FEMINICIDE AND ALL ITS ERASURE

¿DÓNDE ESTÁS?

BY: Ana Sofia Martinez

Part two of three of a radical act against gender-based violence
THIS ZINE CONTAINS POSSIBLY TRIGGERING CONTENT.
THERE WILL BE MENTION OF

SEXUAL VIOLENCE
GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE
MURDER
RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE
ENSLAVEMENT
HUMAN TRAFFICKING

PLEASE TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.

An overzealous and broke college student produced this Zine and its siblings. If you plan to print this, please make a donation to the author! (Suggested $5-20)

Remember, only Nazis and Colonizers steal art ;)
CIUDAD JUÁREZ, MX.

FEB. 1692 TO MAY 1693

A brief synopsis of the gender-based violence embodied in the feminicides of Ciudad Juárez, Mexico.

¿DÓNDE ESTÁS?

FEMINICIDE AND ALL ITS ERASURE
2019 march in Mexico City in front of Palacio Bellas Artes against Gender-Based Violence. "Ni una mas!"

WHAT TO EXPECT

PART 2 OF

feminicide
Aleena Ahmed
collage cover artist
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"I don't have a bio right now."

Aleena's art is tagged with the following symbol.

Julia Nalecz
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"I wish I was funny."

Julia's art is tagged with the following symbol:

Dr. Kristin Bezio
primary thesis advisor and mentor

Dr. Mariela Mendez
committee member and mentor

Dr. Lauren Henley
committee member and overall good person
the road that led me to this project was not easy. it was filled with moments of self-doubt, stress, fatigue, and pain. this topic is not easy, these stories are not easy. but they are worthy of hearing and telling.

i have had the honor to grow through the obstacles, but i recognize that couldn’t have been done without the many people who have supported me, most of whom do not fit on this page but are in my thoughts as i type this. to everyone who helped make this happen, thank you. from the bottom of my heart.


Con todo mi corazón,
Sofie
This investigation is centered around the community of Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. This region belongs to the Mansos, Suma, and Jumano people and was wrongfully stolen from them during the Spanish Conquista. Find whose land you are on using the code provided.

These zines were published through the Jepson school at the University of Richmond. This University is built on the stolen land of the Cheroenhaka (Nottoway), Chickahominy, Eastern Chickahominy, Mattaponi, Monacan, Nansemond, Nottoway, Pamunkey, Patawomeck, Upper Mattaponi, and Rappahannock tribes.

The university of Richmond is built above an enslaved people’s burial ground. Its founders have a disturbing history of owning enslaved peoples and calculatedly attempting to erase their history. Learn more using the code above.

Before beginning meditation, guides will often begin their session with the mantra of Buddha:

“I acknowledge I am doing this practice for the betterment of myself, and for those around me.”

Feel free to pause before beginning and complete this five minute mindfulness practice using the code.
Dear Reader,

There is an almost antithetical nature to activist work. On one hand, understanding intimately what brings about the evils of our world creates a collective connection between all those who have the eyes to see the same violence you see. It makes you feel less blind and guilty when you need to close your eyes. If done with compassion, however, each source you consume will open your heart further to the sorrows of the world. There is great pain in this process. **If you allow yourself to approach these topics as a human being, part of the collective, and not merely as your singular identity, you will begin to see yourself in the victims and survivors of this brutality. Your ego will begin to die, and you will realize that luck is the only thing standing between you and the wickedness you read on these pages. Luck that you were born into the spaces that you were born into, that you had people in your community to care for you, that you were not in the wrong place at that one time that reminds you most of the stories you read.**

This dear reader, is the unspoken goal of effective activism; to present the pertinent injustices of the world in ways that evoke an evolution of ethos. It’s a mighty request, but I hope you keep it in mind while you flip through these pages.

I was first introduced to gender-based violence in high school by my cousin, Jimena Martinez, who shared with me that she’d be participating in a digital workshop for an international collective against gender-based violence.

