

Latinx Politics:

Resistance, Disruption,
& Power

THE
LATINX
PROJECT



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The Latinx Project: Production Team

The Latinx Project at New York University explores and promotes U.S. Latinx Art, Culture and Scholarship through creative and interdisciplinary programs. Founded in 2018, it serves as a platform to foster critical public programming and for hosting artists and scholars. We are especially committed to examining and highlighting the multitude of Latinx identities as central to developing a more inclusive and equitable vision of Latinx Studies.

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The Latinx Project: Production Team

Ariana J. Valle

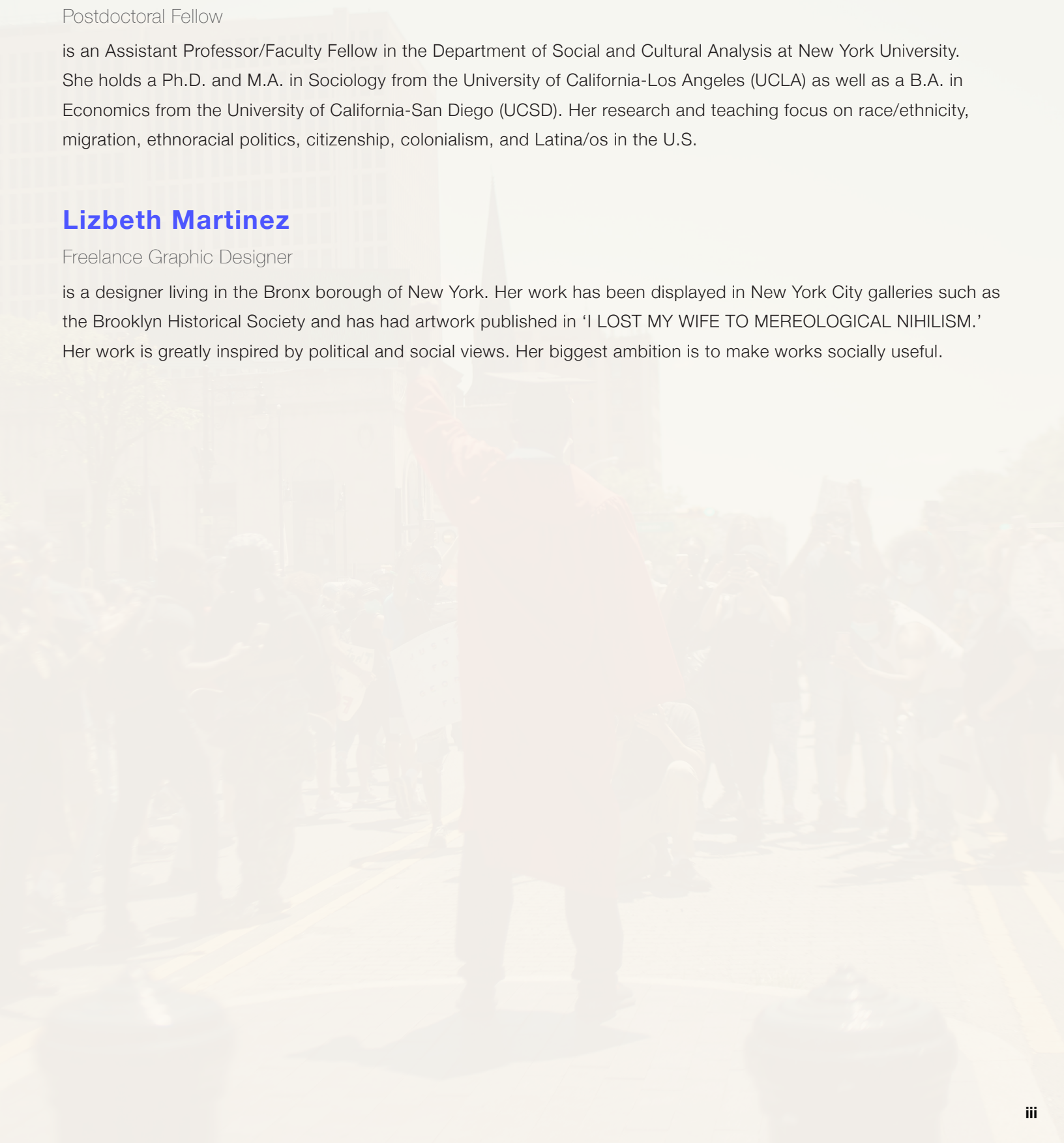
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About

Latinx Politics - Resistance, Disruption & Power was a one-day national conference organized by The Latinx Project at NYU, and spearheaded by Ariana J. Valle, Provost's Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Social and Cultural Analysis, New York University. Originally scheduled for the spring as an in-person gathering, the event was postponed due to the novel coronavirus pandemic. Ultimately, it was reconfigured as a virtual event which took place on September 25th, 2020. The following dossier features original essays adapted from conference presentations.

A recap of the conference, along with the full program of speakers and presentations, can be found [here](#).

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Latinx Politics – Resistance, Disruption, and Power: A Charla with Lisa García Bedolla

By Ariana Jeanette Valle

Conference keynote speaker Lisa García Bedolla gives a timely and in-depth interview on all things related to Latinx politics ahead of the 2020 election.

URL: <https://www.latinxproject.nyu.edu/intervencions/latinx-politics-resistance-disruption-and-power-a-charla-with-lisa-garcia-bedolla>

The Latino population in the United States grew by nearly 50 million from 1965 to 2015 and today, at 18 percent of the U.S. population, Latinos are the largest minoritized group. The magnitude of this segment of the electorate has important political implications because of its capacity to engage in collective action. As we approach the 2020 presidential election, Latino political presence, action, and participation are particularly critical due to the current socio-political moment in which various Latino groups are targeted and marginalized at a social level and by the State. While often rhetorically constructed as a monolithic group, Latinos are heterogeneous and vary in national origin, migration histories, access to citizenship, socioeconomic position, generation status, and phenotype. Given Latinos' diversity and the current social, racial, and political climate, the Latinx Politics Conference seeks to expand our understanding of Latinx Politics in the current era through theoretical, empirical, and artistic presentations and discussions.

Ahead of this timely and critical conversation, charlamos with the Latinx Politics Conference keynote speaker Dr. Lisa García Bedolla, Vice Provost for Graduate Studies, Dean of the

Graduate Division, and Professor in the Graduate School of Education at University of California, Berkeley. Drawing on her research and expertise on Latinos and political engagement, Dr. García Bedolla provides key insights into various topics, including her personal journey to Latino Politics, dominant and problematic framings of Latinos' politics in mainstream media, the importance of using an intersectional approach to study Latinos, developing respectful and reciprocal partnerships with community, the role of political leaders in addressing the needs of Latinos in the current public health, economic, and racial moment, anti-Blackness in Latino communities, and exciting transformations in Latino politics over the years.

The following interview has been condensed and edited for clarity.

* * *

Ariana Jeanette Valle (AJV): Can you tell me about your personal trajectory and how you became interested in Latino Politics?

Lisa García Bedolla (LGB): My parents were political refugees from Cuba and I think that was important in two ways for me. The first was that politics

decided my life. If it hadn't been for the revolution I would not be in the United States. I also wouldn't have had the opportunities that I've had in the United States. So, I appreciate that these larger forces really influenced me. And, I was always interested in why other people then choose to become engaged or not.

The second piece was that being Cuban and growing up in Los Angeles meant that Americans thought I was Mexican and Mexicans thought I talked funny, so there was also a way in which I was an outsider. I think that was part of what led me to become an academic. I always was observing others and never feeling like I necessarily fit in. I think that makes you ask questions in a way that you wouldn't if you were part of the in-group. I think both of those things led me to care a lot about how politics influences people but also to have that skill to be able to see things in a way that people don't necessarily see... I think that's a lot of what made me an academic.

And then Latino Politics specifically, the 1994 elections happened while I was living in Connecticut while I was in graduate school. And I happened to be working on figuring out a new dissertation topic because I had originally gone to graduate school to study Latin America and my dissertation topic was going to be studying Cuba and Chile as the bookends of neoliberalism at that time. When I did my first visit to do some research in Cuba I got kicked out by the government early on and that made me rethink what I was doing and realize I wasn't going to have control over what I was

I personally hate the “sleeping giant” metaphor because it assumes a level of apathy and passivity, which in my research I have never found among Latinos.

going to study. It just so happened the election happened. For folks who don't remember, that was the biggest political mobilization among Latinos in the United States since the Chicano Movement and the Puerto Rican Movement. So, it was historic and I really felt, especially in Los Angeles which is my hometown, I felt a real responsibility to tell that story. And I guess the rest is history. I switched [topics] and I've kept studying it [Latino politics] since then.

AJV: And here we are in 2020 and another important political moment! Which takes me to how Latinos are often described especially right before elections. I wanted to ask you about the media's use of the “sleeping giant” to describe Latinos, based on your research, what are the various ways in which Latino communities are engaged politically?

LGB: The short answer is if you invite us in we will come. The issue is we are never invited in. Often policies affect us indirectly but they are not necessarily designed to help us. I personally hate the “sleeping giant” metaphor because it assumes a level of apathy and passivity, which in my research I have never found among Latinos. People care very much about what is happening in the world, people care very much about what government does or does not do in communities. The issue is whether people feel that politics is an area in which they feel they have power to engage and whether or not they feel it's an area that's going to meaningfully make a difference in their lives.

Folks are busy, people have multiple jobs, they are trying to survive, if you are trying to survive you are going to spend your time on the things you find most relevant and the issues you care about.

There tends to be a frame where if people don't vote then there is something wrong with them.

They are “sleeping” they are “apathetic” or what not. I think it is really important to flip that, if people don’t vote that is actually because the system does not work for them; it is a rational response to your social position and to the messages you are getting that you are not a part of this system and you are not meant to have a say in this system.

At least in my research, part of the reason why I now work with community-based organizations to do community organizing is because I think it is really important for people to be spoken to about politics by people who are similarly situated to them and by people who have similar life experiences, so that they can be reeducated about the power that they have through collective action. If we think about what we learn in school, we do not learn in school that government is for us and open to us. What we learn in school is that the founding fathers were brilliant, the institutions are perfect. So, folks have to learn both the ways in which government affects their lives and the multiple ways in which they can have a say in it. Once you do that, Latinos engage because they can see why they should spend their time on this. I really dislike these frames that pathologize people for not engaging, rather than saying they are not engaging because in fact nobody is talking to them.

AJV: In your work, you emphasize the significance of using an intersectional lens, why is an intersectional approach important for understanding Latino politics?

LGB: I think what is really interesting about Latinos and part of why we’ve been so disruptive to the U.S. social fabric, at least how Americans identify themselves and think about race, is because we don’t fit in a Black/white binary. To quote Vasconcelos, we are la raza cósmica, we can be everything from white origin, African origin, Indigenous, from Asia. Everyone came [to Latin

It’s only through understanding the complexity of peoples’ social positioning that we can actually meaningfully talk about what matters in Latino politics and what matters to the Latino community.

America] we are part of the “new world.” The most important insight from the intersectional frame that Kimberlé Crenshaw created is the idea that these different pieces are not additive. I am not Latina plus woman plus my class status, but rather they are mutually constitutive. I experience my Latinidad or I experience my womanhood through and as a product of my racial status and my other social positionings and my sexuality, all of that.

I think that for Latinos, it’s especially important to understand that because we are so diverse, we are diverse not only in terms of racial admixture, we are also diverse in terms of national origin, generation, geography, class, how long your family has been here, where they landed, what the immigration rules were affecting your particular family situation, etc. All of those things impact how Latino folks move through space in the United States. To understand the Latino experience, you need to have a much more robust and intersectional understanding of all of those different pieces and why they matter. In talking about the Latino community often we get into an almost essentialist orientation where we think, “oh Latinos are voting this way and they are voting this way because they are Latino” and not “they are voting this way because they’ve had a set of life experiences that have led them to a worldview that supports a particular set of policies.” It’s only through understanding the complexity of peoples’ social positioning that we can actually meaningfully talk about what matters in Latino politics and what matters to the Latino community.

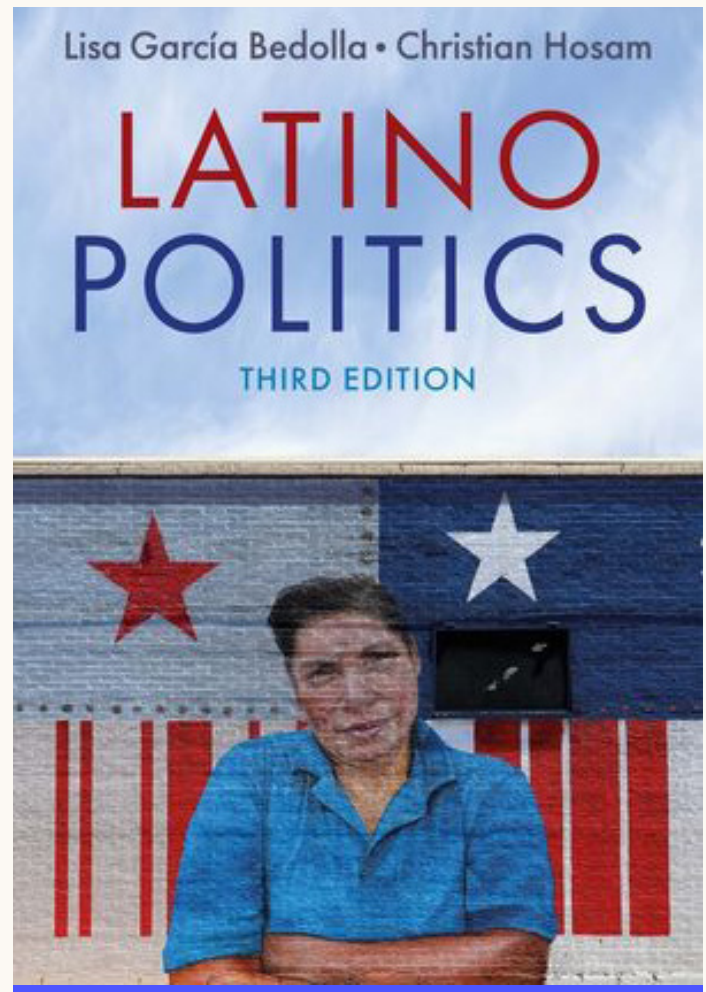
AJV: Which takes me to my next question, which is related to the tensions between this idea of the Latino vote or the Latino community that often gets discussed during elections, in the media, in academic conversations. How do we deal with the tensions between the homogenizing effects of that framing but also the similarities and experiences that may bring people together?

