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The Border Wall and Beyond: Political and Environmental Perspectives

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JLAG Perspectives

The Border Wall and Beyond: Political and Environmental Perspectives

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THE FOLLOWING SIX JLAG PERSPECTIVES essays were written by a group of geographers who participated in two sessions at the American Association of Geographers' Annual Meeting in New Orleans, April 2018. The sessions centered on the discourse surrounding Donald Trump's intention to build a wall across the United States' entire southern border with Mexico, an effort that has converged in real time and overlapped in space with the reversal of the executive order protecting the rights of undocumented young people, a new policy of separating children from their parents at the border, a possible retrenchment of U.S. participation in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and growing concerns about a wall's potential impacts on the fragile yet biodiverse environment of the border. The border—as both a significant biophysical and discursive space—is being disordered and reordered in ways that have profound social, political, geopolitical, and environmental implications for the U.S., Mexico, and beyond.

What are the political and social implications of Trump's proposed border wall and reversal of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) protections for undocumented migrants and refugees? For violence against migrants and marginalization of migrant communities? From a geopolitical standpoint, what do these acts of militarizing the border and curtailing the rights of a heretofore protected class of migrants mean for broader relations with Mexico, Latin America, and the rest of the world? What is at stake with the border wall in terms of environmental justice for marginalized border communities and for endangered wildlife and ecosystems? For indigenous peoples who have lands that straddle the border? For those who seek to engage in resistance, what strategies may most effectively challenge these new realities? These are some of the questions we explored in the AAG sessions. The essays below offer some thoughtful responses to these questions and, in doing so, illuminate distinct aspects of the discourse and practices of the border wall, and beyond.