VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Part 1:
HISTORY *and* IDENTITY

The international border between the United States and Mexico stretches over 2,000 miles from the southern tip of Texas to the northernmost point of Baja California. More than nine million people live along the border. Just as the landscape changes dramatically over these miles, so do the people and traditions found there. Is there something that can be called "border culture"?

The 1993 Festival of American Folklife brought eighty-five people from the border to Washington, D.C. For five hot, July days, these border residents shared their culture.

Olivia Cadaval: The border has great depth. Historically, we can learn a lot about different people from China, from the Mixteca in Central Mexico, the Native Americans that were already there before. The new identities that are forming. The *cholos*, the Chicanos, there is this very complex way of intercultural dynamics happening at the border.

Blaine Juan: My name is Blaine Juan, and I'm from a village called Wo:g I-Huduñk (Woog E Hudungk). Now, for the white people, it's the San Simon village. It's the Tohono O'odham Nation, and where I live is about 105 miles west of Tucson, which is the main Tohono O'odham reservation, and we live by the Mexican border.

Jim Griffith: I suppose I could ask you a silly question. I could say, how come you settled so close to the border?

Blaine Juan: I guess the way I probably would answer that is it's the white people who put the border there.

Carmen Cristina Moreno: We're going past this Cortés stuff, past this Spanish stuff, into the indigenous thing, and I'm Yaqui, I'm a member of the new race.

To better understand border culture, it is necessary to learn about the history of today's border. In May of 1846, in the wake of the Texas Revolution of 1835, the United States declared war on Mexico. Asserting the ideology of Manifest Destiny, the United States pushed the boundary between the United States and Mexico further south, from the Nueces River to the Rio Grande.

The Mexican-American War concluded in 1848, with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The treaty defined a new boundary line between the United States and Mexico. Almost immediately, the boundary became a source of dispute when surveyors discovered inaccuracies in the map used to form the border.

More importantly, however, the border divided Indian tribal territories, Mexican communities, and families.

Jim Griffith: When the border came through, there were people already, Mexican and Native American people, already living in that country, and the border came — whop — right down the middle, and it split our cultural region in half.

Arturo Carrillo Strong: A lot of the people that were Mexican citizens, and living in their homes that they had lived in for many years, all of a sudden became American citizens. Some wanted to stay, and a lot of them went back to Mexico.

Jim Griffith: And this region, this cultural region stretches on both sides of the international border. Really, the people, a lot of the old families living in southern Arizona, have a lot in common with the old families living in the northern part of the state of Sonora in Mexico. It's the same families quite often. The reason, of course, is that the border came into the country. There wasn't always a border. A border isn't something like the Grand Canyon. A border is an artificial line that gets drawn on a map, and later gets marked on the ground.

Modern-day immigration frequently brings border crossings into the news. But migration and immigration have been going on throughout the history of the border.

Enrique Lamadrid: Immigration is a contradiction to us as Hispanics in the Southwest, because from our perspective the original immigrants are Anglo, is Anglo-America. Anglo-America came in and conquered us, in the Mexican-American War, and said, "Guess what, now you are Americans, and guess what, here is a new line that we are using to divide your communities, and guess what, now we are going to call you the migrants." And so, in the United States, we are a country of migrants, all of us are migrants except our Native American neighbors.

Some of the people who participated in the Festival came to the border recently; others have been living in the region for centuries.

Blaine Juan: We have ancestors in Mexico. And when they put that border, that kind of cut us off, so it was kind of hard to visit our ancestors on the Mexican side. Especially right now, it's really hard. I go across, but I don't go through the main gate.

Olivia Cadaval: Storytelling is very important.

Benito Peralta: (translated by Olivia Cadaval) *The coyote is a smart animal but he trusts too much. They get him every time.*

Olivia Cadaval: Storytelling is really the history-making, is really giving people the history and identity of who they are and how their existence is connected to the land, is connected to the history of an area.

Dub Warrior: I am one of the descendants of that, from the Seminole Indian scouts. And at the time that we became Seminole Indian scouts, in 1870, prior to that we were down in Mexico at the little town we have a couple of participants here with, from the little town which is in Coahuila, Mexico, the state of Coahuila. The name of the town is Nacimiento de los Negros, which means in English "where the Blacks were born."

