Survival in Ciudad Juarez, from 1993 to 2011, has been paradigmatic of death and the devaluing of the lives of men and women. Although the murders of more than a hundred girls and women have been reported by the relatives of victims and women activists, they have gone unpunished. Pressured by the demand for justice, the State denied all responsibility, arguing that those lives were valueless, trivializing their deaths as necessary consequences of economic progress, and the city’s image.

**Key Words:** femicide, male homicide, dehumanization, banality of death, extreme violence

Since 1993, and at least through 2011, living in Ciudad Juarez, on Mexico’s northern border, has meant surviving a paradigmatic story of death and contempt for the lives of men and women. Since 1993, the families of victims and feminist activists in Juarez have released information about the femicide of over one hundred low-income girls and women by murderers that have gone unpunished. Their tortured, maimed, and abused bodies were dumped in desert areas and vacant lots. Despite the demands for justice, the State has denied all responsibility and argued for the irrelevance of their lives by trivializing their deaths as necessary consequences of economic progress and the beautification of the city’s image.

In 2008, the extreme violence put the spotlight on an increasing number of other victims’ faces: those killed by organized crime groups. That year, 14,007 people were murdered, and 18.6 percent of these violent deaths occurred in the state of Chihuahua, where Juarez is located. Juarez was the stage for 61 percent of the statewide deaths,
and of 11.35 percent of the total nationwide (National Institute of Statistics and Geography, INEGI, 2010). Paradoxically, on March 28 of that same year, Juárez received information about the creation of the Operativo Conjunto Chihuahua (Joint Operation Chihuahua). This strategy is part of the frontal attack declared by the executive branch against criminality and organized crime groups in late 2006 to restore public safety for citizens nationwide. In the same manner, the victims, mostly poor men, were blamed for their deaths. Governments belittle their extermination in the interests of a better future that is drug free and promotes the country and the city’s good image.

When we reflect on the drama of violence experienced in Juárez, “death is one of the main characters in the cast and it reappears in every act” (Bauman 65). In the immediate past, these hundreds of murdered women drew the world’s attention, and femicide was classified as the symbol and the paradigm of the violation of the rights of women at the national level (United Nations, UN, 2003). At the end of the first decade of the 21st century, Juárez was named the “murder capital of the world” (Turati 8) because of the immeasurable loss of thousands of lives. These two paradigmatic examples of extreme violence represent “the culmination of a long process of dehumanizing and industrializing death” in our city (Mbembe 25).

Violent death is one of the most reliable indicators used to measure the level of violence that societies experience. In like manner, it is one indicator that allows us to analyze who dies, who lives, and who consents to death. In Juárez, the victims of femicide and organized crime are mostly poor; they are the men and women who live in areas with higher indicators of poverty and urban marginalization (Cervera and Monárrez 2011). And the victims are being presented to the community as offenders of their gender and social order both by criminals and by those who should make sure the investigation and justice processes work. Two examples illustrate these assertions. In 2009, a woman was killed and the following message was left on her skin: “The devil is in Juárez. Take care; don’t walk alone or look sexy. We will keep you posted” (PM 5). That same year, General Jorge Juárez Loera, who was appointed to serve in an important command position in the Operativo Conjunto Chihuahua, urged the media to
report the murders in Ciudad Juárez as follows: “Instead of saying one more death, say one offender less” (Siscar 2011). The dominant interpretation between the murderer and the authorities defines society’s internal enemies as “good” and “bad.” This discriminatory discourse against men and women is given to the community: she was killed for traveling alone and dressing provocatively. Men are killed for not having properly chosen licit versus illicit activities, including those within and those outside of the law. Judith Butler says the following in this regard: “those who do not live their genders in intelligible ways are at heightened risk for harassment and violence” because “the reproduction of gender is always a negotiation with power” (Butler, “Performatividad” 322-323).

