this is a working document. we’d love your feedback.
email us at: HAVOQers@gmail.com
We go by a lot of names—some people know us as the SF chapter of Pride at Work. Some people know us as HAVOQ—usually translated as the Horizontal Alliance of Very (or Vaguely or Voraciously) Organized Queers. Whatever you know us as, we are a collective of queer people organizing together in the San Francisco Bay Area. This document is a project of our Migrant Justice Working Group—about ten of us who came together in 2007 to attend the first US/Mexico No Borders Camp and have since been working in a variety of ways to resist the violence created by that border here in the Bay and in the borderlands.
When we first came together, we searched all over for writings and examples of organizing projects that came from the intersections of queer and im/migrant experiences. We wanted a Queer No Borders Manifesto as our compass (one that didn’t focus entirely on the need for LGBT people to be able to marry so that they can sponsor their partners for immigration purposes). Despite finding some good examples of this—Queers and Immigration: A Vision Statement (2007), or the Audre Lorde Project’s 2006 statement For All The Ways They Say We Are, No One Is Illegal, for example—we realized that there is still a lot of room to expand this conversation.

This document is our attempt to add to the dialogue. It is a place for us to learn together and it is and always will be a working document. That means we invite and appreciate feedback and conversation. And as we strive to expand the scope and depth of our work, we welcome and encourage those moved to contribute to the areas where we are lacking.

We hope that what we write below feels accessible and easy to read, but we know that sometimes we reference policies, words, or ideas that might not be totally clear. We have tried to include descriptions of as many of these as possible in a Glossary at the end.

Organizational Crushes
These are links to groups that are doing inspiring work to create migrant justice at the border and within communities.

Audre Lorde Project:
http://alp.org/

INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence
http://www.incite-national.org/
or http://inciteblog.wordpress.com/

No More Deaths
http://nomoredeaths.org/

No One Is Illegal: Coast Salish Territories/Vancouver
http://noii-van.resist.ca/
No One Is Illegal: Toronto
http://toronto.nooneisillegal.org/

O’odham Solidarity Across Borders Collective:
http://oodhamsolidarity.blogspot.com/

Bay Area:
CUAV (Communities United Against Violence): http://www.cuav.org/
POWER (People Organized to Win Employment Rights): http://www.peopleorganized.org/

EL/LA Program Para Translatinás: el.latgprogram@yahoo.com
MUA (Mujeres Unidas y Activas): http://www.mujeresunidas.net/

Books
Borderlands: The New Mestiza / La Frontera by Gloria Anzaldúa
Structural, Institutional, Historical Context

Caminante, no hay puentes, se hace puentes al andar. (Voyager, there are no bridges, one builds them as one walks). -Gloria E. Anzaldúa

As a group, we have focused primarily on the US / Mexico border--on the line itself as well as on how border-enforcement systems stretch much farther north and south. While much of what we say here can be extended to other borders worldwide, we believe it is important to consider the specific histories of the US/ Mexican border and how that impacts what it is today. We also know that the history of the border describes ongoing structural and institutional oppressions that maintain the violence of that line deep into the interior of our country and to the south as well.

So, as a skeleton of a skeleton, a scratch at the surface of history, here are some reminders of what came before, with, and through the border:

- The United States was built on broken treaties with, robbery from, and genocide of indigenous people across the continent.
- It was built through slave labor and the labor of under- (and often un-) paid immigrants.
- It grew through the violent acquisition of even more lands, from the Southwestern U.S. to Hawaii to Puerto Rico as well as the Philippines, Guantanamo Bay, the Panama Canal, Guam, American Samoa, the Northern Mariana Islands and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

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Detention Watch
http://detentionwatchnetwork.org

Prison Economics Help Drive Ariz. Immigration Law

The Business of Detention
http://www.businessofdetention.com

Personal Blogs / Frontera Stories
http://antifronteras.com/

Criminalization & Militarization
Audre Lorde Project: Statement: For All The Ways They Say We Are, No One Is Illegal
http://alp.org/whatwedo/statements/nooneisillegal

Deportation Nation: A Timeline of Immigrant Criminalization
http://www.deportationnation.org/