Like I always says, if you don't know where you're going, you don't know where you are coming from. You gotta know where you are

coming from, to find out where you're going. And where you're going, you have to have been somewheres.

Ofelia Santos López: *I'm from Oaxaca but live in Baja California. I left when I was about eighteen years old to go to Culiacán, Sinaloa, to pick tomatoes. I had two children; when I had a third child, I went to pick cotton. My life was very sad. I worked hard in the fields. When I made some money in Sinaloa, I came to Baja California.*

The people of the border are proud of their histories, but history is not the only thing that has helped to shape border culture.

Enrique Lamadrid: You may have a history, but a history is one thing, that's what happened. An identity is something else, an identity is something that you put together for yourself here and now.

The interplay of language, a sense of shared space, and problems common to both sides of the border also help to define border culture.

Enrique Lamadrid: The people along the northern states of Mexico have more in common with the people in California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas than they do with the capitals of the various countries. We depend on each other. A lot of people talk about border culture as being something distinct from the main cultures and the two countries, and in a lot of aspects we would agree with that.

Carmen Cristina Moreno: Every time I go to Mexico, to the borderlands, I feel really comfortable. When I get deep into Mexico, I feel alien.

Enrique Lamadrid: This is a very complicated place to live. Every time you open your mouth, you have to negotiate your identity. When I open my mouth, is it English? Is it Spanish? What am I going to be? What am I going to do? It's the same me, but Spanish and English are so different that it's like different me's at the same time.

Jim Griffith: The border isn't the simple dividing line. It's extremely porous sometimes, it's extremely hard to get through sometimes. It's not always porous and hard to get through at the appropriate times, and it's also a culture all its own.

At the same time the border creates its own cultural identity, it complicates the identities of individuals who live there.

Part 2: CELEBRATIONS *and* IDENTITY

A person's traditional beliefs are an important part of his or her identity. Along the border between Mexico and the United States, celebrations display the different beliefs of the many people who live there.

Jim Griffith: It's so hard to talk about one thing, you know, paper flowers or music, without talking about food and the other things that all go to make a part of the occasion, because these celebrations, we're talking about celebrations along the border and our little tiny part of the border, these celebrations are so complex, and they involve all these different things. The paper flowers fit into the food, the food fits into the music, the music fits into the pictures of the saints; it all sort of goes together into a complex whole, and it involves two nations and lots of different artists living in different places.

The Pascola dance plays an important part in the traditional celebrations and ceremonies of the Tohono O'odham Indian Nation of southern Arizona.

Blaine Juan: I started when I was twelve. The thing is, if you want to dance, when you start younger, you can't go to sleep if it's all night. You have to push it to do the dance. And you have to do it at least three to five years in order to be called a Pascola.

Jim Griffith: These are the O'odham, Tohono O'odham people from the Arizona Sonora borderland, west of Tucson, the big desert country west of Tucson, and they're doing a dance which in English is called Pascola, *Pacola* in O'odham. And it's a ritual dance, a sacred dance. You'll notice there's an altar here at the back of the *ramada* and you'll notice that several of the dancers bless themselves before starting. It is a part of a very complex mixture, a complex blending of Native ideas and Christian ideas that make up the Tohono O'odham culture.

Blaine Juan: We have to make the sign of the cross when we start dancing. That's why we brought our patron musician saint, St. Cecelia. And on the side is St. Javier, a picture from Magdalena. And it's true that we do this for certain occasions. Sometimes there's a sickness that's involved in this Pascola. So what we have to do is at the same time the healer is in there with the sick person, we go ahead and play and dance first, and after we dance, each Pascola besides the player will have to go over there and make the sign of the cross on the person that's sick. And sometimes this will go all night.

Jim Griffith: I bet people are wondering what the leg rattles are. They are the cocoons of moths, a special kind of a moth that lives in the desert, and you find the cocoons, and you tie them into long strings. You slit them open, and you take the moth inside out, and you put little pebbles in, and they make this wonderful rustling sound, so that the dancer really turns into a third instrument, another musical instrument accompanying the music.

Blaine Juan: We all line up right here to go back four times. See, the elderly tell us, if you want to kill a rabbit, don't eat it until you kill four of them. So anything you do, you have to do it four times, commemorating the east, west, south, and north.

