

## Working the Borderlands

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**Chair:** Celeste Menchaca, Texas Christian University

**Panelists:**

- Holly Karibo, Oklahoma State University
- Laura D. Gutiérrez, University of the Pacific
- Maria Quintana, San Francisco State University

"Working the Borderlands," will consider the intersections between labor, migration, and the production of North America's national, trans- and multi-national borderlands. We will explore how resource extraction, labor economies, commodity flows, and capitalist ecologies have informed the movement of people across the borderlands and have shaped the conditions and settings in which they work. Additionally, our panel will examine the ways race, gender, and sexuality all shape and define border landscapes operating in a global economy. The roundtable features panelists with different perspectives (environmental, labor, cultural history), and regional emphases (U.S.-Mexico, U.S.-Canada) to the study of migration, labor, and borderlands.

Each participant in the roundtable will bring their own expertise to the subject of labor circuits and the production of North American borderlands. Yale Postdoctoral Fellow Maria Quintana moves beyond bi-national frameworks to consider how provisions of the Bracero Program (1942-1964), which centered mainly on Mexican laborers, were extended to incorporate Caribbean labor and how the incarceration of Japanese Americans were framed within the same racial logics of labor importation. Assistant Professor Laura D. Gutiérrez details the consequences of labor migration for sending countries by tracing how the deportation and return migration of workers affected Mexico and the U.S.-Mexico border region in the 20th century. Assistant Professor Holly M. Karibo examines the cultural and social spaces that governed cross-border interactions in the Great Lakes border region despite state control and regulation of illicit economies.

Exploring histories of labor importation, repatriation, and illicit economies, our roundtable seeks to continue a discussion and build on the forms of history that search for the symptomatic traces of the excluded. We will discuss innovative methodological practices that attempt to locate the histories of those who remained obscure to state structures/documentation as a means to survive. Conversely, we will consider the ways in which we read state archives "against the grain," to find the traces of people impacted by resource extraction, labor economies, commodity flows in the borderlands (Stoler). Our roundtable will also highlight the ways in which labor history has impacted borderlands history and vice versa. The history of labor has been intimately tied to the legal, social, and cultural histories of the North American borderlands, and continues with the more recent scholarship of our panelists and that of Andrés Reséndez (*The Other Slavery*), Mario Sifuentes (*Of Forests and Fields*), Mireya Loza (*Defiant Braceros*), etc.

Additionally, rather than focusing on one border region, we will examine the similarities and differences across both the U.S-Mexico and the U.S.-Canada borders. Labor migration flows are never as simple as crossing one boundary. They may require the movement across multiple boundaries within and outside nation-states. Furthermore, these borderlands have been co-

constituted, with labor and immigration policies of one impacting the other. We will draw on the audience to add their knowledge of interior, urban, Pacific, Caribbean, and global borderlands to the discussion. And, finally as a group (panelists and audience), we would like to outline future directions (methodologies, research sites/topics, collaborations) for working the borderlands.

*Recorded in April 2018 at the OAH Annual Meeting held in Sacramento, California as part of the Mellon-funded Amplified Initiative.*

***Excerpt***

**[workingtheborderlandsexcerpt.mp3](#)**

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