

# LOOK UP! JULY 3/4<sup>TH</sup>

## “In Plain Sight”

USES ART TO EXPOSE ABUSES OF AMERICAN DETENTION CENTERS  
A COALITION OF 80 ARTISTS SKYTYPE MESSAGES OVER  
80 DETENTION FACILITIES ACROSS THE U.S.

<https://xmap.us/>

**July 3-4, 2020 (Across the United States)** – Visual and performance artists Cassils and rafa esparza present In Plain Sight: an activist artwork created in collaboration with 80 artists, dedicated to the abolition of immigrant detention and the United States culture of incarceration.

The project will culminate over “Independence Day” weekend in a spectacular performance to expose the detention camps that are hiding “in plain sight” to the American public.



# #XMAP IN PLAIN SIGHT

On July 3, In Plain Sight will launch skytyping plane fleets to spell out artist-generated messages over **80 detention facilities, immigration courts, borders, sites of former internment camps, and other historically significant landmarks**. Written with water vapor, the messages can be seen and read for miles.

Each artist’s message will end in **#XMAP**, a hashtag devised to lead viewers to [In Plain Sight’s](https://xmap.us/) website and interactive map which, using geolocation technologies, locates the ICE detention facilities within your immediate vicinity. The goal of this skytyping performance is to make visible what is too often unseen and unspoken on the ground: the appalling, profoundly immoral imprisonment of immigrants.

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

IPS artists depicting a vast array of ages, gender presentations and subjective lived experiences have been asked to focus their attention on the subject matter of immigrant detention and the culture of incarceration in an act of solidarity—from deconstructing the notions of whiteness in the U.S., to amplifying queer voices, to highlighting the violation of human rights that comes in tandem with ICE. Among the artists are Dread Scott; Emory Douglas, former Minister of Culture for the Black Panther Party; Patrisse Cullors, co-founder of Black Lives Matter; trans activist Zackary Drucker; Asian-American curator and writer Karen Ishizuka; Colombian artist Carlos Motta; and many others.

## OFFSETTING THE EFFORT

Using several Carbon Footprint Calculators, IPS has estimated that each half hour skywriting flight can be offset by planting five trees. IPS artist Sam Van Aken has generously offered to plant [The Tree of 40 Fruit](#): a series of fruit trees created by Aken using a grafting technique. Each tree will produce forty types of stone fruit ripening sequentially from July to October; these trees will be placed in close proximity to detention facilities and sights of incarceration.

## IN PLAIN SIGHT OVERVIEW

The project is conceived in six parts: a precisely orchestrated, moving and poetic elegy on a national scale; a website <https://xmap.us/>; an anthology docuseries; an augmented reality ap: actions the public can take to join the movement against immigrant detention; and partnerships producing arts-related education and engagement with cultural organizations.

## THE PROBLEM AT HAND

Adults and children have been suffering and dying in taxpayer funded facilities. In 2019, U.S. **Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)** [reported an average daily total of 50,000+ incarcerated migrants](#). According to the federal government data, over 70 percent of people are held in privately-run immigrant prisons. Various reports detail horrifying conditions: overcrowded cells without physical room for individuals to sleep; [toilets as drinking fountains](#); lack of access to showers for periods sometimes exceeding 20 days. On October 24th, 2019, ACLU reported more than 5,400 children have been separated from their families at the Mexico border since July 2017. Since 2003 there have been 207 deaths in ICE detention, and this does not include children.

**Compounded by COVID-19, the immigrant community continues to be disproportionately oppressed.** Prompt action to release individuals from ICE detention is not only the just and moral course, but the most reasonable health intervention to prevent unnecessary deaths. The migrant community does not have protection from COVID-19 and **lacks basic supplies including soap, disinfectant and face masks.**

## SERVING THE COMMUNITY

*In Plain Sight* aims to both amplify the voices on the inside and **serve as a pipeline to partner organizations that directly serve the immigrant community.** These organizations include The Haitian Bridge Alliance, the ACLU of Southern California, Detention Watch Network, MIJENTE, and a host of others. The 80 artists involved seek progressive social change around a cluster of issues—from indigenous land to transgender representation.

Award winning social justice documentarian [PJ Raval](#) and producer [Fariyah Zaman](#) have signed on to produce an episodic series filming concurrently. The series will delve more deeply into the project's themes of migration, identity and belonging via the personal and creative lives of the participating artists and activists in the trenches; many of whom are themselves immigrant, first generation, and/or undocumented.

