

Issue 3, MAY 2025

The Poetics and Politics of Borders: An Archive

A ZINE FROM THE BORDERS RESEARCH GROUP
UBC CENTRE FOR MIGRATION STUDIES

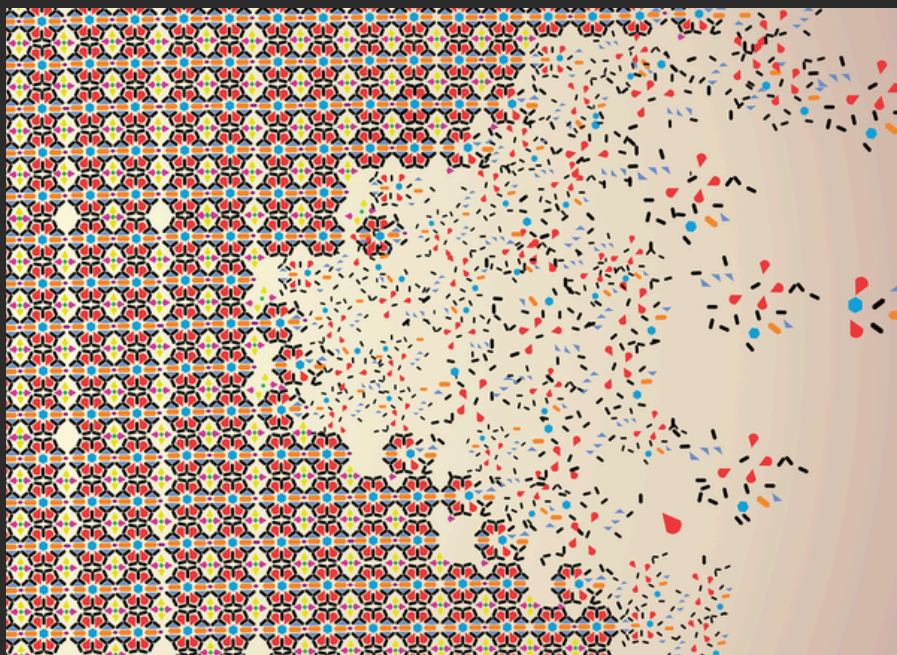


Image by Ramzi Latti from Pixabay, Public Domain

UBC

Centre for
Migration
Studies



The Borders Research Group conducts its activities on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam) people. This acknowledgment invites us to think about how the study of borders is inextricably linked to the struggle for decolonization, human liberation, and the reconfiguration of relationships with land, with each other, and with the broader global communities with whom we are interconnected.

Issue 3



The CMS Borders Research Group introduces the third issue of its zine, *The Poetics and Politics of Borders: An Archive*. Our zine is a platform designed to amplify the work of the Borders research group and to think more deeply about concepts in border studies from an interdisciplinary perspective.



In this issue, we recap our events from terms 1 and 2 of the 2024-2025 academic year, through the lens of imperial diasporas, deportation across oceanic worlds, and the social life of resistance across the Atlantic and Caribbean through artistic and creative practice. In a time when border violence is intensifying across the world with the rise of authoritarian trends and the widening illegalization of human mobility, we feel it is particularly important to centre scholarship and creative work that addresses the ways in which borders reshape people's capacity to move across borders and their senses of self and capacities to imagine tangible futures. Through our reading seminars and speaker events this year, we have tried to highlight and engage with examples of creative resistance to the colonial narratives that serve as the bedrock of border violence in the modern world.

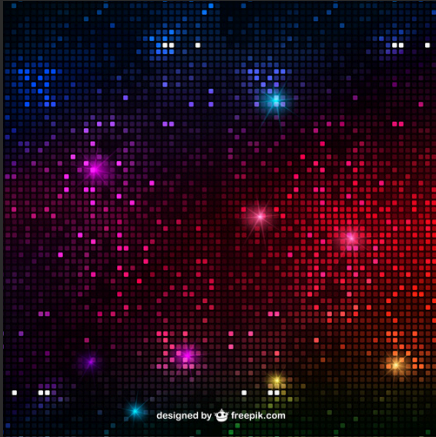
This year we also welcomed our first co-coordinator, Dr. Nikhita Obeegadoo, who is Assistant Professor of Languages and World Literatures at UBC-Okanagan (on leave) and Assistant Professor of francophone Studies at the University of Chicago. Dr. Obeegadoo's expertise on contemporary literatures emerging from the Indian Ocean, African and francophone worlds opened up a whole new world of scholarship that we will continue to explore in our events and seminars.

The image we chose for our third issue cover reflects an ever-present theme in this year's discussions: dispersal and return. Through ethnography, geography, and art, we explored the experience of human dispersal and how it produces new kinds of emplacement in lands both foreign and familiar. We especially focused on how diasporas reimagine return and emplacement, especially those who find themselves living in the lands of imperial and colonial powers.