Jim Griffith: One thing I'd like to remark on is this extraordinarily delicate music. This violin music has lived in this community by ear. This is not written-down music. This is not music you can learn in school. There are very few violin players even in the community who play this music, and it's strictly a living, oral tradition.

The Pascola dance is only one part of a traditional event for the Tohono O'odham. When members of the community gather, food and religious decorations play an important role.

Jim Griffith: This is a culture and this is a world where these celebrations are announced on the radio. And the radio goes out over the whole reservation in O'odham. Every Sunday there's a radio program in the native language of this reservation, and the parties are announced then. So if you can hear the radio, you know you're invited, and you go.

At the O'odham feasts, decorations adorn the chapel walls. Some of the decorations are made on the reservation, but others are from across the border, in Mexico. Many of the painted picture frames that hang in the Tohono O'odham chapels are made by Anastasio León. Anastasio León is not from the Tohono O'odham community. He lives and works in Imuris, Mexico, over the border from Arizona. Anastasio learned his skills from his father, Jesús León, who was a craftsman and a puppeteer. Although they live on opposite sides of the border, Anastasio León and the Tohono O'odham share some of the same sacred objects.

Every year on the 4th of October, a celebration honors Saint Francis in Magdalena, Mexico. People come from both sides of the border to this celebration. At the fiesta in Magdalena, the Tohono O'odham often purchase Anastasio's painted picture frames to bring back to Arizona to display pictures of their own saints.

At the Festival in Washington, a daily procession was held to honor the Virgin de Guadalupe. The procession brought together residents from all along the border.

Norma Cantú: It struck me the other day how some people were saying that every *pueblo* in Mexico has its saint. Well, we in the United States have, I think, as a *pueblo chicano*, as a tribe, we have the Virgin of Guadalupe as an image.

Gloria Moroyoqui, of Yaqui Indian descent, made this elaborate image of the Virgin de Guadalupe at her home in Sonora, Mexico. She brought the picture with her to the Festival. Jim Griffith, a fellow border resident, spoke of Doña Gloria and her work:

Jim Griffith: She is a consummate artist with paper. And she makes things, the things that she makes are intimately connected with celebrations. She makes *piñatas* for parties, decorated eggshells filled with confetti, *cascarones* for kids to whack each other over the head with at parties, and she makes paper flowers to make altars beautiful with and to hang on the graves of the dead.

Doña Gloria has been making flowers for most of her life.

Gloria Moroyoqui: *I learned to make flowers from my mother. Every time I make a flower I feel a great happiness and great pleasure, because I feel as if my mother were still teaching me. I feel very happy.*

Norma Cantú: *Did you make these flowers for the Festival?*

Gloria Moroyoqui: *Yes, I made them to send here because they asked me, and when I make things I make them with lots of love.*

Jim Griffith: A couple of people have said, "Gee why do you use artificial flowers when real flowers are so beautiful?" We live in the desert. There aren't always real flowers. Real flowers are beautiful today, and they'll be wilted and dead and gone tomorrow. It's hard to realize that in real life, one makes constant compromises in order to keep tradition going. And it's the tradition that you carry in your heart, that is important to continue, rather necessarily than all the outward aspects of that tradition.

Compared to the Tohono O'odham community of southern Arizona, the Mixtecos of Tijuana, Mexico, are recent migrants to the border. When they moved to the border from Oaxaca, this group of Mixtecos brought their own celebration traditions with them.

In Washington, D.C., the Mixtecos built an altar for the Day of the Dead, which normally takes place from October 31st to November 2nd.

Laura Velasco: *This is a Day of the Dead altar, a tradition from the lower Mixteca region in Oaxaca. The Mixtecos have celebrated this tradition for over 500 years, long before the Spaniards' arrival. On November [October] 31st, we await the arrival of the dead children, as we call them. It is the day of the little angels. In this tradition the children arrive in the evening to rejoin their parents, brothers and sisters, grandparents. They come home to find food and smells to guide them. It is a way of giving them life again. At this altar, candles are very important. They will guide the dead to their house.*

Juvencio Extrada Maceda (Francisco Paulino Sierra Cruz, translator): *This small candle is for the children. The candle to my left is for adults, for the most important person in the community or the home. In this way you boys need to uphold authority — the oldest and youngest — to respect each.*