Other Interesting Readings
Toward No Borders: from Survival Solidarity Blog
http://survivalsolidarity.wordpress.com/noborders/

Rights to Survival and Mobility: An Anti-Trafficking Activist’s Agenda- National Asian Pacific American Women’s Forum (NAPAWF)
http://www.napawf.org/page.php?view=programs

Queers and Immigration: A Vision Statement

Queers Without Borders Blog
http://www.queerswithoutborders.com/wpmu/

National Center For Transgender Equality Immigration Policy Recommendations
http://transequality.org/Issues/immigration.html

Legislation
Dream Act
Letter to the DREAM Movement: My Painful Withdrawal of Support for the Dream Act

DREAM Act FAQ:
http://dreamact.info/faq/
“Free trade” agreements that seek to break down some economic barriers to international trade have always been directly linked to militarization of the border region. For example, NAFTA’s passage was followed by Operation Gatekeeper, which began the current tactic of sealing off popular border-crossing points by building more walls and fences and increasing border personnel, surveillance and other military technology.

• The more militarized the border becomes, the more people die trying to cross it. Since 1994, over 5,000 people have died at the border. U.S. policy makers call this “deterrence by death.”

• This militarization is tied to free trade agreements because it works to trap vulnerable workforces on both sides of the border while granting freedom of movement to capital.

Through this history, we can see that the border is part of a larger cycle of violence. It is rooted in the ongoing colonization, imperialism, and global economic structures that continue to dominate our world. Any conversation about im/migration is not just about people moving across borders or from one country to another. It is inherently rooted in deep-seated racism, classism, xenophobia, sexism, homophobia, ableism and any other institutional or societal forms of dominance.

Therefore, we try to root our work in the historical struggle within the greater movement (we don’t want to always be reinventing the wheel and we have a lot to learn from what came before us). We want to continue to question all forms of power and authority including but not limited to the law, the state, social norms and social relationships.

RESOURCES

The Situation in Arizona
http://www.altoarizona.com/

Prison Industrial Complex & The Border
Critical Resistance Publications
http://criticalresist.live.radicaldesigns.org/article.php?list-type&type=17
Guiding Principles

How We Will Organize with One Another: AKA, FABULOSITY

When we focus on organizing as part of everyday life, the process becomes as important as the final product. -Paula X. Rojas, Are the Cops in our Heads and Hearts?

As we come together to organize around the demands we lay out in this document, we also want to keep in mind the culture we create with one another. Why? Because the same forces that make borders, racism and militarism have seeped into our relationships, our communities and ourselves. It’s up to us to define, build and practice how we will treat each other and work together. We’ve heard some people call this praxis: putting our ideas into action, but we want to suggest another word for how we try to translate our queer perspectives on the oppressive forces around us into empowering action: FABULOSITY.

FABULOSITY means that we will strive for open and inclusive language and culture. We will try to recognize each of our different and overlapping experiences. We have a lot to learn from and offer one another even knowing that we won’t always agree.

FABULOSITY means that we will also try to be open with one another, to new people and ideas. We will constantly try to expand or deepen our base of ideas, skills and energy. We respect and will use a diversity of tactics to achieve our goals.

FABULOSITY means that we will make time to do the work of building ways of being with one another that do not replicate the hierarchies that marginalize us in the first place. We believe that we can build coalitions and movements without relying on non-profits and professional activism. We want to create and maintain liberating and borderless spaces within which to meet and do work.

FABULOSITY means that we will work together not just to meet specific demands, but also to build a movement and a community.

Imperialism - The process of gaining, maintaining, and expanding political, cultural, economic, ideological, and/or military domination of one group of people over another. What’s the difference between colonialism and imperialism? The Latin root of each word helps explain this a little: colony comes from colonus, which means farmer. So colonization implies settlement. Imperialism, which comes from the Latin imperium, or command, focuses more on how a country or people holds power over another. This might be through a variety of the means of control listed above, and exists to create and maintain colonies and empire.

Institutional Oppression - the systematic mistreatment of people within a social identity group, supported and enforced by the society and its institutions, solely based on the person’s membership in the social identity group. Institutional Oppression occurs when established laws, customs, and practices systematically reflect and produce inequities based on one’s membership in targeted social identity groups.