LGB: Yes, that is an excellent question. It is a tension. On the one hand, if I care about the status of people of Latin American descent in the United States, I want to talk about the size and robustness of that community and I need to have some language to talk about that, so there is a need to talk about Latino as a group. The difficulty though, especially when you're thinking about the Latino vote, is that there are multiple Latino votes. Even if we just look at folks of Puerto Rican origin, the ones who grow up in Chicago have a different history, different organizational structure, different voting patterns than the folks who were in New York, the ones who recently arrived in Florida also have different attitudes and opinions.

The irony is that there is no national vote for anybody. We look at these national polls but the reality is that we don't have a national electorate; our presidential politics is decided at the state level. It would be more useful to think about the California Latino vote—even in California we are so big we have Northern California versus Southern California. Also, thinking about new arrivals versus folks who have been here longer...and Texas, New Mexico, have a unique history. The difficulty is that our current political framing doesn't have room for thinking about that complexity and doesn't have room for thinking about those differences and why they matter. For example, in Florida the research suggests that Puerto Ricans in Florida vote more conservatively than the Puerto Ricans in New York. Part of that may be who chooses to move to

Florida and part of that may be that growing up in Florida you are growing up in a more conservative context and that then affects socialization patterns. There is not enough room in our political discourse to really think about that socialization process and regional differences in a nuanced way and to appreciate that even if the outcome is 75-percent of Latinos agree with one another in terms of how they want to vote, how they got there is very different—like I was saying earlier, it is about life experiences and structural position not because they happen to be Latino.

Even if we look at African Americans who overwhelmingly vote democratic, they don't vote overwhelmingly democratic because they are Black, they vote that way because they have a set of shared experiences that have led them to



Cover image for the forthcoming 3rd edition of Latino Politics.

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a particular understanding of their position within the polity. And the same is true for Latinos. Often people say “why do Latinos support Trump?” but the idea that everyone from a community is going to agree is kind of crazy. Everyone who has sat through Thanksgiving with their family should understand that is not a reasonable assumption. But it comes from this legacy of an essentialist vision and biological definition of race that seeps into our discourse and that we have to continually disrupt in order to understand how power, marginalization, and being a minoritized person influences the ways in which you interact with the political system.

AJV: Earlier you mentioned working with community- based organizations so I am wondering if you can talk more about that and why it's important to you? Can you tell me more about how you have bridged academia with community through your own research?

LGB: I was brought up with the Latin American understanding of the role of intellectuals in the world. My sense is that in Latin America the role intellectuals play is to make society be its best self. There is a reason why universities are a sanctuary for political activity. There is this tradition about the role of the intellectual. When I decided to become an academic, I did not decide to be an academic to win awards or to be president of the American Political Science Association. I became an academic to leave the world a little bit better. I think ideas really matter, who is creating ideas, and also the

legs that ideas have in the world, and how those ideas move through the world.

From the beginning my goal had been to take the tools and wisdom that I gained within the university to make community better. In particular because I appreciate that I stand on the shoulders of giants and that there are very few people of my background who have been given this opportunity. It's really important for me to honor that and to pay it forward and to do my best to leave the world a little better than I found it. I feel very privileged to now have the opportunity to work with organizations and partner with them and try to help them to the best of my ability to do their work more effectively and in more impactful ways. I feel very grateful that I've been able to have a traditional academic trajectory that has served a public purpose. That was very important to me when I went into this. That is one of the reasons why I was happy to join a professional school when I moved to [the University of California] Berkeley. I was in Political Science and Chicano and Latino Studies when I was at UC Irvine, and I moved to the Graduate School of Education [at UC Berkeley] and I feel very grateful to have been given that opportunity because the professional school culture really values applied work and connections to practice and to practitioners.

I've had a unique opportunity and one of the things I am hoping to do as Graduate Dean at Berkeley is to both validate and help to give people that option. I think it's not something we traditionally train people to do in graduate school. Especially the students of color I've had during my career, they really want to make that impact in the world. For the university to remain relevant and to live up to its purpose, it's really important for there to be space for academics to do these kinds of partnerships in a respectful and reciprocal way. Not in an extractive “we are going to take your knowledge and not give

anything back” type of way, but instead valuing the knowledge that sits in the community as much as the knowledge that exists in the university and learning to help one another in that process.

AJV: What advice do you have for researchers and scholars who are interested in collaborative work with communities? As someone who went through the social sciences as a graduate student, I received a lot of direct and indirect messages about working with community and what my role was as an academic. But also, as a community organizer before grad school, I was aware of the distrust in the university and institutions from the community perspective. So, how can we work with community in a way that is respectful and not extractive?

LGB: Primarily, you have to start with humility, that is the most important place to start, with humility and respect. And, acknowledge that the distrust is for very good reasons, it’s based on real harm that social scientists have done. So, owning that responsibility and that harm and entering any partnership with humility. I and some colleagues recently started what we call the Center on Democracy and Organizing because I believe that to do this work well you need to reorient how you do your research. There are some real epistemological changes that need to happen, there needs to be a change in focusing orientation, there needs to be a sense of humility, reciprocity, and respect. And, what knowledge is needs to change. You actually need to be trained to do this work, it’s not something you can just do because you care. I think it’s very important to think this

There is not enough room in our political discourse to really think about that socialization process and regional differences in a nuanced way.

through and how whatever you’ve been taught about methodology, epistemology, and ontology actually needs to be reframed in order to be a co-creator of knowledge with people who are on the ground.

Active listening is very important, a deep appreciation of the role of the researcher and the power of the researcher, and how to create systems to minimize that, and a really robust reflective practice is incredibly important. The last thing I teach my students but I don’t think we teach it enough, is ethics, we really have to think through ethics. Just because the IRB says it’s ok to do something doesn’t mean you should. To appreciate and to meaningfully engage with community, particularly with marginalized groups, requires a real deep self-examination and change in practice. People should be encouraged to do this work but we need to do a better job of training people on how to do it well and how not to replicate the extractive orientation or disrespectful messianic perspective that we are here to save other people. This is not charity. This is in fact co-construction of knowledge in a way that ideally will advance understanding and practice in ways that would be impossible on our own.

AJV: Given current public health, economic, and racial conditions, how can political leaders better engage with and address the needs of Latino communities?

LGB: Wow, that is a very hard question... I think for myself I am still processing what this moment is, it is difficult to have perspective when you’re in it. What I can say is based on what I have processed, which I don’t think is going to be the final answer. I feel COVID has made visible what was already there, the extreme inequities and injustices that are the foundation of our economic system. Here in California, over half of the COVID cases are among

Latinos, the disproportionate impact in the Latino community is a reflection of our concentration in what we now call essential work but what used to be [called] low-wage work. It is still low-wage work but now we're saying it's essential and we're still keeping it both low-wage and high risk. So, I have been thinking a lot about how we can take advantage of this moment to have a deeper and hopefully ongoing conversation about the value that we attach to work, the value that we attach to bodies because that's really what we're talking about, people sacrifice their bodies. I think about my father-in-law who ended up getting a form of blood cancer, he was a construction worker and you get that from exposure to harsh industrial chemicals. He had laid cement foundations I am sure with no protective gear, so literally his work was inscribed in his body. That is what he gave in order to give his children an opportunity in the United States.

And his story is not unique in that way. People are now at risk in their jobs but that has always been what our community has done. Can we think about, at a minimum, what kind of life people



Photo courtesy of Lisa García Bedolla.

Like I tell my students, systems of social coercion are complex on purpose because if they weren't, they would be much easier to eradicate.

should be able to have when you're making those types of sacrifices and how basic human dignity would require us to really reimagine what is valued in terms of work? In particular here in the Bay Area, I'm sure it's similar in New York, where you have Silicon Valley where people make extraordinary amounts of money, why is that what we value that rather than the person who is caring for your child, or the nurse that is caring for your loved one in the hospital? So, the extremely skewed nature of how we compensate people, and I say this as a well-compensated person, I appreciate I've been very privileged to be in my position, but it's just not fair. The one thing I've been hoping for and haven't seen yet is having that deeper conversation about how capitalism puts dollar values on people and to rethink why we think that the markets should be the ones to decide how to do that. I was watching the Democratic Convention last night and this aspect didn't come up, but I am hoping that from this grief, suffering, and loss, that we can open up space to have that conversation. That's the one thing I am thinking a lot about but I must say there are probably going to be a lot of changes in the world that come from this. My hope is that we use this moment as an opportunity to really rethink what is normal and acceptable as a society and to see your interdependence more deeply than we do now. It would make me very sad if we just go back to how things were after all of this. I am trying to be hopeful.

AJV: I'm wondering if you have any thoughts on how Latino scholarship as well as on-the-ground

organizing in Latino community can more directly address anti-Blackness within Latino communities and in inter-group relations?

LGB: You ask lots of really easy questions [laughs]. I think first and foremost—and I say this coming from a Cuban family where anti-Blackness is real and profound and part of the culture in ways that I don't think we talk enough about—so I think that at the most basic level there needs to be more conversation in our communities about that. And, for us to get away from this idea that because you are a person of color you cannot be racist, so that self-reflection I think is really important to have. And not just anti-Blackness but also anti-Indigeneity, all the ways in which the baggage from the Spanish caste system still sits upon us in our families and within our communities.

One of things I have been struggling with and I haven't figured out, it's related to our previous conversation, is how do we honor the specificity of anti-Blackness and the Black experience in the United States while still appreciating that there are multiple lines of oppression that are working at the same time? I think bell hooks was right, if you have any form of oppression you can't get rid of oppression, you have to address all lines of oppression simultaneously. But how do you do that and yet take advantage of this moment which is to focus on anti-Blackness and the particularity of the Black experience in the United States? So, I am hoping that what can come out of this moment is an honoring of that positionality but also a deeper engagement with systems of oppression. I think settler colonialism is helpful in

this regard because it is the colonial experience that really brought these ideologies to the new world, and we have to make visible and disrupt them in order to move forward in terms of racial justice. And to be specific, even the Black experience is not the same in Chicago, or Los Angeles, or Washington state... So how do we maintain specificity but insert complexity? That is what I am struggling with right now... and how do we not have it become a diluted sort of multiculturalism and diversity conversation.

I think that is where we have to go, we have to figure out how to really name these specific dynamics within specific contexts in order to begin to develop the kind of structural change that needs to happen. We tend to fall back on racism as being about idiosyncratic individuals rather than racism being about structures of power in the economy, in society, in government. I am hoping that if we can have that deeper conversation that is both self-reflective about the racism and racist ideologies that we hold, all of us, and then also how we can imagine a different kind of future that honors the specificity but that has a more capacious kind of vision of what it will take in order to really change oppressive practices and structures in the United States. That's not going to be easy. I don't claim to know how to do that but I think that's where we have to go. I've been thinking about that a lot, at least in my role and in my scholarship, how to talk about that, it's not easy. Like I tell my students, systems of social coercion are complex on purpose because if they weren't, they would be much easier to eradicate. So, how do we really dig in, in a way that hasn't really happened in the past. And again, have those cross-linkages, have people work on their own issues while really understanding we are in it together. The future of my children is dependent on eradicating anti-Blackness. I think that is where we have to get but it's not easy. The backlash is going to be real.

Being able to see yourself in popular culture, being able to see yourself in music, in literature, in art, all of that is political.

AJV: Lastly, what are some major transformations and exciting developments in Latino politics that you have observed since you began researching Latino political engagement?

LGB: I am excited that people are actually studying it! [laughs] I know that sounds crazy! I remember the first time I met Arlene [Dávila], she told me “yours is the only book talking about Latino Politics!” It wasn’t the only but it was one of the very few. When I applied for jobs in 1999, there were no Latino Politics jobs, I applied to American Politics jobs and happened to study Latinos. At least in political science, the progress has been that there are actual jobs for people who study Latino politics, which may seem small, but it’s progress.

I am also excited about the creativity and thoughtfulness on the diversity we have been talking about—people using different methodologies, people focusing on different communities. I just got asked to review a piece on Dominican political engagement, which is a field I think needs to grow and develop. There is also more work on Salvadorans today. The more work that is out there the more we can get away from the homogenous depiction and the assumptions people have about this community, we can really get at complexity. I am excited about work that shines a light on how inhumane the immigration system is, I think about Leisy Abrego’s book, which is heartbreaking and heartrending but is a story that needs to be told. The work that has been done on the border, I think of Heidi Sarabia’s, talking to people who have been deported, disrupting this idea of the border as this fixed wall but rather a porous back and forth, communities exist on both sides and are connected across sides. I think the work that really tells these important stories, which help make us three-dimensional as people and really speak to these historical experiences that you don’t learn about

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in school. You don’t hear about the Salvadoran Sanctuary Movement, you don’t hear about all of these incredible movements, even the Young Lords. There are more and more people telling these important stories that give our community depth and history.

As someone who grew up Cuban, I know every episode of I Love Lucy, which may seem superficial but being able to see yourself in popular culture, being able to see yourself in music, in literature, in art, all of that is political. All that cultural production is political. So, I am just excited about how much of it there is, I am thrilled for Eva Longoria to pronounce her name correctly when she introduced herself yesterday [in the Democratic National Convention]. These things may seem superficial and symbolic but I think it really matters for us to see ourselves in a positive way. At least as a mother... one of the things I worry about a lot... when Trump was running in 2016, I do a lot of media for politics so I watched all the Republican party debates so everyone in my house had to watch the Republican debates. I still remember the first debate where my youngest daughter, who at that time was 7 [years old], when Trump was talking about Mexicans being rapists and drug dealers—for full disclosure my husband is Mexican so my kids are Cubicans—my daughter looked at me and said “mami is he talking about us?” and I had to say “yes, he is talking about us.” I still worry for her and what that experience brought. But what I am excited

about is that there are lots of places where she can find other stories about us and I think that means they will grow up in a very different place and with a different sense of self than I did. That makes me hopeful.

AJV: Thank you so much for your time!

