in the community’s care (Cuomo 2014).

Perceptions of the U.S.-Mexico border, when examined at national, state, and local levels, consistently differ and have remained constant over history. National and state opinions have rested on ideological concerns, while local concerns rest on realistic means for livelihood in the face of national decisions made at a geographic distance. A paradox that has come to exist at the border in Ambos Nogales is the reality that the border intended to separate the cities actually provides them with a means for connection. As sister cities, it is almost as though they built bonds and construct solutions together as actual sisters would when their parents are fighting. In Ambos Nogales, the heightened presence of Border Patrol and militarization is something the local community has come to live with, while maintaining a transboundary link via economic exchanges and social interaction as a result of continued human movement through the border. The School of Journalism at the University of Arizona conducted a special investigation of the border in Ambos Nogales entitled, “Security 360°” (Blust 2016) in an effort to examine the sustained presence of militarization in this specific location at the border.

The U.S. government spent an estimated \$18 billion on immigration enforcement in 2014 according to the Department of Homeland Security Budget-in-Brief published in 2015 and since 1990 the annual budget for Border Patrol has increased from \$260 million

to \$3.6 billion in 2014 (U.S. Customs and Border Protection). The Security 360° report accounted for the difference between federal spending and local lives as they are impacted by the heightened presence of Border Patrol and various branches of law enforcement:

In border communities such as... Ambos Nogales, security has become omnipresent. Yet, despite the plummeting of crime and undocumented immigration, some politicians and presidential hopefuls are calling for more border enforcement. Higher walls. Better cameras. More agents. New technology. All funded by taxpayers. (2016)

Many of the national and state decisions occur at a distance and without input or consideration from the city and officials living at or near the border, for instance, Arizona Governor Doug Ducey has promoted the idea of an Arizona Border Strike Force Bureau, which would require an additional \$31.5 million in increased border enforcement funding in order to bridge various Arizona Department of Public Safety agencies in order to prevent and deter criminal organizations conducting drug and human smuggling across the border (Blust 2016). Some public safety agencies, such as the Arizona Sheriffs Association, are not in support of this plan as it extracts funds from localized counties and eliminates any autonomy, they might have in allocating funding in a manner best suited to their community needs. The reality of the proposed plan by Ducey does not address the immediate concerns of the Arizona Sheriffs Association, including, “outdated radio systems, unfilled positions leaving highways unpatrolled, and crime lab backlogs,” which would be overlooked by creating new law enforcement programs (Blust 2016). Nogales Arizona Sheriff, Tony Estrada expressed his concern regarding state and national decisions made on behalf of local communities: “Before you decide you’re going to come into our territory and tell us what you’re going to do, why don’t you do what you’re

supposed to do first,” (Blust 2016). In this case, the local law enforcement is looking for support with known issues, as opposed to looking at the perceived issues that state officials are pushing to address.

One of the more important aspects of the Security 360° report, is the inclusion of local Nogalenses who work and live at and along the line. Teresea Leal, director and curator of the Pimeria Alta Historical Society, lives in Nogales, Sonora and travels into Nogales, Arizona for work. Leal’s concern is about the safety of the transboundary community as individuals must interact and live amongst the increased presence of weapons and entrust the agents who carry and operate them (Blust 2016). This concern is not unfounded, as one of the most recent shootings at the border involved a Border Patrol officer on the U.S. side and a civilian on the Mexican side.

On October 10, 2012, United States Border Patrol Agent, Lonnie Ray Swartz, fired multiple shots through the border fence from Nogales, Arizona into Nogales, Sonora wounding and killing 16-year-old Jose Antonio Elena Rodriguez. Swartz claimed he was firing in self-defense against boys who were throwing rocks at the fence from the Mexican side of the border. As Swartz was being arraigned on October 9, 2015, the Morning Edition show on National Public Radio (NPR) was exploring the details of the case, in particular, the fact that anyone throwing rocks from the Mexican side of the border to the exact location where Swartz fired, would have had to launch, “their projectiles 40 to 50 feet up in the air in order to clear the top of the fence and the rocks would drop straight down to harm an agent standing on the other side. Or they would have to aim their rocks to fly through the 3.5-inch gaps between the iron bars” (NPR 2016). Swartz took aim, emptying a round from his pistol and reloading, firing 16 shots

within 34 seconds into Mexico from the U.S. side of the border, with 8 of those shots hitting Elena Rodriguez in the back. Swartz's trial had been postponed at the request of his defense attorney numerous times and was scheduled to begin on June 19, 2017. Swartz did not face a judge and jury until April of 2018 and the jury was deadlocked. In October 2018, he was once again facing manslaughter charges, and the jury returned a verdict of not guilty. This is not the first case of cross-border shootings between the United States and Mexico, but it is the first time that a Border Patrol Agent was charged with murder and faced a potential life prison sentence.

The return of a not guilty verdict in Swartz' case prompted local activist reactions in Tucson and Nogales that spilled into the streets. Richard Boren, member of the Border Patrol Victims' Network, took issue with the verdict stating that, "it gives agents the green light to go ahead and continue shooting people in the back," and since there was no justice in the case, protesting in public was all they could do (Trevizo 2018). Support for Swartz came from the Border Patrol Union, and fellow agents, who describe the requirement of their positions as high-intensity, often requiring quick decisions made with securing the border in mind. In response, Araceli Rodriguez, mother of Jose Antonio Elena Rodriguez, has filed a civil lawsuit against Swartz for excessive and unjustified force (Trevizo 2018). The paradox in this instance rest on agents who should be patrolling the border and maintaining national security, becoming the enactors of violence on the communities at the line.

Tragic incidents such as the murder of Jose Antonio Elena Rodriguez bring national, often global, attention to the United States-Mexico border, making violence and death prominent characteristics of the territorial meeting place between the two countries.



When combined with the recent rise in drug cartel violence, and mass media focus on drug smuggling, human trafficking, and undocumented migration, the border is shrouded in unfortunate tales of life lost. Humanitarian aid groups throughout the southern Arizona region offer support to undocumented migrants and immigrants in multiple ways. No More Deaths, a faith-based community organization based in Tucson, Arizona, is a coalition dedicated to offering humanitarian aid that would prevent migrant deaths in the desert. During the summer of 2017, when temperatures reach triple digits, four volunteers from the No More Deaths organization ventured out into the desert to leave food and water for migrants who would be traveling through the challenging terrain. The volunteers were charged with misdemeanor crimes for entering the federally protected Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge and leaving food and water there (Phillips 2019). After a three-day bench trial, the volunteers were found guilty and potentially faced up to 6 months in federal prison. This was not the case for one No More Deaths volunteer, Dr. Scott Warren, who was arrested and charged with two counts of harboring and one count of conspiracy. His trial is currently underway and could result in a 20-year prison sentence if found guilty.