**She is a year older than I am, and I had always carelessly seen her life as the mystified version of what mine could have been if my parents had stayed in Mexico. Her experience with GBV awoke me to how glamorized my perception of life there had been. I had to learn more.**

Scholars like those I thanked at the beginning of this zine helped me recognize how intensely woven instances of violence were. **I could not solely look at Mexico to understand this phenomenon, there was a framework that was begging for recognition.**

Throughout this project, you will be introduced, or reintroduced, to three microcosms in history that had and continue to embody flagrant examples of gender-based violence:

- The executions of the Salem Witch Trials in Salem, Massachusetts
- The feminicides in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico
- The sexual harassment and assaults occurring at a private liberal arts university on the East Coast

A zine (An informal magazine style popularized in the 1990s for their ability to quickly reproduce and distribute information via copy machine) was created for each community, to illustrate the haunting parallels between seemingly distinct violence experienced in each space. Consequently, they need not be read in any particular order, or even in their entirety. **Whatever is bolded is the most important, and even reading the keywords highlighted in colorful boxes will equip you with the language necessary to verbalize these issues more extensively.**

These zines, reader, act as the background necessary for you to better understand and implement the practical element of this project; the Flower Index System I have created below. This system highlights an administration’s top eight more prominent characteristics that perpetuate gender-based violence. They are in no particular order.

- Non-transparent leadership
- Power Grabs
- Shift in Social Fabrics
- Colonial Infrastructure Dependency
- Over Policing of the people
- Corruption of administration
- Exchange of Impunity
- Financial strain

The presentation of these characteristics is intentionally disruptive and moves away from traditional indexing systems. Each character is represented by a petal, and those petals closest to each other interact the most when GBV is present. You can rank your organization using the color gauge below. Blue is a bearable manifestation of these qualities, and red is fatally experienced. I hope you take this flower into your personal toolkit of resistance and feel empowered to apply it to any administrative body you live under, no matter how big or small.

**So allow yourself to cry, step back, return, and reflect. This work has been and will continue to be there for you when you are ready. All it asks is that you come with an open mind and an even more open heart.**

Con Amor,
Sofie
The phenomenon is present, and should be spoken about immediately. It may be the first proven example of this phenomenon, but nevertheless there are people about to get hurt or currently being hurt by this. Life may be possible to live without thinking about it, but should it worsen it will begin to impact areas of one’s life.

This phenomenon has grown past a simple presence, its existence in the community has impacted the ways in which people have interacted with each other, the ability for people to live dignified lives, or move in the environment they are in.

This phenomenon has taken over the community. It's impossible for someone to go through their day-to-day life without this phenomenon interfering. It is equally impossible to live any kind of life that protects basic human rights. Living in this environment, in part because of this phenomenon, has made day to day existence unbearable.
When ranking each petal on a scale of 1-10, it is important to look at the numbers and temperature gauge provided previously. They are intentionally grouped into three different ranges to help you narrow down exactly what score to give.

For example, the exchange of impunity experienced in Juárez during the discovery of feminicides (and to this day) is disgustingly high. If you murder someone in Juarez, there is a 99% chance you'll get away with it, leaving the scoring of the petal at a 10/10. That degree of violence does not make life difficult, life ceases to exist. This is the worst case scenario for the characteristics of the petal, and therefore is inevitably going to lead to higher cases of feminicide.

With the same method, I ranked each of the petals and colored the center lightly with the score’s colored “temperature”. The resulting color of the center of the flower exposes the central "temperature" of the administration, and how drastically gender-based violence is affecting the lives of citizens.
NON-TRANSPARENT LEADERSHIP
Little to no member participation in administrative decisions.
Limited opportunities for the development of the political sphere
Leaders of the organization have faced accusations of discrimination based on race, gender, or class
Leadership is largely dominated by a body of people that are not representative of the organization in their race, gender, or class
The enforcement of an organization's laws are unfair and inconsistent to the mass population
Rates of crime are not deterred significantly by the existing justice system and are often counterproductive
Overseeing protective agency punishes some individuals at an unfair rate due to their race, sexuality, or class
The pyramid approach to leadership decisions and power distribution that people in the organization must depend on
A pyramidal approach to leadership decisions and power distribution that people in the organization must depend on
Distribution of wealth within members of the organization is healthy and proactively emphasizing equity in financial success
Monetary wealth is the most powerful form of currency in the organization
A pyramidal approach to leadership decisions and power distribution that people in the organization must depend on
Leadership is largely dominated by a body of people that are not representative of the organization in their race, gender, or class
Leaders of the organization have faced accusations of discrimination based on race, gender, or class
Challenging of foundational gendered dynamics
Introduction of a "new" profile of individual that varies from the one that created the organization
Binary and gendered divisions of the organization's individuals often denoting one as dominant over the other
Racial identities and dynamics are ingrained into organizational hierarchies, denoting the colonizer's identity as superior and the deviant as inferior
Racial identities and dynamics are ingrained into organizational hierarchies, denoting the colonizer's identity as superior and the deviant as inferior
Some individuals have higher rates of impunity for their crimes due to their social capital
Individuals cannot sustain healthy lives without spending a considerable amount of their income
Individuals cannot sustain healthy lives without spending a considerable amount of their income
Financial Strain
Little to no regulation and oversight over the spending of organization's funds
Little to no regulation and oversight over the spending of organization's funds
Non-Transparent Leadership
Limited opportunities for the development of the political sphere
Limited opportunities for the development of the political sphere
Overseeing protective agency does not equally respond to crime against some individuals
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Leadership is largely domi...
why juárez?

