Land of the free

We thought It would be interesting to compare this sign with a song against the construction of the wall on the Mexican-American border. First, it's important to explain the context. The construction of this wall was started after the end of the Mexican-American war, in 1848. The outcome is that Mexico loses around 50 percent of territory which is now California and Texas. Initially on the new border there is no wall, it is just marked at regular intervals by a pile of stones, its aim was to represent the imaginary wall. People could move freely. Then, 4 years later, in 1891, these piles of stones were replaced by white pillars As the US decide to map the border more accurately. At this point the wall was still imaginary. Then in 1897 in many places the US demolish buildings etc and impose there be a wide strip of no man’s land on either side of the border so that visibility is better to spot smuggling which is on the rise of everyday items to avoid import tax.

What is interesting is that through the history of the wall there have been many iterations and their purpose varied: So, let me take you to the early 1900s where this time it is actually the cattle the US want to control as ticks are spreading disease, what can stop it? A simple fence of course. This is then followed by a bigger fence which this time is to control immigration (Chinese, then Mexican, then German spies in the first WW). In 1918 saw big wire fence being built. But its aim was mostly to diffuse tension than stop people from crossing. The big change comes in 1940s as many Mexican immigrant’s cross to the US to work on the farms which is follow many illegal immigrants crossing to the US to look for work. The wall becomes a barbed wired metal fence in but in the 1990s These metal fences are made solid by reusing the metal landing helicopter mats from the Vietnam War.

On September 11th, 2001 the Twin Towers are hit leading to further tightening of immigration rules and the length of the wall expanded by five times. The harder it is to enter the US the more people are attempting to enter illegally. In turn this leads to more reinforcements of the borders and hence the wall.

More recently, a project suggested by Donald Trump has been to replace the walls made from the Vietnam War mats by much higher concrete coloured walls. Trump's proposal has been met with a lot of opposition and protest including films, works of art and also songs: so we chose the song “Land of the free” because it illustrates the horror, the violence, the reason for the construction of the wall. This music expresses the opinion of many Americans, Mexicans, strangers that think it is immoral to build a wall to stop humans from crossing borders. We think that even if they try to customise the wall it’s still a concrete wall it does not change what fundamentally the wall does. There have been many peaceful ways of expressing disapproval and this has also been done through music. If we take a look at the words of the song “Land of the free” we can notice that the song names America as “the land of free” and that the person that is not named but used in the song is a migrant that succeeded in his aim of crossing the border to get to America. If you listen to the words, you can notice that “I’m standing crying”, “Oh oh oh, oh oh oh” and “land of the free” appear quite frequently (every paragraph), meaning that the other people mentioned in the song are envying America and are desperate to join the other side of the wall. And this memory saddens the author who washes his truck in the Sinclair station, “Can’t wipe the wind-blow smile from across my face”. It upsets the author so much that he cries at the sight of the migrants, Mexicans trying to cross the border hoping for a better life.

Alternatively, other artists have tried to find ways to help people connect on both sides of the border wall. They didn’t necessarily break the law, or destroy the wall, but they tried to use the good sides of it to help separated families to make a connection. The wall isn’t only composed of Heli-mats there are also some places where there are vertical bars instead. The artists put a rectangular pink bar through the wall and so it balanced on either side creating a see-saw. This is just one of the many way’s artists have attempted to help families link.

Personal Opinion:

I think it is horrible to separate families, traumatic, to block people, to stop them from accessing freedom. I also think that what artists are doing to try and help families reunite even if a wall separates them is fantastic and should be maintained. Finally, I think that even if racism has been around for ever, it is essential to reduce it to a minimum or preferably end it for once and for all.