Dr. Lisa García Bedolla obtained her BA in Latin American Studies and Comparative Literature from UC Berkeley, and her PhD in political science from Yale University. She is a Professor in the Graduate School of Education and previously, she served as Director of the Institute of Governmental Studies. Dr. García Bedolla's body of research focuses on understanding the causes and consequences of political and educational inequalities in the United States, using multi-disciplinary approaches to examine disparities that cut across the lines of ethnicity, race, gender, class, and more. As the Vice Provost for Graduate Studies and Dean of the Graduate Division, Dr. García Bedolla oversees Berkeley's 11,500 graduate students, and is the chief advocate for graduate education and research at Berkeley. She is a member of academic and administrative leadership groups convened by the Chancellor and the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost. She works with the Graduate Council of the Academic Senate on policies that sustain the world-renowned excellence of more than 100 graduate programs.

Ariana J. Valle is Provost's Postdoctoral Fellow at New York University and an incoming Assistant Professor of Sociology at UC Davis (2021). She is an LA-born/raised sociologist of migration, race/racialization, and ethnoracial politics and her research focuses on the experiences of Latino communities in the U.S.

The Techno-Tamaladas

By Praba Pilar

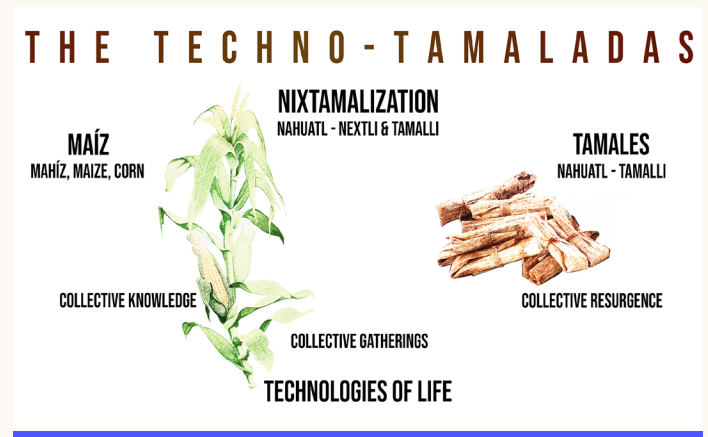
In the Bay Area, a multifarious art project reimagines technological development through Indigenous and African foodways.

URL: <https://www.latinxproject.nyu.edu/intervenxions/the-techno-tamaladas>

I live alongside half of the world's tech billionaires, in the unceded territories of the Chochenyo and Ramaytush Ohlone peoples, presently occupied by Silicon Valley extraction corporations. Many of us in the Bay Area personally experience how these technology corporations have deepened wealth inequality, precarity, evictions, homelessness, poverty, and displacement. If you are not a high paid executive or programmer, but an artist, teacher, nurse, landscaper, or low wage worker in the 'sharing economy,' you can easily be pushed to the margins – displaced, dislocated, and dispossessed. Rather than benefiting, many of us watch the technology sector's monopoly corporations disinvest locally through tax havens, normalize extreme surveillance, shatter the commons, and demolish civic society around the world. We are front line witnesses of 21st century techno colonialism.

Against this daily palpable divide, I have been working on the Techno-Tamaladas, an art project of performances, social practice, media making, gatherings, cultivation, harvesting, and events. The project is based on maíz and nixtamalization as Indigenous technologies of life. It asks publics to reimagine technological development by affirming the concepts of relational accountability and reciprocity

of the Indigenous and Afro Americas. Through community tamaladas, we share possibilities of resurgence amidst our communities in crisis.



The Techno-Tamaladas. Digital image by Praba Pilar, 2019.

Nixtamalización, Maíz, Tamal, Tamalada

Maize es un mundo, a world far beyond animal feed and genetically engineered monocropping. Indigenous to the Americas, the name comes from Mahíz in the Taíno/Arauco language (Cintli in Nahuatl), translated into Spanish as 'fuente de vida' or 'sustento de la vida' ('fountain of life' and 'sustainer of life.')

Maize dating back 10,700 years has been found in the Iguala Valley in Mexico. There are thousands of varieties of Maize that grow in vastly different ecosystems and climates, and it is the basis

of many of the cosmovisiones in the Americas – no una cosa, sino un tejido de relaciones. From the Popul Vuh of the Mayas Quichés, in what is now Guatemala, where the human being is created out of maize, to Quetzalcoatl gifting humans with maíz, to the Incas who have been cultivating corn for thousands of years, corn spread across all of the Americas, creating a hemispheric ‘maize culture.’ The varieties of corn are immense, the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center’s (CIMMYT) Maize Germplasm Bank contains over 28,000 unique collections of white, yellow, purple, orange yellow, red, sun red, blue, mottled and brown maize seeds from 88 countries. Peru’s Germplasm Bank alone contains over 4,000 collections and the Native Seeds bank in Tucson, Arizona contains approximately 1,900 different collections of Maize and other traditional crops utilized as food, fiber and dye by the Apache, Chemehuevi, Cocopah, Gila River Pima, Guarijio, Havasupai, Hopi, Maricopa, Mayo, Mojave, Mountain Pima, Navajo, Paiute, Puebloan, Tarahumara, Tohono O’odham, Yaqui, and other cultures.

Thousands of years ago, the Indigenous people of Meso America developed the technology of nixtamalization. Though the exact time frame of the introduction of nixtamalization varies, the term comes from the Nahuatl words nixtamalli or nextamalli, combining nextli “ashes” and tamalli “corn dough, tamal.” To nixtamalize maíz, you soak and heat it in an alkaline solution of wood ash, slaked lime, or calcium hydroxide. This increases the bioavailability of the calcium, protein, and vitamins B3(niacin), B1(thiamin), B5(pantothenic acid), and folate, while reducing mycotoxins. After this technological innovation sustaining life was

...I realized that bringing people together for tamaladas could expand both dialogues and imaginaries on the development of technology.

introduced, maíz spread quickly throughout the hemisphere. When European colonizers took maíz seeds to grow in Europe, they did not understand (or believe in) the need for nixtamalization, or the relations with corn developed over thousands of years. As a result, Europeans growing and eating corn developed the disease pellagra - extreme niacin deficiency malnutrition.

Tamales, from Nahuatl tamalli, originated in Mesoamerica as early as 8,000 to 5,000 BCE. Tamales are foundational to the spirit and life of Indigenous and African descended people across the cultures of Abya Yala/Turtle Island. As Meredith Abarca shares in An Afro-Mestizo Tamal: Remembering a Sensory and Sacred Encounter, Indigenous and African descendants are connected via the tamal. She writes about how maize and the tamal are intertwined with the land to such a degree that during the Porfiriato in Mexico at the turn of the 19th century, people who ate tamales (defined by Mexican modernists as the maize-based cultures) were seen as a threat to political domination. Further intertwining is found in the African-American hot tamales of the Mississippi Delta in the United States.

Tamales are best made in batches, and tamaladas are the best way to make them. Tamaladas are gatherings of family, friends, and relations, where over many hours people come together and share music, stories, and community knowledge while handling masa, shaping it in corn or plátano leaves, and cooking them. Not only is there a celebratory communal feast, but everyone takes tamales home.

We are front line witnesses of 21st century techno colonialism.

The Techno-Tamaladas

I grew up making and eating el tamal Santafereno in Bogota. The aroma and sight of this delicious tamal, en sus ojas de plátano, immediately fills me with joy. While at an art residency at Grace Performance Space in upstate New York in 2018, I spontaneously taught and made tamales with co-resident Adam Zaretsky, his family, and friends. Over the hours of tamale making, we had a multi-generational dialogue that touched on mediatized technological disaster. Conversation was playful because tamale making is engaging, and I realized that bringing people together for tamaladas could expand both dialogues and imaginaries on the development of technology.

Over 2019, I worked with Oakland's Pro Arts Gallery & Commons and ECAP food bank to host three tamaladas on San Pablo Avenue and 36th Street. We made and shared 1,500 free tamales. I did extensive outreach to community and art organizations, schools and universities, local

businesses, activist circles, and drew over one thousand participants, primarily African American, Asian, and Latinx, and diverse along class, ability, gender, and sexual orientation. Among participants were people experiencing or at risk of homelessness and poverty, students, elders, hackers, disabled community members, artists, sustainable technology activists, Emeryville's Mayor and City Council members, residents from the nearby Place for Sustainable Living, tamale makers, ECAP volunteers, and many others.

Each of these tamaladas lasted over five hours, in multiple phases. At times we mainly served tamales, at others I explained the process of nixtamalization, the spread of maize through the Americas, or taught people how to make and cook tamales. The event morphed multiple times and the experience depended at what time one was there. Many participants discussed the different ways the technology sector has eviscerated the commons and created the need for more food banks, the despair they feel about their own



The Techno-Tamaladas, ECAP. Digital collage by Praba Pilar, of photographs by Minoosh Zomorodinia, Natalia Mount, Colby Riley, John Normoyle, Janet Sarson, and Praba Pilar, from Techno-Tamaladas at ECAP food bank, 2019.

The Techno-Tamaladas is not working within the reactionary ecosystem of isolation, acceleration, addiction, and disconnection of social media and data mining corporations. We work alongside, on other registers, asking: Can we re-imagine working with technologies beyond neoliberal capitalist imperatives?

economic precarity, fears of uncontrollable climate change and ecological collapse on their children, families, community and political worlds, and anger over the racist and divisive politics of the Republican party and Trump administration. Other discussion emphasized innovative and communitarian projects in sustainable technologies, autonomous telephony, water conservation, plastic use reduction, transit alternatives, and other politicized approaches to technology. More than learning from me, people shared, taught, and learned from each other.

We created no waste through this event, as the tamale husks, gloves for preparing and serving, and plates were all compostable. When we cleaned up, all of what would have been garbage went into a compost bin.

2020 Relaunch, COVID-19 Changes

Many of the participants in the Techno-Tamaladas contributed knowledge and expertise to the project. Towards the end of 2019, I asked Mexican activist and scholar Charlotte Sáenz and African-American artist Ben Simmons to join me as collaborators to envision the project going forward. Charlotte works on the pedagogy of the seed, and has a long engagement with Zapatista communities, and Ben is a video artist with a background in AIDS and disability activism and work with communities in crisis.

We planned to begin the new year with tamaladas sited at downtown Oakland's Providence House, which provides subsidized apartments especially built for people on a fixed income living with HIV/AIDS or other disabilities; at the Huerta de Dolores garden of the Cesar Chavez Branch of the Oakland Public Library in Fruitvale, Oakland; and at Poor Magazine's Homefulness community in East Oakland. We worked with Pro Arts Gallery & Commons to plan a huge mid-summer outdoor tamalada with performances, video screenings, free food, and music at Oscar Grant Plaza in downtown Oakland. Additionally, I planned to share the project in late March at the Grafters Xchange Gathering in Hamilton, New York, at Pratt Institute, and elsewhere, and do a performance with biotech/multi-species artist Adam Zaretsky and others at Tompkins Square Park in New York City.

Alongside Ben and Charlotte, I launched this new series at Pro Arts Gallery & Commons on February 23, 2020. We shared the technology of nixtamalization, the concept of the milpa, and the locations and dates of confirmed programming with the public. We also shared tamales. Two weeks later, as it became clear that COVID-19 was highly contagious and stay in place orders were necessary, we cancelled all the in-person events.

We had envisioned planting a milpa in Big Daddy's Rejuvenating Community Garden in Emeryville with students in Charlotte's Creating Community class at the California Institute for Integral Studies. This garden was established by master Gardener and sculptor Vickie Jo Sowell in 2001, after Big Daddy's gas station burned down. We also planned a milpa that Charlotte would grow in Fruitvale, Oakland.

Due to COVID-19, we did not work with Charlotte's class on site, instead we cultivated, watered, and tended corn from May to September. This included



Cultivating the Milpa, digital image and photographs by Praba Pilar. Project collaborator Charlotte Sáenz, gardener Vickie Jo Sowell, helpers Targol Mesbah, & Anuj Vaidya. Big Daddy's Complete Rejuvenating Community Garden, Emeryville, 2020.

socially distanced planting in the garden with Charlotte, Vickie, Targol Mesbah, and Anuj Vaidya.

In September, as we were preparing to harvest the corn, the enormous wildfires burning across California, Oregon and Washington created the worst air quality in the world. Though the corn was ready, we could not go outside to harvest. As soon as the air cleared, I harvested the corn and together with Ben, we shared it with residents of Providence House. Over the same period, I shared informal online talks and dialogues at various institutions, and with Charlotte and Ben, we planned an online webinar/charla on the Tamaladas – La Milpa en Tiempos de Pandemia that will be held live from Oaxaca and Oakland on October 30, 2020.

Conclusion

The Techno-Tamaladas are in conversation with communities who work on autonomous technology projects, community reclaiming, land justice, and stewardship. We challenge white supremacist renderings of our hemisphere that leave out the mass migrations of Asian, Arabic and other

communities by sharing the history of tamale makers from Afghanistan. We make and share Meso-American, Afro-American, and Colombian tamales. We acknowledge our other collaborators, including native bees, flies, other pollinators, worms, and other composters as well as ants and soil aerators.

In the 2020 film *The Social Dilemma*, founders and executives of social media corporations share their distress over the damages wrought by the features they created at Google, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, and others. They discuss, in detail, how these platforms are eroding civil society and civil discourse, and irreparably rupturing any remaining social contract based on cooperation and collaboration. Regrettably, they do not discuss how incredibly wealthy this work made them, omitting a sobering reflection on how much they gained by damaging the commons.

The Techno-Tamaladas is not working within the reactionary ecosystem of isolation, acceleration, addiction, and disconnection of social media and



Harvesting the Milpa, digital image and photographs by Praba Pilar. Project lead Praba Pilar and project collaborator Ben Simmons, maize, native bees, compost. Providence House, Oakland & Big Daddy's Complete Rejuvenating Community Garden, Emeryville, 2020.

data mining corporations. We work alongside, on other registers, asking: Can we re-imagine working with technologies beyond neoliberal capitalist imperatives? Can we support resurgence in our own communities of color, driven by our knowledges? How will we fight anti-blackness and blanqueamiento in the Latinx community? How can a hemispheric view de-center empire? Can a project itself be pluriversal, by being a world in which many worlds

exist? Can we redirect funding available to scholars and artists directly to communities in need?