If one were to look up the term feminicide on the internet, the small, most northern city of Chihuahua, Ciudad Juárez, would echo through search results. Its skeletal-like streets embody the exploitative relationships between Mexico and the globalized North. Maquiladoras, or factories, litter the urban region with the unfulfilled promises of neoliberalism, and poverty stains every corner found outside gated communities.

The neglect of the city permeates the agenda of local and state politicians, with exploitative trade deals leaving a deformed economy with little hope of reform. Poor urban planning left a majority of Ciudad Juárez citizens with a lack of basic infrastructure such as reliable electricity or running water. By 1999, it was the fourth most polluted city in Mexico (1).

The city was born out of wedlock, a child of both the damned dictatorship of the past and the resurgence of national pride after a successful civil war. After the Mexican Revolution (1910-1921), Ciudad Juárez was viewed by the new state as a buffer between the democratized North and the recovering South.

US prohibition (1919-1933) created a demand for paraphernalia that Ciudad Juárez’s criminal organizations were ready to fill, and soon the city was known for its businesses that could provide all the sex, drugs, and alcohol a tourist could dream of (2). The economic boom led to an influx in population that the state’s limited resources could not provide for and by the late 1960s, Juárez had become less a provocative
paradise and more a sphere of consumption. Foreign trade deals like the National Border Development Program (PRONAF) in 1965 brought US raw materials into the hands of poorly paid young Mexicans to create products that increased foreign seller profit exponentially (3). Maquiladoras replaced tourists, and many local businesses fell into states of starvation. Out of the one point two million people registered in 2000 Juárez census, forty percent lived in extreme poverty (4). Between the degraded social sphere and risky economic structures, Juárez began to bleed back into the background of the national and global stage.

That was until the bodies began to appear...
...In 1993, a series of brutal murders targeted young women in the city.

Alma Chavira Farel, a thirteen-year-old girl, was the first to be acknowledged by the Juárez media as a victim of feminicide. In January of 1993, she was found beaten, raped, sodomized, and strangled in an empty lot in a middle-class neighborhood (5). Although certainly not the first, the brutal killing of Alma marks, in many scholars’ minds, the beginning of an epidemic of violent attacks against women in Mexico.

In May, an Unidentified Female’s body was found on a hill that overlooks Juárez with “Read the Bible” lettered on. In June, an Unidentified Female was found stabbed and set on fire (7) The brutal dehumanization of these human beings serves as a painful preview of the destructive grip feminicide would have on the city in the decades following. Between 1993 and the early 2000s, the bodies of over four hundred women would be found in Ciudad Juárez, many in shallow mass graves, and more than a few having gone missing after their shifts in the maquiladoras.
Scholar Carol Mueller believes that although not all the victims of these killings worked in the maquiladoras (some were students, others sex workers from local brothels), the hopes for a better life brought them to Ciudad Juárez. Despite the abusive work conditions, lack of unionization opportunities, and gendered discrimination they faced, **the women of Juárez have made up over 85 percent of the maquila jobs since the 1990s** (8). For a woman coming from a rural village with little economic status and an even lower social standing, the low wages of the maquiladoras were her best chance at economic freedom. **Their bodies became the oil of the neoliberal machine promised by the Mexican government to foreign investors.** Primarily in the production of shoes and textiles, which eventually turned into electronics and motor vehicles.

