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Texas State University's Operation Identification (OpID): Numbers to Names



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Disclaimer

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Kate Spradley, PhD

Dr. Kate Spradley is the Director of Operation Identification (OpID) and a Professor in the Department of Anthropology at Texas State University (TSU). She earned her master's degree from the University of Arkansas in 2000 and completed her PhD at the University of Tennessee in 2006. As a biological anthropologist, Dr. Spradley's research focuses on human biological variation, forensic anthropology, bioarchaeology, and quantitative methods.



<https://news.txst.edu/inside-txst/big-ideas-podcast/episode-29-operationid-with-kate-spradley.html>

WARNING

This presentation contains graphic images that are sensitive in nature which may be considered triggering to some audiences.

Overview

- Background
- Justice of the Peace System
- Gaps in Medicolegal Death Investigation
- Filling the Gaps
 - Exhumations
 - Managing Unidentified Human Remains (UHRs)
- Working Collaboratively Across Jurisdictions and Internationally
- New Innovations (for us)
- Making Connections to Facilitate Identifications for Missing Migrants

The OpID Team



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Dr. Courtney Siegert



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Molly Kaplan, MA



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Victoria Soto, MA



Veronica Flores-Guillen, BS



Chris McMillan



Molly Scott

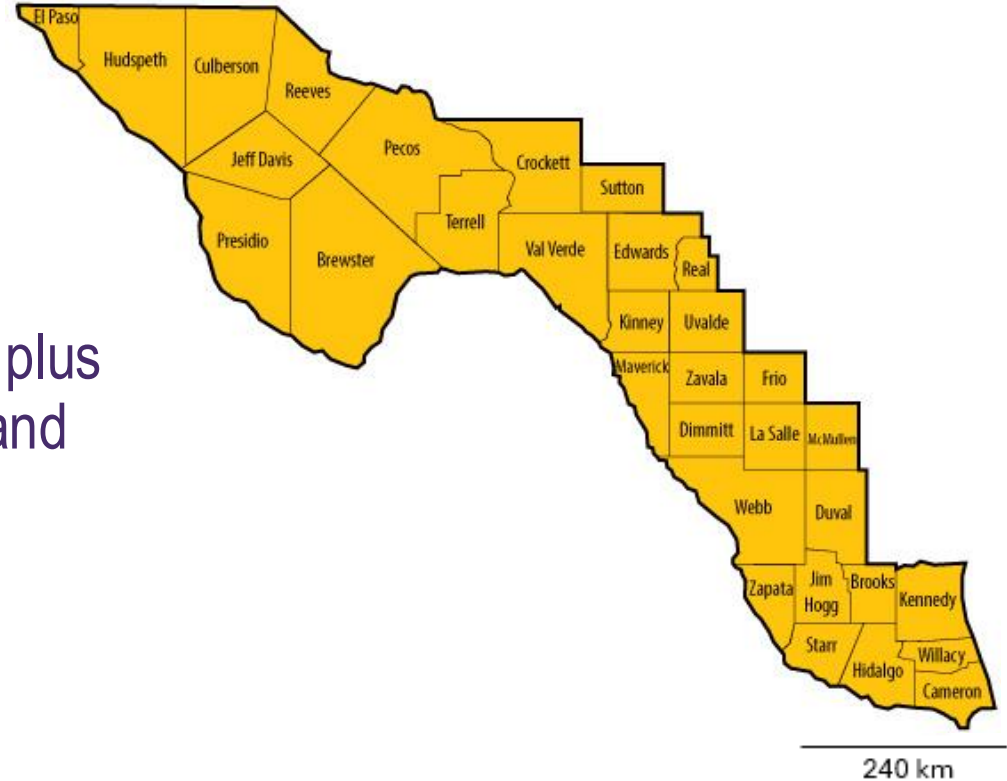
Images provided by OpID



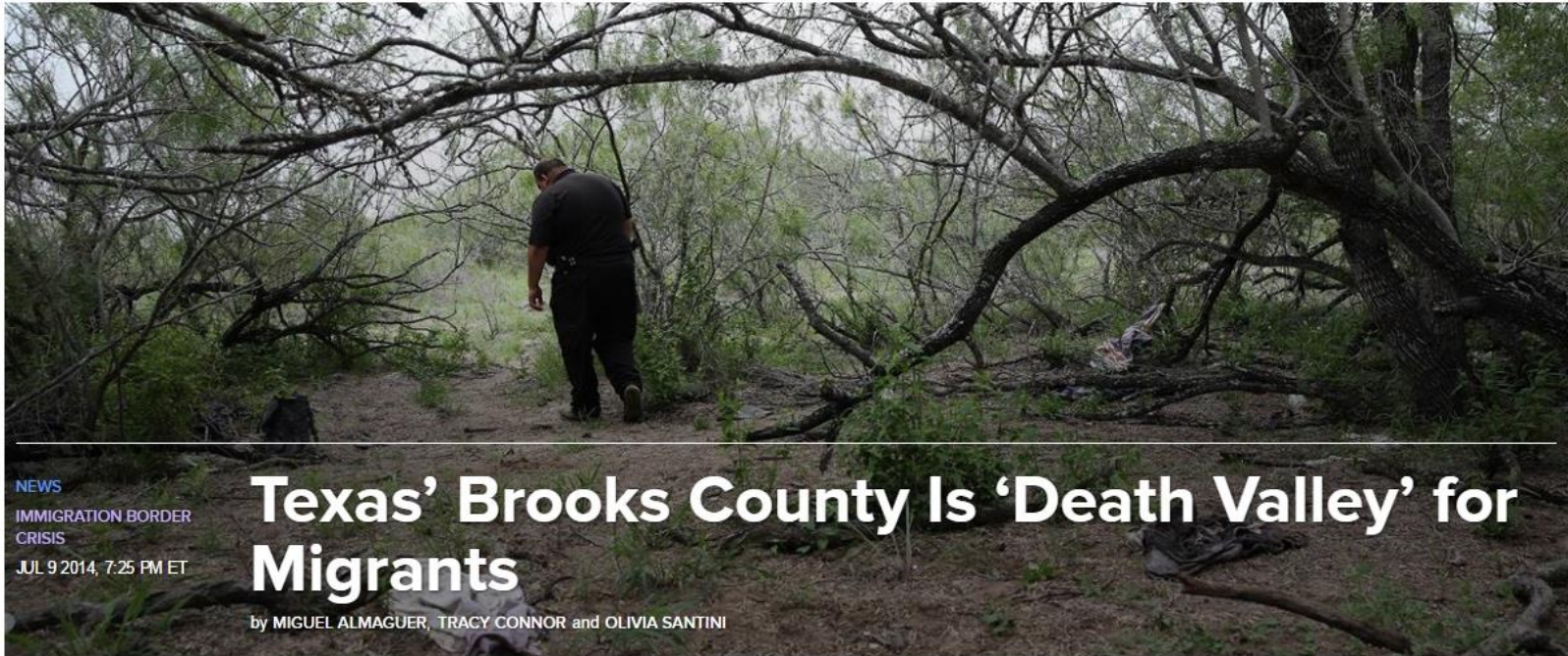
Missing and Unidentified Migrant Cases in Texas

The Impact in South Texas

- 32 counties
- 2 medical examiners
- \$1,700 USD per autopsy, plus additional transportation and storage fees



<https://www.dshs.texas.gov/hiv-std-program/hiv-dashboard/texas-dshs-hiv-std/border-report-section-2>



NEWS

IMMIGRATION BORDER CRISIS

JUL 9 2014, 7:25 PM ET

Texas' Brooks County Is 'Death Valley' for Migrants

by MIGUEL ALMAGUER, TRACY CONNOR and OLIVIA SANTINI

Brooks County Sheriff's Deputy Moe Saavdra tracks fresh footprints while searching for undocumented immigrants on May 23, 2013 near Falfurrias, Texas. John Moore / Getty Images file

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In Brooks County, Texas, where the mercury regularly tops 100 degrees in the summer, Chief Deputy Benny Martinez says he prays for rain — because it keeps the body count down.

advertisement



<https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/immigration-border-crisis/texas-brooks-county-death-valley-migrants-n152121>