Alongside movements that fight racism, white supremacy, climate change, and industrial collapse, The Techno-Tamaladas brings together communities of color in a renewed framing of technologies of life to strengthen our own resurgence in the face of escalating crises.

Praba Pilar is a queer diasporic Colombian mestiza artist creating performance art, digital/electronic installations, experimental public talks, and workshops in museums, universities, festivals, galleries, and streets around the world. Pilar has a decades long practice critical of extraction-based approaches to technology, has been honored with fellowships and awards, featured in local and international media, and published her work in peer reviewed and popular journals and books. In search of better collective electric dreams, she is presently sharing approaches rooted in hemispheric resistance and resurgence by engaging the public through reflection, generosity, and criticality. Pilar has a PhD in Performance Studies from UC Davis, is Co-Director of the Hindsight Institute, and can be visited online at prabapilar.com.

¿Algo Que Declarar? Student Surveillance, Policing, and Belonging at the México-U.S. Border

By Estefanía Castañeda Pérez & Isaac Félix

Transborder students navigate the harmful consequences of institutional violence that extends well beyond the border and into the classroom.

URL: <https://www.latinxproject.nyu.edu/intervencions/algo-que-declarar-student-surveillance-policing-and-belonging-at-the-mxico-us-border>

The U.S.-Mexico border is often framed as an impenetrable fortress not meant to be crossed. For generations, the border “wall” has been at the center of immigration debates, while the livelihoods of communities in the borderlands have remained in the shadows. This myopic perspective posits the border as a natural material structure and blurs the fact that the borderlands stand on occupied Indigenous land. Furthermore, the actual lived experiences of crossing the border and how borders are embodied at the individual level (through processes of inequality and internalization of violence) and at a societal level (interior checkpoints, interior enforcement and policing) often remain invisible.

Our research examines how multiple institutions in the Mexico-U.S. borderlands, specifically in the Tijuana and the Ciudad Juarez regions, impact transborder students’ sense of belonging. One of the themes we have identified in our work is that, regardless of how deeply they may (or may not feel) attached to their communities, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers and educators play an important role in transborder students’ notions of belonging. Across multiple spaces, students are confronted by authority figures such as CBP officers, educators, and school administrator, who put into

question their crossing and residential legitimacy, identity, and allegiance. It is within these multiple spaces of policing where students first begin to question their membership to the nation(s), schools, and communities.

Why Do Transborder Students and Their Families Undergo This Commute?

For the transborder community, home is here, there, and sometimes nowhere. Their livelihoods are characterized by constant mobility in the physical, social, and economic sense. There are 50 land ports of entry along the Mexico-U.S. border where thousands of commuters engage in transborder mobility on a regular basis. At the San Ysidro Port of Entry alone, 90,000 individuals cross on a daily basis. Among this population are transborder students, who are overwhelmingly U.S. citizens, residing in Mexico that regularly cross the border to attend school in neighboring U.S. cities. While there are no statistics on exactly how many students cross the border from Mexico, many are descendants of families that have been rooted in the borderlands for generations.

There is no one single answer as to why transborder students and their families undergo a transborder



Photo by Estefanía Castañeda Pérez.

commute—after all, the experiences vary. Nonetheless, a common misconception surrounding transborder students is that crossing the border for education represents a “choice” when in reality there are many conditions of economic hardship and displacement that force many youth to reside on the Mexican side of the border and cross on a daily basis to attain or continue an education in the U.S. One common example is that a parent (or both parents) were deported from the U.S., forcing displaced students to regain some kind of normalcy by continuing their education in the U.S. For others, crossing represents access to opportunities that their parents never had during their lifetimes, such as learning English and going to college. In the majority of the cases, their transborder mobility

The border infrastructure is designed to make transborder commuters feel as if they are entering a war zone or even a prison...

was decided by their parents even before they were born. Many families view U.S. citizenship as a way to remain rooted in two different countries and cultures. As such, the educational experience for transborder students often represents the gateway into opportunity.

Over-Policing Through Multiple Institutions

Ports of entry often represent zones of legal exception, where CBP officers are given ample discretionary powers to determine an individual’s admissibility based on behavioral and physical attributes. Over the decades, ports of entry have been consistently militarized, particularly after the attacks of 9/11. Since then, biometric technology has been required and used to police ports of entry. The War on Terror was not just fought overseas—it served as an ideological framework to pass some of the most draconian immigration enforcement policies, criminalizing migrants and treating the border as a perpetual warzone.

The border infrastructure is designed to make transborder commuters feel as if they are entering a war zone or even a prison, particularly due to the presence of biometric and surveillance technology, which includes facial recognition and cameras, x-ray machines, and metal detectors. Since 9/11, wait times at the border have fluctuated and have primarily depended on the sociopolitical climate in the region. As such, many students have to wake up sometimes as early as 3:00am in order to cross the border and get to school on time.

For many transborder youth, crossing the border produces uncertainty, which can lead to stress and trauma. These interactions with CBP are the main contact students have with the U.S. government. As such, students go through militarized spaces and, in some cases, are detained or held for more questioning even before they arrive at school. Student participants in the Tijuana-San Diego border region shared how CBP officers question them more during “peak” morning traffic hours. Students also shared how others at the border (e.g. pedestrians, transborder commuters, and adults) partake in the policing of transborder youth. For instance, adults will notify and alert CBP officers regulating pedestrian lanes whenever a group of transborder youth “skip the line” to ensure that they arrive at school on time.



Photo by Estefanía Castañeda Pérez.

Transborder students are policed by multiple sources, including border officials and fellow transborder commuters.

In these instances, transborder youth shared that they have been publicly reprimanded by CBP officials and even forced to return to the very beginning of the line, while other transborder commuters cheer on CBP for punishing the students.

En route to school, transborder students also endure microaggressive comments from adults deeming transborder students as “deviant” for trying to “cheat the [U.S. education] system” by attending U.S. schools while residing in Tijuana. Thus, this demonstrates how transborder students are policed by multiple sources, including border officials and fellow transborder commuters. Despite these challenges, transborder students find ways of reclaiming agency of this cross-border process by creating a community with other commuters or repurposing their waiting time with other leisure activities.

Reproducing Border Surveillance in the Classroom

Surveillance doesn’t end once a person has crossed the México-U.S. border. As institutions proximal to the border itself, schools reproduce policing and surveillance. Often, students must adhere to the institutional and social policies outlined by their school districts. Though not limited to just the transborder student population, residential policies are often the root cause of anxiety and stress. Students across the United States navigate school district policies to attend schools in communities that are better funded and offer more resources. Students who find themselves in these precarious situations are often at risk of being expelled from

Transborder students are exposed to institutional violence embedded in the classroom curriculum that further exacerbates alienation and vulnerability they experience.

their school, fined by their district to cover tuition (the cost of educating the student at the school), and face legal consequences depending on their legal guardian. Considering the demographics typically found in the border region, this would mean that predominantly low-income families would be required to face the consequences of “being caught” (i.e. paying tuition to ensure their child receives a public education that would otherwise be free with a residential address). With this context in mind, we can begin to understand how transborder students navigate the obstacles that arise due to educational policies aiming to regulate residency and citizenship.

This is not a homogeneous process. After all, there is no “one-size-fits-all” answer to how transborder students interact with educational policies and at-school regulations. Generally, this navigation can be thought about in two parts: social behaviors in school and academic performance. The former describes the behaviors that students deploy to minimize suspicion of their transborder experiences. For some students, this means avoiding interactions with school administrators to deflect attention. In other cases, students modify their behaviors in the classroom so that their teachers do not raise suspicions of their commute across the border.

For example, students will ensure that they do not fall asleep in their classrooms despite being tired from their border commute. Transborder students will also actively participate and complete all their assignments to further comply with classroom and



Photo by Estefanía Castañeda Pérez.

school expectations. Thus, they overcompensate in their school performance to avoid consequences that could negatively affect their school standing.

In the examples outlined above, institutional agents (i.e. teacher, administrator, counselor, etc.) are not directly policing student behavior; rather, students self-regulate their performance in school. This may raise questions as to why we argue that schools reproduce policing and surveillance onto transborder students. However, we would like to highlight the policies set in place by schools and school districts. While agents at the school may not actively enforce these policies on a daily basis, these policies remain unchallenged. Moreover, certain regulatory actions by institutional agents may be perceived as repressive by transborder students due to their daily encounters with violence as well as with microaggressions inherent within the education systems against marginalized students.

Structural Violence in Schools and in the Borderlands

Transborder students are exposed to institutional violence embedded in the classroom curriculum that further exacerbates alienation and vulnerability they experience. Some of the actions enacted by the school involve deficit social and academic perceptions of non-English languages and cultures — which are regulated and enforced through the learning environment and institutional agents.

The violence occurring at the border and in their educational experiences are not necessarily unique to the borderlands. Rather, they represent a continuum of broader systemic oppression and policing of minoritized and low-income communities at the national level and at the global scale.



Photo by Estefanía Castañeda Pérez.

Transborder students (along with their peers of color from immigrant and multilingual backgrounds) are taught to follow curricula set forth by their school and school districts. This curriculum is primarily taught in English and references (white) U.S. History and culture, references that are not always accessible or relevant to transborder students and their non-transborder peers of color. Even in cases where bilingual and multilingual curricula are offered, the broader goal of schools and school districts are to assimilate students into the “standard” (dominant) curriculum. This is part of the larger systemic violence and racism that takes place within the U.S. education system which inherently reproduces flawed nationalistic values that promote assimilation and patriotism via the production of “good” U.S. citizens.

Supportive teachers typically do not mark students tardy for arriving late. However, for the most part, students have expressed that they navigate schooling by primarily hiding the fact that they cross. It often feels like their relationship-building

with their teachers and other school agents is contingent upon not speaking openly about crossing the border. Being unable to trust faculty and peers impedes many transborder students from developing a sense of full membership in educational settings. This generates a constant anxiety of being “outed” by a peer or faculty member, causing transborder students to keep their guard up from the moment they leave their home until the moment they return. However, this is not to say that transborder students do not exercise agency within these experiences. In fact, some students shared that they eventually learn which teachers and institutional agents they are able to trust. Particularly, they emphasize that teachers who open up to students and listen to students without judgment are often the teachers that transborder students trust to disclose their experiences and challenges crossing their border. As such, this insight can provide educators with reassurance that relationship building with students can often open a line of communication that can lead to the mediation of challenges facing respective students. While this does not solve structural challenges, we believe that it is one of many steps in the right direction.

The Borderlands as the Future for Global Solidarity

Transborder individuals are characterized by constant exhaustion, instability, stress, and anxiety. However, their livelihoods and experiences demonstrate the necessity to reimagine notions of inclusion and membership beyond the definitions imposed by the nation. The violence occurring at the border and in their educational experiences are not necessarily unique to the borderlands. Rather, they represent a continuum of broader systemic oppression and policing of minoritized and low-income communities at the national level and at the global scale. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that despite experiencing these everyday oppressions, being able to cross a border for educational purposes represents a huge privilege that many undocumented and displaced communities in the borderlands do not have. As such, it is important to envision the borderlands as a space beyond the local communities that inhabit them. Instead, the borderlands have the potential of disrupting the long history of settler colonialism that has forced many to think of themselves primarily as members of nation-states, instead of global communities.

Estefanía Castañeda Pérez is a Ph.D. Candidate at the UCLA Department of Political Science. Her dissertation examines the impacts of state violence at the Mexico-U.S. Border on the lives of transborder commuters in Tijuana, Nogales, and Ciudad Juárez. Her educational aspirations and research projects have been motivated by her experience commuting daily from Tijuana to San Diego as a transborder student for a borderless pursuit of education.

Isaac Félix is a first year Ph.D. student in the Critical Studies of Race, Class, and Gender at UC Berkeley’s Graduate School of Education. His research aims to understand the educational experiences of transborder youth in the Tijuana-San Diego border region. Currently, Isaac is a Eugene V. Cota-Robles Fellowship recipient at UC Berkeley.

Critical Relationalities: Centering Native Activism and Reframing Im/migration Struggles

By Raquel Andrea Gonzalez Madrigal

The undoing of compounded settler structures requires solidarity and alliances among immigrants rights movements with Indigenous struggles for sovereignty.

URL: <https://www.latinxproject.nyu.edu/intervenxions/critical-relationalities-centering-native-activism-and-reframing-immigration-struggles>

While sanctuary resists the U.S. racist police state by protecting im/migrants from deportation, it ultimately is sanctioned by and happens in settler cities. Unless sanctuary and im/migrant rights discourses address this dilemma, they will continue to participate in the collective and ongoing colonial violence of Indigenous dispossession and settler occupation. What does it then mean for im/migrant rights and the politics of sanctuary to engage in Indigenous struggles for sovereignty? I delve into this complexity by first examining Tohono O’odham activism against the border and Border Patrol in Tucson, Arizona, then by analyzing a public forum held on March 9, 2018 in Albuquerque, New Mexico called: “Sovereignty and Sanctuary.”

Necessary Alliances

The Tohono O’odham are an Indigenous, First Nations peoples whose ancestral homelands span the Sonoran Desert. In southern and central Arizona and Northern Sonora, Mexico, unceded O’odham territory and communities are dissected and bisected by the U.S.-Mexico border. Traditionally, the Tohono O’odham are itinerant peoples living in kinship systems, migrating throughout their land according to the seasons and shifts in growth of vegetation.

This kind of Indigenous migration, both particular and essential to Tohono O’odham sovereignty and way of life, differs from other migrations forged out of colonial and imperial routes.

Separated from their relatives in Mexico and deemed as “illegal aliens,” the O’odham continue to face an ongoing quagmire of racial-gendered violence that follows centuries of colonial and imperial practices of dispossession, invasion, removals and attempted exterminations by Spain, Mexico and the United States. With undocumented border crossings funneled onto their lands, the O’odham are caught up in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s surveillance matrix. O’odham in Arizona have their homes raided by border crossers and are harassed not only by Border Patrol but by cartel members as well. Against this colonial and militarized border violence, Alex Soto, a Tohono O’odham activist, hip-hop artist, and volunteer with the group O’odham Solidarity Across Borders, asserts that “the immigration struggle is also an Indigenous struggle.” Soto’s statement focuses our attention on the impact of border militarization in Indigenous communities on or near the colonial and imperial U.S.-Mexico border, and critically highlights Indigenous voices in relation to im/migrant rights discourses and frameworks.