A majority of descriptions of maquiladoras mention women as the perfect body of labor due to the unskilled and underpaid characteristics of the labor demand. Stay mindful of these descriptions, reader, as deprecating descriptions of this labor further invisibilizes the bodies that perform it. Although there is no academic education necessary to work at a maquiladora, **the ability to withstand a sixty to eighty-hour work week in a building with little to no sunlight, for less than three dollars an hour** (as of 2021 and in comparison to the 35 dollars an hour a comparable US citizen will earn) is nothing short of a forced mastery of skill. To this day, **maquiladoras still account for over 58 percent of Mexico’s manufacturing GDP** (9).
Feminicide scholar and journalist Sergio González Rodríguez provides ample framework to deconstruct and better understand the commodification of labor at the hands of the maquiladora machines. Sergio points to the “neo-Fordist economy,” that birthed the maquiladoras, insisting its connection to feminicide was far from coincidental: “It is a parasite of this structure, just as the structure itself was encrusted upon the Mexican border,” (10).

The structure of one of these factories echoes multinational corporate demands of efficiency and loyalty from its workers. Bodies are homogenized into nearly identical uniforms, hairstyles, and stances. Rows of machines are faced forward to discourage small talk between workers, and bright fluorescent lights place concepts of time into the hands of the corporation by restricting access to the rhythms of natural light. By engaging in factory work, individuals are stripped of their identities and forced to root themselves in capitalistic themes of “control, discipline, architectural-industrial surveillance, and functionalism,” which often bleeds into their bodies and personal lives (11).

The body is converted into a machine for production; the body becomes capital.
Intersectional systems of oppression (gender, race, economic status, etc.) do not assign the same value to every body; this inequality is where violence is born. In a culture so deeply rooted in the dynamics of gender, the maquiladoras quickly became a breeding ground for sexual harassment and abuse. Mexican machismo culture perpetuates traditional embodiments of gender roles and encourages the policing of nonconforming bodies. This often instills an overbearing "natural" division in the masses; you are either a Man or a Woman. More often, the disadvantages lived by female-presenting people make an inferred and more problematic division; you are either a Man, or you are not.

& feminicide

**machismo**
a colonially traditional approach to gender dynamics that includes heightened patriarchal values often associated with Latin American cultures

**Men are:**
economic providers
social protectors
expected to be capable of fulfilling labor demands.

**Women are:**
weak
fragile
pure
best kept at home
providers and caretakers for the possessions of a man
EX:
raising his children
cleaning his house,
cooking his meals
providing sexual satisfaction.

dónde estás hija?

por ahora, aquí estás.
what it means to be at war.

The maquiladoras demand bodies for labor, but leave the specification of which bodies to the corporations that feed it. When women began to answer the call, working men were suddenly faced with a cultural juxtaposition many had never experienced before: women working side by side, completing the same cyclical tasks, in the same uniforms for comparable wages. Little did it matter that the wages in question were not nearly of enough subsistence to trigger economic liberation or budge gender hierarchies. Machismo was under attack, and the mere existence of women in the workforce was a declaration of war.

Maquilas are notorious for sexual abuse among employees and supervisors. Men of high authority have been observed to “raffle off,” the most attractive workers to favored subordinate male supervisors (12), and sexist rhetoric is so common it has become part
of workplace slang. The International Labor Organization estimates that four out of ten women who quit working at a maquiladora do so because of sexual harassment, and one in four firings is because of it (13). The ILO admits these findings are likely a gross misrepresentation of the actual volume of incidents due to the stigmatization and shame felt by women who experience workplace harassment. **Alarmingly high rates of abuse allude to the idea that this discrimination is not an unfortunate byproduct of equal opportunity, as the Mexican government states.** Transnational corporations viewed socially vulnerable women as the perfect fit in their exploitative labor scheme with no intention of supporting social equity as a byproduct of making use of women’s bodies.