Food is an important part of the Mixteco Day of the Dead ceremony. They prepared some of the Mixteco food, like *mole*, at the Festival. Not all of the food at the Day of the Dead ceremony is for eating. Different fruit adorn the altar. Laura Velasco explains their purpose:

Laura Velasco: *The food that we offer the children is light, not heavy. The tequila and beer are on the altar today for the adults. Alcoholic beverages are an important element in Mexican and Indian fiestas. They are one element that makes a fiesta a happier occasion. We offer our best to the dead.*

Beliefs help to define and confirm a person's identity. These beliefs are celebrated in many different ways along the border. Despite the daily difficulties created by an international border, people find ways to keep their traditional beliefs alive.

Part 3: EXPRESSIVE TRADITIONS *and* IDENTITY

Traditional art can do many different things: make a statement about political and social problems; unite a family; or reinforce group identity. These traditional artistic expressions can also bring past histories into the present.

Carlos Callejo: Murals are an excellent way to pass on some of these traditions and some of these legends, some of these stories, and it's effective because they're in public places accessible to everyone, so it reaches literally thousands upon thousands of people. And so it's a way to bring some of this identity, some of this history to the new generations.

Carlos Callejo was born in El Paso in 1951 and moved to Los Angeles as a teenager. The political climate of the late 1960s motivated much of Carlos work.

Carlos Callejo: During that time we were experiencing a lot of turmoil. Vietnam War, there was a lot of issues of police brutality. In my particular community, those issues were prevalent, along with, not just the Vietnam War, but the high death rate of Chicanos dying in Vietnam. So the mural movement is very much rooted into your political realities. You have to understand that mural art is a little different from easel painting. Easel painting is basically a person's personal endeavor. A view of how that person views the exterior world. On the other hand, mural painting is actually kind of more of a community art project; the artist basically becomes like a tool, a tool to portraying the struggles, the aspirations, the needs of that particular community.

Along the border, young people known as *cholos* also express themselves through murals. Just as the turmoil of the late 1960s and early '70s influenced Carlos, the political reality of today is central to art of the *cholos*.

Gustavo Grado Tiscareño: *At first, we painted murals about ourselves, our way of life, problems of the* barrio. *Later we began to represent social problems, and create something for our community. In our murals we address problems of the* barrio *such as police repression, rejection by society, and ignorance about us.*

At the Festival, members of the *cholo* group Brigada por la Paz spoke about their lives and their art.

Gustavo Grado Tiscareño: *We reach people with our murals. We make them aware of things that cannot be said openly, things that are usually prohibited by the police and by society as a whole. Murals are for everyone to see, to become aware of problems around them.*

Many different forms of expression flourish on the border. Lowriders express themselves through their cars, which are decorated and lowered to ride inches above the ground.

Romy Frías: It's all about getting low, a lot of chrome, a lot of brilliant colors, to bring out again our festive spirit inside, to show the world, "We're here." It's kind of a statement, the slow cruise just so that people can see you. It's a kind of statement that "Hey, take a look, I'm here, this is my beautiful culture, this is the part of the United States culture that I am part of, and here I am."

Romy Frías of El Paso, Texas, has been a member of the Slow and Low car club since he was a teenager. At the Festival, Romy explained what Slow and Low means to him.

Romy Frías: The lowrider clubs function as a family. I'd have to say the best way to describe the way our clubs function is as a family. The car becomes our expression, our canvas if you will, both inside and out. Before I got involved with Slow and Low, before I got involved with lowriding, I ran around with a couple of gangs, over from East and from Central El Paso. Fortunately for me, there was a group of friends involved with this car club, which was established approximately two years earlier. And I got involved. Year after year, getting deeper and deeper into the club, you create something, you create a brand new family, so to speak. There's nothing I — they won't do for me, and there's nothing I won't do for them. It's a lot of the same mentality that the gangs like to claim, but in the car club, it's for real.

Many forms of traditional art address the social problems of the border. El Taller Universitario de Teatro, a theater group based in Mexicali, Baja California, perform a play on the *maquiladora* industry.

— I am a machine.

— No, I am not a machine.

— I work in front of a wall that looks at me, asking me questions.

— I should have never accepted this job.

— Don't complain or ask for a raise. There are going to be many layoffs, and you may be the next ones.

