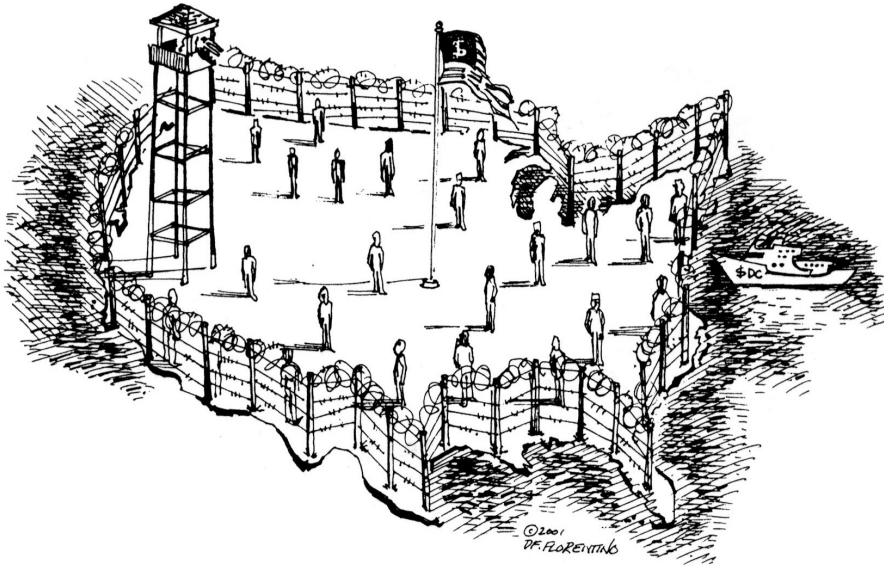


Infrastructure Expansion, Migration and



Radical Border Solutions



Radical (adj): Of or pertaining to the root or root cause of the matter.

In the past few years, public attention in the US has increasingly focused on the issue of so-called “illegal immigration.” In April 2005, a vigilante group called the Minuteman Project undertook armed patrols of the Arizona-Mexico border, allegedly to help capture undocumented migrants. A year later, the mainstream was shaken when millions of immigrants and their supporters (one million in Los Angeles alone) took to the streets in protest of new bills that would further criminalize immigrants and militarize the US-Mexico border. Liberal pundits declared the birth of a new civil rights

movement, while those on the right began to mutter about the possibility of a coming culture or race war.

Reformist solutions have predictably failed to address the root causes of migration or the sources of racist injustice. Amnesty and legalization will undeniably make life better for migrants currently living in the US, but they will do nothing to prevent yet more *indigenas* and *latinos* from being driven from their homes, and they will do nothing to change the US economy’s dependence on cheap migrant labor.

A truly radical analysis of migration must acknowledge that most migrants would prefer to stay home, but desperate circumstances force them to risk their lives in the hopes of finding work in the US. It must recognize the effect of treaties like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which forces hundreds of thousands of *campesinas* and *campesinos* off their land every year by dumping cheap, subsidized, US corn on the Mexican market (according to some estimates, migration across the US’s southern border has tripled since NAFTA went into effect in 1994). It must take into account the way that the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) will exacerbate the problem, and it must acknowledge the role of infrastructure projects like the Plan Puebla Panamá (PPP) in facilitating these trade agreements.

Infrastructure projects, in and of themselves, also dislocate millions of people every year. The World Commission on Dams estimates that those *directly* displaced by dam construction in the last 60 years number 40-80 million worldwide. In Latin America, these dislocations inevitably feed northward migration.

A real solution to the plight of migrants in US society must address the underlying causes of this migration. It must not only defend the safety of those who choose to migrate, it also must defend the right of indigenous and *campesino* peoples to preserve their lands and cultures—to live at home, with dignity, if that is their wish. It must address the racist, colonialist economy that demands cheap labor and forces migrants and people of color into these roles. Attacking the infrastructure of this colonialism might be a good place to start.