Arguments and Theoretical Perspectives

In this long period of violence, it is important to investigate what we have witnessed and survived as what Jean Baudrillard calls “public deaths,” those deaths that are different from natural deaths because they are not the product of biological deterioration, but the will of a group. This willpower has been terribly cruel to the victims. Their dead bodies lie in narco-graves, riddled with bullets, tortured, mutilated, beheaded, strangled, hanged, incinerated, disintegrated in acid, taped, stuck in car trunks, sexually abused, and in humiliating positions. They have simply been abandoned as “natural waste” (Baudrillard 165). These corpses are thrown away with “disregard” as symbols of their “insignificant human value” under the most intolerable impunity, while the life of those of us who have not died is reflected in “a survival determined by death” of the others (Baudrillard 127).

Michel Foucault was interested in a “consideration of life by power.” This was a new type of power exercised by the sovereign who had the faculty “to make live” and “to let die”; this is what he called “biopower” (Foucault 218). However, “to make live” is based on an imbalance that is founded in declaring part of the population as a threat to the survival of others. Therefore, the ruler used disciplinary and regulatory death techniques, the first of which was exercised on “the body,” that is, the effects were
individual. The second technique was exercised on the species, “the population,” and with it “to make live” and “to let die” appear, both supported by the implementation of the “norm” (Foucault 225, 228). The standard norm for Foucault was racism; this biological relationship established a positive correspondence of a military sort: “If you want to live, the other must die” (Foucault 231). It is necessary that they die, so that divisions can be made in the population of the people who must die, so that you can live. This is achieved by distinguishing, prioritizing, and categorizing an inferior and a superior population, from a biological norm.

Hannah Arendt also discussed the death of human beings in totalitarian regimes under the concept of superfluous beings. She addresses this “to let die” from two sub-products of capitalist production; one of them is superfluous wealth. The second, which precedes the first, is:

The human waste that every crisis, that invariably followed each industrial development period, permanently removed from the productive society. The men who had become permanently unemployed were just as superfluous to the community as the owners of superfluous wealth. The fact that they constituted a threat to society was recognized throughout the nineteenth century. (The Origins 211)

The accumulation of capital (superfluous capital) could only occur under a social system that permitted the poor distribution of accumulated wealth and by excluding a large part of the community’s superfluous beings from the production process and consumption by a number of “impoverished and embittered” people. (The Origins 210)

In Ciudad Juarez, these murders are marked and have their material base in two global capital phenomena: the first of these is the opening of the city and the delivery of its cheap labor to transnational capital with the so-called maquiladora project that settled in this city in the late 1960s. The second is the emergence of a solid drug corridor into the United States, which became a death corridor in the mid-1980s. Alongside these two moments, corruption and immorality also appeared at the national, state, and local
government levels, and have increased with the process of the political changes our country has faced since the 80s. These economic and political processes have produced a large number of superfluous beings as human waste. Therefore, the agendas of the oppression of men and women are found both in the global assembly line and the international economy of organized crime —where most of the people involved in drug trafficking activities are poor and easily replaceable, as well as in the political arena, where the State has not made dignified living and the right to life its main objective (Global Commission on Drug Policy 2011).

The drama of the replacement of these lives is that it is done so through death. This is, according to Foucault, power—in our case, the economic and political power—that makes those “divisions” in the lives of men and women. But how do you choose who will die and who will live? The choice is made from the economic value they represent, as well as from the justification and vindication of the rule of the superfluous according to sexual difference and through the discourses that power makes about the male and female victims’ bodies. The power, in this case, comes from the State that grants a “permissibility” to kill men and women. It then sets a “positive relationship” when it sends signals that imply that “in order to live, the other must die” (Foucault 231). Who is the other? The one that is worth less, the city’s leftovers, the residue of excess, the superfluous, the unnecessary, the primitive. These are those:

by which the more the lower species tend to disappear, the more abnormal individuals will be removed, there will be less degenerates with respect to the species and I—not as an individual, but as a species—will live more, and be stronger and vigorous and will be able to proliferate the most ... The death of another is not just my life, my personal safety; the other’s death, the death of the bad race, of the inferior race (or the degenerate, or the abnormal) is what will make life in general healthier and more pure. (Foucault 231)

However, the war launched against the adversaries exposes “the citizens themselves” (Foucault 232), which we now call “collateral deaths” (Bauman 2011). The murder of the others involves two elements: a physical act that inflicts damage to a body and a verbal
act that interprets it. Who died and who speaks for them? Men and women die and those that speak for them are the murderers, the government agencies responsible for enforcing the Law, and the business elite. And their discourses permit the killing, the annihilation, and the disqualification of the victims with the trivialization of their extermination.