- IPS invites the public to join the [#FreeThemAll campaign](#), a response to the growing public health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic; to support the [National Immigration Detention Bond Fund](#), enabling individuals to focus their efforts on winning their immigration cases; and, for those eligible in the U.S., to vote.[2]

## FOUNDER BIOS

**Cassils** is a transgender artist who makes their own body the material and protagonist of their performances. Cassils's art contemplates the history(s) of LGBTQI+ violence, representation, struggle and survival. For Cassils, performance is a form of social sculpture: Drawing from the idea that bodies are formed in relation to forces of power and social expectations, Cassils work investigates historical contexts to examine the present moment. As trans person navigating the US immigration system, they have glimpsed firsthand the unjust, meritless, financially motivated, bigoted and dehumanizing nature of the US immigration system. Cassils phrase, **SHAME #DEFUNDHATE**, will be placed over the west coast Geo Group headquarters. Within the three billion dollar private prison industry, GEO Group is the nation's second largest for-profit prison operator.

**rafa esparza** is a multidisciplinary artist who was born, raised, and currently lives in Los Angeles. Woven into Esparza's bodies of work are his interests in history, personal narratives, and kinship. He is inspired by his own relationship to colonization and the disrupted genealogies that it produces. He is the product of his parents' migration, witnessing the risk taken to traverse unknown territories in search of work and opportunity. Being one of five male siblings, and the only one who has never been incarcerated, he understands the gravity of the prison industrial complex and its targeting of black and brown communities. Rafa's work, **LA FRONTERA NOS CRUZO (THE BORDER CROSSED US)**, will be paired with the **Cross Border Xpress CBX**, a bridge for Tijuana International Airport passengers crossing the border between the United States and Mexico.

## ARTIST INDEX (ABBREVIATED)

[Alok Valid Menon \(ALOK\)](#) is a gender non-conforming writer and performance artist. Their eclectic style and poetic challenge to the gender binary have been internationally renowned. Their typeface, **GOD BROWN AMERICA**, will live over the **Montgomery Processing Center** in Conroe, TX. ALOK is a first generation, South Asian American who grew up in the middle of the Bible Belt who can speak firsthand to the experience of being GNC, brown, and proudly queer individual in an area rife with transphobia and racism.

[Bamby Salcedo](#) is a Latina Transgender organizer and advocate who has produced and developed several ground-breaking programs, from The Translatin@ Coalition to Angels of Change. Her work, **STOP CRIMIGRATION NOW**, will be projected above the **LA Field Office**. Her work, which is grounded in legislative change, makes the courthouse a natural site.

[Carlos Motta](#) is a Colombian historian and archivist committed to in-depth research on the struggles of post-colonial subjects and societies. His work manifests in a variety of mediums including video, installation, sculpture, drawing, web-based projects, performance, and symposia. His typeface, **ESTOY AQUI (I AM HERE)**, is paired with the **Otero County Processing Center** in Chaparral, NM.

[Carolina Caycedo](#) is a London-born Colombian artist who participates in movements of territorial resistance, solidarity economies, and housing as a human right. Her phrase, **#NoWall #NoMuro**, will be skytyped above the **West Texas Detention Facility**, highlighting the environmental impact of wall construction as it interfaces with climate change and forced migration.

[Dread Scott](#) is known for his [revolutionary art](#) to propel history forward. In 1989, his art, What is the Proper Way...? became the center of national controversy over its transgressive use of the American flag; which became a part of a landmark Supreme Court case. His words will be placed above **Ellis Island**—a mythological place of welcome that has acted equally as a filter, excluding those deemed unfit for citizenship for reasons ranging from poverty to disease to homosexuality. Placing Scott at this site continues his work of asking viewers to look soberly at America's past and our present.

[Emory Douglas](#) is an American graphic designer who worked as the Minister of Culture for the Black Panther Party from 1967 until the Party disbanded in the 1980s. As the art director, designer, and main illustrator for The Black Panther, Douglas created images that became icons, representing black American struggles during the 1960s and 1970s. Douglas' **HEALTH IS WEALTH!** phrase is placed over **East Baton Rouge Jail**, a jail holding ICE transfers; where a sheriff's deputy was caught on video choking a man after he says he asked for COVID-19 treatment.

[Hank Willis Thomas](#) is a conceptual Brooklyn-based artist working primarily with themes related to perspective, identity, commodity, media, and popular culture. He is the co-founder of For Freedoms, a platform which aims to inject anti-partisan, critical thinking that fine art requires into the political landscape through programming, exhibitions, and public artworks. His phrase, **LIFE, LIBERTY, AND** will be displayed over the **Hudson County Correctional Facility**.

[Jackie Sumell](#) facilitates unexpected exchanges between persons subjected to indefinite solitary confinement and those of us living on the “outside.” Her project, Solitary Gardens, enlists communities to create public, green spaces designed by men and women currently in solitary, while simultaneously offering workshops and curricula for all of us to envision a landscape without prisons. Placing her phrase **“ICE WILL MELT”** over the **New Orleans Field Office**, she addresses the history of the pre-colonial Mississippi river which brought many different indigenous peoples to this land, often as slaves.