The No More Deaths trials point to a persistent struggle between humanitarian activists and Border Patrol agents and coincided with one of the largest government shutdowns the U.S. has ever experienced over U.S.-Mexico border wall funding. Video emerged as a result of the trial that showed Border Patrol agents destroying containers of food and water that volunteers left in the desert, prompting immediate debate and critique regarding how they might treat migrants and immigrants.

As the results of the No More Deaths trial become known by the majority of residents in Nogales and Tucson, Arizona, humanitarian concern has foregrounded concerns with cross-border violence. The focus on the U.S.-Mexico border has become a vertically polarized discussion between arguments for and against a wall, with little to no consideration of the horizontal lives at the line. The misunderstanding by national and federal decisions regarding local communities along the border has placed Ambos Nogales in a position to become more vocal and active in order to maintain the transboundary connection that sustains them, and help outsiders understand their connection. The economy of Nogales, Arizona depends on that of Nogales, Sonora, and as such, has created a transboundary connection where daily life relies on the ability to negotiate and interact with the border. 2019 has brought a new debate about the U.S.-Mexico border to the national and international discussion of updated security at the border.

The U.S.-Mexico border is often considered the periphery, margins, or fringes of dominant Mexican and U.S. society, and unanticipated by outsiders as a generative or productive site of knowledge production. Viewing the border region as solely a temporal space or place of passage, limits an outsider from fully comprehending the static community and the realities of life at the place where Mexico and the U.S. meet. 2019 has presented challenges to the U.S.-Mexico border region, but as a specific site, Ambos Nogales continues to work together to create a peaceful and jovial community for its residents. Arturo Garino has been re-elected as Mayor of Nogales, Arizona and is working diligently to maintain the ideals of the Ambos Nogales community as one of reciprocity and neighborliness.

## **Chapter Four – The Contemporary U.S.-Mexico Border**

Contemporary narratives generated about the border often focus on loss of life in the desert, drug or human trafficking, and gang violence. The conditions at the U.S.-Mexico border that allowed for the joint Cinco de Mayo Fiestas in Ambos Nogales may not be what they once were, however, the communities on either side of the border alter and adjust their celebratory interactions as a means for upholding a tradition. Nogales, Sonora did not stop their Cinco de Mayo celebrations, but the festivities came to an end in Nogales, Arizona in the 1980s. The reinvigoration of the joint Fiestas in 2010 allowed for a continuous flow of events across the border with one soccer game taking place in Nogales, Arizona, and another taking place in Nogales, Sonora. Much like a soccer ball, the events bounced back and forth across the border, allowing attendees to cross the border in conjunction with each event in order to experience the entirety of the Fiesta schedule. The Cinco de Mayo Fiestas in Ambos Nogales may never return to their previous conditions, but the desire from both Nogales, Arizona, and Nogales, Sonora to continue a binational Fiesta is indicative of the continuous camaraderie between the two cities.

Some components of the Cinco de Mayo Fiestas have not changed. For instance, there are still young women from both sides of the border who compete to be Fiesta Queen, although, not against each other as in the past when only one queen was chosen to represent the Ambos Nogales community. At present, a young woman from Nogales, Arizona is chosen as Fiesta Queen, as is a young woman from Nogales, Sonora, but it is still true that they jointly reign over the Fiestas. The coronation stage in Nogales, Arizona, at one time placed astride the international line, is now constructed only a few

yards north of the border line. The 2017 Fiestas kicked off in Downtown Nogales, Arizona, where reports in the *Nogales International* made it a point to describe Nogales as, “awash in color and culture... during the annual Fiestas de Mayo, featuring Mexican music, dance, and food, as well as the presentation of the fiesta queen candidates,” (*Nogales International* 2017). The candidates vying for queen appear in the *Nogales International*, pictured from left to right, Eurdise Murillo, Eileen Castro, Lourdes Alexa Estrada, and Alexis Ahumada. Each of the women appear in full regalia, dressed in various traditional Mexican ensembles. As part of the competition, each candidate addresses the crowd with a description of the importance of the clothing they are wearing and a comment on the traditions of each region in Mexico they represent. Each candidates statement, by necessity, must include reasons for choosing their dress.



Figure 7. 2017 Nogales, Arizona Fiesta Queen Candidates. Photo by Jonathan Clark for *Nogales International*.

As part of the 2017 celebration, ballet Folklórico dancers, Mexica danzantes, and local musical vocalists graced the stage to offer performances and traditional presentations. In addition to the Fiestas of 2017, were oversized marionettes, the figures also known as *mojigangas*, are typically utilized in the San Miguel de Allende Fiestas that occur in the

state of Guanajuato, Mexico. The innovation of having them in Nogales was introduced by Sandra Kory, a Nogales, Arizona community member and entrepreneur, who constructed two marionettes which she named Panfilo and Filomena.

The 2018 Fiestas changed only slightly, with some of the festivities in Nogales, Arizona held at a location slightly distant from the border. This was the first time the Fiesta stage would be taken away from a close proximity to the actual U.S.-Mexico borderline. Live music, performances, and the coronation of the Queen took place at Fletcher Park, roughly two miles from the U.S.-Mexico border. The *Nogales International*, the major periodical in Nogales, Arizona, featured the Fiesta Queen Contestants in their traditional Mexican attire ranging in styles from Chiapas, Jalisco, the Yucatán Peninsula, and the China Poblana ensemble traditionally identified with the town of Puebla. Anna Lopez was crowned Fiesta Queen, with Jessica Serrano crowned as Fiesta Princess, both students at Nogales High School, and selected at random to reign over the celebration.

The capacity in which the 2019 Cinco de Mayo Fiestas in Ambos Nogales might occur is uncertain as national policies are currently rolling out in the community. For the city of Nogales, Arizona, plans have been advertised and announced for the Fiestas to be held in their previous location, closer to the border on Morley Avenue, and will include music, food, a motorcycle show, and a beer garden on the evening of May 4, 2019. Nogales, Sonora has plans to begin their Cinco de Mayo Celebration on the evening of May 3, with anticipation to continue through the weekend. It has been established that the young women crowned Queen and Princess of the Fiestas in Nogales, Sonora, will travel to Nogales, Arizona for the Queen coronation on Saturday evening.

## **Border Concerns of Today**

National concerns with border security have overshadowed local community interactions and changed the nature of the contemporary Cinco de Mayo Fiestas in Ambos Nogales. While it is uncertain what the future of the border may look like, some scholars and analysts examine contemporary data in order to predict what could potentially occur. Fernando Romero, Architect and founder of the Laboratory of Architecture (LAR) in Mexico City took on this task in his 2008 work, *Hyperborder: The Contemporary U.S.-Mexico Border and its Future*, in which he considers factors such as security, narcotrafficking, migration, trade, and urbanization, as main causes for militarization and heightened law enforcement at the border. Romero employs both quantitative and qualitative data as a means for arriving at the significance of what he terms the *Hyperborder*, which encompasses the diverse nature of the border itself and the myriad of issues that arise as a result of its presence (Romero 2008, 42). The U.S.-Mexico border possesses both literal and figurative traits that allow a measure of material data and intangible experience all crucial to an understanding of this particular border site. At the time that Romero's text was published, the long-term effects of factors such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and heightened security after 9/11 provided measurable data and visible change in border communities. Romero argues that this data foretells the future of the U.S.-Mexico border.