Once the concept of a superfluous life is exposed as the norm of violence, in which lie the femicides and the killings by execution and the settling of accounts\(^3\) by organized crime, I focus on the discourses constructed and managed by the branches of government on the continued killing of men and women. And while such discourses do not completely explain the causes of this violence, they do however exercise a certain influence so that the inalienable and universal right to life and the obligation to repair the damage are lost. My reasoning represents a combination of feminist theory and critical humanist theory that reflects on the use of violence by the State, from the imbalance of sexual difference and the selection of the populations annihilated. My goal is to examine the excuses given to explain why these deaths are not considered irreparable losses and the lack of outrage that should be caused when a person’s life is taken; instead, certain lives are upset for the sake of economic development and a better future for specific segments of the population with the removal of its “excess”. I have organized my discussion around two topics: the first is the policies of the Mexican state “to make live” and “to let die” through the increased violent deaths. The second explores how the artificiality of the finiteness of life is constructed for groups of men and women, and I focus on the analysis of the statements the State authorizes, which become disciplinary techniques for individuals and for regularization of the population.

**Dehumanization and Industrialization of Death**

Death has been present in Ciudad Juarez intermittently since the mid-eighties. Throughout these years, the Juarez community has suffered a devastating experience of deadly violence against men and women (see Chart 1). In this sense, this long-held practice of systematic violence has a purpose: “to dictate what 'men' and 'women' are
supposed to be and to discipline marginalized communities and any other perceived threats to dominant political structures and practices” (Nayak and Suchland 469).

These same authors claim that “the focus on violence against women potentially ignores violence against men, which ultimately results in a lack of attention to the codes of masculinity [that] negatively affect men” (Nayak and Suchland 472). In this sense, we can say that homicide and femicide are acts that have disciplined both sexes while normalizing the Juarez population.

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The violent deaths of men and women, the focus of our analysis, began to increase rapidly in this city late last century. For instance, the number of men who died violently between 1985 and 1992 was 476; this number represents a rate of 11.3 male victims per 100,000 inhabitants. In those same years, 44 women were killed; their cases represented a rate of 2.6 victims per 100,000 inhabitants. These crimes over eight years accounted for an average of 66 victims per year. In 1993, 101 men were killed in this city, representing a rate of 12.3 cases per 100,000 inhabitants, and 12 women were killed, representing a rate of 2.6 victims per 100,000 inhabitants. This year marked the beginning of a rising death toll for men and women. The number of men murdered never falls below 100, and there is an average of 33 cases of female deaths per year until 2007. During these years, the Juarez community had already suffered the devastating experience of deadly violence. This community was ready for death.

The year 2008 was a fateful year for Ciudad Juarez, as it marked the beginning of extreme and unprecedented violence, due to its magnitude and the complexity of the atrocities committed against its people. That year, the Juarez community received the news from the Mexican federal government that, at the request and with the approval of state and local governments, Operativo Conjunto Chihuahua had been formed. This tactic opened the door to unprecedented forms of victimization of the population by organized crime, unorganized crime, the military, the police forces, and public officials alike. In this city, the high cost in human lives, with the renewal of femicide and killings by organized crime groups, again showed the insignificance of human beings, the State's failure to make use of legitimate coercion, and the casualization of community life.

