



**Running Hand-in-Hand:
The Librotráfico Mapping Cultural Resistance in the
US Mexico Borderlands**

Dissertation

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¡Si Se Puede!

INTRODUCTION

I run, like everyone runs, under the blazing sun.

Roberto Cintli Rodriguez

In January 2012, a groundbreaking K-12 Mexican American Studies [MAS] program in Tucson was dismantled by the State. The program had been implemented in the late 1990s to help reverse negative educational and socioeconomic trends within local Chicax communities.¹ The MAS curriculum had questioned prevailing national identity discourse, countering majoritarian myths of the founding and the functioning of the United States. Despite validated evidence of the program's successful learning outcomes, it was ruled anti-American and seditious by a right-wing conservative legislature, and subsequently found to contravene state law. The books of the program's bibliography were removed from the classrooms, these included texts considered a critical part of the canon of Chicax, African American, and Native American literature. The news of the State's dismantling of the MAS program resonated with Chicax community groups across the Southwest, communities long embattled by the outcomes of majoritarian politicking and definitions of justice. One such group, Houston-based *Nuestra Palabra: Latino Writers Having Their Say* [NP], decided to act. NP's strategy was to return books from the removed MAS bibliography to the program's students. To do so, the group applied a critical understanding of the racialized criminalization of their communities to then fourteen years of counter/storytelling organizing. Hereby, the *Librotraficante Movement* was born. In praxis, a group of thirty-eight "book smugglers" who, over a period of five days in March 2012, took a caravan of texts to Tucson, engaging on route with community sites in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona.

¹ In my work, I use the terms "Chicax" and "Latinx" to reflect the diversity and agency of Mexican and Latin American heritage communities in the United States—in particular in respect of the term's representative turn toward Indigenous, Queer, and non-binary communities. I use "Chicano" where it fits the historical moment, for example, the Chicano Movement, and to represent those who identify as such. I also use the term "Chicana" in the same way.

My project utilizes the caravan's route as a framework to investigate Chicana resistance in the contested US Mexico borderlands. I pay particular attention to Texas. Annexed in 1845 by the White Supremacist urges of Manifest Destiny, and bordered in 1848 when the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo saw Mexico stripped of fifty-percent of its territory,² Texas has long been on the frontline of the making of the United States. This "making" brought about not only much of the geopolitical space of the nation, but the racialization of those who now found themselves, in the words of Mexican General José Mariano Salas in 1856, "strangers in their own land" (qtd. in Griswold del Castillo 1990, 3). Post-Hidalgo, said "strangers" were disenfranchised by settler-colonialism. They were surveilled and brutalized by the Texas Rangers, and from 1924 by the US Border Patrol whose praxis at that time, as Kelly Lytle Hernández argues, "was a matter of community, manhood, whiteness, authority, class, respect, belonging, brotherhood, and violence in the greater Texas-Mexico borderlands" (2010, 41). Little has changed. Yet, in this often-visceral contested space, Mexican heritage communities continue to struggle and thrive. The Librotraficante caravan's Texas journey maps myriad resistance to historical and contemporary trauma as it "operates", in Ofelia García and Camila Leiva's words, "within a dynamic network of cultural transformation" (2014, 203). This dissertation brings to light a legacy of Chicana cultural resilience that troubles US-centric narrative constructions of identity and belonging. My work is located at the intersections of Cultural, Chicana, Borderlands, American, Literary, and Ethnic Studies, and the Political and Social Sciences. It is at these intersections that sites in my four case-study cities (Tucson, Houston, San Antonio, and El Paso) operate in response to, and despite, historical and contemporary oppressions. Said oppressions take the shape of, but are not limited to, epistemological colonization, NAFTA,

² See Richard Griswold del Castillo, *The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo: A Legacy of Conflict*, Norman, UO Press, 1990; Sonia Hernández, "The legacy of the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo on Tejanos' land" *Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 35, No. 2, 2001, 101-109; Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr. and Richard Valencia "From the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo to Hopwood: The Educational Plight and Struggle of Mexican Americans in the Southwest," *Harvard Educational Review*, Vol. 68, No. 3, 1998, pp. 353-413.

gentrification, right-wing politicking, border militarization, anti-immigrant discourse, and the persistent marking of brown bodies as “illegal”. My goal is to elevate the historical, cultural, political, and literary consciousness produced by the resistance organizing of the sites. This, I argue, is a consciousness that arises from within the community’s collective experiences.

From the introduction of Operation Gatekeeper in 1984, the increasing militarization of the US Mexico border under both Democrat and Republican administrations has led to the deaths of thousands seeking to enter the United States. In the Trumpian era, where anti-immigrant legislating has seen a substantial increase in the number of migrants concentrated in detention camps, the majority of whom are held in Texas and come from across the Americas,³ there is an urgency to record the resistance histories of Chicanx and Latinx communities. In this respect, in examining the construction of racialized identities, I am guided by Natalia Molina, particularly her central theory of “racial scripts” (2014). In seeking to excavate historical and contemporary violence in the borderlands, I follow the imperative of the Refusing to Forget Project led by Sonia Hernández, Trinidad Gonzales, John Morán González, Benjamin Johnson, and Monica Muñoz Martinez.⁴ In my interrogation of the operational praxis of the Librotraficante Caravan, I am guided by the work of Roberto Cintli Rodriguez, a Tucson-based scholar who was part of the fight to save the MAS program. In 2009, when the first attempt to dismantle the program was introduced by state legislators, students organized a ceremonial relay run from Tucson to City Hall in Phoenix, a distance of one-hundred and sixteen miles. It was led by members of the Calpolli Teoxicalli nation,⁵ taking part were students, teachers, and community members. The run was an extension of annual barrio runs.

³ In 2018, there were 15,852 individuals held in immigration detention centers in Texas. The state with the second highest number, 6,527 is California.

⁴ See refusingtoforget.org/

⁵ Nahua-based families who self-identify as Tlamanalca-Indigenous peoples of Tucson. The community lives by and ceremonially observes what is commonly referred to as the Aztec calendar. For more on the Calpolli Teoxicalli see, Marissa Freireich, “Indigenous Community Values Traditions of Past.” *Independiente*, 5 May. 2011, journalism.arizona.edu/sites/journalism.arizona.edu/files/files-page/indie_may11.pdf. Also, Christina Leza, “Indigenous Identities on the U.S.-Mexico.” *Border Journal of the Southwest*, vol. 60, no. 4, Winter 2018 pp. 914-936, 10.1353/jsw.2018.0018

Rodríguez explains their impetus:

With each footstep we take, we are not simply leaving footprints; we are also creating our own stories, our own narratives. More importantly, with our bodies, we create a collective narrative and carry within us a collective memory. Through collective running, we come to share experience, purpose and understanding, even raised consciousness regarding our own (besieged) community, but taking the further step of soliciting peoples' 'testimonies' about why they/we run is also educational and enlightening. When they are shared, they become invaluable components of community (2012, 80)

I argue that the Librotraficante Caravan is located in the collective praxis of ceremonial running. Its route follows in footsteps laid by the resistance narratives it carried. At each stop, the caravanistas collected testimonies in the form of spoken-word poetry. They also collected books that had been donated by the local community to replace those from the removed MAS bibliography. Alongside the books and the poetry, new caravanistas joined the movement, relaying these testimonies to the next site, testimonies that include their own. In arguing how literature as testament is key to community resilience, I draw from the work of Randy J. Ontiveros, who postulates that it is vital to recognize its importance to movements for social change, for, he insists “an argument could be made that the cultural sphere is where the Chicano movement has enjoyed its most obvious success” (2013, 35). In my project, I use counter-storytelling methodology to interrogate canon formation, guided by the work of Richard Delgado, Daniel G. Solórzano, and Tara J. Yosso.⁶ For through Nuestra Palabra [NP], the Librotraficante Movement runs hand-in-hand with the literary success of the Chicano movement in creating representational mirrors in the face of persistent marginalization. NP has built connections with foundational writers such as Rodolfo Anaya, Carmen Tafolla, Lorna Dee Cervantes, Lucha Corpi, Rolando Hinojosa, and Luis Valdez. The next generation of