On Friday, May 21, 2010 six Tohono O’odham and Diné activists including Soto locked themselves together for almost 4 hours in the lobby of the United States Border Patrol Headquarters in Tucson. These headquarters lay adjacent to the Tohono O’odham reservation, 67 miles north of the border. This self-imposed lock down was a protest to end border militarization on Indigenous land, against Indigenous peoples, and to end the criminalization and deportation of im/migrants. While Soto and 5 others were locked together inside, community members, including members of the Pasqual Yaqui, Tohono O’odham, and Diné Nations gathered in prayer and rallied in support.

Their list of demands were:

The immediate withdraw of National Guard Troops from the U.S./Mexico border,

The immediate halt of the development of the border wall,

The immediate removal of drones and checkpoints,

the decommission of all detention camps and the release of all presently held undocumented migrants,

The immediate honor of Indigenous peoples rights to self-determination,

Full settler state compliance with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples,

The respect of Indigenous people’s inherent right of migration

The end of racial profiling, Border Patrol encroachment/sweeps on sovereign Native land, and an end to all raids and deportations.

Ultimately, these demands call for the undoing of compounded settler structures crystalized over time and space so that Indigenous lifeways such as the immediate and unconditional freedom of movement for all people can be materialized. From this perspective, the criminalization and deportation of im/migrants stands in direct opposition to Indigenous presence, lifeways, and sovereignty. Centering



Border fence, photograph from Tohono O’odham Nation. (Evan616 / Wikipedia Commons)

Unless sanctuary and im/migrant rights discourses address this dilemma, they will continue to participate in the collective and ongoing colonial violence of Indigenous dispossession and settler occupation.

Indigenous politics delegitimizes the United States as a sovereign nation and invalidates its efforts to restrict the freedom of movement. Soto affirms: “Elders inform us that we have always honored freedom of movement...We need to...remember this action was a prayer, and the dismissal of trespassing reaffirms that the Border Patrol troops are the real trespassers, not us.”

Moreover, this Indigenous action reveals that Indigenous peoples existed prior to the border and its militarization. They existed before the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed in 1848 which ended the U.S./Mexican war; before the Gadsden Purchase of 1853 which demarcated the boundary lines between the United States and Mexico, causing separation among Indigenous relatives. Indigenous peoples existed before the mounted watchmen of the U.S. Immigration Service who patrolled the border as early as 1904 and who would later become the Border Patrol. In this, the border and border militarization are colonial and imperial operations weaponized to continue Indigenous genocide and land dispossession.

Sovereignty “and” Sanctuary

From 2017-2018, faculty and students at the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, mobilized to establish a sanctuary campus. This was when the Trump administration withdrew DACA protections for undocumented youth, enacted immigration bans, and carried out massive deportations.

Creating sanctuary was part of a nationwide resurgence informed by the sanctuary movements of the 1980’s, which began as a political and religious effort to protect Central American refugees escaping civil wars in Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador from being deported. During this time, the United States refused asylum to Central Americans. In response, over 500 member congregations declared themselves official sanctuaries committed to providing shelter, protection, material goods and legal advice. In this context, the “Sovereignty & Sanctuary” forum brought together a timely panel of activists, organizers and scholars to discuss the intersections and the meaning of Indigenous sovereignty and sanctuary. This forum was



Bob Hoosous, Border Crossing, on view at the Albuquerque Museum

PUBLIC FORUM:
SOVEREIGNTY & SANCTUARY

Friday, March 9, 5:30pm

Presented by UNM American Studies, UNM Art & Ecology, 516 ARTS & Outpost Performance Space

Everyone is invited to a conversation about the meanings of sovereignty for native nations and that of sanctuary within the migrant justice movement, featuring representatives from Red Nation, New Mexico Dream Team, UNM American Studies, UNM Chicana & Chicano Studies, Tohono O’odham Hemajkam Rights Network and NM Faith Coalition for Immigrant Justice:

**Jennifer Marley • Eduardo Esquivel • Jennifer Denetdale • Irene Vasquez
Nellie Jo David • Daniel Vega • Rafael Martinez • Rebecca Schreiber**

at Outpost Performance Space • 210 Yale Blvd. SE • FREE

Part of the citywide programs organized by 516 ARTS and partners for the exhibition *The US-Mexico Border: Place, Imagination, and Possibility* at 516 ARTS and Albuquerque Museum through April, 2018.

516 ARTS UNM INFO: 268-0044, outpostspace.org • 516arts.org 505242-1445

“Sovereignty and Sanctuary” event flyer. Courtesy of author.

necessary because while Albuquerque has a large im/migrant community, it is a settler city built upon the stolen, occupied, and unceded lands of Sandia-Isleta Pueblo, Tiwa/Tewa peoples.

Discussants were Jennifer Marley (San Idefonso Pueblo), member of the Red Nation; Eduardo Esquivel, member of the New Mexico Dream Team; Jennifer Denetdale (Diné), Professor in American Studies at the University of New Mexico (UNM); Irene Vasquez, Chair of Chicana and Chicano Studies and Professor in American Studies also at UNM; Nellie Jo David, Tohono O’odham environmental justice activist and member of Tohono O’odham Hemajkam Rights Network (TOHRN); and Daniel Vega, member of the New Mexico Faith Coalition for Immigrant Justice (NMFClJ).

The forum’s goal was to “decenter the U.S. nation-state’s assertion of sovereignty” and “emphasize Indigenous perspectives.” Questions asked were: (1) How do you define sovereignty and sanctuary? (2) How do these two terms and ideas intersect? (3) What impact does the linking of the concepts of sanctuary and sovereignty have for academic research as well as social movement organizing?” Marley stated that Indigenous sovereignty means “the self-determination of Indigenous peoples and calling into question the legitimacy of the U.S. settler-state.” Juxtaposed with U.S. sovereignty, it asserts Indigenous presence and traditional life ways relative to an ancestral land base. Marley’s statement is informed by the Red Nation. In Albuquerque, the Red Nation is an urban and diverse Native movement informed by traditions

Centering Indigenous politics delegitimizes the United States as a sovereign nation and invalidates its efforts to restrict the freedom of movement.

Vasquez shared that Indigenous sovereignty and sanctuary are about alliance building; and teaching about colonialism in the classroom is where she is able to ‘move towards understanding sanctuary and sovereignty as our ability to maintain relationships that nurture life.

of activism, with strong connections to ancestral homelands. The convening of Marley, Denetdale, and David at this forum demonstrates that urban Native connections happen off the reservation, beyond the U.S.-Mexico border, and beyond the borders of the reservation. This affirms what Renya K. Ramirez calls “Native hubs,” where for particular reasons, different Native Nations gather together in solidarity in an urban setting, cohering the meaning of Indigeneity into an off-the-reservation formulation as well as an on-the-reservation composite.

Vega explained that sanctuary has a faith-based history and describes a safe shelter from deportation. Esquivel similarly conveyed that sanctuary means to be known in U.S. society as undocumented and not threatened by deportation. Speaking of the O’odham in relation to border crossers, David shared:

“People coming through are seeking just that—sanctuary and we don’t have the sovereignty to give it to them! We can’t even give them food or water without being criminalized by Border Patrol.”

While David articulated the impossibility of Indigenous sovereignty and sanctuary at the border, Denetdale addressed the conceptual implications for linking them together:

“The treatment of Indigenous people is at the forefront of how the U.S. transits empire. Its



Tohono O'odham and Diné activists protesting at the US Border Patrol Headquarters in Tucson.

treatment of Indigenous people shapes and influences the way it also treats other people of color...we are marked differently for death...we need to recognize the commonality of settler violence.”

Speaking on the impact on social movement organizing, Vasquez shared that Indigenous sovereignty and sanctuary are about alliance building; and teaching about colonialism in the classroom is where she is able to “move towards understanding sanctuary and sovereignty as our ability to maintain relationships that nurture life.” As an audience member, I was curious about how the forum would interrogate “sanctuary” in relation to Indigenous sovereignty since these concepts do not have a natural affinity. I observed that the forum overlooked the challenges evoked by placing Indigenous sovereignty “and” sanctuary in dialogue with one another. There was no discussion on how sanctuary happens on Native land, in settler cities, and upon a foundation of colonialism and imperialism. Sanctuary legitimizes im/migrant presence through settler structures that emerge out of conditions requiring Indigenous land dispossession and genocide. So while Tohono O'odham activists have a decolonial organizing practice that delegitimizes the settler state, im/migrant organizing practices, in contrast, look to the settler state for legitimacy. Another source of

tension is the presumption that Indigenous Nations generally do not see im/migration issues relevant to their struggles, except if they live along the border. As David noted: “I don't want to name tribes, but people up north...don't know that there are Indigenous people across the border.”

Perhaps the lack in addressing these kinds of challenges was due to the forum being part of an art exhibit about the border, which, at the time, was hosted by an art gallery and museum in downtown Albuquerque. Curiously, the audience was predominantly white, and it was held in a context outside of both communities, thus highlighting another complication around the challenges of alliance-building and solidarity. Nonetheless, the forum is significant because it highlights the need for im/migrants politics to understand the ways in which Indigenous sovereignty is foundational to their struggle, and vice versa.

Conclusion

In one way, the protest and forum spotlight the critical relationalities that already exist between Indigenous and im/migrant struggles, and in another way, reveal the complications inherent between them. On their own terms, Indigenous sovereignty is incommensurate with sanctuary and im/migrant struggles. These divergences present challenges for building alliances and solidarity but only because they have not been fully theorized or imagined. The

Holding the weight of all of this relational violence, it is necessary to address the overlooked relationalities between Indigenous and im/migration struggles so that life for both groups can be simultaneously valued and accounted for.

underlying problem is how Indigenous presence and struggles continue to be erased.

In early August, *Immigration Nation*, a documentary film series that narrates the scope of immigration enforcement under Trump, was released. Though the series ends in the Sonoran Desert, it does not mention the Tohono O’odham or how im/migrant deaths happen on their land. This invisibility is symptomatic of Indigenous erasure writ large within immigration discourses. Eve Tuck and Wayne K. Yang assert that “justice” is a colonial temporality, that it has “limited actions within a colonial moment against colonial structures.” This means that if our attempts to attain justice happen within settler forms – liberal ideologies, legal spheres, and judicial courts, and so on, they will be predicated upon Indigenous erasure. Yellowknives Dene scholar Glen Sean Coulthard critiques how recognition for Indigenous peoples historically has meant recognition by the U.S. settler state.

O’odham activists resist this kind of recognition. Their organizing has reframed the potential for im/migration politics by tackling the settler structure that inflicts violence on both groups.

The Trump administration has wrought upon us an unprecedented catastrophe through the separation of detained im/migrant families, and the stonewalling of asylum seekers camped on Mexico’s side of the border. Added to this is the trauma of the election year, the novel coronavirus pandemic, and the Black Lives Matter uprisings against the state-sanctioned killings of George Floyd, Jacob Blake and countless others like Breonna Taylor, and in particular, Black Trans individuals like Tony McDade, Nina Pop, Dominique Fells and Riah Milton. Holding the weight of all of this relational violence, it is necessary to address the overlooked relationalities between Indigenous and im/migration struggles so that life for both groups can be simultaneously valued and accounted for.

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How State Violence Translates to Political Action for Immigrants in the Midwest

By Romelia Solano

Informal community networks and rapid response mutual aid helped resist harrowing levels of state violence inflicted on immigrant communities.

URL: <https://www.latinxproject.nyu.edu/interventions/how-state-violence-translates-to-political-action-for-immigrants-in-the-midwest>

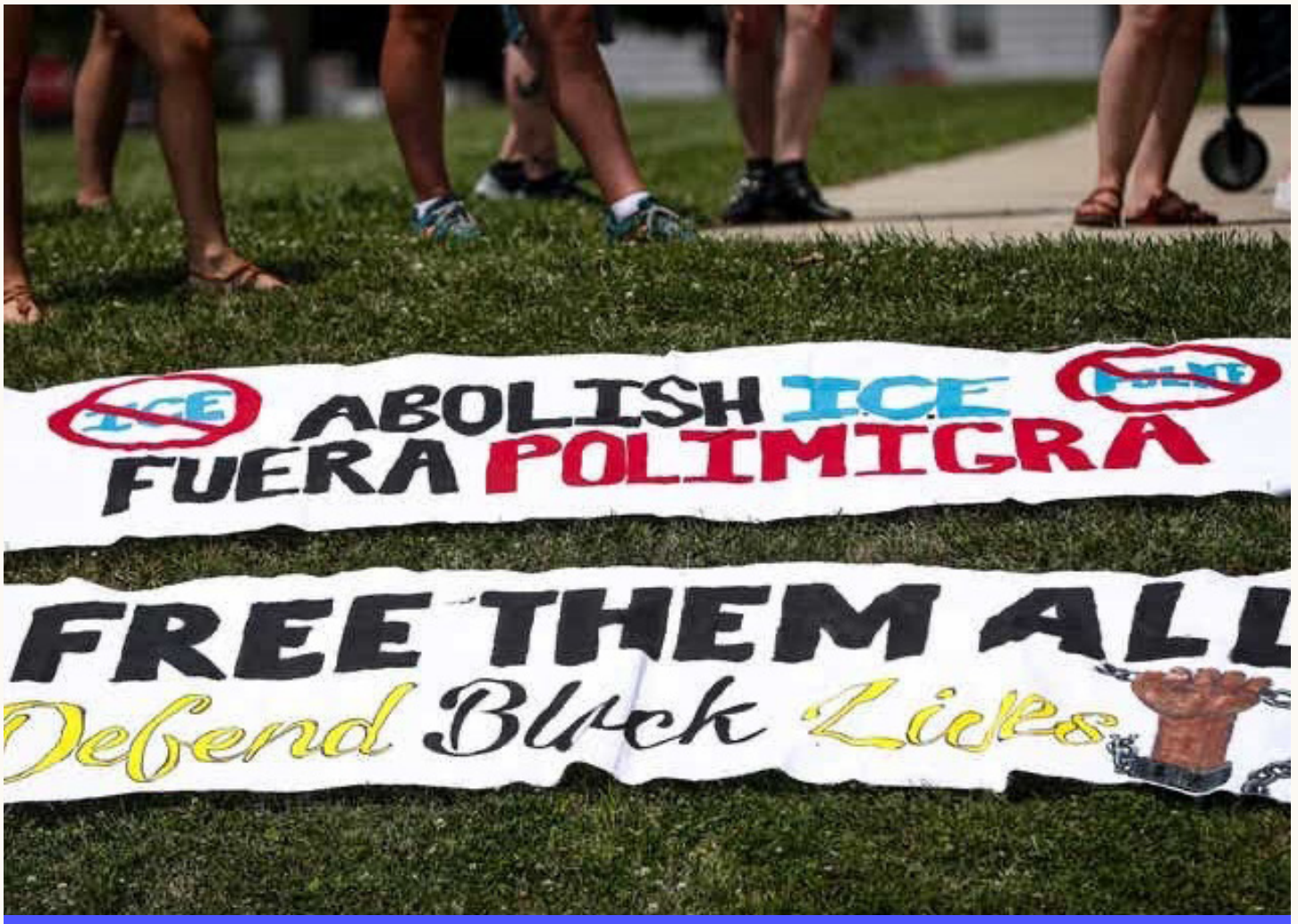
In light of the Trump administration's persistent attacks on BIPOC communities, understanding when and how immigrants will mobilize and align themselves politically with other race-class subjugated groups is more important than ever. Individuals, moreover, can respond to traumatic experiences in different ways. Whether you have lived in the country for well over a decade or whether you have just fled violence in your home country, experiences with the U.S. immigration system are filled with uncertainty and can have long-term psychological, relational, and economic effects. Similarly, the alienating effects of police violence among the Black community are well documented and this research tells us that state violence is repetitive, cumulative, and has enduring political consequences (for more on this, see Soss and Weaver 2017 and Weaver and Prowse 2020). However, when individuals turn inwards and seek information and opportunities to challenge the state is less understood in political science.