Economic opportunity laid the foundation for social, cultural, and familial relationships to be established at and beyond the territorial line, signifying the multifaceted properties the border possesses. The region of Ambos Nogales gained a significant permanent settlement in the 1880's as a result of economic potential for

brokers and business people who dealt in trade across the border. In our contemporary moment, this still holds to be true, as the Nogales Chamber of Commerce reports that wholesale trade, transportation, and warehousing comprise the largest industries of employment in Nogales, Arizona (2017). The Office of the United States Trade Representative reports that as of 2017, trade in goods and services between Mexico and the U.S. reached \$615.9 billion dollars, with \$276.2 billion in exports and \$339.8 billion in imports. This economic exchange promotes interdependence between Mexico and the U.S., as described by Herzog's notion of transboundariness and Romero's term, Hyper border. Their respective examinations of cross-boundary economic exchanges inevitably point to the development of social and cultural links that impact identity, familial structure, and socialization beyond the international line. It is a place where migration and immigration occur, and in the process of crossing, demonstrates that ideas, culture, and information do not stop on one side as people pass through it, but move through generating higher forms of understanding as individuals come to learn how to navigate multiple languages and societal structures on either side of the border.

Even when the great majority of border researchers and observers conclude that trade benefits both countries, xenophobic myths about the border persist and rest on the notion that the border is a dangerous and unruly place in need of taming. A distinct difference from local realities which focus on quotidian life and upholding familial structures. The transformation of the border, particularly in the Ambos Nogales region, has created a new set of challenges in the form of heightened crossing measures, a reinforced fence of steel and concrete, and heavy military and law enforcement presence at a civilian point of crossing. For outsiders, including officials and politicians, the border

is thought to be an unguarded periphery or margin where drugs and human smuggling occur at an increased rate, which has fueled much of the debate between local and national conceptions of the border.

### **The Border and the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election**

Analysts, demographers, social scientists and other observers of border life have often looked to data and knowledge about the border in order to speculate its future. In truth, we do not know what the border, or beliefs about it, might do to influence national decisions and international relations. Any sense of predictability in this regard was lost during the 2016 presidential campaign, and the subsequent election of Donald Trump as President. At the very outset of his campaign, Trump's concerns about the U.S.-Mexico border were at the forefront of political conversations and social debates. On June 16, 2015, Donald Trump announced his intention to run for the Republican nomination for president and used the U.S.-Mexico border as a major tenet to his campaign promises. On that day in June, he made a statement about Mexican migrants and immigrants that quickly set the tone for the divisive nature present in contemporary political discussions:

When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best. They're not sending you. They're not sending you. They're sending people that have problems, and they're bringing those problems with us. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people. (2015)

In the time following this statement, Trump spoke publicly of the intention to build a more secure structure between Mexico and the U.S., at a direct cost to Mexico. During a presidential campaign stop in Phoenix, Arizona, Trump spoke to a room full of cheers when he described his intention once elected as president:

We will build a great wall along the southern border, and Mexico will pay for the wall. On day one we will begin working on an impenetrable, physical, tall, powerful, beautiful southern border wall. We will use the best technology,



including above and below ground sensors, that's the tunnels, remember that, above and below, above and below ground sensors. Towers. Arial surveillance and manpower to supplement the wall, find and dislocate tunnels, and keep out criminal cartels. (2015)

Trump's statements as a presidential candidate point to two concerns about the manner in which he speaks, the first is his generalization of all Mexican peoples as dangerous, and the second is his desire for a stronger structure that would signify anti-immigrant sentiment. While these are not the only statements Trump made about the U.S.-Mexico border, they are met with the, "anxieties... among Hispanics, African-Americans, Muslims, immigrants, women, and others who felt disparaged or demonized by Mr. Trump, who used harsh and racially charged language in ways that upended mainstream politics," (Healy and Peters 2016). Trump was favored by some as a presidential candidate as a result of his lack of political experience, and it was believed by many of his supporters, that he would bring a citizen's perspective to politics in Washington, D.C. Trump won the presidential election and has widened an already broad political divide, most recently as it relates to the U.S.-Mexico border.

The sense that Trump and his supporters leaned toward an anti-immigrant sentiment was solidified in January of 2017, when Trump signed an executive order banning foreign nationals from predominantly Muslim countries from entering the U.S. for 90 days, while also banning Syrian refugees indefinitely, and prohibiting the entry of any refugees for 120 days (ACLU, 2018). The restrictions were placed on Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria, Yemen, and included non-Muslim North Korea and Venezuela, as a result of reports from the Trump Administration that the sending countries did not cooperate with U.S. officials or adequately document their own travelers and had instances of terrorist activity. In a recent article by Hannah Giorgis for *The Atlantic*, the

connection is made between the Muslim Ban and lingering 9/11 concerns that equate all Muslims as terrorists. In addition, Giorgis notes that, “fifteen of the hijackers on September 11, 2001, were Saudi Arabians, yet Saudi Arabia was not on Trump’s list,” and, according to a report by her colleague Uri Friedman, of the countries on the banned list, no evidence from 1975 to 2015 can be found linking terrorist activity from those countries aimed at the U.S. (Giorgis 2019). Many journalists and reporters have worked diligently to try to connect the dots and make sense of Trump’s actions as president, but any effort to report realities or factual evidence are written off and disregarded as fake news.

The issue with these national perceptions about the border rests on the manner in which discussions are blurred to bundle Mexico, Central and South America, and Middle Eastern countries into one group inciting fear at one of the four U.S. international borders. Many critics of Trump examine his use of fear as a means for rallying his supporters and locating the reasoning behind his actions, words, and twitter feed. Fear, as understood through psychology, is highly personalized and based on both material and immaterial realities of the person experiencing it. 9/11 incited fear in the U.S. public and locating terrorists has become a public and political fear used to generate organizations such as the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), created less than two weeks after the attacks. While the DHS was created as a result of the events of 9/11, it had an immediate impact on militarization and heightened security at the U.S.-Mexico border. This raised questions about how race may have been factored into the response and treatment of the southern border, however, due to the fear generated as a result of potential terrorist entry at the U.S.-Mexico border, there is no challenge to systemic

racism when a justification can be made that it is a dangerous place for terrorists to pass through and enter the U.S. In his text, *The Culture of Fear: Why Americans are Afraid of the Wrong Things*, Barry Glassner examines the manner in which the United States operates within traditions of fear, which prevents the recognition of what is real (1999). It is this very reason that the U.S.-Mexico border is so misunderstood on a national level when compared to that of the local level. The national perceptions of the border are based on unrealistic fears, and local realities are based on actualities of daily life.