⁶ Solórzano and Yosso write, “We define the counter-story as a method of telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told (i.e., those on the margins of society). The counter-story is also a tool for exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege. Counter-stories can shatter complacency, challenge the dominant discourse on race, and further the struggle for racial reform.” “Critical Race Methodology: Counter-Storytelling as an Analytical Framework for Education Research”, *Qualitative Inquiry*, vol. 8, no 1, 2002, pp. 23-44.

writers is also part of the NP community, Ana Castillo, Dagoberto Gilb, Sandra Cisneros, and Monica Palacios. “Newer” voices include, José Olivarez, Gwendolyn Zepeda, Tim Z. Hernandez, Griselda Muñoz, Laurie-Ann Guerrero, and Carolina Hinojosa-Cisneros.⁷ In this sense, NP and the Librotraficante Movement are a continuation of the representational urge of the Civil Rights era and a critical narrative of how the promise of said era remains unfulfilled.

In the respect of the continued work, my project is grounded in Gloria Anzaldúa’s interpretation of the borderlands as “*una herida abierta*” (“an open wound” my trans; 1984 [1987], 25), particularly when examining the healing processes developed at the sites where the Librotraficantes stopped. For the communities of both San Antonio’s Southwest Workers Union [SWU] and El Paso’s La Mujer Obrera [LMO] have long been at the forefront of right-wing politicking’s attempts at their social, political, pedagogical, judicial, and cultural immobilization. In examining the survival strategies in this contested space, I use Tara J Yosso’s discussion of cultural capital. Moreover, Yosso’s community cultural wealth model provides a framework on which to understand how SWU, LMO, and NP empower their communities through drawing on said communities individual and collective cultural knowledges. My project begins with an examination of Tucson’s MAS program that similarly drew from collective knowledges, namely the “Critically Compassionate Intellectualism Model of Transformative Education” (CCI), or “The Pedagogy of Barriorganic Intellectualism” (Romero 214).⁸ This model is the recognition of the enormous potential of the students’ sociocultural environments. In the Civil Rights era, the desire to harness this potential rather

⁷ The Nuestra Palabra Archives are held at the Houston Metropolitan Research Center (HMRC), part of the Special Collections Division of the Houston Public Library.

⁸ See: Cammarota, Julio & Augustine Romero “A Critically Compassionate Intellectualism for Latina/o Students: Raising Voices Above the Silencing in Our Schools”. *Multicultural Education* Winter 2006, pp. 16-23. Also, Romero, Augustine. “Critically Compassion Intellectualism: The Pedagogy of Barriorganic Intellectualism” *Raza Studies: The Public Option for Educational Revolution*, editors Julio Cammarota & Augustine Romero Tucson: UA Press, 2014, pp.14-39. For detailed application and usage of CCI in the MAS classrooms see Arce, Martín Sean, Julio Cammarota and Augustine Romero, “A Barrio pedagogy: Identity, intellectualism, activism, and academic achievement through the evolution of critically compassionate intellectualism” *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2009, 217-333.

than see it destroyed by subpar schooling brought about seismic changes to the education of Chicana youth. Guided by Chandra Talpade Mohanty's question, "What does it mean for educators to create a democratic public space in this context?" (2003, 189), I seek to address the urgency for representative pedagogy in a new era of White Supremacist narrative control. It is crucial then to examine the historical antecedents of the MAS program, to locate the historical seeds of radical pedagogy from which the program took root.

On February 14, 1969, Mexican American students from two Tucson high schools walked out of their classrooms to attend a rally in Oury Park. The students were all members of the Mexican American Liberation Committee (MALC), a group formed at the University of Arizona by Salomón Baldenegro, Lupe Castillo, and Raúl Manuel Grijalva. Grijalva recalls the prevailing environment:

Everybody knew that the school system was discriminatory. That we weren't putting kids in college. That we weren't graduating kids. We knew that the staffing wasn't reflective of the community, Corporal punishment and punishment in general was metered out to minorities at a 4:1 ratio. You couldn't speak Spanish; even at lunch, or when you're hanging out on campus, that was insulting. (2012, 01:25)

Walkout participant, Isabel García, then a sophomore at Tucson High, shares that both her mother and her sister, despite their excellent grades, had been stripped of any opportunity to pursue higher education. Her brothers were counselled to "pursue shop, carpentry, [and] auto mechanics" (2012, 02:15). Classmate Eduardo Olivas recalls, "In fact, when we walked out, I think a lot of the vocational classes were empty" (2012, 02:21). Baldenegro, who had grown up in Tucson's Barrio Hollywood and experienced first-hand the repressive environment of schooling for Mexican and Mexican American children, played a key role in this fight for pedagogical change. Historian Rodolfo F. Acuña argues, "The presence of Baldenegro was indispensable in keeping alive the notion of Mexican American Studies" (2011, 56).⁹ In the

⁹ In *Occupied America*, Acuña speaks to Baldenegro's continued activism in the face of push-back from local, state, and federal politicking. "Baldenegro", Acuña argues "has remained a gadfly in opposition to injustice and a strong advocate of student and community control of Mexican American Studies" (2011, 56). For a profile of

mid-1960s, Baldenegro had studied for a time at a community college in East Los Angeles. Whilst there his activism became heavily influenced by the work of *La Raza*, a bi-lingual zine centered on exposing police brutality and the pedagogical wasteland that was schooling for communities of color. *La Raza* was founded by Eleazar Risco, a Cuban immigrant who had first worked with the United Farm Workers union (UFW), and later was a member of the Fresno organizing committee for the first Chicano Moratorium.¹⁰ In April 1966, during the United Farm Workers march from Delano to Sacramento, Risco had been charged with ensuring arrival arrangements were in place at each of the fifty-three towns on the route.¹¹ He recalls, “When we were going through la colonia there were a lot of young kids on the sidewalks ... And I remember listening to what the kids were saying” (“Chicano History” 2014, 01:50). What he heard gave him critical insight into what Michael Staudigl theorizes as “the experiential oppressiveness of racism, i.e., the ways in which it affects its victims’ lived experiences in transforming their habitual ways of life, and finally, their subjectivities” (2011). As Risco recounts, “Those kids were saying that they felt the police ... in the county [were] actually prejudicial to them. They felt this *personally*, that it was prejudicial to *them*” (emphasis in original, (“Chicano History” 03:22)). It was this tangible sense of the self-interrupted as articulated by the youth on the route that Risco took with him at the end of the march. He says,

That concept was influential to me when I went to Los Angeles to work on *La Raza* newspaper. Because it said to me that what we had to do, if we are trying to do what

Baldenegro and his son, Salomón Baldenegro Jr, see Herraras, Mari “Being Baldenegro” *Tucson Weekly* March 31, 2011. www.tucsonweekly.com/tucson/being-baldenegro/Content?oid=2634972

¹⁰ Risco was a founder of LA’s El Barrio Communications Project, a movimiento organization that published *La Raza* and other Chicano movement newspapers, periodicals, and media. He also went on to become the first director of Mexican American Studies at Fresno State University, California.