NAFTA - The North American Free Trade Agreement eliminates tariffs on trade between US, Canada, and Mexico, and has had devastating effects for rural Mexican farmers. It also creates the “Trade NAFTA” non-immigrant status that allows citizens of Canada and Mexico to temporarily (3 years) enter the US for work in certain approved occupations. related: CAFTA and other “free trade” agreements

Operation Streamline - Instituted in 2005, Operation Streamline demands federal criminal charges for all people who crossed the border illegally. In the past, many first-time offenders were processed through civil deportation proceedings, but now as many as possible are required to go through federal courts. A first-time conviction can see up to 6 months in prison, while repeat offenders can face up to 20 years. Streamline trials have come under criticism because migrants are tried 75 at a time, chained together, made to plead guilty en-masse, and otherwise denied basic rights to due process.

Polyamory / Polyamorous - polyamory is the practice of having more than one intimate relationship (sexual and/or emotional) at a time with the consent and knowledge of everyone involved.

Prison Industrial Complex - The term refers to all of the businesses and organizations involved in the construction, operation, and promotion of correctional facilities and the services they provide. It often implies a network of folks who are motivated by making profit rather than solely by punishing or rehabilitating individuals or reducing crime rates.

Punitive Force - imposed penalties intended to inflict punishment rather than intervene in a site of conflict or repair damages.

Real ID Act - Federal law enacted in 2005 that sets national standards for state issued identification cards. In order to meet national standards, states must require...
This means that we will consider the sustainability of our projects, trying to find a balance between our immediate goals and needs and our longer-term vision or collective health. And it means that the community we make isn’t confined to meetings and actions. We like to eat together, play together and spend unstructured time with one another.

FABULOSITY means that we will ask for what we want, not just what we think we can get. We know that compromise is part of working in coalition, but we will strive to keep in mind our larger vision of what kind of world we ultimately want to see.

We know this is hard. We will probably mess up sometimes, but we will do our best.

So, What is “Queer Organizing?”

Are you afraid of the homosexualization of life? / And I’m not talking about sticking it in and pulling it out / I’m talking about tenderness “compañero”... -Pedro Lemebel, from the poem “Punto de Vista Diferente”

Some folks might look at this document or come to one of our meetings and ask what any of this has to do with being queer. We’re not working primarily on the im/migration issues traditionally understood to be The Gay Ones (asylum, bi-national marriage, etc.), so what do our sexualities and our gender identities have to do with what we think about borders?

Is it just that we’re a bunch of people organizing together who mostly happen to identify as queer? Not really, even though it’s nice to get...
to use words like Fabulosity when we work on projects like this. Is this just another border-creating effort to define who’s in and who’s out? We hope not. Rather than viewing Queer as a who or a what, we see Queer as the how: the culture we create with one another, the platform from which we organize together.

We want to focus on two things queers have historically been really excellent at building into our communities (and building our communities out of): one is an uncommon comfort with / love of gray areas, and another is a radical redefinition of family.

Gray Areas:
It’s about breaking down binaries (like black/white, woman/man) and recognizing how complex we all are—how our identities and communities overlap, merge and intersect. These lines that separate us can be understood as borders. Sometimes they’re literal or physical and sometimes they are cultural and social. Sometimes they are all of those things at once, but in any form, we’re not into them.

In regards to the parts of movement focused on migrant justice, it’s often about breaking down the rhetoric that separates us from one another: naming some immigrants (workers, members of nuclear family units) “good” and others “bad.” It means looking at the diversity in im/migrant groups’ relationships to the United States, and creating spaces for differences within the movement. It is from this platform that we recognize the power of vibrant, diverse spaces to be revolutionary sites to build collective liberation.

Radical & Chosen Families:
Excluded from the traditional nuclear family unit for a long time, queers have made their own families. There are many forms-- from

Glossary
Ableism - the way physical, built, psychological, and social barriers bar people with disabilities from fully accessing and participating in political, legal, economic, educational, health-care, and social institutions. Here, we define disability as having bodies and/or minds that work in different ways than what is considered ‘normal’ or ‘functional’ or ‘sane’ by society.