In Arizona, specifically, responses to fears after 9/11 resulted in the creation of civilian vigilante groups, most notably, the Minutemen Project, also known as the U.S. Border Guard, Civil Homeland Defense, or Minutemen Civil Defense Corps (MCDC). Formed in 2005 by Chris Simcox and Jim Gilchrist, as a response to distaste with undocumented migration and the threats it is thought to present to national security, the Minuteman Project included patrolling the border, while also exposing businesses and corporations that are known to employ undocumented migrants (Cabrera and Glavac 2010, 677-678). The fear and mistrust in the government when it came to protection of our nation's borders, prompted volunteers from across the United States travel to the border region to enlist in the civilian guard. They are not recognized by law enforcement or local authorities as a component of their border security system, however, some public officials and members of congress who sympathize with their objectives, have attempted to introduce legislation that would allow them to be recognized as a part of border security initiatives (Cabrera and Glavac 2010, 674).

As of 2016, the Minuteman Project is now defunct as a result of child molestation charges against Simcox and murder charges facing a few prior members. Largely

considered an anti-immigrant group, the Minutemen, and Gilchrist in particular, take credit for the factors that led to Trump's presidential victory. When interviewed by *Vice*, Gilchrist expressed his content with his personal mission having been accomplished – to raise awareness about the undocumented migration issue (Hoffman 2016). The Minutemen have been used as a symbol of anti-immigration by some members of the Democratic Party, in particular during the 2016 presidential election. In contrast, many of the ideologies of the Minutemen trickled into the Republican political rhetoric and can be heard echoed in many of Trump's speeches and decisions as president: a larger wall between Mexico and the U.S.; revoking birthright citizenship; and calls for mass deportations (Hoffman 2016).

Labeling Trump and many of his supporters within the Republican Party as anti-immigrant has occurred at multiple times during both his campaign, and now during his presidency. The most recent instance occurred during the fall of 2018, when it became public knowledge that children were being separated from their families while residing in the U.S. and awaiting asylums hearings. For families and individuals seeking asylum, they are fleeing violence, poverty, and poor living conditions, but are met with hostility as they reach the U.S.-Mexico border. On October 12, 2018, 160 migrants from Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala gathered in preparation of their travel to the United States' southern border in order to seek asylum from their home and sending countries. The next day, October 13, more than 1,000 people joined the group. By the time the group reached the U.S.-Mexico border on October 19, they reached an estimated 8,000 to 10,000 people, with one in four being a child. Having labeled the group as the

migrant caravan, Trump refers to these asylum seekers as criminals and accuses them of benefiting from loopholes in the U.S. immigration system (ACLU).

Trump's initial reaction to the refugee caravan, was to threaten a complete closure of the U.S.-Mexico border and station the military along the international line in order to avoid potential undocumented crossing (Heavey and Menchu, 2018). By late November 2018, multiple news outlets were offering reports of the refugee's arrival at the southern side of the U.S.-Mexico border. The border between the two countries was shut down in California as a large quantity of refugees reached the actual fence between Mexico and the U.S. in Tijuana. In response to some attempts to strike law enforcement by throwing rocks or cross the fence sans documents, Border Patrol and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents pepper sprayed the groups, which included women and young children. News of the refugee caravan was pouring out of multiple media outlets, and just as *The Daily Show* covered the story, Trevor Noah's daily monologue encapsulated the manner in which opposing perspectives about the refugee caravan came through depending on which news outlet one viewed:

What I found really interesting about this story, is how much it changes depending on where you get your news... it was either innocent women and children who were just strolling through a park in Mexico and then got surprised by tear gas, or innocent Border Patrol agents were attacked by hordes of violent brown people singing the *Narcos* theme song as they came across. What is also interesting to me, is that both sides are viewing this as a validation that they were right all along. One side is like, 'you see, I told you America is the most immigrant-hating nation of all time,' and then the other side is like, 'you see, I told you they were coming to invade.' But, let's be honest, this wasn't an invasion, it was frustrated asylum-seekers at the border throwing stones, which, we can be honest, probably isn't going to help their case, because we know Trump is going to use this as proof that all asylum-seekers are criminals and dangerous [...]. (2018)

Noah's description of the perspectives about the border, point to the bifurcation of thought, and seemingly lack of realistic compromise when it comes to discussion of the U.S.-Mexico border and what happens there. Debate about the manner in which the refugees were being dealt with bounced back and forth in the news, between politicians, and in conversations across the country, while local communities at the U.S.-Mexico border had to find solutions to the impact the border shut down and refugee presence had on them directly.

Just north of Tijuana, many local businesses in San Ysidro, California experienced an unprecedented lull in traffic. There was a sharp drop in shoppers and many business owners had to make decisions to shut down operations for the day as a result of the lack of traffic resulting from the closure of the border. Many business owners in San Ysidro lost business they had counted on during the holiday shopping season (Morning News Daybreak 2018). Local businesses and communities at the border once again, had to develop local solutions to accompany the national decisions made regarding the U.S.-Mexico border. While the shut down in Tijuana in November of 2018 directly impacted the decline in sales for businesses north of the border, in Ambos Nogales, the decisions made in Washington, D.C. were now presenting a situation that Nogales, Sonora had to find a solution to.

On December 20, 2018, the Trump Administration, using reports from the Department of Homeland Security, announced that asylum-seekers would not be allowed to reside in the U.S. while awaiting case hearings. The reasoning behind this decision rested on the notion that asylum-seekers would remain in the U.S., as an undocumented population, after their asylum claims had been heard in court. As a result of this new

policy, the Mexican government would need to work with the U.S. in order to allow individuals seeking asylum in the U.S. temporary authorization to remain in Mexico. In Nogales, Sonora, this put a strain on organizations already working to offer food, shelter, and clothing to migrants residing in the area temporarily. In some cases, asylum decisions can take up to three years, which would mean that some families would need to reside in Mexico for that time period, raising questions about how they might locate more long-term housing, jobs, and safe space while they await asylum results (Genesis and Phillips 2019).

As a response to what some media outlets were calling the “caravan crisis” coupled with the fear of a large quantity of people crossing the U.S.-Mexico border, Trump pushed for construction of the wall that he had described during his presidential campaign. The demand for a more secure structure and construction of a fence or wall where there was previously not more than a string of barbed wire, came with the belief that drug and human trafficking, cross-border gang and cartel violence, and undocumented migration of criminals was pouring over the territorial line between Mexico and the U.S. In order to force lawmakers’ hands, Trump threatened a government shutdown as a way to ensure the new wall between Mexico and the U.S. would be funded and constructed. The threat became reality when the U.S. government shut down from December 22, 2018 through January 25, 2019, one of the longest in United States history, all over a border wall.