Brooks County Migrant Deaths

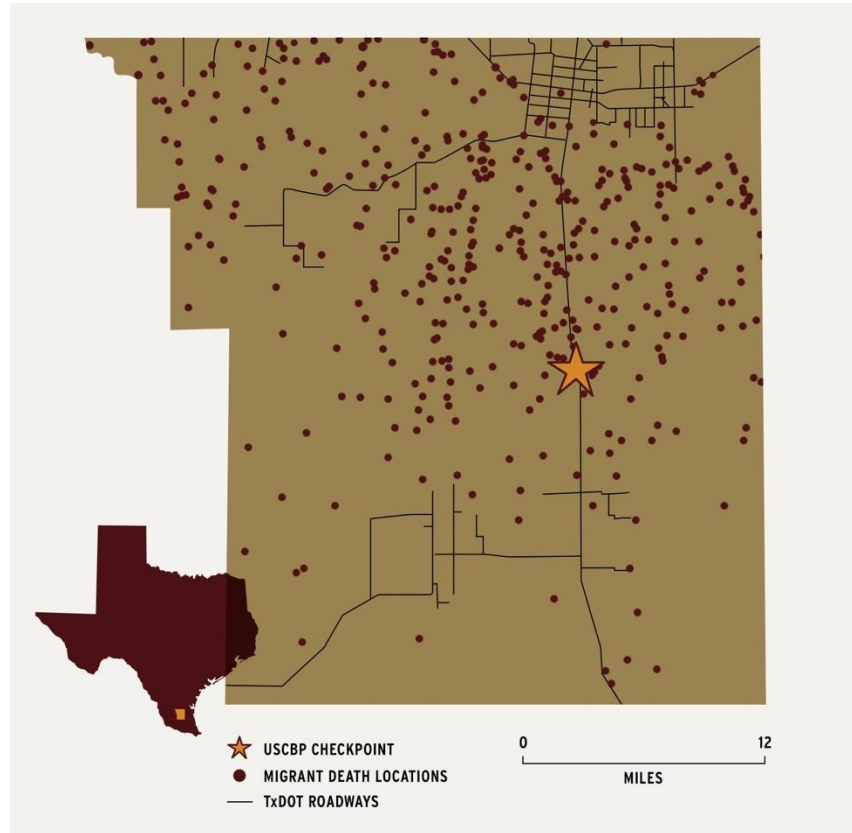


Image provided by OpID

BROOKS COUNTY MIGRANT DEATHS 2009 – 2022

Total Remains Discovered: 1,037

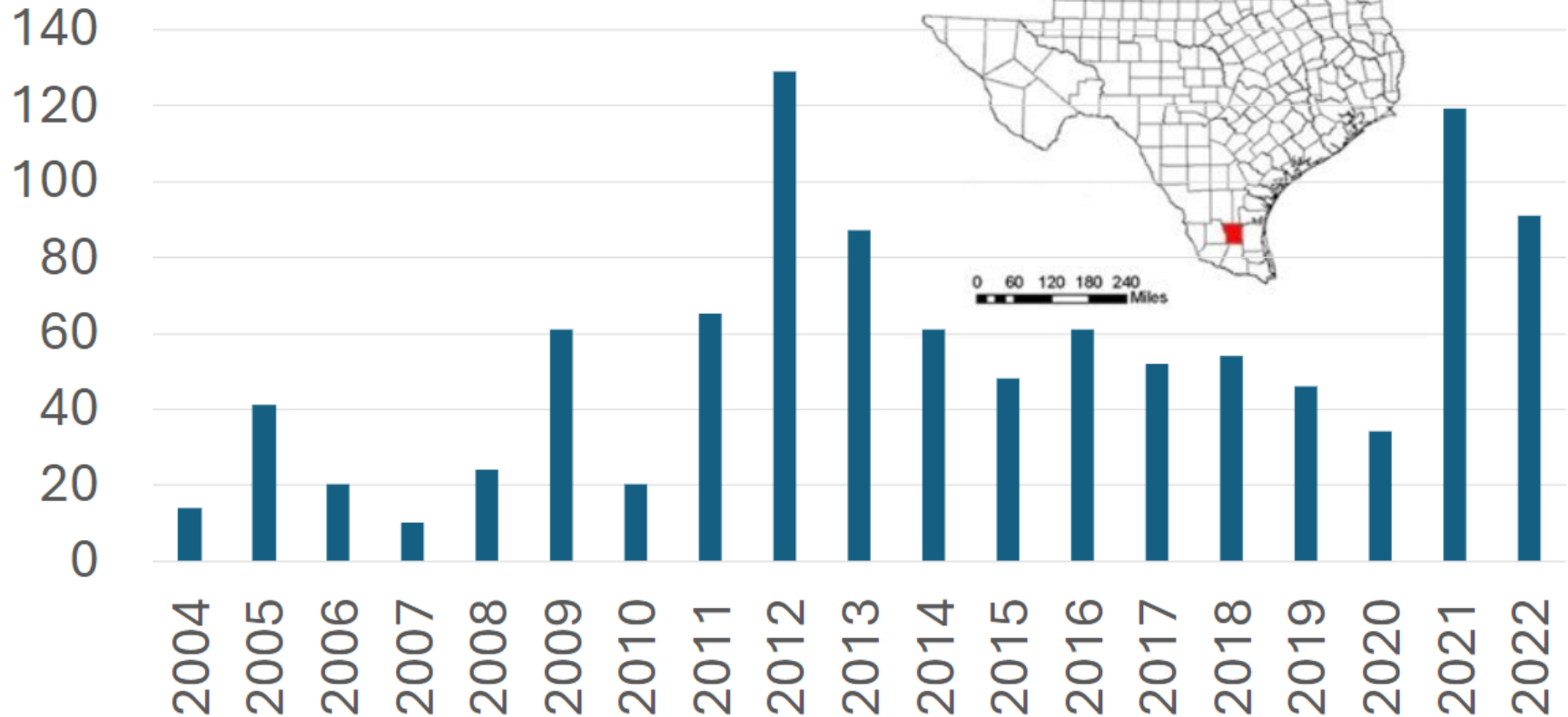


Image provided by OpID

“Once Marta learned her nephew was at Sacred Heart... it would cost \$3,000.00 to exhume his body, \$250.00 to take a DNA sample, and \$3,000.00 to profile the DNA. It would also cost \$100.00 per day to store the body until it was returned to El Salvador...”



Lain also neglected to explore compliance with Texas Administrative Code 203.41 Title 22, which requires durable, waterproof identifiers to be placed on individual remains within the casket. Yet, according to our analysis, 45 of the 118 sets of human remains had no identification tags at all, making it next to impossible to correlate individual remains with a particular police report or death certificate.

Commingling of human remains, according to our analysis, was common, further complicating family reunification. One grave contained four skulls and a pile of loose bones jumbled together with a white sheet and a feed bag. In eight other cases, a single grave contained two, three, four or even five separate remains—some buried only in trash bags or plastic wrap. No records we obtained from the county sheriff state that four or five migrant remains were ever collected at a single location on the same date—an indication that remains may have been lumped together during burial.