¹¹ In the spring of 1966, Chávez led a 340-mile march from Delano to state capitol, Sacramento.¹¹ Marshall Ganz argues, “[The march] enacted an individual and collective journey from slavery to freedom” (2001, 10). The march asserted claims to rights for those whose labor fed the nation and who were in turn left impoverished; in the words of Chávez, this caravan was “the pilgrimage of a cultural minority who have suffered from a hostile environment, and a minority who means business” (2005, 16). The march was, as Ganz writes, “a powerful strategy: a way to mobilize support for the first boycott that resulted in a breakthrough that, in turn, enshrined the march with the still greater significance of an enacted story of how Mexican farm workers through sacrifice, solidarity, determination—and good organizing—could change their world and themselves (10). Upon arrival in Sacramento, the initial march numbers of seventy-five fieldworkers had swelled to ten-thousand, “By choosing to take part” Ganz writes, “individuals could link their identity with those of others who shared “la causa”, entering upon the stage of history” (10).

we call “organizing” ... we have to go and ask the people, or not just ask them, observe the people as they interact among themselves. What is it that they talk about? What is it that they feel? What is in their gut? Not what the politicians say are the issues. But what do the people say are the issues. (03:43)

Risco explains how connected these “gut” responses are to a greater field of work in critical pedagogy. “Years later,” he shares, “we discovered that there was a Brazilian educator that had defined what that was. And he called it “*conscientização*” (04:46). Risco here is speaking of Paulo Freire, whose critically acclaimed book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, advocates for “a pedagogy which must be forged *with*” he insists, “not *for* the oppressed” (emphasis author 1998 [1970], 30). It was one of seven titles on the MAS bibliography removed from the program’s classrooms *and* banned across the Tucson Unified School District [TUSD].¹² In *Pedagogy*, Freire defines *conscientização* as “learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (1998 [1970], 17). Gloria Anzaldúa articulates this critical perception as “*La facultad* ... the capacity to see in surface phenomena the meaning of deeper realities” (2012 [1987], 60). “It’s a kind of survival tactic,” she writes, “that people, caught between the worlds, unknowingly cultivate” (61). For Risco, his experiences of “being at that level” (04:38) of reality perception, led him to ask of the community, “What is it that you want to see in the newspaper?” Not what the editors want to say, not what the agencies want to say, not what the advertisers want to say, but what do the people want to be said” (05:12). *La Raza*’s counter narrative came from centering individual and community *conscientização* as stakeholder, for as Freire argues, “Dialogue with the people is radically necessary to every authentic revolution” (109). Moreover, it is in this dialogue that marginalized communities, like those encountered by Risco, reclaim their subjectivities, as Freire’s postulates, “To impede communications is to reduce men to the status of “things”—

¹² The other five titles are: *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (2001); *500 Years of Chicano History in Pictures* by Elizabeth Martinez (1994); *Message to Aztlán* by Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales (2001); *Chicano! The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* by F. Arturo Rosales (1997); *Rethinking Columbus: The Next 500 Years* edited by Bill Bigelow and Bob Peterson (1998); and Rodolfo Acuña’s (2004) *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*.

and this is a job for the oppressors, not for revolutionaries” (109). Baldenegro’s dialogue with Risco in Los Angeles shaped the core of his organizing upon his return to Tucson. This occurrence was not uncommon. As F. Arturo Rosales argues, “A good portion of the stimulus for the vibrant *movimiento* in Texas and Arizona came through local Chicanos bringing the message from California” (1997, 210-211). In its journey from Houston to Tucson almost half a century later, the Librotraficante Caravan connects to this dynamic praxis of community knowledge transference. The message Baldenegro took back to Tucson was that radical change lay in grassroots activism, guided by the lived experiences and epistemologies of the community. This challenged members of Tucson’s sizeable Mexican American middle class, who until then had controlled the narrative. Many within this group believed that it was “Americanism” not radicalism that “was the only way up” (73). In 1969, for example, Baldenegro’s application for conscientious objector status was blocked by one of Tucson’s Mexican American business elite (Oropeza 2005). As Raul Grijalva explains, “The traditional argument during those times was for working through the system as opposed to taking the system head on” (qtd. in Navarro 2000, 205). Baldenegro’s California experience fueled his frustration with this assimilationist “top-down” approach to activism. Whilst a student at the University of Arizona (UA) he formed the Mexican American Students Association (MASA.), he recalls, “Most of the kids that came to the university were middle class.... I’d say, “Let’s do something with the [grape] boycott.” They’d say, “No, the best thing that we can do is go tutoring in the community, or raise money for scholarships”” (qtd. in Rosales 1997, 211). MASA later fired Baldenegro from the group for taking part in anti-war demonstrations (Oropeza 2005). Recognizing the losing battle they were fighting, Baldenegro, Castillo, and Grijalva took their activism off campus and onto Tucson’s streets; this was when MALC was formed and the high school walkouts began.

Similar walkouts had occurred in Denver and Texas, and from smaller Chicax

communities in states such as Kansas and Illinois.¹³ However, again California had led the way. In fact, Rosales argues, “The key event that ushered in the *movimiento* in Los Angeles, and to a great degree elsewhere was the East Los Angeles high-school walkout” (1997, 184). These had begun on March 1, 1968, when thousands of students from five high schools walked out of their classrooms in what became known as the “Chicano Blowouts.”¹⁴ What was, in Rosales’ words, “key” to this response, was how the needs of the students galvanized intergenerational direct action.¹⁵ The night of the walkout a group of twenty-five parents met in the First Baptist Church of East Los Angeles, forming the Educational Issues Coordinating Committee (EICC) and electing the Reverend Vahac Mardirosian as its chair.¹⁶ Mardirosian recalls, “Originally [it was] a gathering of parents to support the students, to find out how they could minimize the damages their children would suffer by the school district if they were punished” (“1969 Women’s Caucus” 2013, 00:32). Soon however, as the group expanded to include teachers, college students, senior citizens, and union members, the EICC’s focus broadened. Galvanized by the educational needs of the youth, the community turned to examining further institutional discrimination in areas such as health and welfare. This occurred, as Mardirosian reflects,

¹³ For further reading on the Texas “blowouts” see: “Walkout in Crystal City” *Teaching Tolerance*. Southern Poverty Law Center. No. 35. Spring 2009. Also: Navarro, Armando. *Mexican American Youth Organization: Avant Garde of the Chicano Movement in Texas*. UT Press, 1999, pp-118-132 and 207-213. For an overview of the Kansas walkouts, Chicano activism and social identity in Kansas City see: Ortiz, Leonard David “La Voz de la Gente: Chicano Activist Publications in the Kansas City Area, 1968—1989” *Kansas History*, vol. 22, 1999, pp. 229-244. Chicago’s school walkouts had been led by African American students—see Danns, Dianne, *Something Better for Our Children: Black Organizing in Chicago Public Schools, 1963-1971*. Routledge, 2003, pp. 75-92.

¹⁴ Over a one week period in March of 1968, up to 15,000 students from five majority Chicano schools took to the streets to protest the dire state of Eastside education. For further reading on the Los Angeles “blowouts” see: García, M T & Sal Castro, *Blowout!: Sal Castro and the Chicano struggle for educational justice*, UNC Press, 2011. Muñoz, Carlos Andrés *Youth, Identity, Power*, London: Verso, 2007, pp. 79-88. Mehlman Petrzela, Natalia. “The Polarization of Bi-lingual Education.” *Classroom Wars: Language, Sex, and the Making of the Modern Political Culture*. OUP, 2015, pp. 41-50; Treviño, Jesús Salvador *Eyewitness: A Filmmaker’s Memoir of the Chicano Movement*, Arte Público, 2001, pp. 9-13. A feature film based on first-hand accounts see: *Walkout* 2006, motion picture, HBO, Los Angeles. Dir. Edward James Olmos. Exec. Prod. Moctesuma Esparza (indicted for his role in the 1968 Los Angeles high school walkouts).

¹⁵ Sal Castro, history teacher at Lincoln High School and a key figure in the walkouts, recalls, “They had never seen a community that well organized. This was one of the major effects of the blowouts. The Chicano community in LA had risen up in a way never seen before” (2011, 194).