— Unions have become a forbidden topic. Don't even think about forming one because a maquiladora *can disappear overnight.*

— In Mexicali, we are all of this and more. We will be something else tomorrow. Things are always changing. That is the border, myth and reality, bridge and chain link fence, a place for crossing and an impenetrable wall.

— Mexicali bends with the crisis, but does not break.

— Mexicali bends with the crisis, but does not break.

— Mexicali bends with the crisis, but does not break.

— Mexicali bends with the crisis, man, but does not break, homey.

— Mexicali bends with the crisis, but does not break.

Along the border, music often brings a family together. At the Festival, the Layton family from Elsa, Texas, shared their music, as well as their family memories.

Norfilia Layton: I am the only daughter from a family of four, and being from siblings of migrant families, I was not allowed to play with my brothers. I used to sit back in the back porch of my parents' house while my brothers would practice, and I would listen to them play nightly. They would practice every evening after supper, they'd go out there. I'd do the dishes in a hurry and I'd go out there, and as a result I learned how to sing.

Benigno Layton: When we got started I was seven years old, and René was nine, and Tony was eleven. The very first time that we played as "Los Hermanitos Layton" was four houses down the street. It was a baptism party, and we played in a garage. That was our debut. What I try to do with my accordion playing, I try to make it as happy as possible, *alegre*, you know. And sometimes when there's a little interlude between the singing, I get a little chance, a couple of bars, a couple of beats to do whatever I feel I want to do.

Norfilia Layton: At the age of eleven I did my first performance in public, and the rest is history. I am now approaching forty-one, and I am still singing with my brothers.

Music has always been a part of Carmen Cristina Moreno's family. Her parents, professional musicians, sang *rancheras*.

Carmen Cristina Moreno: I was raised in the mariachi. I'm just learning about her history too.

Carmen Cristina has a history of music in her family, and her music is filled with history.

Carmen Cristina Moreno: I'm going to sing a song about the Mexican Revolution, which is something very close to my heart. My father was in the Mexican Revolution he was, because my grandfather was a full-blooded Yaqui Indian and my grandmother was a French refugee. But my father was dark and had the Yaqui features like I do. They conscripted him in the Yaqui division of the Revolutionary Army. In order to whittle down and weed out the Yaqui population, they conscripted these Yaquis to go to the front lines, and they drafted my father; he was only fifteen and a half, and he was sent to fight with General Carranza. This is *"El teniente y González,"* the Lieutenant and González.

From Allende he said goodbye
21 years completed,
He left a lot of pleasant memories
To the town and to the *rurales*
(*Rurales* like the federal troops).

And it says:

Arnulfo was sitting down
And at that time a lieutenant goes by,
And the lieutenant said,
"What are you looking at?"

And the lieutenant got very angry and hit Arnulfo in the face with his gun. He hit him in the face and pulled out his gun threatening him, and then he put his gun back in his holster and walked off. Then Arnulfo said, "Hey, wait a minute. You need my answer." And so it goes.

Using music, drama, and visual images, traditional art expresses identity along the border.

Part 4: OCCUPATIONS *and* IDENTITY

Occupations can reflect a regional and personal identity. Along the United States-Mexico border, traditional occupations tied to the land, like ranching, have a long history. The border fosters other occupations born from special circumstances: the availability of inexpensive labor, a bustling tourist trade, and the control of people crossing the border.

For many people, ranching is a way of life in the lower Rio Grande/Río Bravo region. The dry open ranges of South Texas and northeastern Mexico create an ideal area for raising large herds of cattle.

Cynthia Vidaurri: The cattle industry as it exists today had its origins in Spain. It was brought in to Mexico by the Spanish visitors that came in the 1500s.

One of the occupations connected to ranching is that of the cowboy, or *vaquero*. A *vaquero*'s identity is evident in the clothes he wears, the equipment he uses, and in the skills he's learned over a lifetime.

Omar Galván: I was born and raised in a ranch in South Texas. I come from a big family of ten. My father was a cowboy, my grandfather was a cowboy, my great-grandfather was a cowboy. All my brothers and myself.

Identity can also be tied to the terms used to refer to oneself. When speaking English, Omar calls himself a cowboy. In Spanish, however, he is known as a *vaquero completo*.