According to media accounts, in 2008, 1,608 people were killed on this border: 1,510 men and 98 women. Disciplinary techniques increased in a way never before seen, and with them, regulatory techniques appeared and were extended to all citizens. The population began to suffer further violence, such as kidnappings, extortion, pay per floor, and the right to “protection,” buses riddled with bullets —along with the users of public transportation, fires, and the shutting down of businesses. Other types of violence intensified, such as car theft accompanied by violence, assaults on passersby,
burglary, bank robbery, sexual violence against girls and women, and the increased disappearance of teenage girls. By 2011, it was said that this militarized conflict had left an unknown number of parents without children, countless widows, and between 8,000 and 10,000 orphans. The year 2009 ended with 2,607 people killed, 202 of whom were women. In 2010, the count was 3,010, 302 of whom were women. The dehumanization and industrialization of death was well underway.

Violence affects both men and women in Ciudad Juarez. However, in no way can it be said that the experiences of violence of women are totally different from those of men: “it would be as false and misleading as to argue that the experiences of both are identical” (Weitzman and Ofer in Ni Aoláin 45). We must, therefore, be attentive to the different ways in which men and women are harmed, but also to the differentiated harm caused to the women and among the populations that make up the national, rural, urban, border, and multicultural, youth, adult, native, foreign, and other citizens. In studying the criminal violence inflicted on the bodies of men and women, we must recognize what Catherine A. MacKinnon asks: “When is it a sexual act? When you kill or die as a member of your own gender, and when you are any other person? Are you ever someone else?” (in Caputi 437).

In 1993, feminists, activists, and the relatives of victims announced the femicide nationally and internationally: a systematic killing of low-income girls and women, tortured, humiliated, mutilated, and dumped as waste in inhospitable places throughout the city. With the femicide, Ciudad Juarez was the subject of recommendations by national and international human rights organizations. The first was made by the Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos (National Human Rights Commission, 1998), in which it informed the government of Chihuahua that the killings in Ciudad Juarez, from the point of view of violence against women, were an intolerable affront to the dignity of human beings. In 1999 Asma Jahangir, Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions, said it was the little value given to the lives of these women that kept them from being considered as a “great loss,” hence, their cases were not investigated (United Nations, Report by Rapporteur 1). In 2003, the Office of the UN
High Commissioner for Human Rights in Mexico devoted a special section to the murders of women in Ciudad Juarez and said, “Ciudad Juarez is the symbol and the paradigm of the violation of the rights of women at the national level and of the absent State.” Similarly, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime said that this impunity, coupled with the lack of credibility in the administration of justice, has produced fear in the Juarez population, resulting in a gap between civil society and the public order to the benefit of the perpetrators of these crimes (United Nations, “Report of the International” 10-11). In 2009, the Corte Interamericana de Derechos Humanos (Inter-American Court of Human Rights) recognized femicide as a “gender-based murder” and sentenced the Mexican State for the massacre with the three paradigmatic cases of Claudia Ivette López, Esmeralda Herrera Monreal, and Berenice Ramos Monárrez. However, neither they nor the more than 100 victims accumulated over these 18 years have received justice (see Photograph 1).

Photograph 1. Protests on behalf of the missing girls and young ladies. Photograph by Julia Monárrez (2010).
The murdered men did not have families or activists who would speak for them. While in 1993 women's organizations began to register and keep a list of men and women killed, the former were left aside to focus on the extermination of the women. Moreover, the authorities argued that the women were guilty of their murders for leading lives outside the female norms. This same authority argued that most of the murders of men were related to organized crime, and both went unpunished. It allowed a different power other than the State — the organized crime, to decide the death of these men without any consequences for murderers.

In an excellent pioneering work done on male homicide in Ciudad Juarez, Salvador Cruz notes the following, among other things: most men killed by organized crime are young and marginalized. Those who kill presumably take cover under “a substitute and alternate law other than the State law” in a setting that culturally and historically tolerates the use of firearms, alcohol, silence, and impunity, and where some groups of young people that have no jobs or education swell the ranks of drug dealers, contract killers, and gangs of kidnappers and extortionists (Cruz 240).