Once Marta learned that her nephew was at Sacred Heart, she set about the process of retrieving his body for repatriation to El Salvador. But what Elizondo Mortuary told her stopped her in her tracks. They said it would cost \$3,000 to exhume his body, and another \$250 to take a DNA sample. It would cost \$3,000 more to run the DNA analysis against a family reference sample. And it would cost \$100 a day to store the body until it was returned to El Salvador, a fee that could run into the thousands of dollars.

What Marta didn't know at the time was that the county was required by law to collect a DNA sample from any unidentified remains—this is part of what Elizondo should have done before returning any remains to Howard-Williams for burial. Elmer's DNA sample should already have been sent to the University of North Texas for analysis at no cost to the family.

Yet despite Lain's assertion that "DNA samples from unidentified human remains were being secured," Baker said that none of the remains she exhumed showed the classic cut marks in the long bones that would indicate a DNA sample had been taken, no more than six had any bone cut marks.





Image provided by OpID

A woman approached us at the cemetery and said, “My husband doesn’t want me to tell you, but I can’t buy the plot next to my father because unidentified human remains are buried there.”

Burials at this cemetery have been found due to community memory recall, not through any written record.

We must find the people that remember.







Image provided by OpID



Image provided by OpID



Image provided by OpID



Personal Items

- Clean and photograph all clothing and personal effects
- Upload to the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) database (www.namus.gov)
 - Publicly searchable



Images provided by OpID



If this was happening in Brooks County, is it happening in other counties? If so, what can we do?