¹⁶ For more on the life and work of Vahac Mardirosian, see Torres, Luís *Doña Julia’s Children: The Life and Legacy of Educational Reformer Vahac Mardirosian*, Xlibris, 2013. Mardirosian’s papers are in the UCLA Library Special Collections.

“[b]ecause people told each other, “We can go there, we tell them our problems and some of them are very good at addressing them.”” (01:27). EICC meetings became a site of both respite and resistance, with attendance figures growing to upwards of over four hundred people. The meetings were held in both Spanish and English. As the various factions of the community flexed their muscles, the gatherings became also at times fractious. Those who sought sweeping radical change clashed with those calling for a more concessionary agenda. However, what was imperative for all was the transformation of the schools and the need to ensure the wellbeing of the over fifteen thousand students who had been taking part in the walkouts. In Rosales’s words, Mardirosian and other leaders “mollified the divisions” (1997, 191), and on March 28 presented fifty-five demands to a meeting with the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) board. The demands fell into four categories: Academic, Administrative, Facilities, and Student Rights.¹⁷ They included compulsory bilingual-bicultural classes for all Mexican American students; library expansions and library materials in Spanish; the removal of administrators or teachers exhibiting racial prejudice; the development of critical culturally relevant textbooks; individual educator accountability for drop-outs; new schools to be named by the community; the cafeterias to prepare Mexican meals; and corporal punishment to be enacted only through the remits of state law. The school board accepted thirty-six of the demands. However, this acceptance did not lead to broad changes. The LAUSD claimed lack of funds. Tanya Luna Mount, a high school student journalist and activist responded, “Do you know why they have no money for us? Because of a war in Vietnam 10,000 miles away, that is killing Mexican-American boys—and for WHAT? We can’t read, but we can die. Why?” (emphasis in original, qtd. in Rosen 2007, 286). The walkouts may have not led to sweeping educational reform, yet Mount’s analysis reflects a growing critical understanding of the layers

¹⁷ For the full list of demands see, “Latinopia Document - E.L.A. High School Walkout Demands.” Latinopia, 6 March 2010, latinopia.com/latino-history/ela-high-school-walk-out-demands/. Accessed 28 Oct. 2017.

of persistent injustice inflicted upon the community. As Elizabeth "Betita" Martínez writes, "With the 1968 protests, students moved beyond the prevailing politics of accommodation to a new cry for "Chicano Power!" (2017 [1998], 210). Mount's generation wanted better and wanted more.

In Arizona in 1969, the protest pushback by Chicano youth against what García, Bybee, and Urrieta Jr. identify as "a colonial legacy of schooling in the Southwest" (115), marked a shift from earlier approaches to the seeking of educational reform in the state. Previous to the walkouts, pedagogical justice had been sought to a greater degree through legal pursuance.¹⁸ However, despite victories in a number of desegregation cases, the requisite system changes were often not forthcoming. Where the suits did achieve "success" was in the revealing of the operating tactics of the state and local school boards. As Richard R. Valencia argues, what became very clear was that "school boards used the cloak of pedagogy—separation on language grounds—to isolate Mexican American from White children" (2008, 15). In the early twentieth century, the more the boards were challenged, in Arizona and from California to Texas, it became clearer that "this [pedagogical] practice, used over and over again, was, at its core, racialized segregation" (15). At the operational level, this took the form of "Mexican Schools", which were grossly subpar environments for learning.¹⁹ In 1925, one Tempe resident,

¹⁸ A decade before the 1954 landmark desegregation case, *Brown v. Board of Education*, a class action lawsuit was filed against four Los Angeles school districts on behalf of 5,000 Mexican and Mexican American families. The case, known as *Méndez v. Westminster*, was the first desegregation suit to be decided and won in a federal court. Frederick P. Aguirre argues "provided a key link in the evolutionary chain of school desegregation cases culminating in *Brown v. Board of Education*" (2005, 321-322). Thurgood Marshall, who would serve as chief attorney for the plaintiffs in *Brown*, served as a co-author of the NAAP's *Amicus curiae* (friend of the court) in the Méndez case. For more on the impact of the connections between the two cases see Ramos, Lisa Y. "Dismantling Segregation Together: Interconnections between the Méndez v. Westminster (1946) and Brown v. Board of Education (1954) School Segregation Cases", *Equity & Excellence in Education*, vol. 37, no. 3, 2010, pp. 247-254. For an analysis of Méndez and the rooted social inequality in Mexican Schools see Arriola, Christopher, "Knocking on the Schoolhouse Door: Méndez v. Westminster, Equal Protection, Public Education, and Mexican Americans in the 1940's", and Valencia, Richard R. *Chicano Students and the Courts: The Mexican American Legal Struggle for Educational Equality*, NYU Press, 2008, pp. 22-49.

¹⁹ For a study of the conditions of schooling for Mexican and Mexican American children in Arizona in the early-mid twentieth century see: Jeanne M. Powers, "Forgotten History: Mexican American School Segregation in Arizona from 1900–1951", *Equity & Excellence in Education*, vol. 41, no. 4, 2008, 467-481, also Valencia, Richard R. *Chicano Students and the Courts: The Mexican American Legal Struggle for Educational Equality*, NYU Press, 2008, pp. 22-49.

Adolfo Romo, took a legal stand; on behalf of his four young children, he sued the local school district. The case, *Romo v Laird*, was the first school desegregation suit in the country initiated by a Mexican American. During the trial, plaintiffs claimed, amongst a litany of issues, that the teachers at Eighth Street School were “inferior in attainments and qualifications and ability to teach” (qtd. in Valencia, 14). The teachers were all trainees. The judge ruled in favor of *Romo*. In response, however, the school board moved the goalposts. They simply stopped trainee teachers from instructing at Eighth Street and it remained segregated until the 1950s (Valencia, 2008). Meanwhile in 1951, Porfiro Gonzáles and Faustino Curiel brought a similar suit against the state. *González v. Sheeley* was heard before the United States District Court of Arizona. It was a class action suit with over three hundred and fifty plaintiffs, all of them elementary school children. The presiding judge ruled in favor of *González*, arguing in summation that practices of segregation in the schools, “Foster antagonisms in the children and suggest inferiority among them where none exists” (qtd. in Perea 2011, 597).²⁰ Again, despite the plaintiffs win, change was not forthcoming. Appeals to the unconstitutionality of segregated schools may have seen success in courts of law, but the fight for social justice on the ground proved much harder.

Historic and contemporary lessons had been learnt in Tucson in 1969. Like the youth Risco had encountered during the UFW peregrination, the students had experienced the societal dislocation of institutional racism and were saying “No more”. Those who gathered in Oury Park, and who would gather in the streets over the next few weeks, were quite literally walking out of a racialized positioning in both the schools and the history books. Their demands echoed those of their peers in East Los Angeles. As José García, Eric Ruiz Bybee, and Luís Urrieta Jr.