These criminal groups are primarily the victims and perpetrators of this military conflict. They, continues Cruz, are mostly murdered in desolate public places, but also in places where their annihilation can be noticed by a wider audience, by the number of people who are in these places and doing their activities in bars, shops, restaurants, and nightclubs. Their deaths occur mostly in the afternoon, when the population becomes more active and moves from one place to another, and when you expect to see a larger number of police monitoring public safety. Given these challenging and defiant actions by the murderers, Cruz argues that “this border region has formed, through its local history, structural and relevant conditions that enable extreme social violence that is suffered ... in a power vacuum State” (259).

The Banalization of Death

“The State is a central political category in the organization of our lives” (Nayak and Suchland 470) and also in organizing our deaths. Given the serious problems of
femicide and murder, the State at different levels of government, and through the years, has not been content to allow the null value that the murderers have conferred the lives of girls and boys, men and women killed.

The statements of the leaders keep people from making a connection between the victims and the reality (Arendt, *Eichmann*). Their words, transformed into discourses that still need to be analyzed, represent certain aspects of the life of a community, and in like manner, incorporate themselves into the population that receives them as a stimulus to discipline and regulate their “innate repugnance toward crime” (Arendt, *Eichmann* 93). Hannah Arendt analyzed this way of leading the people, through speeches that contain a “language rule.” These language rules are euphemisms and code names for what in ordinary language would be called a lie (Arendt, *Eichmann* 85).

“The net effect of this language system was not to keep these people ignorant of what they were doing, but to prevent them from equating it with their old, 'normal' knowledge of lies and murders” (Arendt, *Eichmann* 86).

This is exactly the same way in which the government in Chihuahua has acted. At the beginning of the movement for justice, officials responsible for enforcement, governors, and a large segment of the community were quick in defining the victims as women leading a “double life” (Nathan). This claim has a direct relationship with Governor Francisco Barrio (1992-1998), of the Partido de Acción Nacional (National Action Party, PAN), who said the following in 1998 on a local television station: “There is a similar pattern, [the murdered women] moved in certain places and frequently associated with the thugs who then assaulted them” (in Najar 3). Also, then-assistant attorney general, Jorge López Molinar, offered a solution to the community regarding the insecurity caused by the killings between different groups of organized crime, the assaults, and the violence against women, based on having the citizens “self-impose a curfew, to make sure the good ones are at home with their families, and bad ones stay out on the street” (in Najar 3).

In the first statement, we observe how the disciplinary mechanism was exerted on the bodies of the girls and women murdered whose behavior had strayed from the
female norm and needed to be disciplined and punished on a permanent basis. This then gave way to a normalizing mechanism on the sexuality of all women, admonishing them to make sure their sexual behavior did not depart from the forced heteronormativity and a modest and prudent conduct. Otherwise, they could become victims not of men, but of beings who eke out a living. The second security proposal can be seen with full clarity in the present, in the dead ends that the streets of this city have become. A city besieged, a city with barred walls, a city where the neighborhoods impose their own curfews, a city with the suffering expressed in the different workshops offered to provide comfort and relief, to survive the passage of those who have left and recover from that which has been lost.