"Maquilapolis"  
[City of Factories]  
A film by Vicky Funari and Sergio De La Torre
In March of 1995, the Human Rights Watch Women’s Rights Project conducted an investigation into sex-based discrimination in the maquiladora industry. Their investigation into forty-three maquiladoras along the Mexican border concluded with substantial evidence that pregnant and possibly-becoming-pregnant workers faced extensive discrimination in the hiring process. By interviewing current or former maquiladora workers, the HRW discovered female workers were often coerced into taking pregnancy tests through the guise of a physical exam prior to employment, and to answer questions related to their sexual activity, means of contraception, and love lives to gauge potential risks of pregnancy (14).

The investigation also concluded that maquiladora employers “aggressively recruit female workers,” through practices such as job postings that stated “women only,” and sending trucks of men with bullhorns throughout neighborhoods during working hours (when women are most likely home and men are not) to advertise available jobs (15).

"Pink crosses mark spots where the bodies of women, mostly maquiladora workers, have been found in Juarez.”

In These Times
A socialist newspaper founded in 1973
When questioned, *maquiladora managers shamelessly admitted their preference for female workers because of their docility, reduced likeliness of unionizing, and a high tolerance for abusive work conditions.* Depressingly, the latter proved to be accurate, as HRW noted little to no resistance against abhorrent factory conditions amongst female workers. Women working in *the Zenith factory in Reynosa* told HRW that they were only given protective gloves for their soldering work when US managers came to visit; women in the ITT plant in Rio Bravo noted that due to a lack of protective eyewear, oil would habitually fall into their eyes while oiling car parts (16). Through a crude prioritization of productivity, the very women who were beckoned to these underpaying positions were unknowingly subjecting themselves to complete objectification by the corporate body. *Like machine parts, their disfigurement seemed a small enough price for the Mexican government to pay for $29 billion in export earnings it produced by 1996* (17). In hiring the most vulnerable sector of the population, companies slashed labor costs. Hiring men to perform the same tasks would inherently "require higher wages, better working conditions and more
flexible working hours,” all of which would reduce capital gain (18). Maquiladoras are the prodigy of capitalism: a factory that has stripped away any hindrance to production and exploited every resource, including humans, capable of increasing its capital. Unsurprisingly, this degradation of human life has placed female workers, who are already seen as objects before putting on their uniforms, in an extremely vulnerable position. Without a framework of gender equality, the maquiladoras created a mutation between power and exploitation; “Biopolitical territory par excellence: the body is seen as the objective of power,” (19). Female workers are now not only dominated socially, but their very bodies also produce capital and thus, a dual objectification is born. As property of men and now of their corporations, women are seen as the superior object to obtain and impose control over.

The creation of maquiladoras, in extremes, can be viewed as the “feminicide machine’s antechamber,” because its dehumanizing labor practices slowly strip its workers of any political, social, and personal sense of self.

They are reduced to naked life, making these factories the “most absolute biopolitical space that has ever been
realized,” (20) a space where women are subjected to the extremes of personified capitalist, and therefore patriarchal, power. Despite the limited pay, the women of the maquiladoras were able to at least partially provide for themselves, threatening a hallmark dynamic of masculinity. Gender fright, a term used to describe backlash faced in societies when gender dynamics change, took over the city of Juárez.

It is very likely that many men of the community, regardless of their connection to the maquilas, soon found themselves feeling vulnerable in a perceived economic power grab, and felt emboldened to take the domination of women into their own hands.

Feminicide can be considered one side of a conversation between peers; men who cannot embody traditional masculinity characteristics take initiation into their own hands. Socialization of statehood camouflages itself as an independent opinion of society. Failed police investigations and unfulfilled political promises recommit the government to ignorance. The system speaks back.

"Cancion Sin Miedo"
Song Without Fear
A anti-feminicide song performed as an act of resistance by activists around the globe
Dear Debanhi,

Social media posts and newspaper articles filled the internet with opinions on your actions. Why did your friends leave you alone at a party? What were you doing in such a dangerous part of town? Why would you get into an Uber alone so late at night?

These questions are so fucking unfair to you. They prepare the social sphere for the legal impunity that you embody. They reek of a state’s justification and rationalization of violence. They focus our anger and frustration into forming a typecast of who you were. You were alone, had untrustworthy friends, and partook in risky activities.

