Voces (“Voices”) addresses the mass femicide of Chihuahua, Mexico. Beginning with the first documented victims in 1993, I embroider the names of individual women into white blouses. The pink thread with which I sew references the pink crosses erected throughout Ciudad Juarez to commemorate the dead. As the murders continue, embroidered shirts amass upon the floor.

Voces stems from my childhood experience residing in El Paso, Texas, the border town directly opposite Juarez. I find a jarring incongruence between my fond memories of Juarez and the city I now hear about on the news. Shock, disgust and sorrow confronted me when I first became aware of the femicides. The majority of victims, from low income families, are between the ages of 14 and 30. Many are raped, beaten, tortured, and strangled, their bodies discarded in the dessert, or left by the highway. The motives range from gang initiation rituals and sport killings to domestic abuse.

I have dedicated the last four years to embroidering the name of each victim and looking into the individual stories of their lives. In this way, the act of sewing has become an act of commemoration and mourning. As the needle pierces each shirt, the suffering of each woman is lamented and recorded in thread. Though their lives and bodies have been so carelessly discarded, these women are not forgotten. The time taken to hand-stitch one name is a time taken to remember one person; it is to lovingly declare, “No, you are not forgotten. I remember you. I value you.”

Voces also breaks down the boundaries of culture and location, and presents the Chihuahua femicides as a very real dilemma to a United States audience. Combating our tendencies to generalize and distance ourselves from ‘the Other’, the project invites viewers to empathize with our continental neighbors, and reminds them that these women are fellow humans who have suffered within a system that we all live in and have created.