²⁰ As Valencia notes, the District Court judge in the *González* ruled almost verbatim from the ruling in *Méndez v. Westminster* three years earlier. Part of that ruling reads, “The evidence clearly shows that Spanish-speaking children are retarded in learning English by lack of exposure to its use because of segregation, and that commingling of the entire student body instills and develops a common cultural attitude among the school children which is imperative for the perpetuation of American institutions and ideals. It is also established by the record that the methods of segregation prevalent in the defendant school districts foster antagonisms in the children and suggest inferiority among them where none exists.” *Méndez et al. v. Westminster School Dist.*, 64 F. Supp. 544 (S.D. Cal. 1946), law.justia.com/cases/federal/district-courts/FSupp/64/544/1952972/.

report, the students “confronted racist schooling practices such as tracking, lack of Chicana teachers and college counsellors, [and] corporal punishment for speaking Spanish” (2014, 123). Moreover, local journalist Ernest Portillo Jr. postulates that, “The protests were more than anti-war and pro-education. They announced the emergence of young political activists, who called themselves Chicanos. The name gave them a political and cultural identity” (2006). The impact of the walkouts reached far beyond the initial calls for change; Portillo writes, “From that movement emerged a new generation of political, cultural and social leaders in Tucson's Latino community” (2006). Grijalva, now US Representative for Arizona's Third Congressional District, speaks to the walkouts as “a kind of a renaissance period for us, that everything got discovered at once. Our politics, our art, culture, identity, it was just exploding at the same time” (00:01, 2012). He recalls the prevailing atmosphere amongst this new generation, “Like any group of young people are expectations were high. In these next four or five years we were going to fundamentally change the way this world is, and how we were treated” (00:37). In the short term however, institutional support was not forthcoming. The punishment meted out to the participating students was swift. Grijalva recalls, “[The school district] over-reacted, wanted to expel everybody, wanted to punish everybody, wanted to victimize every student that went out” (05:22). On March 20, school district superintendent Thomas L. Lee suspended one hundred and ninety students for participating in that morning's walkout.²¹ Lee claimed that the students had been unduly influenced by radical elders; Baldenegro claimed otherwise. “The whole idea sprang from the kids themselves”, he recounts, “They organized everything” (qtd. in Acuña 2011, 56). The students were not intimidated. They understand where decent representational schooling could take them. In their communities, they had lived the results of subpar education, of the lack of opportunity. They were willing to fight the system for as long

²¹ The official TUSD website contains a page entitled: “Bridging Three Centuries: The History of Tucson School District 1867-1993.” There are links to digital chapters where no mention of the walkouts is made, nor is there mention of the number of lawsuits brought by Mexican Americans against the school board and/or the state: www.tusd1.org/Information/History/Bridging-Three-Centuries

as it took, for as Baldenegro argued at the time, “These students feel that education might be key to break the whole cycle of poverty” (qtd. in Acuña 2011, 56). There is little doubt that the students of the 1969 walkouts did achieve some level of structural success. As Isabel García argues, “There were significant changes. In fact, I benefitted. Many of us benefitted from these movements for bi-lingual education [and] affirmative action. The universities had to recognize us and we got scholarships” (06:52).²² However, despite Tucson’s Mexican and Chicana students and communities coming together to operate as agents of transformation, and despite critical victories, structural inequities run deep. District resources continue to be disproportionately directed towards schools on the city’s predominantly White east side. Any changes experienced in the late 1960s and early 1970s have not been significant or wide reaching enough to dismantle a weighted system. The results of this would fall on new generations of students facing again lack of access to societal tools required to shut down cycles of disenfranchisement and poverty; this is where the MAS program was to step in.

My project begins at the end of the Librotráfico Caravan route. Chapter One, “¡MAS!” interrogates the TUSD MAS program. First introduced at Tucson Magnet High School the program was framed on Freirean pedagogy and Indigenous epistemologies. The Mesoamerican concept of Nahui Ollin, which represents the four movements of the Aztec Calendar, was the program’s “foundational and liberatory pedagogical tool” (Arce 2016, 13). Its application created culturally responsive spaces of learning in which knowledges subsumed through historical and contemporary processes of colonization were celebrated. Through this radical framework, MAS director Augustin Romero and colleague Julio Cammarota developed what they term the “Critically Compassionate Intellectualism Model of Transformative Education” (CCI), or “The Pedagogy of Barriorganic Intellectualism” (Romero 214). This is

²² In 2015, García retired from the position of Pima County Legal Defender, a post she had held for 22 years. She is co-founder and co-chair of Coalición de Derechos Humanos, a grassroots human rights organization based in Tucson.

an approach that recognizes/draws from the scholarly potential of the students' sociocultural environments, wherein the seeking of pedagogical justice takes the form of disavowing hegemonic Western systems of knowledge. In this chapter, I address how the curriculum of MAS both attempts to decolonize Arizona's education system and works to "re-humanize" those communities impacted by some of the toughest educational, anti-immigration, and border security legislation in the nation. Through examining the application of CCI in the classroom, I argue that in the face of poverty, misrepresentation, and alienation, the MAS curriculum provided Chicax and Latinx students with critical mirrors of humanity. Moreover, that the program's holistic community focused approach allowed for the development of sociocultural resistance tools to survive the open wound of the US Mexico borderlands.

Chapter Two of my project, "V for Victory Vatos", interrogates how the operational framework of Nuestra Palabra [NP] in forming the Librotraficante Movement was able to respond to the dismantling of the MAS program. NP was founded in 1998 in Houston by writer, educator, and activist, Tony Díaz. I analyze how through workshops, showcases, and book festivals, Nuestra Palabra operates to reclaim space for community storytelling in the Houston area and beyond. A cultural demographic that includes the work of Jovita González, Américo Paredes, John Rechy, and Carmen Tafolla. In 2002, the organization held the inaugural Edward James Olmos Latino Book and Family Festival in Houston, drawing over 15,000 people; by 2004, attendance numbers had grown to 30,000. My work interrogates how this community mobilization fueled by successful strategies for social activism, connected Nuestra Palabra, both locally and nationally, with networks of writers, activists, educators. So when Arizona's MAS curriculum was dismantled, when the books were banned, and when the community called, in just a few short weeks the Librotraficantes were ready. I examine how in forming a caravan the Librotraficantes follow a continental American tradition of dynamic mobilization, finding reflection in Chicax civil rights activism in the 1960s and early 1970s. Moreover, I argue the term "Librotraficantes", which can be translated simply into English as 'book

smugglers’, reflects the prevailing discourse of illegality in the United States and that the caravan’s “smuggling” performativity usurps nativist notions of il/legality in the borderlands.

Chapter Three, “The List”, moves to San Antonio. My work investigates the Librotraficantes press conference as a reclamation of a site that Richard R. Flores argues is a “powerfully rendered and racially produced icon of American cultural memory,” (2002 xiv) the Alamo. Here poetry by Carmen Tafolla and Lorna Dee Cervantes centers Chicana sociopolitical storytelling, connecting the Librotraficante Movement to seminal literary voices and activism of the Chicano Movement. This chapter also studies the Southwest Workers Union, who hosted the Librotraficantes for an event on the second night of the caravan. I interpret how the founding of a Librotraficante Underground Library at SWU connects to the social justice praxis of the site. Here, I also examine the poetry of local Chicana writer, Carolina Hinojosa-Cisneros, who took to the mike that evening to read her poem, “The List”, written the piece in direct response to the dismantling of MAS program. I argue that “The List” as resistance poetics transmits contested history in its incantation of the voices of authors censored in Arizona, voices considered the very canon of Chicana literature. I suggest that Hinojosa-Cisneros’s poetics, by revealing social, political, and cultural violence committed against Latinx communities, frees the MAS program’s silenced voices from those seeking to seize control of a singular story of the United States. Moreover, I also argue that Hinojosa-Cisneros’s work opens up multiple pathways for coalitions of resistance in the revealing of intersectionality of oppressions under 21st century US conservatism.