Cynthia Vidaurri: There's a distinction between a cowboy and a *vaquero* on the South Texas ranches. "Cowboy" might mean the guy who is twenty, twenty-five, takes his pick-up truck and his goose-neck trailer and works cattle using hydraulics, but the *vaquero completo* knows the entire range of the cattle business. These are the fellows who fix windmills, *papelotes*, these are the guys who build the fences, as well as going out there and working the cattle. Some of these older cowboys can tell you by sight which calf belongs to which cow.

At the Smithsonian's Festival of American Folklife in Washington, D.C., Omar described a typical day's work for a cowboy:

Omar Galván: *We get up very early, sometimes at 3:00 a.m., sometimes at 4:00. We have to be ready to ride at dawn.*

Omar is retired now and no longer lives on a ranch. He still identifies himself as a *vaquero*, though, and is often called upon to guide younger, aspiring *vaqueros*.

Many people working along the border are influenced by ranches and their history. Armando Flores, a blacksmith, was inspired by his family's involvement in ranching:

Armando Flores: Throughout my years growing up, on both sides of my family, my mother's side and my father's side, all the folks in our family were ranch hands or worked in ranches all their lives. On my mother's side, I'm the first generation that

did not grow up on a ranch, that did not do ranch work. On my father's side, I'm the second generation that was pulled off the ranch. So, I've always heard from when I was a kid stories about blacksmiths, and how resourceful those people were, how they would repair wagons and plows and all kinds of stuff, make implements for the ranchers and stuff. So I kept that in the back of my mind somewhere, and as I progressed in my blacksmithing skills, I brought that back. So now I go to scrap yards and look for items that I am able to recycle into something else, whether it be decorative or practical form.

Other occupations, like rope and basket making, continue in ranching regions of the border.

Arturo Carrillo Strong, an author and former border investigator, explains that ranching is not the only occupation with a long history in the region.

Arturo Carrillo Strong: The smuggling business is one that has been handed down from one generation to another. The old smuggling routes of the *tequileros* go back centuries, and these routes are inherited and handed down to the children.

Since the early part of this century, the United States Government has increased its patrol of the border to monitor traffic of people and goods between the two countries.

Reynaldo Hernández: My name is Reynaldo Hernández; I'm with the United States Border Patrol, part of the branch of the Immigration Service, and my job is to stop illegal immigration of illegal aliens from all parts of the country, all parts of the world that are coming into the United States. I was born and raised in South Texas. For the past sixteen years I have been involved in the enforcement of smuggling or contraband directly, right on the river in South Texas, now right on what we call "the line," the *"linea"* in Nogales. I was born and raised on a horse and worked with these King Ranch cowboys at one time. And when I went to the area where I am now in, we started up a horse patrol. And we have been able to apprehend narcotic violators on horseback, partly because now we are using the trades, tools that they are using, countering what they are using, and it also helps us in the tracking of illegal aliens. My background in ranching allowed me to track and, you know, apprehend a lot of narcotic and illegal alien violators.

The availability of inexpensive labor has lured many U.S. companies to relocate their assembly plants to the border. These plants are known as *maquiladoras*. In many cases, the U.S. companies exploit their workers, and pollute the environment.

One *maquila* worker offers a description of her work: "The work is very hard, very dirty. You work with metals, and all the time you are shaking off shavings and picking out splinters."

Other occupations have benefitted from the thriving tourist industry of the border. In Tijuana a group of Mixtecas have organized themselves to sell crafts to tourists. In the Plaza de Santa Cecilia, these women display their goods in specially designed carts.

The Mixtecas, originally from rural Oaxaca in southwestern Mexico, migrated to the border, which is a mid-point between the agricultural fields of Mexico and those of the United States where many of their husbands find seasonal

work. Ofelia Santos López, president of the Unión Mixteca de Comerciantes y Artesanos de Artículos para el Turismo, explains:

> **Ofelia Santos López:** *We are all women. Our husbands go to the United States to work, while we stay in Tijuana. We struggle to help our husbands and children get ahead. We have organized ourselves, so they don't suffer like we did. We are hard workers, and we help each other out.*

From the clothing of a *vaquero* to the union card of a Mixteca vendor, occupations along the border help define people's identities. Occupations change over time — but the border itself creates circumstances that affect the working lives of its residents.