Death, human insecurity, and unprotected assets are paradigmatic examples of the various forms of violence that have developed over a long period. These are the disciplinary technology of the body (of those killed) and the regulatory technologies of life, of the population (the kidnappings, the extortion, and the car-jackings). And those who try to protect themselves and live, those who survive, do so in a besieged city full of cloistered streets (see photographs 2 and 3). In his account of the past, Patricio Martínez (1998-2004), former Governor of Chihuahua and member of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party, PRI) who succeeded Francisco Barrio Terrazas (PAN), said: “The Dead Women of Juarez are not part of my administration, they are Barrio's dead ... There are those dead, wallowing in the bag in which he left them, calling for the expert opinions he did not order at that time, and for the murderers to be found” (Crónica/Notimex 2004). His patriarchal discourses unequivocally represent the tolerance of impunity in the vulnerability of the bodies of victims who were killed in the previous administration and that also went missing and were annihilated during his administration. At the same time, he wryly replaces terms: “dead” for murdered, and “wallowing” instead of waiting. He uses the first change to make it impossible to see the violent act, and the second, a word with a double meaning in Mexico, to denigrate them.7
After the presence of international human rights agencies with their reports, governors have been cautious when referring to the murdered women. While the commission of femicides and the impunity are permanent, they prefer not to refer to the victims and to focus their speeches instead on the “city's image.” Governor José Reyes Baeza Terrazas (2004-2010, PRI), who succeeded Patricio Martínez, blamed national and foreign media, as well as international organizations, of maintaining “a structured, systematic, and ongoing campaign to tarnish the image of Ciudad Juarez” with the pretext of femicides (Breach and Villalpando 32).

In this effort, the governors and other voices have insisted on discrediting a society globally conceived in the defense of the human rights of women. And they insist, as Karl Marx noted in the *Communist Manifesto*, on exhibiting the State as a committee to defend the common interests of the bourgeoisie.

One of these voices is Governor César Duarte Jáquez (2010-2016, PRI). In 2009, as president of the Mesa Directiva de la Cámara de los Diputados (Executive Board of the Congress), he asked Ambassador Juan José Gómez Camacho, Mexico's Permanent Representative to International Organizations in Geneva, Switzerland, to “make an effort” to change the image of Ciudad Juárez “repeatedly struck” in the international arena, with the “stigma” caused by the dead women of Juárez. He said:


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We do not intend to shade or change a reality that could exist, but also do not want to assume one that does not exist, because stigmatizing this region, which receives thousands of Mexicans looking for jobs and opportunities for growth, today imposes a huge cost in terms of investment and employment, as Ciudad Juarez currently has over 100,000 people unemployed due to the economic crisis. (Parralalinstead.com 2009)

Norbert Elias argues that “the fact of dying” changes, just as a “society's development” also changes (24). This is quite true in Ciudad Juarez, where the form of being killed or murdered persists while also changing. What the State has not changed is the construction of the meanings of what is life and what is death, “to make to live” and “to let die,” and along with these acts, the discipline and regulation of the population.

In August 2011, the Governor of Chihuahua, César Duarte Jáquez (2010-2016, PRI), announced that the state of Chihuahua was no longer number one in terms of violence, three days after the Secretario de Seguridad Pública Federal (Federal Secretary for Public Safety) announced that Chihuahua ranked sixth nationwide and was seeing a downward trend (Espinoza 2011). The governor did not explain the reasons behind this decline or the violence indicators that were taken into account to measure the degree of violence in the 32 Mexican states.

Paradoxically, on the subject at hand, the weekly journal Zeta had reported the total number of murders registered between December 1, 2006, and July 31, 2011, just one day earlier. Of the 50,490 murders linked to organized crime, the journal said that 11,264 executions occurred in the state of Chihuahua,8 while also confirming that it held first place in terms of executions (Mendoza and Navarro 2011), with 22.3 percent of deaths nationwide. Meanwhile, Ciudad Juarez, with a blood quota of 8,820 persons killed, represents 78.3 percent of all deaths statewide and 17.4 percent nationally.

It is important to note that in this dreadful sacrifice of human lives, we have actually seen a 50 percent decline in Ciudad Juarez. Notwithstanding this decrease in the death toll, there is a need to examine the impunity prevailing in this lethal violence. For example, in terms of femicide, the Prosecutor in charge of the Fiscalía de

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Investigación de Homicidios de Mujeres (Attorney's Office for the Investigation of Murders of Women) stated that 304 women were murdered in 2010, and only 20 of these cases were handled by this office for being related to gender violence (González 2011).