We also want to sincerely thank the Borders Group members for an enriching, dynamic, and productive 2024-2025 academic year. A special thank you to the CMS staff, including Atmaza Chattopadhyay, Gabriele Dumpys-Woolever, Marie Frileux, and Maia Johl for their critical support in making our events happen! Thank you to CMS Co-Directors, Dr. Antje Ellermann and Dr. Irene Bloemraad for their ongoing support and encouragement of the research group. We wish you a lovely summer and look forward to more enriching events and discussions next academic year.

~Helena Zeweri and Nikhita Obeegadoo,
Borders Research Group Coordinators,
2024-2025

Creativity and Resistance in Imperial Diasporas



Source: <http://www.freepik.com>



Source: <http://www.freepik.com>

On November 20, 2024, we hosted a reading seminar titled “Creativity and Resistance in Imperial Diasporas.” In the seminar, participants discussed the ways in which performance, grief, and joy shape diasporic personhood in South Asian communities in the global North. Through an article by Roshanak Kheshti, we looked at how spaces like discos and nightclubs function as spaces where ancestral and contemporary cultural forms are combined and community and freedom are reimagined.

We also explored displacement from a more literary perspective. We discussed the lived experiences of Chagossians, people displaced from the Chagos islands to Mauritius in the wake of British colonialism and the creation of a US military base on the island of Diego García.

Through reading *Silence of the Chagos* by Shenaz Patel, we thought about what it means to reimagine home in the face of multiple rounds of displacement.

We discussed the following pieces which may be of interest to our members:

Kheshti, Roshanak. 2023. “Pocodisco: The Sonic Performativity of Grief, Grievance, and Joy in Diaspora.” *American Anthropologist* 126(2): 271-281.

Patel, Shenaz. *Silence of the Chagos* (translated from the French by Jeffrey Zuckerman). 2005. Brooklyn: Restless Books.

Mass Deportation and Colonialism



Source: <http://istockphoto.com>

On January 29, 2025, the group hosted a reading seminar on mass deportation, in which we discussed global trends around mass deportation and their relationship to historical colonial and imperial formations.

Through examining the ways in which deportation is increasingly being outsourced to global South countries, we thought about the geopolitical power relations that inform contemporary deportation trends.



Source: <https://www.dreamstime.com/stock-photo-passport-image1402350>, Davinci

We also discussed the lived experience of deportation and the social fragmentation and disorientations that accompany it. We discussed an article that examined how the United States, New Zealand, and Australia utilize Guam, the Cook Islands, and Samoa as sites to receive deportees, and the responsibilities they place on such islands to determine the fates of deportees.

The following article may be of interest to members:

McNeill, Henrietta. 2023. "Deportation as a neo-colonial act: how deporting state influence extends beyond the border." *Political Geography* 102: 1028-1045.

The Political Life of Diasporas



Source: https://pixabay.com/users/tylujura-22072131/?utm_source=link-attribution&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=image&utm_content=9425698
Tylujura for Pixabay</p>

On February 28, 2025, the Borders Group hosted a book talk by Dr. Sharon Quinsaat, Associate Professor of Sociology at Grinnell College, titled “Insurgent Communities: How Protests Create a Filipino Diaspora,” also the title of her new book (2024, University of Chicago Press).

Dr. Quinsaat discussed the historical processes through which diasporas are politically constructed through the Filipino experience in the United States and the Netherlands. Such forms of resistance contribute to what Quinsaat calls a collective memory and helps create insurgent communities that emerge during times of social and political transformation.

Borders Group members also visited the Vancouver Art Gallery to view an exhibit by Firelei Báez, an artist who explores the multiple legacies of colonial histories in the African diaspora and the Caribbean, through mixed media and rich visual tapestries. Her paintings and installations were powerful and evocative commentaries of emergent grammars of resistance that defy colonial conceptions of the body, land, time, and cultural authenticity.



Source: <https://www.dreamstime.com/royalty-free-stock-photos-vancouver-art-gallery-canada-facade-downtown-image40097258>,
Alexandre Fagundes De Fagundes

The Borders Research Group

Mission Statement

The Borders Research Group aims to advance interdisciplinary dialogues about border regimes and the lived experience of borders through reading seminars, speaker events, and written and creative expression. We seek to expand our understanding of the many ways borders can be conceptualized: as physical spaces that monitor, manage, and limit human mobility; as a set of bureaucratic practices and logics; and as historical formations that are deeply entangled with colonialism and empire in all of its forms. We value the work of artists, community leaders, community activists, and advocates in amplifying critical analyses of bordering practices today. Our members' research spans a range of topics including but not limited to: the securitization of borders, cross-border labour mobility, the mediation of gender and sexuality, the externalization of sovereignty, carceral border regimes, and resistance and political mobilization.

If you would like to learn more about upcoming events, feel free to email the Borders Research Group Coordinators: Helena Zeweri (helena.zeweri@ubc.ca) and Nikhita Obeegadoo (nikhita.obeeegadoo@ubc.ca).

Please visit our [website](#) to learn more!