In my final chapter, “Bridging the Abyss”, I seek to show how neoliberal strategizing through the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement [NAFTA] and the concurrent, and historical, build-up of militarization on the US Mexico border, has embedded poverty and displacement for fronterizx communities. I interrogate how, in the face of the growing commodification of female bodies through the thirst for cheap migrant labor, sites such as La Mujer Obrera [LMO], the Librotraficantes third stop on their caravan, operate. LMO

was established in 1981 by displaced Mexican garment workers. My research examines how the organization's development strategies give voice to migrant women of the El Paso/Ciudad Juárez border region. I analyze how LMO collaborates with the invisible female faces of globalization, the victims of femicide and the families of the dead on both sides of the border, and with migrant women workers who face destitution in a city built upon their backs. It is through this strategizing that the organization has created a dynamic resistance community, and here I am guided by Chela Sandoval, who argues, "Those not destroyed ... develop modes of perceiving, making sense of, and acting upon reality that are the basis for effective forms of oppositional consciousness in the postmodern world" (Sandoval 2000, 34.5). One such mode is poetry. On the night of the Librotráficoante El Paso Book Bash at LMO, local poet and essayist, Griselda Muñoz, performing under her stage persona La Rana, read her poem, "Woman. No Apologies." I claim that the poet writes not only against Anglo hegemonic society and against the lack of voice and resource available to women of the borderlands, she also writes again against the embodied imposition of cultural ancestry, emphasizing the subjection of Chicanas/Latinas to patriarchal narratives of role, place, and history. Moreover, Griselda Muñoz's poetics of the border speak to the experiences and multiple subjectivities of women clearing a path for their self-articulated freedoms. Here again, it is in this dynamic process of transcultural engagement that new resistance strategies are revealed in the face of crippling globalization, patriarchy, and cultural hegemony; strategies that reframe debates on immigration, reframe the realities of globalization, and reframe the space of women living on and between one of the world's busiest and most-contested borders.

CHAPTER ONE

“¡MAS!”

MEXICAN AMERICAN STUDIES, TUCSON

There's an Indigenous concept called Xinachtli—you plant that seed and the seed will grow.
José González – MAS teacher

We took the pill. Now we can't go back. But this is better, because now we see the matrix.
Tina – MAS student

Arizona, we're throwing the book at you.
Tony Díaz, El Librotraficante

Henry Giroux argues, “Pedagogy is about the struggle over identity just as much as it is a struggle over what counts as knowledge” (2016, 15). The Tucson Mexican American Studies program confronted this very struggle at its core. Founded to respond to the educational needs of one of the most disenfranchised communities in the United States, it drew the ire of a right-wing Republican state administration. The curriculum questioned prevailing national identity discourse, countering Anglo majoritarian myths of the founding and the functioning of the United States, and of what it means to be an American. Lorenzo López, a MAS student then teacher, argues, “It validated the struggle of folks who were just like me, the immigrant story. The story of not quite fitting into this American fabric” (qtd. in Tirman 2015, 34).

THE WILD WEST

As recent findings by a Pew Hispanic Center report reveal, 48.3% of Latinx children whose parents have no college experience live in poverty (2013, 9). A similar report by Arizona State University and the Arizona Latino Research Enterprise reveals the effects that poverty has had upon the educational success of the state's Latinx communities. The report's data shows that 69% of Latinx children live under the poverty line, compared to 30% of Whites, with the situation for American Indian children worse, at 72%. Access then to pre-school education, for

Latinx and Indigenous families in poverty in Arizona, becomes concurrently problematic, due to, for example, tuition and transportation costs. For poor immigrant Spanish-speaking communities across the state, this can leave children linguistically disadvantaged from a young age through lack of access to key primary English-language education. Critically however, even in the face of protracted law suits and massive federal fines,²³ there has been historical reluctance on the part of state legislators to put funding into English-language programs to meet the needs of Arizona's Spanish-speaking immigrant populace.²⁴ Studies have also revealed that achievement disparities for Latinx students are not purely linguistic. Data shows that in mathematics, science, and reading, Latinx standardized test scores are consistently lower than the scores of White and Asian students (García, Mehmet Dali Öztürk and J. Luke Wood 1990, 42-48). Disproportionate school dropout rates in Arizona mirror these findings. In the TUSD, as Nolan Cabrera reports, “affluent and white students overwhelmingly graduate and go to college. For low-income and Latinx students, just graduating high school is a question” (2014, 49).²⁵

²³ In *Flores vs. Arizona*, for example, parents of Spanish-speaking children in Nogales claimed that state provisions for English language learners was academically subpar. A class action lawsuit was filed in 1992. The case went as far as the US Supreme Court which in 2009 found the state of Arizona in violation of the Equal Opportunity Act. In 2017, state compliance was as yet unresolved. See, “Flores vs. Arizona” *Arizona State Senate Issue Brief*. 30 December 2013, www.azleg.gov/Briefs/Senate/FLORES%20V.%20ARIZONA%202018 .pdf. For a LatCrit analysis of the case, see Jimenez-Silva, Margarita, Laura Gomez & Jesus Cisneros, “Examining Arizona's Policy Response Post Flores v. Arizona in Educating K-12 English Language Learners.” *Journal of Latinos and Education*, vol. 13, no. 3, 2014, pp.181-195. For further legal case studies see Moore, Sarah Catherine K. ed. *Language Policy Processes and Consequences: Arizona Case Studies*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2014.

²⁴ Linguistics in Arizona and across the US Mexico borderlands are not of a “simple” Spanish/English English/Spanish binary. As Anzaldúa argues, “because we are a complex, heterogeneous people, we speak many languages. Some of the languages we speak are: 1. Standard English 2. Working class and slang English 3. Standard Spanish 4. Standard Mexican Spanish 5. North Mexican Spanish dialect 6. Chicano-Spanish (Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California have regional variations) 7. Tex-Mex 8. *Pachuco* (called *Caló*)” (emphasis author 2012, 55). With an increased number of immigrants arriving from Central American countries such as Guatemala and Honduras, Indigenous language speakers are on the rise, with ancient Mayan languages such as Quiché and Mam becoming increasingly common as the native-tongue of those crossing the US Mexico border. For further analysis see: *Exclusion of Indigenous Language Speaking Immigrants in the US Immigration System, a Technical Review*. AMA Consultants, 29 Jun. 2015. For pedagogical impact, see: López, Jacqueline. Hannah Pick and Walt Wolfram. “Indigenous Language Students from Spanish-Speaking Countries: Educational Approaches” *Heritage Briefs Collection*. Center for Applied Linguistics, Feb. 2011.

²⁵ In their study of the national crisis in Latino education, Patricia C. Gándara and Francis Contreras reveal that “almost half of Latinos do not receive a diploma four years after entering high school” (2010, 23). Moreover, Mariella Espinoza-Herold and Ricardo González-Carriedo argue that in Arizona, “if these conditions prevail, the academic improvement of Mexican-origin youth will probably be a pipe-dream for years to come (2017, 52).

This data when accumulated presents as a cause for concern for the state of Arizona's education system, particularly in the light of changing demographics. One-third of the state's student population is Latinx, and projections show that by 2020 these students will be the majority in Arizona's schools.²⁶ However, despite, or one could argue, because of this, public school expenditure in Arizona remains amongst the lowest in the nation. As Curtis Acosta, former TUSD MAS teacher argues, "It's the Wild West for education right now....They're just going to leave this giant defunded school district filled with brown kids: fend for yourself. We better be ready to respond" (Planas 2015). In 1998, TUSD had responded to growing inequities in its schools with the allocation of funding of over \$350,000 for Ethnic and Multicultural Studies programs. The board, however, had not been acting out of pure philanthropy. Before this, in 1996, Salomón R. Baldenegro had petitioned the district to develop a Mexican American Studies program in its schools. As he had in 1969, Baldenegro argued, "It would nurture racial harmony" (Devine 2015, 210). Baldenegro's 1996 request was ignored. In January 1997, attorney Rosalie López went one-step further. She filed a federal lawsuit against the school board on behalf of her daughter. López claimed that the district's use of non-representational curricula in the schools was failing Tucson's Latinx communities, "My research in TUSD reveals that material used (in the classroom) are not inclusive of the rich contributions of Hispanic people" (Samuelson 1999). Moreover, López argued, the allocation of funds for the heritage schooling of Latinx students was disproportionate to that spent on other ethnic groups - \$139 was spent per Native American student, and \$200 per African American, for Latinx students, the largest of the three demographics, per student funding stood at a little over \$11 (Valdez Díaz 1997). In September 1997, the Tucson City Council voted to recommend the TUSD create a dedicated Hispanic Studies program. Two years later, with the

²⁶ An EdChoice survey project shows that despite state demographics Latino and other marginalized students have consistently been under-represented in the private school system. Their results reveal that between 1995 and 2014 Latinos have made up an average 20% of the schools' population, in comparison to the average 66% for White (Catt 2016, 38).