### **2018-2019 U.S. Government Shutdown**

Trump used the perceived danger at the U.S.-Mexico border as a means for being elected, in order to make good on his campaign promise to build the wall, Trump pushed

for \$5.7 billion that would be dedicated to securing the U.S.-Mexico border. When White House and congressional officials failed to reach a compromise on the funding, it led to a government shutdown. As a result of the shutdown, an estimated 380,000 workers would be sent home without pay, and another 420,000 would be forced to work without pay, including Border Patrol officers (Davis and Cochrane, 2018). The shutdown led many to wonder if Trump realized the impact the shutdown would have on citizens across the country who would go without pay so he could make good on a campaign promise.

In Arizona, news of the shutdown was met with a humanitarian response by communities who came together to collect food donations for the families of government workers who would be financially impacted. Corrections officers working without pay received free food delivery from surrounding businesses hoping to provide a small relief. Republican senator, Martha McSally, visited the Mariposa and Deconcini ports of crossing at the Nogales sector of the border on January 22, 2019 and provided deliveries of food to the Border Patrol agents working without pay. The government shutdown was demonstrative of the difference between perceptions of the border versus realities on the ground. Regardless of the state and local community perceptions about the border, what occurred during the shutdown, was largely communities and neighbors unifying to help one another survive.

Issues related to the government shutdown and the U.S.-Mexico border were striking citizens in the pocketbooks and causing much debate amongst politicians. Along the border, communities on the line were dealing with federal actions that conflicted with local interests. In November of 2018, U.S. Army troops were sent to the border in Texas and instructed to place concertina wire on the existing structure between Mexico and the



U.S. By February of 2019, Nogales, Arizona had experienced the same military presence with an addition of six stacks of razor wire mounted to the existing fence running through the city. The mayor and city council of Nogales, Arizona passed a resolution on February 6, 2019 condemning the installation of the razor wire as it, “is only found in a war, prison, or battle setting,” (*The Associated Press*, 2019). As a result of the physical border fence running through the city, there are various residential neighborhoods near the fence, placing Nogalenses at risk of being hurt by the proximity of the razor wire to their homes. Additionally, Mayor Arturo Garino spoke of the negative aesthetic and impact of the razor wire in hindering the, “business-friendly community here in Nogales,” (*The Associated Press*, 2019).

### **Bordertown Response to National Actions**

The city councils of San Diego and El Paso shared similar sentiments with that of Nogales, and as such, San Diego issued a resolution stating that Trump’s walls would be, “damaging symbols of fear and division that will increase tensions with Mexico, one of the United States’ largest trading partners and neighbor with which communities such as San Diego in the border region are inextricably linked culturally, physically, and economically,” (*The Associated Press*, 2019). In response to the alteration of the fence, Republican Mayor, Dee Margo, of El Paso reacted by saying, “We have a fence here. The fence is fine. It does what it’s supposed to do. I hear the term wall and I think of the Berlin Wall. I think it’s pretty detrimental to the [local] relationships that have lasted more than 400 years,” (*The Associated Press*, 2019). The reaction by city officials along the U.S.-Mexico border is one of a concern for their localized communities, while

national perceptions and debate are generated from an outside misunderstanding or fear about what actually occurs at the U.S.-Mexico border.

On February 11, 2019, Donald Trump visited El Paso, Texas and held what some are calling a 2020 campaign rally. The U.S.-Mexico border was present both as a structure and topic of discussion. Trump spoke of the need for a wall as a prevention of drug and human smuggling, elimination of cartel and gang violence, and a means for securing the dangerous southern border. At the same time as Trump's rally, former U.S. Representative, and potential 2020 presidential candidate, Robert "Beto" O'Rourke, of El Paso, held a counter-rally where he encouraged the people of El Paso, supporters, and border residents to "tell the true story about the border," (@BetoORourke, 2019). During his speech, O'Rourke spoke of the safety of the city of El Paso, "safe not because of walls, but in spite of walls. Secure because we treat one another with dignity and respect," (O'Rourke, 2019). The interconnected nature of Ambos Nogales was reflected in the reality of life in El Paso that evening – the border was not a separation, but a bridge for transboundary connection through various means, most notably by the communities who seek to work and live in unity and with mutual respect at the line.

The border communities had received news of a potential declaration of emergency at the U.S.-Mexico border, in order for Trump to receive the funding for the structure, and reactions began to dominate news and media outlets, as well as social media. Prior to the declaration of a national emergency at the border, Mayor, Arturo Garino, and the Nogales, Arizona City Council, viewed the declaration being one of, "a declaration of a state of emergency against Mexico and the biggest trading partner that you have. We trade in the billions of dollars through the port of Nogales, let alone Texas

and California,” (KGUN 9, 2019). Preoccupation with the declaration of a state of emergency is more about the manner in which it might hinder trade with Mexico and impact the transboundary economy in Ambos Nogales.

For Santa Cruz County (Nogales) Sheriff Tony Estrada, the concept of the declaration of an emergency and the alterations made to the existing border wall raises concerns of how the U.S. government deals with people. As Estrada reflected on the current events at the border, he expressed a sentiment that, “livestock is treated better with barbed wire, not razor wire... they are human beings that are trying to come across and you are treating them as less than human beings. I think what the president needs to do is have a little bit of empathy and compassion,” (KGUN 9, 2019).

Local reactions differing from national perceptions is not new, however, we find ourselves in a moment where heated debate and profound division between the manner in which the U.S.-Mexico border is discussed versus how people actually live at and interact with the line is distinct. National decisions about the border are made at a geographic distance, but for city officials and community members, those decisions impact them, their neighbors, and friends. Locally, there is a more realistic understanding of the manner in which national decisions will impact the immediate community, as well as a means for negotiating with the U.S.-Mexico border with a livable approach.

### **Declaration of National Emergency at the U.S.-Mexico Border**

On Friday, February 15, 2019, Donald Trump declared a state of national emergency at the U.S.-Mexico border in order to bypass Congress, free up funding, and move forward with construction of a more elaborate international wall. In response, 16 states, California, New Mexico, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois,

Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, and Virginia, have formed a coalition to sue Trump, calling his executive decision as a means for funding the border wall, unconstitutional. California Attorney General, Xavier Becerra, stated that, “the president has used the pretext of a manufactured ‘crisis’ of unlawful immigration to declare a national emergency,” and citing that the Constitution places congress in the position to determine spending, not the president (NPR, 2019). While the results of the case and the declaration of a state of emergency at the U.S.-Mexico border have yet to play out, the question arises regarding how this might impact the structure and enforcement at the border in the future.