Police killings of Black individuals and human rights abuses in immigration detention have undoubtedly heightened feelings of distrust between race-class subjugated groups and the state. But how might they affect feelings of solidarity or cooperation among targeted groups? My research with immigrants

formerly detained in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) custody and their loved ones, survey data, and administrative crime reporting exposes how experiences of state violence are translated into political action. First, individual responses to state violence are more heterogeneous than the prevailing literature contends. Second, and perhaps unsurprisingly, state violence decreases voting and crime reporting. However, my study has shown that state violence increases participation in community-based forms of political action and support among immigrants for Black Lives Matter.

How has racialized state violence and COVID-19 in the U.S. affected immigrant communities?

Following the devolution of immigration policy-making from the federal to the local level, the state of Indiana has featured a particularly closed policy landscape on immigration. Hallmark restrictive legislation in the state includes HB 1402, which prohibits resident tuition rates for undocumented youth, and SB 590, which mandates employers verify citizenship status. Nonetheless, immigrant Hoosiers, or longtime residents of the Midwestern state, have deep social and economic roots in Indiana, with 26.6% of noncitizens having entered the United



Protest banners at a July 4th march from city hall in Indianapolis to the Clay County Jail in Brazil, Indiana.
Photo by Wendy Catalan Ruano

States prior to 2000, 40% between 2000 and 2010, and 21.5% since 2010. The immigrant workforce in Indiana also holds predominantly private wage or salaried jobs, with 24.1% of foreign-born workers employed in manufacturing and 19.9% employed in the educational, healthcare, and social assistance services sectors. Mixed-status families in Indianapolis are increasingly diverse based on varied countries of origin, migration journeys, and lengths of residence in the United States. While they contribute significantly to the essential labor force in Indiana, they continue being undervalued economically and politically.

Nearly 20 years after the passage of the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Acts (AEDPA) and the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant

Responsibility Act (IIRIRA), which inextricably linked immigration law to criminal law, immigrants continue to face strong challenges to achieving full membership. In the Midwest, large metropolitan cities like Indianapolis are increasingly sites of political struggle. Marion County, home to one of the most heavily Latino districts in the state, has one of the highest use of immigration detainers in the region according to the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC), a data organization at Syracuse University. Immigration detainers allow local law enforcement officials to hold individuals to be transferred to ICE custody, and is a practice that has enabled the Trump administration to indiscriminately detain more immigrants with minor or no criminal convictions. These collaborative relationships between local law

and enforcement mean that for immigrant Hoosiers, the border is not a distant threat. Rather, every day has the potential to upend lives, separate families, and ravage entire communities.

Therefore, immigration patterns in places like Indiana, or new immigrant destinations, dovetail with national trends where an estimated 53% of Latinos report direct and harmful experiences with the immigration system. Another 28% of Latinos say they are unlikely to report a crime for fear that these interactions with law enforcement could lead to immigration consequences for others in their families and communities. Experiences with the immigration enforcement system are also empirically linked to serious public health consequences. Loss of a loved one to detention or deportation can leave women and youth suffering from chronic economic insecurity, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, and a range of other health complications



Counter-protester at a July 4th march from city hall in Indianapolis to the Clay County Jail in Brazil, Indiana.
Photo by Wendy Catalan Ruano.

Whether you have lived in the country for well over a decade or whether you have just fled violence in your home country, experiences with the U.S. immigration system are filled with uncertainty and can have long-term psychological, relational, and economic effects

that may jeopardize employment and education outcomes. Among children, trauma exposure related to immigration enforcement can powerfully shape a child's biological, physical, mental, and emotional development. Unfortunately, immigrant communities have been disproportionately devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic, adding another layer of precarity to everyday life.

Like in many other parts of the country, immigrant Hoosiers are over-represented in the service and health sectors where they are essential workers at the forefront of the fight against COVID-19 while being repeatedly left out of government relief efforts. Additionally at particular risk of COVID-related death or harm are incarcerated individuals, detained immigrants, and Black immigrants who face some of the harshest treatment in immigration detention. Repeatedly, ICE has failed to implement meaningful measures to protect detained immigrants, resulting in wide-spread outbreaks, and a swell of COVID deaths in detention. A joint report conducted just before the pandemic by the ACLU, Human Rights Watch, and the National Immigrant Justice Center indicates that the Trump administration has opened 40 new detention centers, and 39 adults have died in ICE custody since 2017. Detained individuals report a severe lack of access to mental health and medical care, limited or no access to hygiene and cleaning supplies, decreasing food quality, gross mistreatment, and rampant cost-cutting practices.

As human rights advocates point out, though these abhorrent conditions have worsened under Trump, they long precede the Trump and Obama administrations. Importantly, when put in the context of a historical record of medical- and eugenics-motivated forced detentions during World War I and World War II, the mass deportations of Operation Wetback during the Depression-era, or the expansion of the detention system during the ‘War on Drugs’ and the ‘War on Terror’ it is clear that human rights abuses including lack of access to legal counsel, invasion of privacy, and sexual abuse, have consistently been a part of the state’s repertoire of violence against immigrants. Thus, many were horrified but not surprised when a whistleblower recently came forward about unexplained hysterectomies being conducted on immigrant women in detention.

Why might targets of state violence be willing to cooperate?

Integrating membership theory, trauma studies, and human rights frameworks may help us explain how targeted groups respond to what feel like constant and cumulative acts of state violence. Membership theory was first proposed by Juliet Stumpf to explain how the criminal justice and immigration systems have become increasingly linked in American politics. Stumpf argues that membership and positive rights come from the social contract governing the relationship between

it is clear that human rights abuses including lack of access to legal counsel, invasion of privacy, and sexual abuse, have consistently been a part of the state’s repertoire of violence against immigrants.

individuals and the state, and since immigration law assumes nonmembership, the state exerts its sovereign power to exclude those it sees as deviant, or incapable of self-governing. This is why over time, ICE has grown into the largest armed federal law enforcement body in the nation and immigration prosecutors have outnumbered crime prosecutors for decades, she explains.

Following this line of thinking, we might consider that with the rise of a corrupt executive who is more than willing to use the state’s expressive power, to tell groups that they are not members over and over again, punish them with impunity, and engage in a downward spiral of protections for nonmembers, could create an external threat that might have the unintended consequence of becoming an unifying force. Moreover, what political science often forgets—but interdisciplinary and comparative work has shown—is that when the state tries to constrict the boundaries of membership, this does not go uncontested. This is precisely when we are more likely to observe individuals engaging in counter-conduct, or rights claiming practices. In my research, individuals have asserted that protesting, writing letters of support, donating to bond funds, helping others with their immigration cases, filing ICE complaints, participating in labor and hunger strikes, and even refusing medical care in detention, are political acts meant to reclaim dignity in the face of the state’s repressive apparatus. Thus despite the harrowing levels of state violence being inflicted on immigrant communities, resilient informal community

Loss of a loved one to detention or deportation can leave women and youth suffering from chronic economic insecurity, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, and a range of other health complications that may jeopardize employment and education outcomes.

networks coupled with rapid response and mutual aid models outline a path forward.

What does this mean for the decarceration movement?

To offer readers a concrete example of what my research suggests, I would like to come back to the Indiana case, where the Indiana Undocumented Youth Alliance (IUYA), an immigrant-led organization, has served the undocumented community in Indianapolis for over 8 years on the issue of higher education access. Notably, IUYA's impact extends far beyond its successful scholarship and mentorship programs. IUYA has also collaborated closely with Cosecha Indiana, a national immigrant-led organization, to help launch the Driving Without Fear campaign to push for state-level legislation that would provide access to driver's licenses and allow immigrants to have safe and reliable transportation to and from work without the fear of arrest or detention. In light of the COVID-19

pandemic, IUYA and Cosecha Indiana spearheaded the UndocuHoosier Relief Fund, raising well over \$130,000 in small funds to be dispersed to immigrant families in the greatest need of support.

This summer, undocumented youth participated in both the Indianapolis uprisings that followed the killings of Dreasjon Reed and George Floyd. Rapid-response groups mobilized to provide undocumented youth with information about their rights as protestors, and the immigration consequences of being arrested while protesting. On July 4, 2020, immigrants rights groups, among them IUYA, followed the lead of Indy10 the local chapter of the Black Lives Matter movement, and IndySURJ the local chapter of Standing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) and marched together from city hall in Indianapolis to the Clay County Jail in Brazil, Indiana. At the demonstration, the wife of a detained immigrant addressed the crowd and powerfully shared her family's story as she called for the immediate release of those in detention and a moratorium on immigration



Protesters at a July 4th march from city hall in Indianapolis to the Clay County Jail in Brazil, Indiana. Photo by Wendy Catalan Ruano.

for immigrant communities, like for other targeted groups, politics is not about identity, it is about dignity.

enforcement. The protest was largely successful until an armed group of white men and women showed up to intimidate the protestors. Rather than confront or arrest the armed group, police on the scene de-escalated the situation by escorting the protestors away from the short-term detention center.

I argue that for immigrant communities, like for other targeted groups, politics is not about identity, it is

about dignity. My research traces the genealogy of this concept to develop and test a dynamic theory of individual responses to racialized experiences of state violence through the criminal justice and immigration systems. Importantly, because my research examines political action beyond voting and protest, my findings add to a growing body of evidence that highlights the agency and resiliency of race-class subjugated communities. But as with many things leading up to the 2020 election in the midst of a global pandemic, only time will tell if immigrant communities will continue to respond to this political moment with bravery instead of fear, and in record numbers, to build sustainable and intersectional coalitions in support of decarceration.

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Lessons Learned From the Los Angeles Youth Movement Against The Carceral State

By Uriel Serrano

“This is a movement, not a moment.” Los Angeles-based youth of color continue a legacy of challenging the carceral social order.

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On June 23, after a day of youth-led protest, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) voted down Board Member Monica Garcia’s resolution to cut the Los Angeles School Police Department (LASPD) budget by 90% over a three year period. Despite this loss, it was clear to youth activists and their adult allies that abolitionist politics were at the fore as calls to defund school police swept the nation. And while community based abolitionist politics predate the mass uprisings following the murder of George Floyd, resolutions to “defund the police” authored by LAUSD board members do not. A week later, after a full day of public testimony, board deliberations and heated debates, and protest; LAUSD voted 4 to 3 to defund LASPD by \$25 million, resulting in a 35% decrease in the LASPD annual budget.

This victory has been decades in the making and part of a larger movement in Los Angeles to abolish policing and carceral logics in schools. In fact, in 2016, community organizers convinced LAUSD and LASPD to return military grade weapons—including 3 grenade launchers, 61 M-16 rifles, and a tank—they had acquired through the Department of Defense “Excess Military Equipment Program.” Prior to that, in 2013, community activists and organizations won the passage of the “School Climate Bill of Rights,”

which eliminated expulsion and suspension for acts of “willful defiance” and called for alternatives to suspensions. This victory in LAUSD was followed by the passage of similar bills and resolutions across California. Yet, recognizing that a \$25 million budget cut is not enough to abolish one of the largest school police departments in the county, youth protesters have continued their calls to defund LASPD.



Photo courtesy of author.

That’s why on September 15th, youth organizers returned to LAUSD headquarters to not only demand the defunding and abolishment of LASPD, but to also demand youth involvement in the decision-making processes connected to the reallocation of the \$25 million dollars. I took the picture above that evening after adult allies formed a protective barrier to prevent pro-police counter protesters from reaching the student-led

rally. About 20 minutes into the rally, 35 or so counter-protesters, many of whom were off-duty officers, arrived accompanied by the lyrics of Toy Story's "You've Got a Friend in Me." The song blasted out of the motorcycle of a counter-protester who revved his engine in sync with "Black Lives Matter" chants in an attempt to drown them out. The counter protesters arrived as libations were being poured in memory of Breonna Taylor, Andres Guardado, Dijon Kizzee, and the countless others murdered by the police. Some of their signs read "Keep Our Kids Safe," "Protect Our Kids," and "Defend School Police." While drawn in different colors, fonts, and material, what connected all the signs was the exclusion of Black youth from notions of safety and protection.