López suit still ongoing, the school district allocated \$206,000 of its new \$350,000 Ethnic and Multicultural Studies budget to a Hispanic Studies program. In López' words, the formal launch of the program on January 7, 1999 was, "a historic event" (qtd. in Samuelson 1999). Yet, she argued, for a district of its size, the funding was simply not enough, "One thing I had hoped Hispanic studies would do is provide more support for those students who are in dire need of assistance to improve their performance" (qtd. in Samuelson 1999).

In 2002, another "historic event" unfolded in the drive to bring representative education to the community. Augustine Romero, a long-standing TUSD educator, was appointed director of the district's then fledgling Hispanic Studies Department.²⁷ Romero comments, "The establishment of the MAS Department was a victory in battles fought nearly thirty years earlier" (2015, 54). He acknowledges, "Among the primary requests of the 1969 protestors, the most relevant was their demand for Chicano studies. It is my belief that the seeds of the MAS department were sowed during [those] walkouts" (n. 61). In an essay written in 1970 whilst a student at UA, Baldenegro postulated:

We are involved in a historical moment of our evolution as a people. I firmly believe that in 20-30 years, a new generation of Chicanos and Chicanas will study *El Movimiento*—in the Chicano Studies classes we are creating even as I write this—and have cause to be proud of their parents' generation. (2006)

This time the impetus to develop a viable program came not only on the back of continued grassroots activism but with the introduction of a new federal education act.

PEDAGOGY OF THE OPPRESSED

In January 2002, President George W. Bush, signed into federal legislation the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Such federal intervention into states' educational practices is not new. In fact, NCLB was a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965

²⁷ The TUSD Hispanic Studies Department became Mexican American/Raza Studies in 2002, and in 2008 changed to Mexican American Studies. It is more commonly known as MAS (Cammarota and Romero 2014, xv).

(ESEA), introduced by the Johnson administration as part of the Civil Rights Act and Johnson's War on Poverty campaign. The 2002 pedagogical intervention however, supported as it was by massive federal funding, required extensive accountability:

The act, which passed with overwhelming bipartisan support, embodies four key principles - stronger accountability for results; greater flexibility for states, school districts and schools in the use of federal funds; more choices for parents of children from disadvantaged backgrounds; and an emphasis on teaching methods that have been demonstrated to work. (US Dept. Education 2002, 9)²⁸

NCLB accountability came in the form of the nationwide implementation of standardized testing and evidence-based programs drawn from data which was, for the very first time, “disaggregated for students by poverty levels, race, ethnicities, disabilities, and limited English proficiencies to ensure that no child—regardless of his or her background—is left behind” (9). The act then had the capacity to “draw-back-the-curtain” on state pedagogical practices that disadvantaged those historically marginalized.

In the wake of NCLB, Romero was given “the responsibility to design a program that would close the achievement gap between Latinos and Anglos” (2014a xv). An experienced TUSD teacher, Romero saw an opportunity through the remit of No Child Left Behind to change not only the face of education in the district, but also the futures of the student long past graduation. He argues:

We continue to perpetuate an educational experience that is inadequate at best for the majority of Latino children. Without that diploma, you are working out in this world with limited opportunities, limited chances. You are the one going to be exploited for eight bucks an hour. They're using 2nd grade children-of-color data to determine what number of prisons they're going to need in the future (*Precious Knowledge* 2011, 07:05).

This, what I term, “data of debilitation”, farmed by for-profit prison operators, is part of a cycle of the criminalization rather than the education of students of color. As Sophie Kerby writes:

Students of color face harsher punishments in school than their white peers, leading to a higher number of youth of color incarcerated. Black and Hispanic students represent

²⁸ The No Child Left Behind Act was replaced in 2015 by the Obama Administration's Every Child Succeeds Act (ESSA). ESSA, a bi-partisan initiative, reauthorized ESEA, for, as the US Department of Education argues, “NCLB's prescriptive requirements became increasingly unworkable for schools and educators” (2017).

more than 70 percent of those involved in school-related arrests or referrals to law enforcement. (2012)

In the face of the pejorative treatment of Latinx youth in the district, Romero created the Social Justice Education Project [SJEP], “with the intent to foster a greater sense of educational sovereignty for the students, parents, and the community” (2014, 15). On the first day of the new school year in August 2002, Romero, and teacher, Lorenzo López Jr. began SJEP with a class of seventeen students at Cholla High School on Tucson’s West Side. Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was part of the program’s foundational praxis, echoing the influence the Brazilian educator’s work had had upon Eleazar Risco during the Chicano Movimiento.

In its application, Freirean critical literacy challenges, “traditional curriculum, disconnected from life, centered on words emptied of the reality they are meant to represent, lacking in concrete activity” (Freire 2013 (1974), 33). Through identifying what Freire terms, “the banking concept of education” (1998 (1970) 72), a pedagogy of the oppressed confronts how the traditional curriculum “deposits” information through the teacher as “narrating Subject” and the students as “patient listening objects” (71). Banking, Freire argues, erases ability for critical consciousness, for with students more likely to “accept the passive role imposed upon them, the more they tend simply to adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited” (73). This pedagogical passivity suppresses critical faculties, which in turn produces “manageable beings” (73) whose compliance “serves the interests of the oppressors who care neither to have the world revealed nor to see it transformed” (75). In the MAS classroom, as Romero and MAS co-creator Julio Cammarota claim, the threat to “the oppressors” in Arizona is that through critical literacy, “what comes to light is that maintenance of the racial, social, political and economic status quo is dependent upon the manufactured failure of our students” (2014, 8). The application of Freirean thinking validates the intellectual capacity of students, rather than societal transmissions of “failure”.

Therefore, whereas the banking approach favors the educator, in the Freirean model, “The students—no longer docile listeners—are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher” (81). In Tucson, it is this co-investigation as liberatory praxis that “builds knowledge steeped in a social justice epistemology” (Cammarota and Romero 2014, 7), an epistemology that nurtures not only skills necessary for educational development, but also transformative skills for life. In the MAS classroom, as the educators explain,

students use[d] *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* as a theoretical map to find new locations in which to challenge the living conditions that the oppressor group [had] constructed for them.... The use of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, render[ed] raza studies more than a program to teach young people academic skills ... they [were] also learning to address the social, educational, and economic problems that hold people in oppressive and subordinated spaces. Raza studies is therefore a story of not only learning, but also of critically progressive transformation, whereby students comprehend their roles as historical agents to promote, restore, and sustain generosity and compassion among humankind. (4)

Teacher José González argues, “Students are often taught to read the word, and Paulo Freire said you have to teach students to read the world” (*Precious Knowledge* 2011, 14:57). In this way students through seeing their world reflected in culturally responsive pedagogy, would come to recognize that, in Freire words, “dehumanization although a concrete historical fact, is *not* a given destiny but the result of an unjust order that engenders violence in the oppressors, which in turn dehumanizes the oppressed” (emphasis author 1998, 26). Students would also then recognize that the conditions of their lived environment were also “*not* a given destiny” (Freire 26), and because of the knowledges of their lived experience, they were the ones who had the intellectual capacity to challenge the conditions of their oppressor. For as Freire argues, “Only power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both” (26). This “weakness” can be seen as the impositions of the oppressor, but this was also the destiny not given, this was then the power of the students’ lived environment.