Multiple organizations had the same questions, and we started talking. Then we got together and started the Forensic Border Coalition so we could work together to answer our questions.

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South Texas
Human
Rights
Center

 COLLEGE OF SOCIAL & BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES
Southwest Center



**FORENSIC
BORDER
COALITION**

OFFICE OF THE
MEDICAL EXAMINER

TUCSON, ARIZONA

**OPERATION
IDENTIFICATION**
NUMBERS to NAMES

TEXAS STATE
GEOGRAPHY AND
ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES


University
of Houston
Clear Lake

Image provided by OpID

OpID Service Coverage in Southern Texas Counties

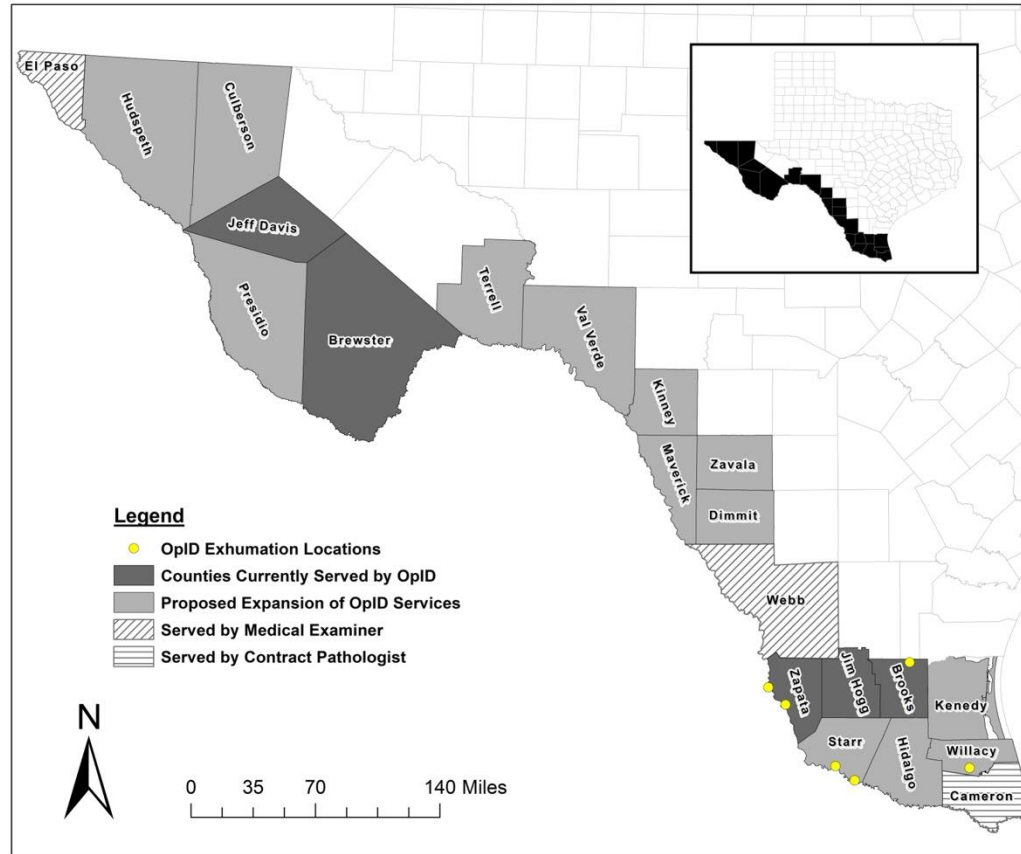


Image provided by OpID

KS
Kate Spradley
 Medicolegal Death Investigator
 My Profile

Quick Search

MISSING UNIDENTIFIED UNCLAIMED

NamUs Number
 UP123, UP-123, 123

State
 Select State

County
 Enter County

Reset Search

Unidentified Advanced Search

Contact NamUs

Michael Ramirez
 Justin Spradley
 Agency Links



My Dashboard

+ Add New Case

MISSING UNIDENTIFIED UNCLAIMED