For the past three years I have been researching how the logics and practices of the carceral state—like that of the counter--protesters—persist and manifest themselves in the lives of Black, and Brown youth in Los Angeles County. Most importantly, I document how Black and Brown youth activists and their coalitions refuse, resist, and challenge the carceral social order to center youth of color and their futures. With an intersectional, multigenerational, and abolitionist approach, coalitions like Brothers, Sons, Selves (BSS)—a group of nine community-based organizations across Los Angeles and Long Beach—offer several lessons to support youth of color-led movements against the carceral state.

Despite experiencing the brunt of carceral subjugation and oppression, Black and Brown youth in Los Angeles County, and across the country, are developing robust intersectional and abolitionist critiques, practices, and movements.

According to a young Black girl who spoke at the September 15th rally, in order to understand the mechanisms that facilitate the expansion of a carceral social order into schools—as one example among many others—we must 'let the primary sources tell their story.'

First, the movement is and must be youth-led and youth-centered. The experiences of youth of color render visible how carceral logics operate outside of places that are not explicitly punitive like prisons and juvenile detention centers. According to a young Black girl who spoke at the September 15th rally, in order to understand the mechanisms that facilitate the expansion of a carceral social order into schools—as one example among many others—we must "let the primary sources tell their story." This also means that youth of color must be present and allowed to actively participate in decision-making processes that impact them and their communities. This is particularly important given the fact that adults in decision making positions often express the same sentiments as the counter-protestors I described above.

Their stories lead me to the second lesson: the movement is and must be intersectional. The BSS Coalition, for example, recognizes that the insidious nature of the carceral state requires an intersectional approach. In other words, their mission to end the criminalization of youth of color can only be achieved by remaining attuned to how criminalization produces difference as well as distinct, yet structurally similar experiences.

Intersectionality is also a practice. That is, intersectionality is a reflexive and purposeful process that requires showing up to meetings, rallies, and spaces of dialogue within movements to ensure

that all systems of punishment are eradicated. This common ground motivates youth of color and their adult allies to foster connections with coalitions, individuals, and organizations addressing other issues pertaining to the carceral state.

Third, abolition is also about shifting practices. The testimonies that youth of color often share reveal the racial and gendered brutality of carceral logics. You don't need a prison or a police officer for the carceral state to operate. As such, the youth movement against the carceral state disrupts our current relational practices with demands for counselors not cops, social workers not cops, and everybody except cops. These calls to action scrutinize the over reliance on logics and practices of punishment, dispossession, and abandonment in every aspect of our lives, but especially the lives of youth of color.

Lastly, the movement must unapologetically center joy, music, dance, and healing. The logics of the carceral state and their murderous agents are relentless and exhausting. In response, youth of color activists have been just as relentless through spoken word, building the soundtrack of the movement, holding healing circles, dancing, and

prompting exercise routines during rallies. As Audre Lorde reminds us, caring for ourselves is an act of political warfare.

We are currently witnessing how the carceral state and its agents value property, punishment, borders, and walls—including the walls adjacent to Breonna Taylor's home—over life. Youth of color in the United States have witnessed firsthand the consequences of carceral expansion and police brutality in the United States. Despite experiencing the brunt of carceral subjugation and oppression, Black and Brown youth in Los Angeles County, and across the country, are developing robust intersectional and abolitionist critiques, practices, and movements. As a youth activist proclaimed earlier this year, “this is a movement not a moment.” That is, current movements to defund school police have been long in the making. They are a reflection of decades of youth of color refusing, disrupting, and organizing to challenge the carceral social order of the United States. How might schools, our communities, and the world look like if youth of color were met with healing and support? How do we create a world where youth of color can be free? For answers to these questions, “let the primary sources tell their story” and take them seriously.

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The Legacy of Fred Hampton: Remembering as an Active Process

By Elizabeth Barahona

At Proviso East High School in Maywood, Illinois, a growing Latinx immigrant community honors the legacy of its most influential alum.

URL: <https://www.latinxproject.nyu.edu/interventions/the-legacy-of-fred-hampton-remembering-as-an-active-process>

Living in Hampton's home community of Maywood and attending his alma mater is a unique experience for Latinx students because their communities intentionally remember Hampton's life. Remembering is an active process for the Maywood community, which maintains the cultural symbols that Hampton strived for. Students at Proviso East High School are introduced to a Black role model who fought for their right to be treated fairly in school and to have resources in their community.

Born in 1948, Fred Hampton was an activist and revolutionary who advocated for his community as a student at Proviso East and later as a young adult in Chicago, before becoming chairman for the Illinois Black Panther Party. He is famously remembered for organizing the Rainbow Coalition that united Black, Latinx, Asian, and White Chicago residents against police brutality and substandard housing.

At the age of 14, Hampton organized a chapter of the NAACP in his community Maywood, Illinois. Hampton got his start in community organizing by advocating for a desegregated public swimming pool in Maywood. In 1966, Hampton graduated from Proviso East with honors.

Today, Maywood is home to a predominately Black or African-American (non-Latinx) community, with a growing Latinx immigrant population. As such, most students at Proviso East are identified as students of color (98%).

Attending Proviso East can be a radicalizing educational experience for many students because they are taught about Hampton throughout the entirety of their high school experience. At first, many incoming first-year students at Proviso East do not know who Fred Hampton was or what he represented. However, this quickly changes during their first freshman assembly where students are taught about the culture of the school. The teachers and staff at Proviso encourage students to learn about their community and become inspired by those who have previously studied there. Students learn about the expectations for students and about the school's most famous alum, Fred Hampton. They learn that Hampton was a Black Panther who advocated for free breakfast programs in Chicago. The assembly is accompanied by a performance by the theatre club who perform monologue with facts about Hampton's life and the school band that plays music in his honor.

Students also learn about one of the most key aspects of Hampton's life, including his assassination by the Chicago Police and FBI. Administrators and teachers carefully explain that Hampton was heinously murdered while he slept alongside his pregnant fiancé, Deborah Johnson. Hampton's tragic murder at the young age of 21 is a shocking reminder to students about the relevancy of police brutality fifty years ago and today.

In reflection of his life, Proviso East students dedicate their time to studying Hampton's life through various school activities. In December 2019, before the Coronavirus pandemic closed down in-personal classes, the teachers and students memorialized the 50th anniversary of Hampton's death with a series of contests. Students competed in three categories: oratory, essay, and art. Students researched Hampton's life to write speeches interpreting his quotes, created visual art, wrote essays, and reflected on what Hampton's quotes meant in their lives and in the larger struggle to "end racism in the United States." Students wrote and illustrated graphic novels about Hampton's life, made posters about the Black Panthers and the NAACP, recreated the Pan-African flag, drew portraits of Hampton, and displayed their work for all of the community to see. The contest winners won cash prizes as an added incentive as part of a partnership with a local non-profit and Wintrust Bank.

Hampton's efforts to unite people of all races, fight for racial equality, and determination to fight for his



Fred Hampton mural in Algiers, Algeria. (mags/Flickr)

principles inspired two Latinx students who won the first and second place prize for best artistic representation honoring Hampton's life. First place winner Francis Vazquez wrote a graphic novel called "Fred Hampton's Legacy" and second place winner Kaela Delgado created an art piece titled "Fred Hampton-Life and Legacy."

Many students admired that Hampton's son, Fred Hampton Jr., grew up to become a revolutionary like his father. Fred Hampton Jr. is the chairman of the Black Panther Party Cubs. Every year he organizes the Chicago community to honor his father's birthday. Many Proviso East students participate in the annual memorial and march Hampton Jr. organizes to his childhood home where his father was assassinated.

In February 2020, students celebrated Black history month by creating informational art pieces that featured Black and Afro-Latinx leaders, movements,

Attending Proviso East can be a radicalizing educational experience for many students because they are taught about [Fred] Hampton throughout the entirety of their high school experience.

and organizations. Many students chose to honor Fred Hampton in their art. Their art is featured in the hallways throughout the school for all to see.

Latinx students also learn about Hampton in their extracurricular activities, specifically the Latinx cultural club called Raza Unida. Raza Unida is led by Miguel Lopez, a math teacher and immigrant from Mexico. Lopez brings together club members once a week to play games like Mexican loteria, learn to dance Latin music, and learn about different Latin American issues.

Lopez argues it is important for his students to know about Hampton and reflect on the connections between their lives and his. He dedicated an entire club meeting to discuss the history of the Black Panther Party, Fred Hampton, and his assassination. Students shared moments when they experienced racial discrimination and ended the discussion saying “Latinos should learn about Hampton because he wanted to unite everybody and even though he was a different race [from me] he wanted equality for everybody.”

The students at his alma mater study his life seriously and are given opportunities throughout the year to pay homage and reflect on Hampton’s revolutionary life.

Latinx students left the club meeting with an understanding that efforts towards racial equality benefit everyone, and that they are not solely Black issues.

Like the students in Raza Unida, Hampton was also involved in extracurricular activities. He was elected by his peers to be part of the Interracial Cross Section Committee and was president of Junior Achievement. Through these organizations he fought to end racism at Proviso East and reform his racist White peers. He also led a march to the Maywood Police Department when one of his classmates was unjustly arrested. From a young age, Hampton was committed to fighting for justice in his community.



Photo courtesy of author.

Through school-wide assemblies, a speaker-series and student art display during Black history month, and clubs, the legacy of Fred Hampton lives on. The students at his alma mater study his life seriously and are given opportunities throughout the year to pay homage and reflect on Hampton's revolutionary life. When school ends and summer begins, families swim at the Fred Hampton Aquatic Center and walk past his steel bust. Hampton's legacy is physically and visibly celebrated.

Students will be excited to learn about the upcoming 2021 movie Judas the Black Messiah directed by Shaka King and produced by the Black Panther director, Ryan Coogler. The film aims to provide a different insight into Hampton's life, focusing on the polarized personalities and values held by Hampton and his close friend and security guard, William O'Neal. Students will now have another interpretation to add to their collection of films about Hampton's life, which includes the documentary The Murder of Fred Hampton released in 1971.



Fred Hampton pool and statue: A statue commemorates the life of Fred Hampton. (WBEZ/Flickr)

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CHARAS and The Reimagination of Loisaida

By Wilfred Guerron

From the 1970s onwards, community organizing, activism, and extensive arts programming, provided alternative notions of power and ownership for the Puerto Rican community and long time residents of the Lower East Side in the struggle against gentrification and displacement.

URL: <https://www.latinxproject.nyu.edu/intervencions/charas-and-the-reimagination-of-loisaida>



Dome Construction, August 1974, The Records of CHARAS, Inc., Archives of the Puerto Rican Diaspora. Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, Hunter College, CUNY, photograph.

As New Yorkers continue to combat an ever growing budget deficit, they find themselves at the beginning of another period of city disinvestment and mass displacement—one that has already begun to disproportionately impact marginalized communities. With access to city resources and public services becoming more difficult and conversations around the future continue to promote a high level of anxiety for most people, it might be worthwhile to look back at another period

of uncertainty in New York City’s history where community organizing and activism, coupled with an extensive arts program, provided alternative notions of power and ownership for community members.

In the early 1970s, to get out of a fiscal crisis, the city initiated a policy of “planned shrinkage,” in which all spending on municipal services, subsidies for housing, public schools, fire stations, hospitals, and garbage collection. Various low-

income neighborhoods were directly impacted by these policy changes that ultimately encouraged redevelopment of New York for national and multinational corporations through the displacement of long time residents. One of the most impacted groups was the large Puerto Rican community that settled in New York City following the “Great Migration” of the 1950s. By 1960, the United States Census showed that there were well over 600,000 New Yorkers of Puerto Rican birth or parentage.

One of the largest communities of Puerto Ricans in New York City was in the Lower East Side. Devastated by the fiscal crisis and subsequent policy changes, between 1974 and 1979, the Lower East Side lost two-thirds of its population, with the most significant drop seen among the section from Avenues B to C and from 3rd to 12th streets that housed the highest number of Puerto Ricans: 14,908 to 4,597. From the 1970s and on, remaining residents were under the constant threat of gentrification (seen through the redevelopment of nearby neighborhoods Greenwich Village and Soho), afraid that there would soon be a disappearance of affordable housing and further displacement of the working class. [Fig. 1, 2]



Fig 2: Josie Rolon, La Plaza Cultural in the foreground with CHARAS Recycling Center to the left in the middle ground, 1980, photograph.

As the Puerto Rican community in the Lower East Side faced the real possibility of extinction, it was the efforts of the remaining community members to directly address the multitude of problems found in the neighborhood. This conflict was captured in the mural project La Lucha Continua/ The Struggle Continues (1985-86) at La Plaza Cultural on 9th Street and Avenue C in the Lower East Side, New York. Sponsored by Artmakers and CHARAS, this mural project comprised twenty-six murals addressing six political issues: gentrification, police brutality, immigration, feminism, racism, and U.S. military intervention. The central mural, which lent its name “La Lucha Continua/ The Struggle Continues” to the entire project, aimed to provide a sense of identity and place to the neighborhood. “La Lucha Continua” narrates the past, the present, and the potential future of the community through immediate and legible imagery. Depictions of homelessness, eviction, and the physical destruction of housing stock are juxtaposed with the rehabilitation of the neighborhood’s housing stock and a community cultural center. In the center of the mural is a clear ball held up by two hands that present a future signified through housing, various types of workers, and an idyllic



Fig 1: Marlis Momber, Looking north from East Fourth Street are the tenement at 309 East Fourth Street and the bare-bones playground, El Jardin del Paraiso in the foreground, 1979, photograph.

image of children playing in an open field. However, this future is threatened by the imminent danger of gentrification in the personification of landlords through a green octopus in a limo. [Fig. 3]

While various historical details of the mural have been written about by previous scholars- homesteaders, gardens, a broader history of community development- there is an object present in the mural that has been obscured within the history of the community. In the upper right-hand corner, there is a geodesic dome. [Fig. 4] Due to its placement in the pictorial composition, the mural suggests a limited role for



Fig 3: Eva Cockcroft et al., *La Lucha Continua/ The Struggle Continues*, 1985, photograph.



Fig 4: Detail. Eva Cockcroft et al., *La Lucha Continua/ The Struggle Continues*, 1985, photograph.