To put it bluntly, these questions make this your fault. But you had the right to be out late. You had the right to have friends who made a mistake, it shouldn’t have cost you your life. You have so many people who are seeking justice for you, whatever that can mean. “Presidente” ALMO publicly denounced the risk of feminicide, saying your death was tragic but an “unavoidable” part of a woman’s reality. Your community took it as a massive insult, and thousands of journalists, independent bloggers, and social media spaces around the globe exposed the mediocre police work of Monterrey, including the fact over 200 personnel couldn’t locate you. Your body was in a water tank only two blocks away from where you disappeared. The state failed you Debanhi, but your sisters have not. Thousands have taken the streets to find justice for you. I’m thinking of your family, and pray your father finds peace while he waits to see you again.
Yolanda Martinez is a 26-year-old woman applying for a job.

Her father Gerardo Martinez reported her missing on the last day of March after leaving her grandmother’s house in the Juárez municipality “with a job application in her hands.” Despite pleas from her family, authorities, including the state governor Samuel García, denied the severity of the disappearance.

Dear Yolanda,
They make you disappear every day. Once on the last day of March 2022, and every day since your story was buried under the news of Debanhi. You disappeared from the same city as her, gone for three times as long, after wanting to find a job for yourself. Your dad told us he was nervous when they found Debanhi but never gave up hope that they’d find you too. When I read your story, my heart broke at the anguish your family went through. They had to lead the hunt for you. They had to protest time and time again against the Nuevo Leon police that you were worthy of resources and energy as well. They had to watch as the world moved mountains for another but wouldn’t move pebbles for you. Nobody but the corrupt Nuevo Leon administration is to blame for their continued suffering. On May 8th, your family found you. You were faced down, and alone.

Your dad says he doesn’t trust the authorities anymore. Finding you was only the beginning of their battle. They still hunt for evidence from your last moments, meticulously retracting your steps until your truth comes back to life. Your family shared your story tirelessly until activists of your community gathered around the Attorney’s General building. Mothers, including yours, rallied with posters and banners with your name on them. Mother’s Day was only 2 days after. The coward that killed you is still out there, and I can’t imagine the suffering that this burden causes your family every day. Your grandmother misses you. We will never forget who you were, and what was taken away from you. We will fight your erasure.
Debansi’s Timeline

Debansi Susana Escobar Bazaldua is born. She would soon be adopted by

September 4th, 2003

Debansi, now 18 and in law school, agreed to go to a party in Las Quintas with her friends.

April 8th

The driver initially reported that he didn’t know why Debansi left his car, but later confessions would expose that he had tried to sexually assault her during the car ride. The image he took of her standing outside his car would become the most infamous photo attached to her case.

April 9th

At 12:20 am she arrives at the party. Accounts of her activities during the party are conflicting, but at 4:21 am she left after an argument took place between her and the friends she came with.

Her body was found in Ciudad Juárez in Anapra. She was half-naked when found; her dress had been torn apart. An unidentified woman was found in Ciudad Juárez in Anapra. She was half-naked when found; her dress had been torn apart. An unidentified woman was found in Ciudad Juárez in Anapra. She was half-naked when found; her dress had been torn apart. An unidentified woman was found in Ciudad Juárez in Anapra. She was half-naked when found; her dress had been torn apart. An unidentified woman was found in Ciudad Juárez in Anapra. She was half-naked when found; her dress had been torn apart. An unidentified woman was found in Ciudad Juárez in Anapra. She was half-naked when found; her dress had been torn apart. An unidentified woman was found in Ciudad Juárez in Anapra. She was half-naked when found; her dress had been torn apart. An unidentified woman was found in Ciudad Juárez in Anapra. She was half-naked when found; her dress had been torn apart. An unidentified woman was found in Ciudad Juárez in Anapra. She was half-naked when found; her dress had been torn apart.
The Mexican government’s erasure of feminicides can be seen through a lack of public recognition of the issue, botched police work, and insufficient protective legislation. The rates of impunity seen in feminicide cases are not a coincidence. **Impunity is a tool of the state.**

Imagine this...

You are a human experiencing the formation of civilized society. What could possibly entice you to part ways with a majority of your free will and subjugate yourself to administrative law and order? How about safety from external forces? A guarantee of basic needs being met? The phenomenon of the Social Contract guides ethical relationships between citizens and the state. By definition, the main function of a state is to maintain civility. In return for their obedience and subjugation, citizens are owed peace. However, if the government cannot protect its citizens from violence outlawed by its legislation, what validity is there to its power?