Rachel Bowen offers the following analysis of the ignorance prevailing among the authorities in addressing violence against women:

Not gender-related crimes are those that are not necessarily motivated by or based on the victim's gender. However, the different State responses to these crimes may reflect the State's position on the equality of men and women. If the State pays less attention to the prosecution of perpetrators of crimes against women than to crimes committed against men, especially when these criminals target women based on their gender, then the State is systematically failing to protect women. This failure may represent a broader denial by the State to guarantee women equal protection under the laws. (6)

If this proves to be insufficient, the recommendations made by the Special Rapporteur on Women's Affairs, Martha Altolaguirre of the Corte Interamericana de Derechos Humanos (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights), are left void, as she emphasized in her report in 2002 on the *Situation of the Rights of Women in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico: The Right to be Free from Violence and Discrimination*:

In seeking solutions to the murder of women and girls in Ciudad Juarez, [it is essential] to devote more attention to developing an integrated understanding about the way in which different forms of violence against women are related and mutually reinforcing; and implementing integrated strategies to fight such violence.

[T]he director of UNIFEM has noted that the situation in Ciudad Juarez, which is troubled with drug trafficking, organized prostitution and pornography, among others, is a significant factor that increases violence against women. She noted that it would not be possible to stop the murders in Ciudad Juarez until these
related problems are dealt with seriously. (Corte Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, Situation of the Rights of Women)

In connection with the killings, she mentioned that between January 1st and September 1st of 2010 alone, a total of 2,030 murders were committed, and suspects were only found for 67 cases, which means that 97 percent of cases do not even indicate a responsible party (Rodríguez 2010). So the question remains: Who are the killers? However, she responds to the points raised by Bowen, Nayak, and Suchland. There is an equal application of the injustice and the disciplining of men and women in a marginalized community that is segregated, cornered, differentiated, and regularized by extreme violence.

At the same time, the war on drugs prompted an official narrative of the security forces against the forces of organized crime, revealing opposing positions: good versus evil, human versus inhuman. In April 2011, and in light of the murder of traffic police by organized crime groups, Julián Leyzaola Pérez, the former military commander in charge of the Secretaría de Seguridad Pública Municipal (Municipal Public Safety Secretariat), said the following:

[Those who killed these police officers] are like cockroaches that like living in the trash: they feed off disorder, anarchy, and filth in order to survive. Surely, they are not human, because if they were, they would have been born of a woman, and they are not. Those people who believe they are brave because they shoot a defenseless person do not deserve to live in the community. They certainly do not even deserve to live with their own children or families, or go to their piñatas. We have to throw them out. You, who know where they are: denounce them. Tell us where they are, do not shelter them, and do not cover for them. There is a huge difference between collecting the body of a criminal on the cold slab at the Forensic Medical Service (SEMEFO) and honoring the body of a public servant. No one claims the cowardly murderers’ bodies. Their family members, if they have any, are embarrassed to go pick them up. Their deaths do not release them from erroneously living outside the Law. (Bustamante 2011)
While criminal actions deserve our overwhelming rejection and judicial action, this rhetoric reflects a genealogy of discrimination on the basis of the “inhuman” compared to the “normal human” (Baudrillard 125-126). The murder of these police officers represents the “will of the group” (Baudrillard 165). They are the killers, the executioners, those connected to the criminal groups and who will also die, sooner or later. They know this: in 2010, a young man was killed and his dismembered body was scattered. A banner was staged at the scene, explaining why he had been killed: “FOR KILLING INCTS (sic) WOMEN⁹ AND TAKING ORDERS FROM ‘DIEGO’ AND WE ARE EXPENDABLE ASSASSINS FOR HIM. SINCERELY 7 (sic), YOU, 8, ARE NEXT” (El Diario de Juarez 7b).

Death has lost the ritualization of the civilizing process, says Norbert Elias, and with this, the last wish of those murdered is not delivered or conveyed to their family members; on the contrary, the murderers’ wishes are what prevail. Through countless events, through the narco-posters and narco-banners, they inform us that the power of the dying has been rendered ineffective before them. The body, lacerated and sometimes completely mutilated, exhibits the will of the de facto powers, and their ability to make this body die, so the de facto powers can live.