Asexual - an asexual person is someone who does not experience sexual attraction. Unlike celibacy, which people choose, asexuality is an intrinsic part of who people are. There is considerable diversity among the asexual community; each asexual person experiences things like relationships, attraction and arousal somewhat differently.

Autonomy / Autonomous - a person or collective of people who make decisions and act without outside coercion; are self-governing / to act or live in autonomy.

(Border) Military Industrial Complex - the Military Industrial Complex refers to the relationship between government policies, specifically those relating to the military’s weapons and other stuff and the industries (military contractors) that support and, more importantly, profit from selling to the government/military. While the idea of the Military Industrial Complex began when President Eisenhower referred to it in a speech, more recently, folks have been using this idea to describe what is happening on the border. It is meant to describe how much money is being made by military contractors hired by the US government to create a hyper-technological and militarized border region.

Colonialism, Colonization - See also: Imperialism - Colonialism is a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people to another, often through political and economic control over a territory of land and its resources and the people who live in it. Often the term refers to the period of European domination beginning in the late 15th Century (Columbus’s times) that extended to the Americas, Africa, and Asia. Colonialism has changed throughout time, and is often understood in its present formation as globalization.

ENDA - The Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) is a proposed bill in US Congress that would make it illegal to discriminate in hiring on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. Closely modeled on existing civil rights laws (like Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Americans with Disabilities Act), ENDA has been introduced every year except one since 1994. Some national LGBT organizations believe that the bill would be more likely to pass if protections based on gender identity were removed from the bill, while many others insist that trans protections are an important backbone to the bill.

Global Economic System/ Globalization - An economic system is the structure of how goods and services are produced, consumed, and distributed. It is made up
Ahistorical Context: Recognition & Thanks

As politically-engaged queers, we align ourselves with all the autonomous hearts through time and space, who in the face of repressive conditions and oppressive conditioning of the times, dared to dream and collaborated to bring about the then Unimaginable Now.

We venture down roads less traveled, meander in the uncomfortable and creative potential of the unknown. In the ambivalence of the chaos, we re-member ourselves nothing short of fabulous, beautiful and free.

We do so informed by our past experiences in all our communities and with an openness toward communities we’ve yet to meet. We cultivate with tenderness the delicate balance of all the contradictions we embody and hold.

We want to thank you for being here; thank you for all that you do.
POINTS OF UNITY / INTENTIONS

While many forces erect and sustain borders, we will work to dismantle them on all levels.

Freedom of Movement

We believe that freedom of movement is a fundamental human right. The right to mobility is more than the right to cross a national boundary. It is the right to live and work where we please, including the right to stay home. It means dismantling detention centers along with the larger Prison Industrial Complex. It also means the right to full participation in our community without fear: without the threat of raids and deportation and without racist policies that seek to limit our access to community resources and spaces.

- We actively support the actions of individuals or groups (and the communities that support them) to stay or move where they choose. Often this is tied to the ways we seek to survive (and hopefully thrive) amidst the current extreme levels of economic and state imperialism.

- We oppose coercive forces like NAFTA, CAFTA, and other “free trade” agreements that, through job loss and land privatization, have forced people to urban areas and to the north, effectively denying individuals of their right to stay; their right to live in the community of their choosing.

Policing OurSelves

We see a connection between the policing of people’s genders and sexualities with the policing of borders and seek to build a world where everyone may assert their right to self-determination. We reject the regulation of our selves and our relationships through socially-created borders, such as those used to define traditional families, acceptable sex practices, ideal bodies and gender presentations, and love.

- We work to expand the definitions of “family” to include queer and other self-defined relationships. Rather than fight to extend marriage to queers, we strive to create free and inclusive communities where we do not place legal borders between coupled families and those who enjoy single, asexual or polyamorous lifestyles. We believe that freedom of movement, access to services and other benefits should be available to all of us regardless of our marital or immigration status.