MY CASES RECENT REGION ARCHIVED

184 Entered
251 Contributor
251 Tracked Cases

1 - 25 of 184 Entered Cases

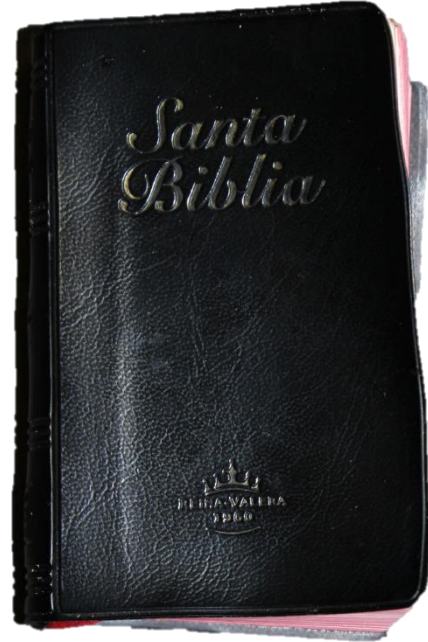
Results 25 Page 1 / 8

Stat...	Case	ME/C Case	Date Found	Date Modified	Ag...	Ag...	Cl...	State	Sex
	UP9957	F01-1967, DPS-2-7/93, L...	01/06/1967	12/17/2018	40 ...	66 ...	Ca...	TX	Male
	UP9958	F01-1978	08/21/1978	02/26/2014	23 ...	76 ...	--	TX	Unsure
	UP9965	F02-1980	01/01/1980	05/16/2014	30 ...	60 ...	--	TX	Male
	UP8473	F01-1980	10/25/1980	05/02/2019	30 ...	60 ...	Edi...	TX	Female
	UP6116	F02-1982	10/17/1981	12/13/2012	40 ...	60 ...	Ha...	TX	Female
	UP8474	F01-1981	12/31/1981	12/13/2012	30 ...	50 ...	--	TX	Male
	UP9968	F01-1982	01/06/1982	02/26/2014	19 ...	25 ...	--	TX	Unsure

NamUs – www.namus.gov

	UP6959	F01-1994	01/08/1994	12/13/2012	--	--	Lo...	TX	Unsure
	UP7025	F02-1997	02/20/1997	01/22/2019	27 ...	45 ...	Lo...	TX	Female

Image provided by OpID



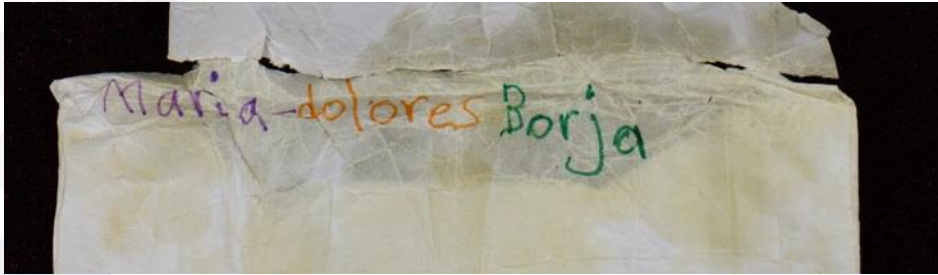
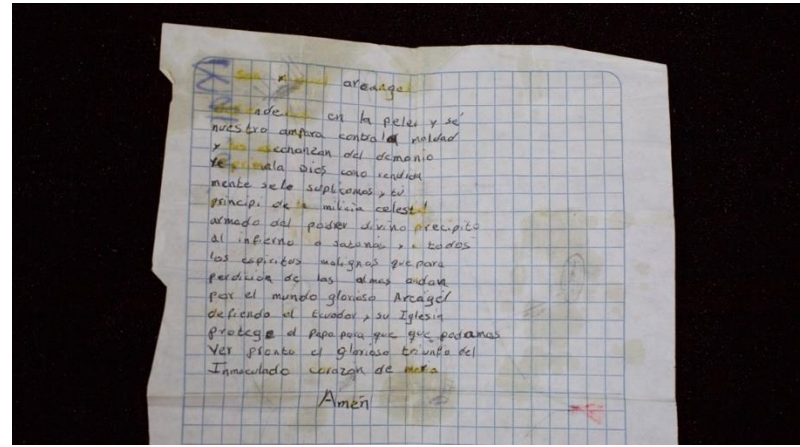
Case Study: Christian



Images provided by OpID



Case Study: Maria Dolores



It seeks to Ecuador
El Periódico U.S.A.