Some wonder if what Trump is seeking are closed borders, which would be a potential future eerily foretold in Alex Rivera’s 2008 film, *Sleep Dealer*. The film is set in Tijuana, the city of the future, and a dystopian reality dependent upon heavy surveillance, closed borders, and a profound reliance on technology. The main protagonist, Memo, leaves his small community in southern Mexico in order to obtain work and send money home to his family after the death of his father. Based on the Bracero Program, a guest worker agreement between Mexico and the U.S. from 1942 to 1964, the labor force of the future is virtually transported to the U.S., their bodies remain in Mexico with machines connected to implanted nodes allowing them to operate robots that work in construction and agriculture. This earns laborers the title of Cyber Bracero or Sleep Dealer. On Memo’s first day of work, the maquiladora manager says to him, “*esto es el sueño Americano. Le damos a los Estados Unidos lo que siempre han querido – todo el trabajo, sin los trabajadores,*” (This is the American Dream. We give the United States what they have always wanted – all the work without the workers). The alarming

reality is that virtual or cyber braceros would be a way to continue to sustain the U.S. economy without the presence of undocumented workers, of which are a main concern and push for a more enforced border wall. The future portrayed in the film is one of zero immigration and no transboundary relationships. Rivera's work rests on the notion that the future of human labor can only be via virtual reality connections where the U.S. benefits from the work, without the presence of the workers.

While there is no way to know what the future of the border might hold, it is clear that there is a distinction between national perceptions of the place where Mexico and the U.S. meet, and the local realities of communities astride the line. As news of Trump's declaration of a state of emergency at the southern border caused protests and national reactions, in Ambos Nogales, it was business as usual. In Nogales, where the border is a daily reality, some residents did not see the declaration as an issue, and some did not even know the declaration had been made. For many Nogales families enjoying lunch on the day of Trump's declaration, conversation was focused more on their children, and were burnt out with discussions of the border (Foster, 2019). In other words, no matter the structure, decision, or declaration, the transboundary nature of the Ambos Nogales community is consistently present.

Since its inception, the history of the border has been one of national concerns enforced by local actions, and like much of its regional history, the geographic distance of the border from the national political centers of Mexico and the U.S., has allowed individuals living on the border the opportunity to implement federal rules in a manner suited to their local realities. Conversations about contemporary issues regarding the U.S.-Mexico border often occur in a vertical and national manner, many times between

Mexico City and Washington D.C, and most recently are focused on unfounded beliefs about the people moving through the boundary and the crimes they might commit.

Locally, horizontal lives on the line continue as best as they can with national policies and actions being made at a distance.

### **What does this mean for the border today?**

Concerns about the U.S.-Mexico border rest on the issues of undocumented migration and immigration, drug and human trafficking, and potential cartel or gang violence. While these are material concerns, in many cases they are based on unfounded beliefs or fears, and the rate of their occurrence is presently lower than that of the past. According to the U.S. Border Patrol data released in 2018, apprehensions of undocumented migrants reached 396, 579 people, one of the lowest numbers since the 1970s. Typically, the border had seen adults crossing, however, recent Border Patrol data indicates that two in five people are now children and there are higher rates of families crossing (U.S. Customs and Border Protection, 2018).

When it comes to the issues of drug cartel or gang violence, much of that does not spill over the border. As described by a recent NBC broadcast of *Dateline*, entitled, “The Dividing Line: America’s Great Divide,” the Border Patrol agents, city officials, and local business people featured, described the violence as localized in Mexico and completely related to battles over drug cartel territory outside of the United States. This would indicate that the violence is localized within the Mexican communities where drug cartels are present or reside (Holt and Soboroff, 2018). Any violence or interaction with gang members, namely the Maras, a transnational gang with ties in California, Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador, is localized and focused on individuals who interact with

them directly. While they are of concern, they do not indicate membership amongst all people and migrants traveling from those countries.

As a result of migration into the U.S. and antiquated immigration policies, the U.S.-Mexico border has come to be a place of great humanitarian and immigration crises. Due to policies created during the Clinton Administration, the Sonoran Desert, shared between Arizona and Sonora, has witnessed much death and tragedy, giving way to a rise in humanitarian aid and activism as a means for preserving the lives of the migrants who make the decision to traverse the desert and enter the U.S. Groups such as Humane Borders, No More Deaths, Kino Border Initiative, and various chapters of Samaritans have grown in their volunteer memberships as a means for offering humane assistance to anyone who has crossed, plans to cross, or encountered difficulty crossing the U.S.-Mexico border. At present, there are more than 30 organizations offering assistance to migrants and immigrants in Nogales, Sonora, Nogales and Tucson, Arizona, and surrounding communities. The main tenet of these organizations is to treat people humanely and offer any assistance as may be required by fellow humans.

Policies and decisions made by the Trump administration that do not coincide with state governments has caused a rise in policy driven activism. The 16 states that find his strategies unconstitutional are moving to take legal action that would derail decisions made outside of state and city governments. In Nogales, Arizona, the City Council is looking to take legal action that would result in removal of the concertina wire placed on the north-facing side of the U.S.-Mexico border fence. The results of these actions remain to be seen, but there appears to be a marrying of policy driven activism and humanitarian aid. South and Central American refugees traveling to the border in seek of asylum in the

U.S. are being offered assistance by volunteer organizations offering food, clothing, and shelter. In Tucson, Arizona specifically, the former Benedictine Monastery has been converted into a full-service shelter by the Catholic Community Services organization. Ward 6 Councilman of the city of Tucson, Steve Kozachik, is currently working with the community and city to quell any assumptions that asylum seekers might match assumptions coming out of Washington (Perla and Rico, 2019).

A most important component to the section of the border between Arizona and Sonora is the presence of the Tohono O’odham reservation, which comprises a 75-mile portion of land across the two states. The U.S.-Mexico border runs through the reservation separating the tribe and their sacred lands. At present, 32,000 tribal members reside on the reservation on the U.S. side of the border, while 2,000 reside on the Mexican side of the border. Their tribal police often work with Border Patrol to apprehend or locate migrants who may be crossing on the reservation, but it is the Tohono O’odham people themselves who must negotiate the myriad of fences and separations placed on their sovereign land by the U.S. government, who most often does not consult with them.

In our present moment, the Trump administration is currently pushing for a new border wall construction and the potential for a closed border as a means for controlling or ending undocumented migration. This makes the future of the border uncertain and the humanitarian crisis coupled with immigration concerns have created a problem that the Mexican and U.S. governments cannot seem to find a solution to. In the meantime, humanitarian aid activists are doing what they can to assist migrants crossing in the desert, while Border Patrol agents operate under national direction to increase security



and monitor the fence. In the midst of this, Ambos Nogales is preparing for their upcoming Cinco de Mayo celebration and looking forward to working together, as they have always done, to create a jovial atmosphere for its community members and anyone who wishes to attend the event. The legacy of the Mexican victory in 1862 during the battle at Puebla extends through to our current moment by providing a glimmer of hope whilst surrounded by battles of animosity and division. Perhaps the lesson the Cinco de Mayo Fiestas of Ambos Nogales have to teach us, is that in moments when there seems to be no hope, human resilience and partnership can prevail and provide us with a moment to unite and find a moment of celebration.