Questions of legitimacy towards a government tend to rise when a society’s basic needs aren’t being met. In the case of Mexico, the constant economic instabilities of the past 80 years leave millions poor, hungry, and unemployed and is often thought of as being the leading cause of mistrust in the Mexican government by its citizens.

**Impunity**, particularly in a legal sense, refers to exemption from punishment for illegal and harmful actions.
Specifically in the 1990s, when Ciudad Juárez was placed in the global limelight for mass feminicide reportings, the neoliberal policies adopted by the PRI party, including the devaluing of labor done by maquiladora schemes, the Mexican economy experienced destructive recessions.

An inconsistent economy produces fewer resources for its citizens, which means the majority cannot obtain the basic goods and services necessary to feel safe. In a legitimate democratic state, administrative failures of this magnitude have often prompted citizens to utilize voting systems and replace faulty leadership. However, in Mexico, the regime of the PRI party has repeatedly distorted election results, enacted local clientelism, and paralyzed opposing parties to ensure their reelection recession after recession.

In the 2022 Freedom House report, Mexico received an overall score of 60 out of 100, with political rights scoring 27 out of 40 and civil liberties 33 out of 60 respectively. This places the country in a high-risk category for democratic backslide and marks a five-point decrease from even five years prior (22).

The instability of a failed state and failed attempts by citizens to reclaim it have created a chasm in the Social Contract. The State cannot legitimize itself through traditional means. A new violence is born.

**clientelism**
A political strategy that involves an exchange of goods and services for political support

**democratic backslide**
A process of administrative change in government that makes the exercising of democratic rights and the usage of democratic institutions more repressive.
Scholar Michel Foucault argues that modern liberal governments, in comparison to authoritarian regimes of the past, control their population through who and how people are allowed to live instead of threatening death.

With limited financial resources and weakened democratic institutions, the PRI was met with a choice in the 1980s; either acknowledge the state has failed and can no longer live up to the Social Contract or choose whom to protect in their dystopian and corrupt governing system. With the consolidation of economic and political power seen in the 90s and early 2000s, I argue the state chose the latter. During Salinas’ six-year term, twenty-four individuals and families were listed in Forbes 1994 billionaires list. In 1991, Mexico was home to only two billionaires (23).

Although the PRI was challenged and is currently replaced by an alleged anti-neoliberal left-wing party (ALMO’s MORENA movement), necropolitical practices prove more evident in Mexico as the fight worsens against the competitor cartel-state, weakening currency exchange and corrupt political figures.
Controlling a population through a fear of death is something scholar Achilles Mbeme believes to be common for vulnerable states (24). As a last resort to legitimize, states may offer limited resources to citizens who will embody and promote the image of the state. In return, those citizens are rarely victims of violence, whether economic or literal. As was the case for Debanhi, Yolanda, and the millions of gender-based violence victims, their subordination by the state, and thus society, is undeniably connected to their death. It consumes their being as a sacrifice to the consumer, transforming them into an object no different to him than the shoes on his feet.

A state’s violence acts as the consumer’s manual. It is also silence. State silence, in its most brutal form, is impunity. In 2018, it has been estimated that ninety-three percent of crimes go uninvestigated, and nine out of ten homicides that occur remain unsolved (25). Impunity is a commodity, a gift from the state to its consumer. Just as international corporations were gifted female labor in the maquiladoras of Juárez, the state gifts feminicide perpetrators with their ignorance and denial.

In any civilized society, it’s undeniable that “no common crime committed by common outcasts would remain in complete impunity for this long,” (26). The failing efforts of the Mexican government to prosecute perpetrators uncover a horrific systemic pattern of erasing female-presenting people. Whether through machismo, maquiladoras, or assassination. Men reinforce the consumption and brutality of the government and remain superior.
A majority of feminicides are perpetrated by men. For a country like Mexico, enshrined in the doctrine of machismo, men are expected to embody traditional traits of masculinity (i.e. strong, domineering, protecting, providing, etc.). They are also expected to take pride in their masculinity and perform it for others. In cases of rape and sexual assault, many assume the act itself to be for sexual gratification and control. Assault is forceful, and for the victim marks a complete “loss of control over her body’s behavior,” and complete consumption of her free will by the aggressor (28). Superficial understandings of masculinity would provide support to this hypothesis; if a man cannot obtain what he wants willingly, the patriarchy expects him to enact force to get what he wants. Anything to consume.