**Closing Remarks**

Ciudad Juarez has a disciplinary and normalizing element: the death of superfluous men and women over a long period of impunity. I begin by paraphrasing Foucault: in this long period of death in Ciudad Juarez, we have witnessed that the government “has the power over life and death,” this means it “can “let die” and “make to live,” therefore, “life and death are not those natural phenomena,” but should be thought of within “the realm of political power.” The right to life is no longer an inalienable, historical and universal right. It has become unbalanced and has differentially favored some, granted by the death of others through the “sovereign will” (Foucault 218). Biopower has not only allowed the killing of others, the subhuman, but
has also tolerated the death of those who supposedly have a certain value, the human: these are the collateral deaths.

Faced with this reality, the government and companies scheduled the Juarez Competitiva (Competitive Juarez) event in 2011. This was the first business, cultural, and sporting event held October 16-28 of that year. With the presence of invited national and international guests involved in politics, art, science, and others—all of them labeled as “visionary minds”—the intention was to bring ideas, hopes and resources to let Ciudad Juarez succeed. Amid their four goals, the first of these was stressed: “to position Ciudad Juarez positively in local, national and international circles.” For the organizers, this strategy highlighted “the global economic importance of one of the largest cities on the continent” and rescued the “dynamism that was once part of this city” (Juarez Competitiva. La ciudad que queremos 3-4).

Creating the image of the city, whatever that means, says Servando Pineda is an “act of hegemonic power groups” that ignores the demands for justice for the victims and the claims civilian community organizations make against femicide and the actions involved in organized crime, police corruption, and the lack of justice. As groups in power, they forget to mention the “powerful drug cartels that have taken over the city or to express an implacable judgment on the poor role performed by federal, state and municipal governments in challenging the economic crises suffered by our community” (Pineda, “Reseña” 14). The only downside is that death, death as a senseless violent process exists in Ciudad Juarez.

I end with a quote from Jean Baudrillard:

Power is established on death’s border. It will subsequently be sustained by further separations (the soul and the body, the male and the female, good and evil, etc.) that have infinite ramifications, but the principal separation is between life and death. (130)

Since the survival of superfluous lives and the banalization of death in this city is based on the principle that the only real “human beings” have the right to immortality; others have only the right to death (Baudrillard 127).
Translated from the Spanish by Ligia Figuerola Brunet and edited by Patricia Arroyo-Calderón and Miguel Valerio

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**Notes**

1 While I refer to official figures, it is important to note that the local and national media are those that actually keep count of the murders and figures resulting from this lethal violence, and they are always higher than the official figures. Therefore, I will quote both sources.
“Stuck in a car trunk” means depositing the victim's body in the trunk of the car. “Taping” is a neologism used in Mexico's northern border. It comes from the English word tape, referring to industrial duct or packaging tape. “Taping” means wrapping a person's head, body or part of the body with these tapes.

These words are now part of the vocabulary used both by the criminal organizations and the authorities and society in general.

During the first six months of 2011 alone, 188 young women have gone missing.

There are no official figures available in this regard. However, the Trust Fund to Care for the Children of the Victims of the War Against Crime was created to serve an even smaller number of these collateral victims of the drug war.

This was used in Nazi Germany, which mandated the use of words like “final solution,” “change of residence,” and “special treatment” instead of killing or sending the Jewish population to concentration camps for extermination.

I thank Lucha Castro, of Justice for Our Daughters, for drawing my attention to the double meaning of the word.

This weekly journal bases its statistics on the information cards of state and federal prosecutors, and the state and federal secretaries of Public Safety. According to official figures, 34612 people have been murdered in Mexico since the beginning of the violence associated with drug trafficking through 2010. Of these violent deaths, 29.2 percent occurred in the state of Chihuahua. Ciudad Juárez was the setting for 63.5 percent of such deaths statewide and 18.5 percent nationwide (Ramos Pérez, 2011).

It means “the innocent.”