Devastated by the fiscal crisis and subsequent policy changes, between 1974 and 1979, the Lower East Side lost two-thirds of its population.

the geodesic dome in this attempt to historicize the struggle of the community. However, one cannot help but think about the visual similarities of its circular shape of the dome with that of the clear ball, and its optimistic ambitions for the future. The inclusion of the dome in a mural over other prominent figures and organizations in the community raises an important question: what are we to make of the geodesic dome within the context of the community?

Over time, the geodesic dome became a symbol of community building for Loisaida, the Latinized pronunciation of Lower East Side coined by activist and poet Bimbo Rivas in 1974. Loisaida represents the determination of the Puerto Rican community and the long term residents to preserve and cultivate the neighborhood despite limited support from municipal and federal agencies. From its first appearance in 1972, the dome has appeared throughout the Lower East Side, coinciding with the mass adoption of the word Loisaida throughout the community and the city. The image of the dome and the word Loisaida are constantly paired together through photographs, newspaper and magazine articles, various bureaucratic documents, exhibition posters, and banners. This deliberate pairing was crafted by the Puerto Rican activist organization CHARAS. Through the adaptation of the geodesic dome, CHARAS formed alternative notions of power and ownership over their community. As “the improbable dome builders,” CHARAS built and cultivated the image of the dome to fit within their programming and ambitions for Loisaida.

By tracing the shift from the geodesic dome as a physical structure within the built environment to the geodesic dome as an abstraction serving as a reminder of the past, the image of the dome is intrinsically tied to the creation, maintenance, and potential of Loisaída.

The narrative around domes in the Lower East Side starts with Syeus Mottel's book CHARAS: The Improbable Dome Builders (1973), which tells the story of how CHARAS was able to build two geodesic domes as an alternative to current housing models over a period of five months, September 1972-January 1973. [Fig. 5] With guidance from architect and inventor of the geodesic dome, Buckminster Fuller, the dome becomes a platform for CHARAS and Loisaída to experiment with how to address prominent social issues facing the community.

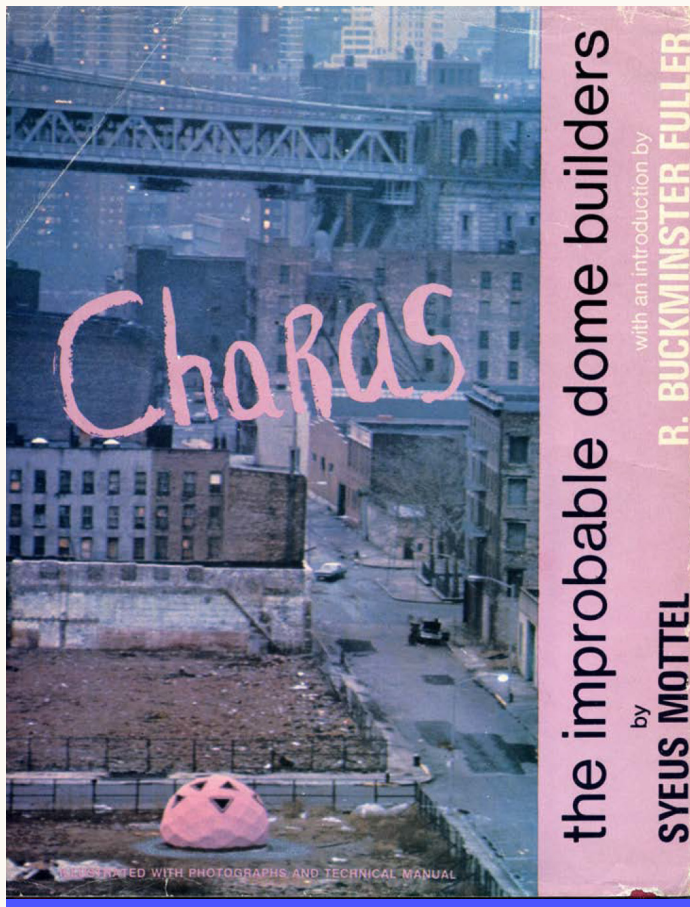


Fig 5: Detail. Eva Cockcroft et al., La Lucha Continua/ The Struggle Continues, 1985, photograph.

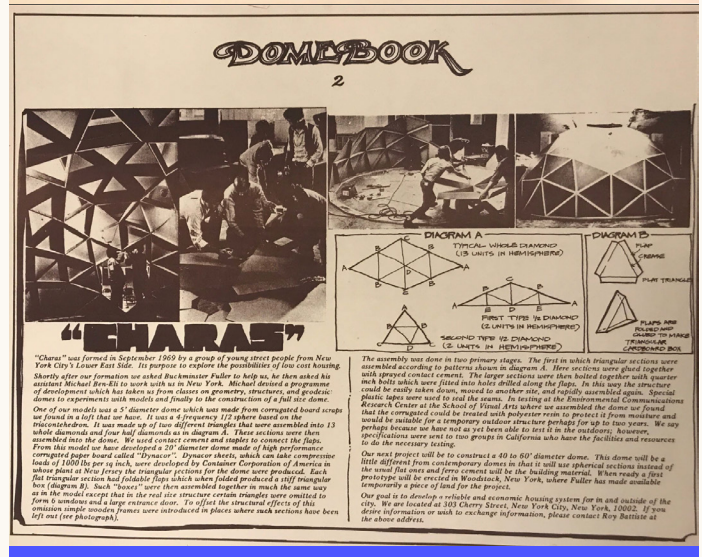
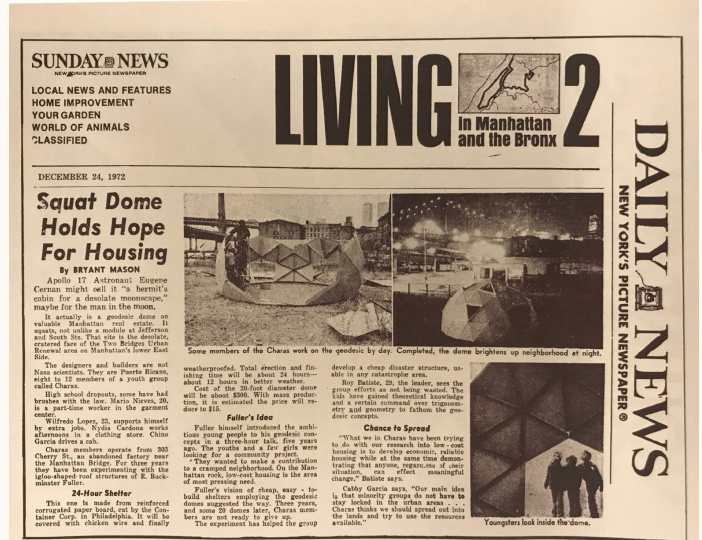


Fig 6 & 7: CHARAS, Summary of Dome Building, The Records of CHARAS, Inc., Archives of the Puerto Rican Diaspora. Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, Hunter College, CUNY, 1973, Document.

Although the text contains various photographs of the dome that were republished and distributed by various local and national media outlets [Fig. 6, 7], the impact of the geodesic domes in Loisaída does not stop with Fuller in 1972-1973. There is a rich history of CHARAS' dome building throughout the 1970s and 1980s that slowly began to shift away from its initial purpose as radical alternative housing. Despite the media attention CHARAS' work with Fuller received, there is little written about what becomes of the dome as it begins to appear throughout the neighborhood and in other areas.

The increased production of dome making and dome imagery by CHARAS supports larger efforts by many activist and community organizations, such as CHARAS, to implement a new community identity under the mass adoption of Loisaída. By framing the conversation around Loisaída, we can begin to make sense of the photographs found in the CHARAS archives that point to an increased use and production of domes.

How did CHARAS and their dome building operate within the larger process of building Loisaída? To answer this question, one must first look at how community members themselves came to understand Loisaída. The best historical record of what the public was thinking and talking about during the period was the community magazine The Quality of Life in/ La Calidad de Vida en Loisaída (March 1978 to December 1992). The Quality of Life served as a guide for the residents of Loisaída, ultimately evolving into an important source for news and other useful information for the community. Even though The Quality of Life was not a CHARAS specific publication, the channels of circulation for the publication were made possible through the work of CHARAS. In one of the first issues, there is an article titled “The Ideology of Loisaída” by Carmelo Quiñones. The article pulls quotes from several residents of Loisaída, stressing the importance of their role in rebuilding and reorganizing the community. For Quiñones, the “ideology” of Loisaída revolves around the ability to come together to make a claim to their community through physical actions for the future benefit of the residents. [Fig. 8]

the geodesic dome as an abstraction serving as a reminder of the past, the image of the dome is intrinsically tied to the creation, maintenance, and potential of Loisaída.”



Fig 8: The Quality of Life in/ La Calidad de Vida en Loisaída, Vol. 1, No. 1, The Quality of Life, The Records of CHARAS, Inc., Archives of the Puerto Rican Diaspora. Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, Hunter College, CUNY, 1978, Magazine.

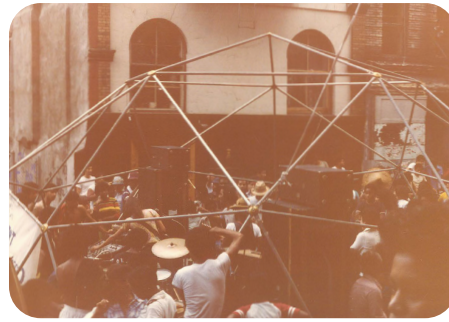


Fig 9 & 10: Untitled, Box 12, Folder 8, The Records of CHARAS, Inc., Archives of the Puerto Rican Diaspora. Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, Hunter College, CUNY, photograph.

If Loisaida was indicative of an active community constantly thinking about how to better themselves in hope for a better tomorrow, how did CHARAS and their domes promote this? In his PhD dissertation titled “Un Milagro de Loisaida” (A Miracle of Loisaida) (1980), Daniel Chodorkoff provides the first serious look at dome building in the Lower East Side after Mottel’s 1973 account. Chodorkoff understands the domes to function as both a physical and symbolic object. As a physical object, the dome was an all-encompassing project: it had a beginning and an end, taught participatory decision making, and showed how communal work can produce a result that would be insurmountable for one person. Symbolically, the dome was a representation of the new environment that they actively participated in creating and the dome building process itself was meant to empower the community to continually seek and produce change in their environment.

Below are a selection of a few photographs from the CHARAS archive that capture the community empowerment that Chodorkoff mentioned. Take note of the various different types of spaces the domes are being built in, the different functions of the dome, and how people are interacting with them. [Fig. 9, 10]

By the mid-1980s, dome building by CHARAS began to slow down, with a complete stop of dome building by the early 1990s. With the move to El Bohio, an abandoned school turned community center on 9th Street near Avenue B in 1977, CHARAS shifted its operation to supporting various

For Quiñones, the “ideology” of Loisaida revolves around the ability to come together to make a claim to their community through physical actions for the future benefit of the residents.

At first, the dome drew its importance from how its physical structure actively engaged with the community, their built environment, and their immediate needs. But, as the physical act of dome building disappeared, the image of the dome remained, serving as a constant reminder of the spirit of Loisaida—the spirit of hope.

other artistic media and rented spaces to local community groups. What happened to the dome?

When CHARAS began to invest in El Bohio and the arts, the image of the dome did not fully disappear. Looking at a thirty-fifth anniversary poster for CHARAS, it fully acknowledges the CHARAS-El Bohio identity shift. However, on a closer look, we can see their new logo, the use of the comedy and tragedy masks, incorporates the geodesic dome into their aesthetic design. If the reference to their history of dome building was not apparent enough, the children who are celebrating (in reference to CHARAS' focus on the youth of the community) are holding balloons shaped as geodesic domes. Why is there an intentional call back to CHARAS's legacy as dome builders in Loisaida?

To answer this question, one must return to the mural "La Lucha Continua." In the mural, the importance of the image of the geodesic dome is not apparent—at first. However, by recalling the history of the geodesic dome as a tool to empower the community, there is a connection between the legacy of dome building in Loisaida and the future of the community. The future of Loisaida is dictated and shaped by the actions of the past. As the mural shows, it is the work of the community that brought about the changes seen in the physical landscape of the Lower East Side in the 1970s and 1980s, and it is the continued work of the community

that will bring Loisaida closer to the idyllic scene depicted within the clear ball at the center of the mural. As external forces, such as developers and city government, began to pose direct and indirect challenges to members of the community, CHARAS and the dome gave people the chance to see the full potential of their actions when working as a community. With the dome perched up in the top, right hand corner of the mural, it is not obscured. In reality, the dome is responsible for all the change happening below it. At first, the dome drew its importance from how its physical structure actively engaged with the community, their built environment, and their immediate needs. But, as the physical act of dome building disappeared, the image of the dome remained, serving as a constant reminder of the spirit of Loisaida—the spirit of hope.

What can we take from this history of dome building in the Lower East Side? I argue that dome building presented one way of mediating how people can reclaim contested spaces to fulfill needs within a community. Dome building was a part of a larger arts program happening in the City and the rest of the country at the time that showed the valuable role of the arts within community activism. More importantly, dome building, in particular the existing photographs, serve as a reminder of the real potential of community organizing.

* * *

Author's note: *This article stems from the research I conducted for my master's thesis. The research on this topic of dome building would not have been possible without the help and support of Libertad Guerra, urban anthropologist, curator, and Executive Director of the Clemente Soto Velez Cultural and Education Center, and Nandini Bagchee, Associate Professor of Design and History at the Spitzer School of Architecture at CCNY and Principal of Bagchee Architect. A significant portion of my research came out of my time as a fellow for the Loisaida Center in the summer of 2019, where Libertad was formerly director. Working alongside Libertad, Nandini, Andrea Gordillo (who is currently at The Clemente), and Alejandro Epifanio Torres, I became more*

aware of the power behind the visual arts and the passion needed to confront the various injustices faced by the Latinx community in NYC. Libertad provided essential feedback and insight as her expertise and intimate knowledge of CHARAS provided a framework for me to experiment and learn from. Nandini introduced me to the topic of the dome and shared with me her tremendous wealth of knowledge about the Lower East Side. Nandini's 2018 book *Counter Institution: Activist Estates of the Lower East Side* and her 2019 exhibition "Activist Estates" served as an invaluable foundation for my work. Lastly, it is important to highlight the legacy of CHARAS. Their impact on the community continues through the work of various individuals and organizations in the Lower East Side, such as the Clemente and the Cooper Square Community Land Trust.

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