

DEPORTED VETERANS

DIASPORA Mural Project

IMMERSIVE EXHIBIT



www.lizbethdelacruzantana.com/deported-u-s-veterans-immersive-exhibit



DEPORTED U.S. VETERANS

Immersive Exhibit

This immersive exhibit sheds light on the lives of non-citizen U.S. veterans who served their country only to find themselves expelled from it. Non-citizens have served in the U.S. armed forces since the Revolutionary War, yet their service does not secure a path to citizenship or permanent residency. This vulnerability has been especially severe since the passage of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996, which introduced harsher deportation measures, trapping veterans in a web of exclusion despite honorable service.

This exhibit uncovers the diaspora of deported U.S. veterans through a collection of photos taken between 2016 and 2024 in Tijuana, California, and New York City. The images and stories—woven with resilience, pain, and patriotism—invite viewers to witness the overlooked consequences of U.S. immigration policy, particularly its unintended yet severe impacts on those who served.

This powerful photo series by photographer and researcher Lizbeth De La Cruz Santana captures the poignant stories of deported U.S. veterans through evocative portraits taken over eight years (2016-2024) in Tijuana, San Diego, Fresno, and New York City.

As part of her work with the Humanizing Deportation project, Lizbeth's images showcase the strength, resilience, and enduring dignity of veterans who served their country but now find themselves separated from it.

Through each face and each setting, this series invites viewers to reflect on the complex reality of deportation and its impact on those who once wore the uniform with pride. The exhibit not only honors these veterans' sacrifices but also challenges us to question ideas of loyalty, belonging, and the unbreakable ties between identity and homeland.

ARTIST STATEMENT

This exhibit centers on deported U.S. veteran stories and invites the public to better understand the legal penalties, such as deportation, that non-citizen servicemembers are subject to, regardless of their patriotism, service, and exclusive links to the country they served. A forced exile magnified by being U.S. childhood arrivals. This labor of love comes in at a crucial time as a transition of governments in both the U.S. and Mexico is approaching, and the topic of deported veterans demands further ethical attention. The solutions to this issue can be found by listening to their stories.