## **Conclusion**

During the Fall of 2018, I was asked to speak as part of a panel during the, Transnational Feminist Encuentro, hosted by the Spanish and Portuguese Department at the University of Arizona. I joined professor and activist, Raquel Rubio-Goldsmith, activist and human rights attorney, Isabel Garcia, and activist, Leilani Clark, to discuss narratives currently being produced about the U.S.-Mexico border. The accounts described by fellow panelists included death in the desert, humanitarian aid at the border, and human rights violations committed by Mexican and U.S. Governments. How would the Cinco de Mayo Fiestas in Ambos Nogales fit into this discussion? In its most simplistic form, the history of the Fiestas in Ambos Nogales work as a reminder of the stationary communities at the territorial line between Mexico and the U.S.

The complex response to that question rests on the ability to view a border as a generative site of cultural knowledge production resulting from transboundary linkages. As evident during the Cinco de Mayo Fiestas of Ambos Nogales. The border did not hinder or separate the community, instead worked paradoxically as a means for connection. The Cinco de Mayo, as described by Hayes-Bautista, worked as a unifier amongst Latina and Latino populations in the U.S. However, in a contemporary context and growing global community, could potentially serve to unify multiple ethnic groups who have experienced marginalization within or at the hands of the United States. The border is not a singular line between Mexico and the U.S., it encompasses a global and transnational crossroads with multiple ports of land, air, and water access into and out of the United States.

Be it through Anzaldúa's third space or Martínez's interdependent border framework, the reality is that there are static communities astride the line continuously negotiating the border on a daily basis. Attention to the U.S.-Mexico border quite often rests on one of a macro U.S.-Mexico interaction and the violence and clash which occurs. Although at times tragic, and extremely important, localized communities at the border have found manners within which to exist alongside these macro situations. It is rare for examinations of the border to occur at a micro level in order to comprehend manners with which local communities have developed in order to live, interact, and manage the national decisions made about the border. These modalities could potentially provide a connecting force and offer a bridge for the extremely divided binary of beliefs about the border.

Frameworks or theories about the border are not located at some point in the past, either. The historical connections made in Ambos Nogales' history inform their present relationship. A solidified connection at the border, forged in a historical moment, is still valued in a contemporary context. Much in the way familial heritage is structured. This continued connection alters theoretical or figurative interpretations to include that of its evolving existence in the face of changing circumstances. In this manner, frameworks or modes of understanding the border should include a living component to account for the shifting negotiations resulting from interactions with the border. In this way, micro understandings of the border could aid in macro dealings when it comes to perceptions about the border.

Just as the border possesses two sides, it must be understood and dealt with by comprehending those two sides. In an ever-increasing global society, this understanding

must extend beyond a binary or two sides to account for the multiplicity of interaction at and across the U.S.-Mexico border. The border is multi-faceted and generates both literal and figurative understandings of culture, race, class, economy, identity, society, and ethnicity. The larger issues and concerns about the U.S.-Mexico border often detract from the realities and lives that exist along the territorial line between the two countries. Along the 389 miles of border shared between Arizona and Sonora, there are numerous communities that depend on their neighbors on either side of the line for economic, cultural, and familial survival.

Seventy-five miles of that stretch of border belong to the Tohono O'odham nation, who struggle to compromise with a territorial system that has long ignored their sacred connections to the land. Tribal police work within the parameters of their own sovereign regulations, however, find themselves interacting with Border Patrol and a territorial demarcation in which they had no input or decision of its placement. This is a reality that must be included in understandings of the border beyond a meeting place between Mexico and the U.S. As well as serving as further indication of static communities along the territorial divide.

The border is often perceived as a temporary site of passage, resulting in communities that are misunderstood by those at a distance from the geographic boundary between Mexico and the U.S. For local border communities, they have come to know their neighbors and developed friendships as a result of living and working within a close proximity to one another. The geographic distance of the political centers of Mexico and the U.S. have resulted in a lack of humanization of the people living and interacting with the territorial demarcation between the two countries. In Ambos Nogales, the community

living astride the line has developed a heightened sense of awareness when interacting with the economy and society of both greater Mexico and the greater United States. The ability to negotiate both societies and economic systems allows for higher knowledge production, a reality put on display during the Cinco de Mayo Fiestas of the past. As the reinvigoration of the Cinco de Mayo Fiestas has occurred since 2010, the communities of Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, Sonora continue to come together during a time when calls for increasing separation and a reinforced physical fence are demanded by many at a distance from the border.

### **U.S.-Mexico Border Concerns in 2019**

On March 29, 2019, Donald Trump published messages via Twitter indicating a potential shut down or closure of the U.S.-Mexico border should more undocumented migrants and refugees from Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador travel through Mexico and attempt to cross the border or apply for asylum in the U.S. The border closure would be a mechanism for forcing Mexico to create a potential solution to prevent movement of people through the country which has served as a causeway for entry into the United States. There has been much debate over the manner in which the border, migrants, and refugees should be dealt with, in particular as this has been a situation rooted in historical interactions where undocumented labor has been utilized in the United States and the drug trade extends to some of the largest cities in the country.

For some, the solution is easy, reform immigration legislation already in place that would create a financially feasible and realistic path for migrants to seek a path to U.S. citizenship. Allow them to become a part of the taxpaying citizenry, while also holding businesses and corporations who utilize undocumented labor accountable for

taking advantage of a vulnerable population. Additionally, the argument for offering medical and mental health support that would prevent populations from maintaining an addiction to drugs is offered as a means for solving the drug trade and trafficking issue. Conversely, and as we are witnessing in a contemporary moment, a stronger, larger, and reinforced wall between Mexico and the U.S., at a cost to taxpayers, is the route the Trump Administration has decided to take. Even if it may not be successful, and could potentially exacerbate the concerns of migration, drug trafficking, and cartel violence along the border.

The reality is when it comes to the U.S.-Mexico border, the issues tied to it are more than anyone can handle. The concerns around drug and human trafficking, undocumented migration, and potential transnational gang violence dominate the perceptions about the border, which cause the communities along the border to be dismissed or marginalized, as is typical with people believed to exist on the fringes of society. As a result, the knowledge development that occurs on the border goes unknown by many in the dominant society and economy of Mexico and the U.S.

During the recent trial of Mexican drug kingpin, Joaquin “El Chapo” Guzman, testimony from Pedro Flores, who worked for Guzman, indicated that some of their major drug trafficking from Mexico into the United States did and does not come near the geographic U.S.-Mexico border. Instead, deliveries are flown from Sinaloa direct into a location near Chicago’s O’Hare airport (Coen, 2018). Focusing on movement in that capacity would generate a new understanding of the complexity of land, air, and water boundaries with access into the U.S.

In addition to the drug trafficking concerns, migration, immigration, and asylum seekers or refugees have created a concern for those who believe they might put a strain on the United States economy, or somehow eliminate citizens' access to government benefits. The Trump Administration has done much to feed into a fear of migrants, as well as criminalize numerous asylum-seeking populations from various Central and South American countries. On the same day that Trump tweeted about a potential closure of the U.S.-Mexico border, his administration came under fire over their treatment of refugees and migrants being detained in El Paso, Texas. Images had been released via numerous news outlets and social media platforms of large quantities of adults and children enclosed in a fenced area under a roadway overpass. Customs and Border Protection Commissioner, Kevin McAleenan, interviewed by the *Washington Post*, described the situation as negative, and a last resort, as current processing centers had been overwhelmed with people (Miroff and Sacchetti, 2019). The images, both understandably alarming and disconcerting, cause major concerns about humanitarian treatment and raise questions about where detained individuals and families might end up.