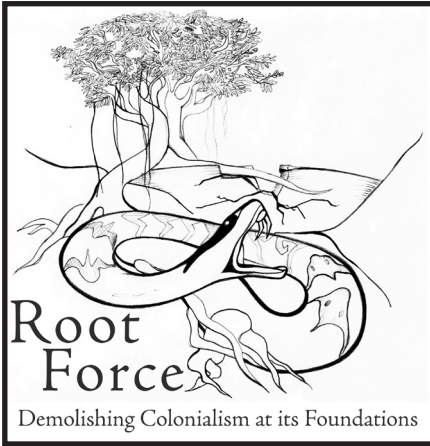
Root Force

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demolishing colonialism at its foundations

Beyond Summit Hopping

Undermining the Foundations of Corporate Globalization



In the immediate aftermath of the 1999 World Trade Organization protests in Seattle, the US movement against corporate globalization seemed energized and unstoppable. This aura of invincibility soon evaporated, however, when governments and corporations responded by moving their summits to remote locations, setting up fortress-like defenses and contracting massive numbers of heavily-armed police to brutally repel any protest.

Without summit protests as a viable option, much of the energy around anti-globalization organizing dissipated. In this, our movement committed a strategic error, backing off just when we were strongest.

The forces of corporate globalization are still on the defensive in many parts of the world, where farmers, labor organizers and other social movements have risen up to repel them. Here in the US, we can put a similar squeeze on corporations' ability to strengthen their control over people's lives around the world.

The key is the recognition that without certain critical infrastructure, all the free trade agreements in the world are merely so much useless paper.

What Is Infrastructure?

The word "infrastructure" describes the physical basis of an economy — the transportation, electrical and communications networks required for the extraction and movement of resources. Specific examples of infrastructure include highways, railways, ports, dams, mines, oil and gas pipelines, power plants, power lines and telecommunications cables. Until this groundwork is laid, industrial production is simply impossible.

Why Globalization Needs Infrastructure

Most simply, a free trade agreement is useless without a way to actually move the goods being traded. This may seem like a simple or even foolish point to make — would governments be signing free trade treaties in the first place if they didn't have a way to move their products?

In fact, they have already done so. Existing infrastructure in the Americas is simply insufficient for the massive trade volume anticipated from new free trade agreements, increased resource extraction and ever-increasing consumption. That's why expanding "international trade infrastructure" is one of the top priorities for business and political leaders throughout the hemisphere.

The best-known example is a megaproject called the Plan Puebla Panamá (PPP), introduced in 2001. Originally, the PPP included a variety of highways, ports, dams and other projects throughout southern Mexico and Central America. Widespread popular resistance, however, forced the region's governments to backtrack on their rhetoric. The most controversial projects, including all dams, were officially removed from the plan. But this was a change on paper only, as none of the "removed" projects actually lost their funding or government endorsement. In 2003, Mexican officials were instructed to stop making public statements about the PPP, and the projects continue in relative secrecy.

In South America, *every* country is involved in the South American Regional Infrastructure Integration Initiative (IIRSA), nearly identical to the PPP in concept and design. In North America, infrastructure initiatives like Atlantica, the CANAMEX Corridor and the Corridors of the Future Program aim to patch up the gaps in that region's far more extensive infrastructure.

Throughout the Americas, similar projects are under way, although not necessarily under the umbrella of a megaproject like the PPP or Corridors of the Future. Yet no matter how individual projects are classified, they are all part of an explicitly stated plan to integrate the Americas into one massive transportation, electrical and communications network. When taken together, these projects will provide the infrastructure necessary for the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA).

A Weakness of the System

This lack of infrastructure is a major weakness of the global economic system, and the government and business leaders of the continent know it. It's time we recognized the same fact and adjusted our resistance strategies accordingly.

We can do this. There is a long history of communities around the world shutting down planned infrastructure projects — from the airport that was never built in San Salvador Atenco, Mexico, to the decade in which virtually no new roads were built in the UK.

Stop these projects from being built, and the whole global economy will be hit by a resource shortage. In a very real sense, by fighting infrastructure we can take direct action against corporate globalization at one of its weakest points.

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