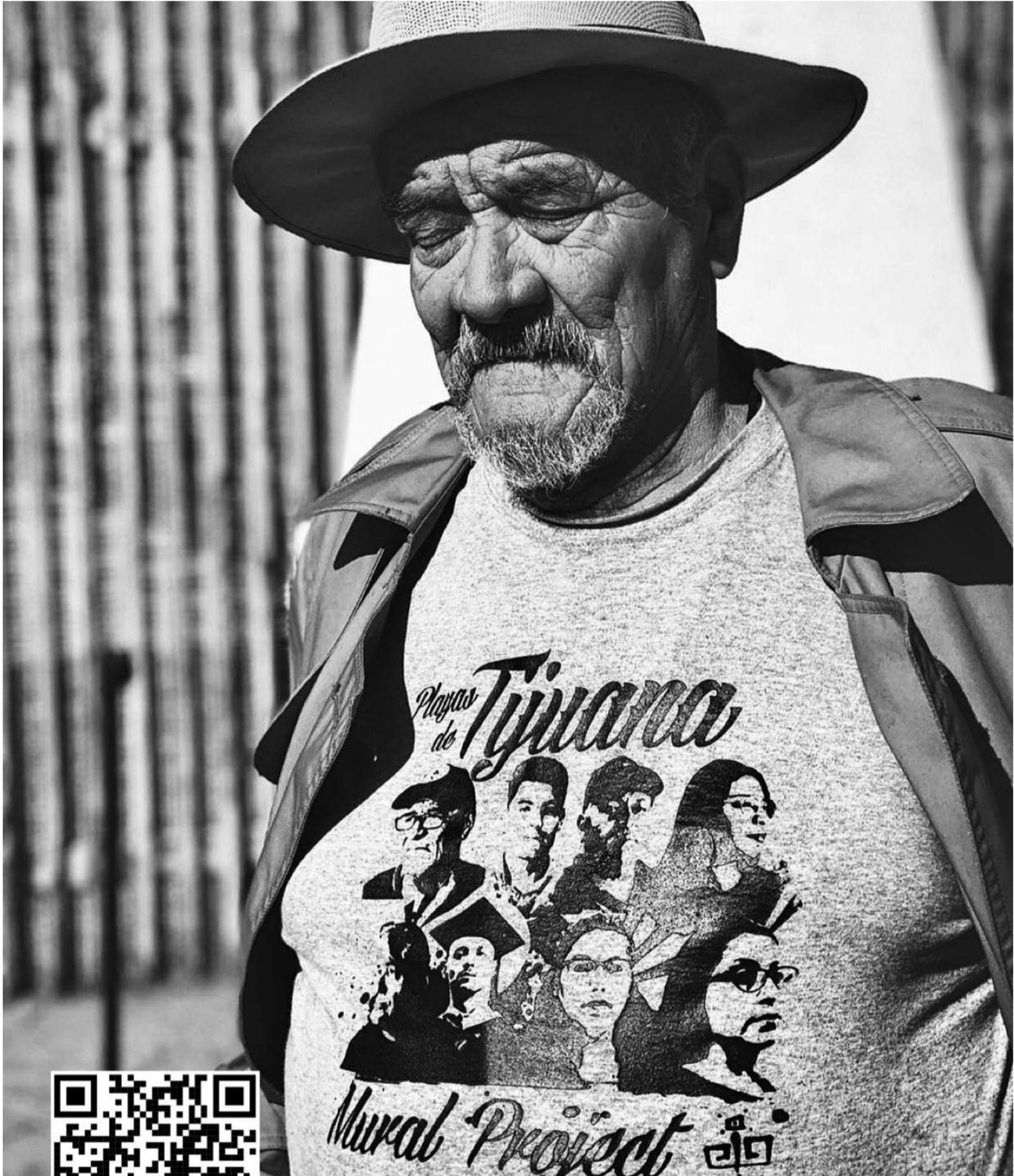
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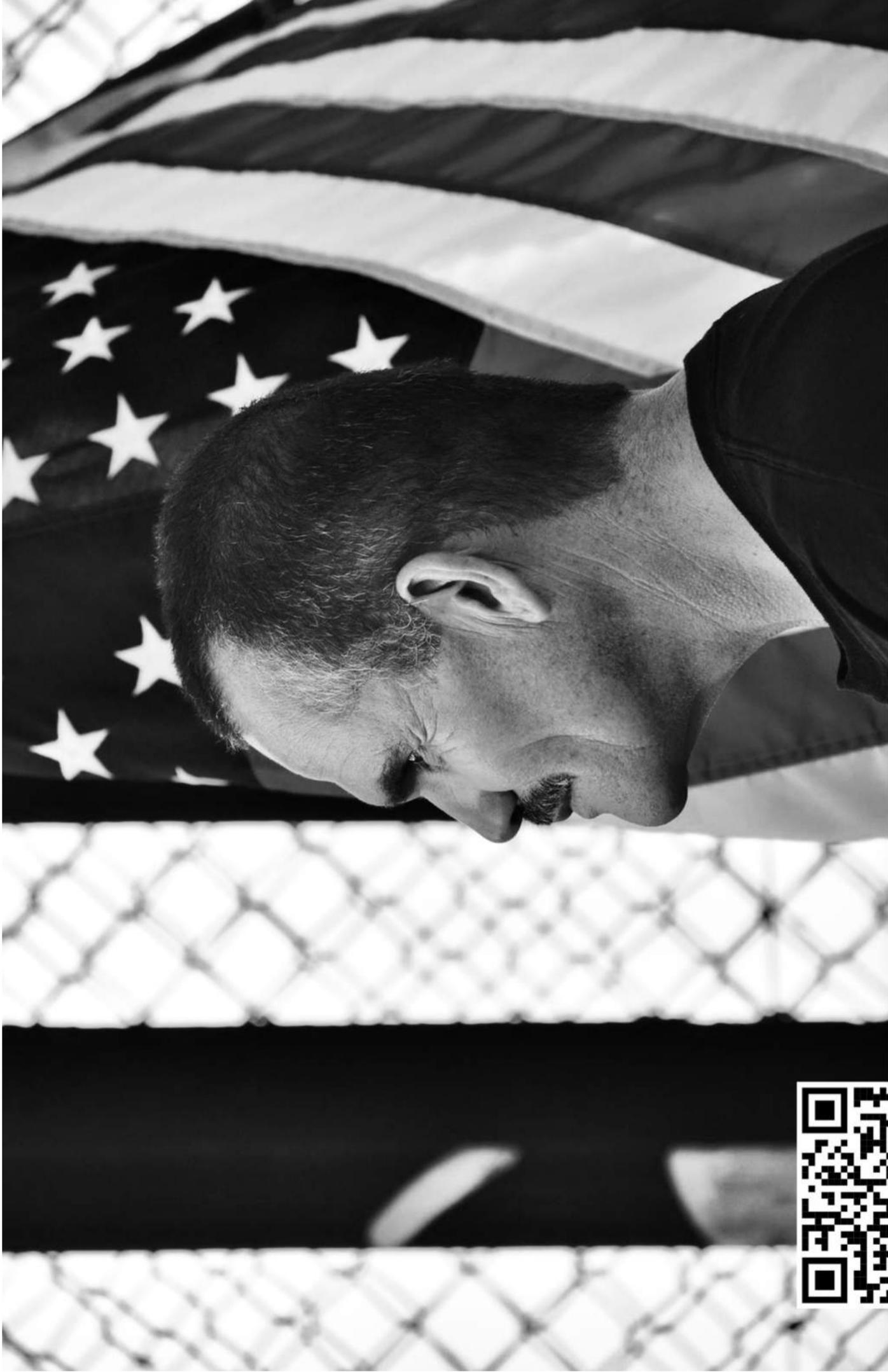


RICHARD AVILA, PLAYAS DE TIJUANA (2021)
US MARINE CORPS, DEPORTED TO MEXICO





ANDY DE LEON, PLAYAS DE TIJUANA (2021)
US ARMY, DEPORTED TO MEXICO



ALEX GOMEZ, PLAYAS DE TIJUANA (2017)
US MARINE CORPS, DEPORTED TO MEXICO





JEAN DORSAINVIL, NEW YORK CITY (2024)
US MARINE CORPS, DEPORTED TO HAITI





HECTOR LOPEZ, FRESNO, CA (2024)
US ARMY, DEPORTED TO MEXICO





DAVID BARIU, DON DIEGO VFW POST 7420 (2024)
US ARMY, DEPORTED TO KENYA