Understanding feminicides forces one to recognize who expects a man to dominate. The performance of masculinity can only be validated by other men, typically at the expense of a woman. Behaviors of toxic masculinity serve as a language between men and their peers.

Notice how easily one can parallel the violent practices of the maquiladora corporations and the aggressive demands of masculinity. Domination, superiority, and control are also qualities neoliberal governments and their supporting corporations depend on to survive. Any perpetuation of this toxic masculinity better serves the identity the state has chosen to embody. In the maquiladoras, it led to the complete objectification of the female body, resulting in an increase of feminicides in the nation.
Less lethally, it can be experienced in instances of public harassment. A man, sometimes alone but always with an audience, will catcall a woman, making her his object and performing the masculine act of domination. His peers, if present, may encourage him or pat him on the back after the fact of a job well done, like clapping at the end of a performance. The hierarchy is reasserted and the male is praised.

In a study of serial rapists in Brasilia, Rita Segato noted that heightened sexual violence can act as a surrogate road to manhood for individuals who cannot secure their status by traditional means (29). The patriarchy assigns value to some bodies and not to others, men must prove themselves worthy of superiority. In cases of feminicides, the victims are often, but not always, females who are challenging the patriarchal norms. They are out late without male companionship, refusing sexual advances, and searching for jobs to gain economic independence. They are a threat in the eyes of the machine.

Feminicide acts as both a means of extermination and resocialization. An extermination of a rising social shift that would challenge the persisting patriarchy and a tool for resocializing its doctrine. The systematic victimization of females in Mexico “bear the signs of a campaign: they smack of a turf war, of the lands’ rape and subjugation,” (30). The killing of a female allows a man the ultimate and most pathetic monologue to prove himself worthy. The state, just as it protected the maquiladoras, turns a blind eye to the repeated abuses of the bodies of women, especially those who do not conform to the female archetype needed to perform masculinity.
Frida Guerrera is a Mexican journalist who has dedicated her life to hunting down men who kill women. She has been tortured, kidnapped, arrested, and stalked for what she does, yet does not waver. Unlike so many officials in the government, Frida does not rest knowing there are free killers in the streets.

This oil pastel drawing and collage rendition of Frida is aimed to mimic the style of the infamous Virgin Mary depiction that is common in Mexico. Public officials often send messages of prayer to the families of victims, compelling the Virgin Mary to protect them.

Julia Nalecz, whose beautiful work stands before you, and I thought there was someone more worthy of credit.
Take a second to check in with yourself. What are you feeling? Were you reminded of anything? Did parts of this reading make you stop and reflect or step away?

Journal, talk, draw, dance, etc. it out! If you have reflections helping you process the material, express them in your physical world. This phenomenon gets its power from cultures of silence. Seek out the community to help you synthesize what you're learning!

Remember that even in reading a portion of this zine, you are helping put an end to GBV! Interacting with something as complex as this can make us feel helpless- but radical resistance also means acknowledging and embracing any and every moment we try and make the world a better place.

Step away from the zine to reassess! It’s easy to get sucked into this subject, but it is violent in nature. Too much negativity will drain you from your ability to interact with this material.

MEDITATE! Scan the code below to access this author’s favorite mindfulness practices.
**FEMINICIDE AND ALL ITS ERASURE**

“Performance, Valparaíso / colectivo interdisciplinario y feminista”

**LASTESIS**

“Our daughters back home” is a civil association founded by relatives and friends of young girls who have disappeared or been murdered in the State of Chihuahua. We deal with the loss of our daughters by adopting an active attitude that allows us to overcome impotence by denouncing the facts and demanding that the authorities respond to our demand for justice.”

**PSYDEH**

“PSYDEH [see-de] is a Mexican grassroots non-profit organization investing in Indigenous and rural women as local leaders to build strong communities and sustainable futures in rural Hidalgo, Mexico.”

**ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN JUAREZ, MX**

“Funds for this Initiative will support community-based women’s rights groups that are using a variety of innovative strategies to end the wave of systemic violence against women in Juarez, Mexico”.

citations can be found using this code