Diana Grace Parilla | 11/06/2013 4:53 pm



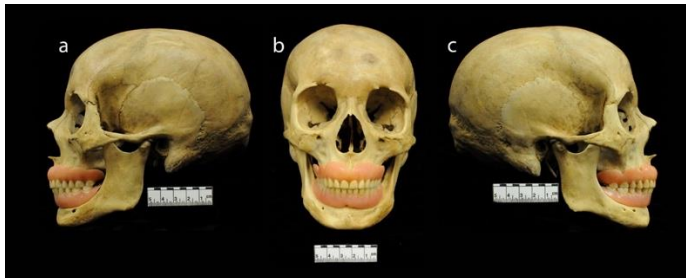
Asking for help to find the whereabouts of Maria Dolores Borja Cabrera. |

McAllen - Immigrants make up the foundation La Merced USA in the US states east of the region requesting assistance to locate a compatriot missing for more than 15 days in the desert of the United States.

According to alternative sources, Maria Dolores Borja Cabrera, 28, crossed the city of Reynosa.

Borja Cabrera is originally from Azuay, Ecuador, and has no relatives in the area.

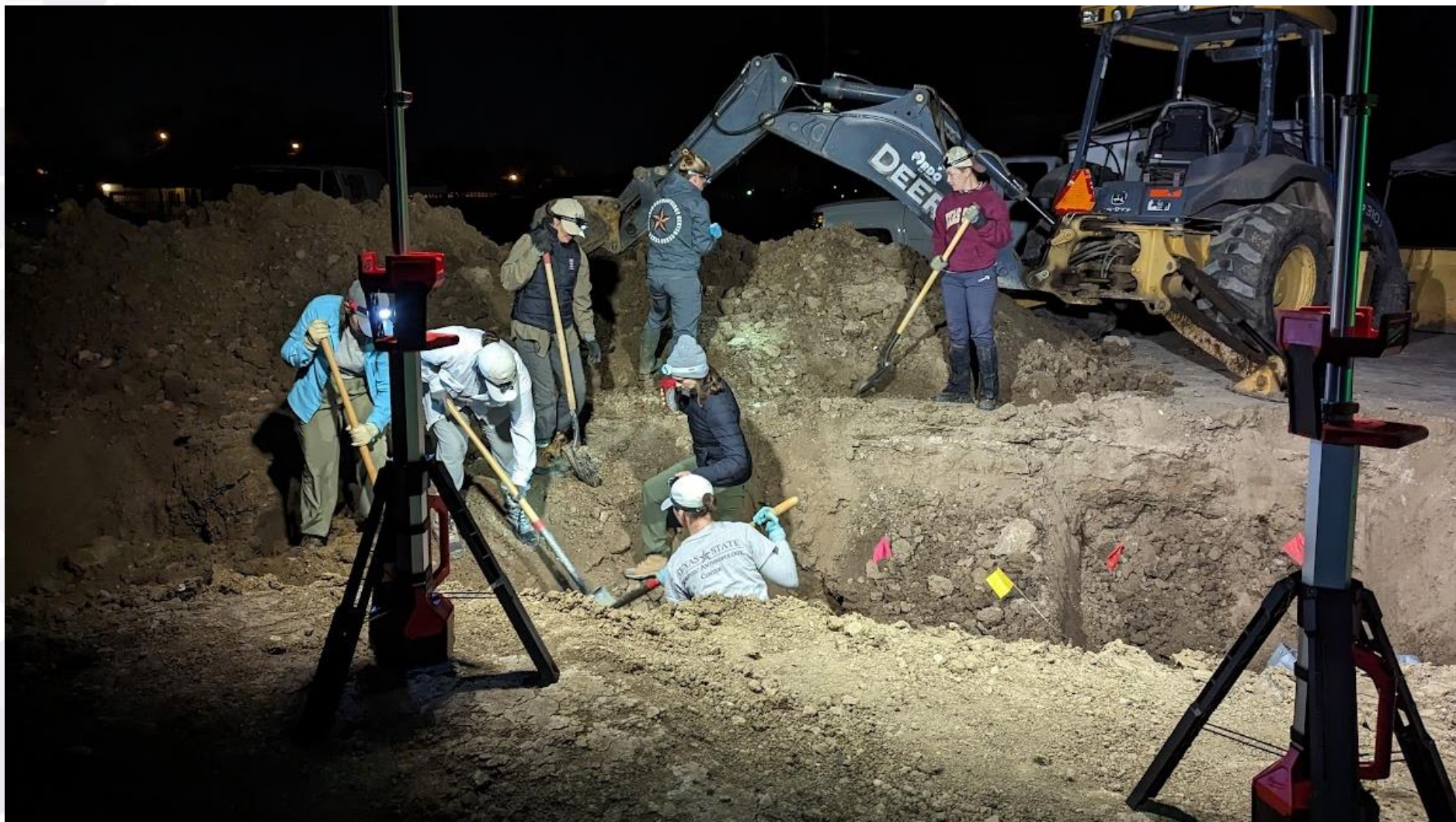
If you have information please contact the phone 914-720-1665 or 914-484-2221 with Luis Lopez, president of the organization La Merced.