- We believe in the right to access documentation regardless of our federal immigration status and documentation that reflects our self-identified genders or does not list our genders at all. Further, we seek to build a world where government does not hold the power to legitimize our identities through access to documentation such as IDs and that government control over access to these documents no longer impacts our abilities to lead the lives we want to live.

- We support the dismantling of medical guidelines that are used as political borders to limit freedom of movement. Recent changes to medical requirements for im/migration, including the lift of the HIV ban and of mandatory HPV and herpes vaccinations are examples of steps in this direction. We believe that requirements such as these violate the health, sexual and reproductive rights of migrants. We want an end to all medical screenings as a prerequisite for immigration, which are developed and enforced in sexist, homophobic, transphobic, and racist ways.
• We oppose efforts to criminalize mutual aid, such as harboring provisions which penalize those who assist undocumented immigrants, their families and loved ones.

• We oppose the continued construction of a wall spanning the entire US-Mexico border and the increased policing in the border regions, which has only raised the death toll on the border. We recognize that increased enforcement has not decreased the number of people traveling north; it has just funneled them into more remote and dangerous areas.

• We oppose all state efforts to continue the splitting of the lands currently held by indigenous people, specifically the imposition of border policies on reservations that span both sides of the line. We support the indigenous people who continue to struggle to maintain the right to move through their own sovereign lands.

Resisting Militarization and Criminalization

We share in our common need to experience safety for ourselves and our communities, but do not believe in the use of punitive force to achieve this goal. Additionally, we find that the militarization of the border of the United States serves to prop up the illusion of separate communities, which in turn foster feelings of hate, xenophobia, and violence, rather than achieving safety.

We assert our inherent interconnectedness and strive to cultivate systems, strategies and tactics that create safe communities without the use of militarization by the police, ICE or other forces. We challenge the criminalization of people’s survival behavior to create safe communities for themselves, such as crossing borders without documentation, sex work, gang involvement and drug dealing. We will continue to push to expand the choices we can make to not only survive, but to thrive in freedom.

In the short term this means that we call for a shift of resources away from militarization, policing and criminalization toward our shared need for education, health and economic sustainability.
Specifically,

- End Operation Streamline, 287g and the “Secure Communities” program as well as ICE raids, deportations, detentions, and any policies that grant local police the right to act as immigration enforcement. We support calls for local municipalities to opt out of such forced collaboration with federal immigration enforcement as well as refusing any allocation of local resources for enforcement of federal anti-immigrant policies.

- We reject any actions, policy or legislation that deny access to any public services or legal protections based on migratory status. This means that we support education as an option for all people.* We support and participate in mutual aid projects that share community resources with all people regardless of any societal status.

*We feel the need to say, in light of the recent failure of the Dream Act, that while we believe in access to education for all, we do not believe that higher education or military service should be the only way for undocumented youth to gain residency/path to citizenship. We also do not believe that we should have to concede to increased militarization to gain access to educational resources.

- We will strive to create sanctuary where we live and support others in similar steps towards removing ICE and all federal immigration enforcement from our communities entirely.

- We want a halt to the building and further enforcement of border walls and to see current fences torn down. We want an end to all private contracts that further the technological militarization of the border and create a new “Border-Military Industrial Complex.”

- While we reject the false dichotomy of “citizen/non-citizen,” we support the immediate and unconditional citizenship of all people living within the bounds of the United States as an initial step towards living without criminalization and fear from ICE. In addition, we support steps in that direction, such as ending the 1 year deadline for applying for asylum* and 3 and 10 year bars for “unlawful presence.”

*While we acknowledge that the US is not inherently any safer for queer and transgender people than the rest of the world, we the support the expansion of accessibility to asylum. The current 1 year deadline is particularly challenging for queer and trans people who often experience high levels of isolation and as a result do not learn about asylum options until the deadline has passed.

WORKING Against Borders

We will stand to root out racism and homophobia within the labor movement and work to break down all programs, laws and agreements that exist to divide workers. “An injury to one is an injury to all” does not stop at the border.

We will work to dismantle the tools of an economic system meant to separate us from one another. This includes opposing:

- Free trade agreements like NAFTA, CAFTA, etc.

- Workplace raids

- Labor laws that target workers who are trying to organize, regardless of documentation