[Julieta Venegas](#) is a Mexican singer/songwriter who has earned the praise of critics and won numerous Grammys. Venegas is a pioneer whose music and image have broken Latina stereotypes and has forged a path between Latin alternative and pop music, and has supported the cresting of a strong wave of Mexican female artists. Julieta has been a outspoken, social justice advocate in particular for women’s rights fighting to end violence against women in Latin America. Her work, **NO TE RINDAS** (DON’T GIVE UP), will be affixed above the **U.S. Customs and Border Protection**, San Ysidro Port of Entry.

[Patrisse Cullors](#) is a co-founder of Black Lives Matter the New York Times bestselling author of When they Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir, and a visual artist working at the intersection of performance art and social practice. Cullors is currently one of the most outspoken leaders organizing the fight to #DefundthePolice, the nationwide campaign seeking to reallocate funds from law enforcement to communities and their social support. Her words, **CARE NOT CAGES**, will live above the **LA County Jail**, the largest county jail in the country.

[Tayhana](#) is an Argentinian DJ and producer, established as one of the most powerful musical forces on the South and Central-American dancefloors. She breaks prejudices with her soundbeats, and is vocal about the intersection of music and politics. Her explosive energy and vast selection of vigorous club tracks, along with an extensive collection of regional hits, make her a favourite of many DJ’s and club-goers. Tayhana’s phrase will live over **US Customs and Border Protection** - Rio Grande Port of Entry.

[Titus Kaphar](#) is an artist whose paintings, sculptures, and installations examine the history of representation. His practice seeks to dislodge history from its status as the “past” in order to unearth its contemporary relevance. [Kaphar’s recent cover for TIME Magazine](#), Analogous Colors, depicts a black mother holding a silhouette of a child. Kaphar is referencing Floyd calling out for his mother during his arrest, as he was pinned to the ground and held down by police officer Derek Chauvin for 8 minutes and 46 seconds. Kaphar’s typeface, **UNSEEN MOTHERS**, will be placed over the **Border Patrol Station** in Wesalaco, TX. This site previously held Carlos Gregorio Hernandez Vasquez, a 16-year-old Guatemalan migrant who was ill, in a concrete cell without proper medical attention; his body was not discovered until his cellmate alerted guards. Placing Kaphar’s words over this site points to the unwitnessed and silenced pain and anguish that Vasquez’s mother must have felt.

[Tsuru for Solidarity \(Karen Ishizuka\)](#) is a nonviolent, direct action project of Japanese American social justice advocates working to end detention sites and support front-line immigrant and refugee communities that are being targeted by racist, inhumane immigration policies. The Artist Lead, Karen Ishizuka is a third generation Japanese American who is currently Chief Curator of the Japanese American National Museum. Ishizuka's phrase **NO MORE CAMPS** over the Santa Anita Assembly Center asks that Japanese Americans and their allies take a stand against all acts of xenophobia.

[Zackary Drucker](#) is an independent artist, cultural producer, and trans woman deconstructing societal norms on gender and sexuality. Drucker is an Emmy-nominated producer for the docu-series *This Is Me* and the Golden Globe and Emmy-winning *Transparent*. Drucker's phrase "**NOSOTRAS TE VEMOS**" ("WE SEE YOU") is paired with **South Texas ICE Processing Center** because of their special unit for transgender women. More than 900 transgender migrants have been booked into detention centers since November 2015, around the time ICE began tracking the population.

**IPS** will also be typing a phrase written by a decentralized network of undocumented/DACA organizers across the country who released this message on anniversary of DACA. The phrase **Abolish Pol(ICE)** will be displayed over **Santa Cruz County Jail** in El Paso, AR. Abolish Pol(ICE) is a loud and clear demand from undocumented, DACAmented, and formerly undocumented community leaders who are rooted in organizing and abolition. They believe that in order for Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and all people to be free we must abolish ICE and the police.

## **PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS**

ACLU SoCal	Defund The police & Abolish Ice Collective
RAICES	Immigrant Legal Resources Center
Central American Research Policy Institute (CARPI)	National Day Laborer Organizing Network (NDLON)
Detention Watch Network / CIYJA	Clinica Romero
Familia: TQLM - Familia: Trans Queer Liberation Movement	Salvadoran American Leadership and Educational Fund (SALEF)
Freedom For Immigrants	CARECEN-LA
Haitian Bridge Alliance (HBA)	El Rescate
La Resistencia	Mayavision
Make the Road NY & NJ	Center for Cultural Power
Mijente	

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