The preoccupation with and questions regarding what might happen to this asylum-seeking population takes a front seat to any other concerns that might arise regarding the U.S.-Mexico border. Migrant and refugee detainment coupled with the rate of migrant death in the Sonoran Desert has resulted in humanitarian crises concerns currently playing out across the U.S. Human rights activists have often been concerned with the treatment of migrant and refugee populations at the border, but it was not until the publication of Francisco Cantú's memoir, *The Line Becomes a River: Dispatches*

*from the Border*, that his experience employed as a Border Patrol agent, comes with an admission that training involved the dehumanization of migrants (2018). Cantú's work is a confirmation of the mistrust resulting after Border Patrol involved shootings, such as that of Jose Antonio Elena Rodriguez. Which created a public sentiment that agents use excessive force, especially considering he was shot 16 times in the back. This leads to further questions regarding the manner in which Border Patrol or Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents might interact with refugee and asylum-seeking populations being detained at the border in El Paso, or any other border port for that matter.

Much in the way Santa Cruz County Sheriff Tony Estrada expressed concern with the concertina wire that was added to the border fence in the Nogales area in November 2018, the current trepidation in the border region, specifically in the Nogales Sector of the border, is one of human treatment. Families who reside there wish to continue living in a peaceful manner, and one they have come accustomed to when negotiating with the border fence. At a distance, the Trump Administration seemingly makes decisions without a consideration for the human component of the situation. Resulting in an uncertain future when it comes to how migrants and refugees currently detained at the border might be treated and how future populations might come to be dealt with. The major issues related to the U.S.-Mexico border paint a grim picture however, it is necessary to keep in mind that there are stationary communities along the U.S.-Mexico border.

As Cinco de Mayo 2019 approaches, those communities will come together to commemorate an unexpected victory in Mexico's history. Cinco de Mayo is symbolic of a moment during the Franco-Mexican war when Mexicans, not trained in warfare or



military combat, went up against heavily trained French troops and had an unanticipated victory. It was a moment of celebration and a glimmer of hope during an otherwise difficult time. While small, the victory at Puebla in 1862 was enough to reinvigorate Mexicans and the people of Mexico with the energy and tenacity they needed to keep fighting. The Cinco de Mayo came to represent resilience and determination in the face of adversity. While the Cinco de Mayo has taken on capitalistic characteristics in the United States, and some mistake it for Mexican Independence Day, it does possess the qualities of resilience and grit in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges.

### **Lessons from the Fiestas**

The Cinco de Mayo Fiestas in Ambos Nogales have come to reflect the same symbolism as that of the battle at Puebla in 1862 - characteristics of hope, resilience, and unification at a completely unexpected time. The binational Fiestas of the past occurred as a means for generating income and tourist interest, however reflected an effort on behalf of the community to highlight the camaraderie and transboundary connection between Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, Sonora. The success of the Ambos Nogales Fiestas for almost 40 years points to their ability to work together, not only during the Cinco de Mayo celebration, but throughout the year and over time. The crowds of people that came to attend the Fiestas of the past did so out of a desire to celebrate collectively while enjoying the ambiance and merriment of the event. The reinvigoration of the Fiestas during a time of much friction concerning the border serve as a means for reinforcing connection when it appears to be impossible.

The current political climate presents unknown challenges for the residents of the border region. With discussions of a potential border shutdown looming, Ambos Nogales

is prepared to continue with their tradition of a Cinco de Mayo Fiesta. A backdrop of concertina wire hangs from the U.S.-Mexico border as the stage for the 2019 Fiestas goes up less than a block away. Regardless of what might be occurring at a national level, the local Fiestas will go on.

On May 5, 2019, Puppets at the Border/Títeres en la Frontera, will hold a festival and workshop in both Nogales, Sonora, and Nogales, Arizona entitled, “Beyond the Wall/ Más allá del Muro.” As an organization, Puppets at the Border, intends to use this festival as a means for celebrating the, “border culture of Nogales, and the rich diversity, history, and creativity that transcend physical barriers there,” (*Nogales International* 2019). The move to title the event further indicates a transboundary reality of the community. In the face of the barrier in Ambos Nogales, there remains connection beyond the static reach of the wall itself.

Spring, a season often regarded by indigenous populations as a time of new beginnings and a time to plant seeds that will nourish minds, spirits, and futures, brings the Cinco de Mayo or Fiestas de Mayo every year. In this manner, the Fiestas could serve to provide a renewed sense of connection during a time of much division across the country. Together, Ambos Nogales used the Cinco de Mayo Fiestas to share their fused identity with outsiders who are only beginning to understand the transboundary existence of life on the U.S.-Mexico border. This year, and in the commemorations of years to come, the community plans to continue to celebrate their culture, community, and history in the face of a structure seeking to divide them.

## Notes

1. The use of Disturnell's Treaty Map in conjunction with Richard Griswold del Castillo's text, *The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo: A Legacy of Conflict*, provides both visual evidence of incorrect cartographic treaty lines, and the historical interaction as a result of the map's errors. The map is most often available under the following citation:

Rittenhouse, Jack D. *Disturnell's Treaty Map: The Map that was Part of the Guadalupe Hidalgo Treaty on Southwestern Boundaries, 1848*. Santa Fe, N.M.: Stagecoach Press, 1965.

2. For more on the Bracero Program, 1942-1964, see:

Calavita, Kitty. *Inside the State: The Bracero Program, Immigration, and the I.N.S.* Routledge, 1992.

Cohen, Deborah. *Braceros: Migrant Citizens and Transnational Subjects in the Postwar United States and Mexico*. University of North Carolina Press, 2013.

Gamboa, Erasmo Coronado. *Mexican Labor and World War II: Braceros in the Pacific Northwest, 1942 – 1947*. University of Washington Press, 2000.

Mize, Ronald L. *The Invisible Workers of the U.S.-Mexico Bracero Program: Obreros Olvidados*. Lexington Books, 2016.

3. There appears to be dispute over the founding of both Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, Sonora as cities within their respective counties and states. Across numerous historical documents the founding date is listed as 1899 for a singular Nogales, with no distinction between Sonora or Arizona. However, the city of Nogales, Arizona lists 1880 as its founding date on signs as one drives into the city and the city website. Nogales, Sonora's founding date is listed by their city officials as 1920. For the purposes of this dissertation, the 1899 date has been employed as it indicates one community, and no division between the two.
4. For more on the Cinco de Mayo, including description of national and global influence on the battle occurring concurrently with local events in Puebla see, *Fire and Blood: A History of Mexico* by T.R. Fehrenbach.

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