Images provided by OpID





Images provided by OplD

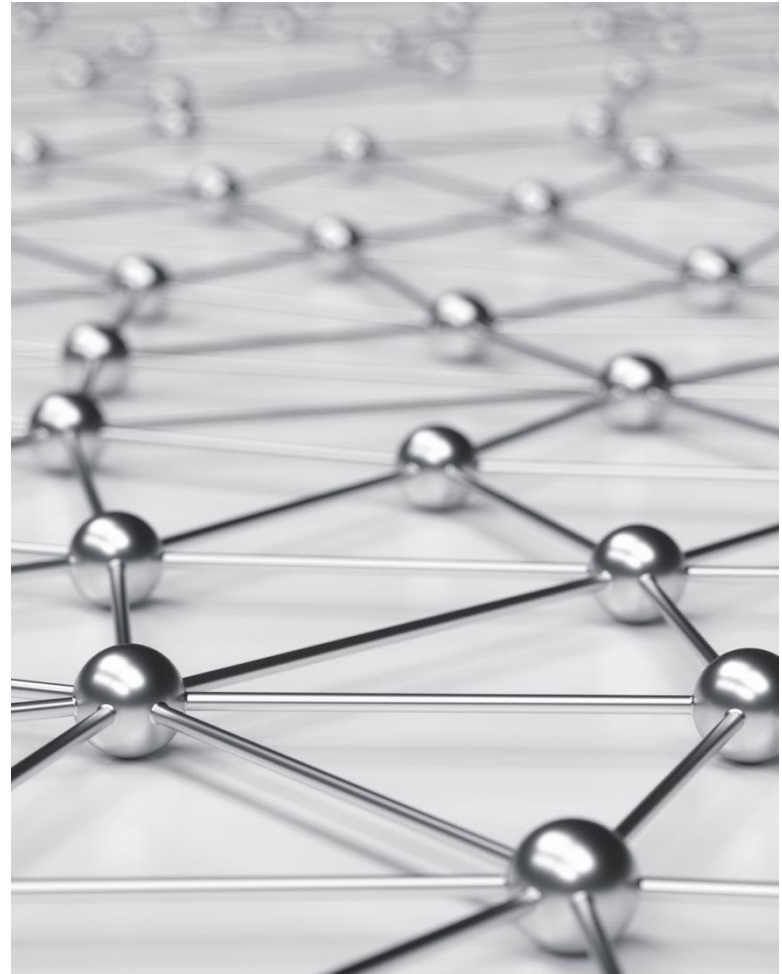


Images provided by OpID

Fingerprint Training by the Federal Bureau of Investigation

Education and Outreach

- Justice of the Peace training, resources, and checklist
- Communication and collaboration with all agencies and entities
 - Justice of the Peace, law enforcement, United States Customs and Border Protection, consulates, non-governmental organizations, community organizations and organizers
- International Committee for the Red Cross
 - Global forensic coordinators
 - Fingerprints, DNA
- Identification Center



Microsoft Stock Image

Contact Information

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Director

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Scan to receive card

**OPERATION
ID**ENTIFICATION
NUMBERS **to** NAMES



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