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Catherine D'Ignazio, a.k.a. kanarinka, is an artist, software developer and educator. She is the Director of the Institute for Infinitely Small Things, an interventionist performance troupe, and former Director of the Experimental Geography Research Cluster at RISD's Digital+Media MFA program. She has also taught in the Comparative Media Studies program at MIT since 2009. Her artwork has been exhibited at the ICA Boston, Eyebeam, and MASSMoCA, and has won awards from the Tanne Foundation and Turbulence.org. Catherine has a BA in International Relations from Tufts University (Summa Cum Laude, Phi Beta Kappa) and an MFA in Studio Art from Maine College of Art. She has lived and worked in Paris, Buenos Aires, and Michigan, and currently resides in Waltham, MA.

At the lab, Catherine is interested in researching experimental ways of engaging more deeply with place and spatial justice issues - through storytelling, maps, media, social practice and algorithms.

kanarinka.com

ERASE THE BORDER: A PETITION OF VOICES FOR CHANGE

Submitted by [kanarinka](#) on December 18, 2012 - 11:34am

Erase the Border is a project that took place on the US-Mexico border in May 2012 and continues on the Internet. In May 2012, O'odham activist/artist Ofelia Rivas and I worked with a group of Tohono O'odham youth from the village of Ali Jegk to create a symbolic action to "erase" the US-Mexico border fence on the O'odham's land.

The main goal of the action was to symbolically erase the border by pressing and rubbing. The youth involved ranged from four years old to sixteen years old. The older ones documented the action using cameras and video cameras. The school-age kids were the most involved in the erasing. Several mothers and grandmothers were also present and watched the action from a distance in folding chairs.

The online Erase the Border project has two acts. The first act is a slideshow that tells the story of the border fence in a short, somewhat poetic way. It asks the viewer to "imagine your town cut in half by a fence" and then proceeds to play out the scenario where "you" are the person whose world is divided. In the background, Ofelia is singing "The Eagle Song". This act is meant to set the stage and to provide some small amount of context to why we are inviting people to add their voice and to erase the border.

The second act is a petition of voices that want to "erase the border". Each person's voice plays while their name and identifying information show in a window on the left hand side of the screen. The main goal for this page is to ask the visitor to contribute their voice to the petition, hence the large red button featured prominently on the page. On clicking this button, users are taken through a process of recording their voice directly from the browser or, alternately, calling the Vojo group phone number or just emailing me an audio file. If they record their voice from the browser, they are then given a link to share with their friends.

The link that the user is given at the end of the recording process and that they share on their social networks leads them back to the main page, but their voice will play first in the queue.

On the backend, I'm integrating with the Vojo system. Adding a file works by emailing a file to the Vojo group called "Erase the Border" with a specially designated user account. And retrieving the voices from Vojo works by parsing the RSS feed associated with the group. Now that I have that piece figured out it would be interesting to think about

<http://civic.mit.edu/blog/kanarinka/erase-the-border-a-petition-of-voices-for-change>

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Other information sections on the page include "Where does my voice go," which describes the ways that we will be using the voice archive, including encouraging a kind of open source approach where users are encouraged to download the whole archive and do creative things with it. I will speak more about this in the "next steps" section as I feel like there remain to be some things worked out here. Finally, the "More information" section includes a map, a New York Times article and the Zeega presentation about our symbolic action on the border.

I haven't linked to the petition site here because it's a work in progress and I want to have time to review it with my collaborators. Look for a more public release of "Erase the Border" in Spring 2013.

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