Through their work with the Cholla High School students, Romero and Cammarota developed what they called a “Critically Compassionate Intellectualism Model of Transformative Education” (CCI), or “The Pedagogy of Barriorganic Intellectualism” (Romero

214):²⁹

- (1) The nurturing of blossoming intellectualism (Xinachtli) through authentic caring.
- (2) Pedagogy de los barrios.
- (3) Students as creators of knowledge.
- (4) Focus on collective and individual agency.
- (5) Organic intellectualism.
- (6) Academic and personal transformation (Arce et al. 2009, 219-220).

At the core of this model is the recognition of the scholarly potential of the students' sociocultural environments. Moreover, as Romero writes, he and Cammarota had the "shared belief that we could create an educational setting wherein students became scientists studying their own social condition" (2014, xiv). This could then lead to an understanding of how political environments such as US border policy, industrialization and globalization, as James B. Greenberg and Carlos G. Vélez-Ibáñez argue, "shape the formation of Mexican households as well as their cultural and social responses" (2000, 209). The MAS educators believed that in problematizing the lived conditions of students, and engaging them in critical praxis, the students would see how they are holders of knowledge; moreover, that through this knowledge they would recognize their potential to become agents of change and transformation. In the words of Romero, "We believed that these processes offer an elevated sense of empowerment for our students by giving them an opportunity to name, challenge, and begin the process of overcoming their lived structures of oppression" (2014, xvi). The MAS program's "lived conditions" praxis drew from a qualitative approach to the learning experience known as "funds of knowledge."³⁰ Developed by Cathy Amanti et al. in a 1992 study of educational and

²⁹ See: Cammarota, Julio & Augustine Romero "A Critically Compassionate Intellectualism for Latina/o Students: Raising Voices Above the Silencing in Our Schools". *Multicultural Education* Winter 2006, pp. 16-23. Also, Romero, Augustine. "Critically Compassionate Intellectualism: The Pedagogy of Barriorganic Intellectualism" *Raza Studies: The Public Option for Educational Revolution*, editors Julio Cammarota & Augustine Romero Tucson: UA Press, 2014, pp.14-39. For detailed application and usage of CCI in the MAS classrooms see Arce, Martín Sean, Julio Cammarota and Augustine Romero, "A Barrio pedagogy: Identity, intellectualism, activism, and academic achievement through the evolution of critically compassionate intellectualism" *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2009, 217-333.

³⁰ Abel and Browner similarly argue for what they term "experiential knowledge." In a study of pregnancy and childbirth, they put forth the "need for feminists to examine the extent to which women in other arenas use various forms of particularistic knowledge to resist authority." (1988, 322)

household practices amongst the Tucson Mexican working class, “funds of knowledge” is theorized as “the historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being” (133). As residents of the borderlands, a number with familial connections in Mexico and across the Americas, students of MAS could bring to the classroom impact knowledge of areas such as labor and immigration law, NAFTA, border security, migration, the war on drugs, and environmental contamination. Curtis Acosta argues that drawing from these epistemological funds, “establishes a pedagogical and curriculum ethos that deviates from traditional educational models that reinforce academic elitism and a social hierarchy that places the community, parents, and students in subservient roles” (2013, 10). With Amanti et al. similarly maintaining that centering this sociopolitical cognizance in the classroom “represents a positive ... view of households as containing ample cultural and cognitive resources with great, *potential* ability for classroom instruction” (emphasis in original, 134). The MAS Freirean approach coupled with funds of knowledge praxis challenged students to recognize their own humanity, a humanity stripped through the savagery of colonization and the state’s attempted economic, political, and cultural silencing of Borderlands communities.

Chicanx critical pedagogy has centralized lived environments since the late-1960s, interrupting here the MAS program’s Freirean impulse. In 1968, moves to dismantle what Angela Valenzuela terms “subtractive schooling” (1999) had community at the heart of praxis. In Southern California, in order to prevent “the erosion of students’ social capital” (Valenzuela 20), the Chicano Coordinating Council on Higher Education [CCHE], formed by Chicann academics, teachers, students, and activists, oversaw the development of a charter to ensure greater representation in the state’s colleges and universities. The result of which was El Plan de Santa Barbara. Drawn up in April 1969, the one hundred and fifty-five page document calls for the implementation of Chicano Studies programs designed by, for, and taught by, the community. “The critical dialect of Chicano Studies” El Plan reads, “is the individual and

culture which produces identity and new culture; the individual and community produces social action and change” (40). This production a decolonizing praxis for as El Plan continues, “Chicano Studies means, in the final analysis, the re-discovery, and the re-conquest of the self and of the community by Chicanos” (“El Plan” 1969, 40). However, El Plan’s “re-discovery” and “re-conquest” narrative, coming out of the patriarchal heteronormativity of the Chicano Movement has required further critical disruption, for as bell hooks reminds us, “The scholarly field of critical pedagogy and/or feminist pedagogy continues to be primarily a discourse engaged by white women and men” (2010, 12). Through what Dolores Delgado Bernal theorizes as Chicana feminist epistemologies [CFE], scholars of education and ethnography such as, Alejandra C. Elenes, Aida Hurtado, and Sofia Villenas, have disrupted said discourse.³¹ In doing so, Delgado Bernal insists, CFE has “expose[d] human relationships and experiences that are probably not visible from a traditional patriarchal position or a liberal feminist standpoint” (1998, 560). A critical intervention, for in Elenes’s words, “To decolonize is not to recover the silenced voices by using hegemonic categories of analysis, but to change the methodological tools and categories to reclaim those neglected voices” (2001, 60). MAS director, Romero, acknowledges the impact of Delgado Bernal on the program’s development, writing, it “has helped me understand that our students are constructors of knowledge” (2014, 31), arguing further that the program “developed and employed what Delgado Bernal (1998) refers to as a Chicana/o epistemology” (31). However, to use Delgado Bernal’s words, what is “not visible” in Romero’s application of CFE is its raced-*gendered* perspective. For in the 1998 work Romero draws from, an article titled “Using a Chicana Feminist Epistemology in

³¹ See Dolores Calderón, et al. “Chicana feminist epistemology revisited: Cultivating ideas a generation later.” *Harvard Educational Review*, vol. 82, no. 4, pp. 513-539, 2012; *Chicana/Latina Education in Everyday Life: Feminista Perspectives on Pedagogy and Epistemology*, edited by Dolores Delgado Bernal, et al., SUNY, 2006; C. Alejandra Elenes et al. “Chicana/Mexicana Feminist Pedagogies: Consejos, Respeto, y Educacion in everyday life.” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, vol. 14, no. 5, 2001, 595-602.

Educational Research” Delgado Bernal insists, ““endarkened” *feminist* epistemologies are crucial, as they speak to the failures of traditional patriarchal and liberal educational scholarship and examine the intersection of race, class, gender” (emphasis mine, 556). Moreover, “A Chicana feminist epistemology”, she continues, “addresses the failure of traditional research paradigms that have distorted or omitted the history and knowledge of Chicanas” (566). In this respect, Romero similarly distorts Delgado Bernal’s work through erasing its gendered epistemological framework, thereby constructing, to apply Elenes’ words, patriarchal “hegemonic categories of analysis” (60). Said analysis then applied to the binary class-based struggle at the heart of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* further marginalizes the intersectional epistemologies of Chicana feminist pedagogy.

The complex nature of the program’s pedagogical pursuit speaks to Chandra Talpade Mohanty’s claim that “The struggle for representation is always a struggle over knowledge” (2003, 189). During the Chicano Movement, representational conflicts within community collided with the fight for justice in the face of external oppression. Romero’s dilution of CFE reflects the imposition of masculine heteronormativity on El Movimiento, a disenfranchising parallel here that questions the MAS program’s radical potential. However, Romero, although a foundational figure, is only one voice. In Acosta’s Xicano Literature class, for example, oppressions within community are addressed (see Appendix III). He writes, “We study and confront critical issues within the culture, such as machismo, youth violence, and sexism” (2007, 38). Through the study of books that counter cultural hegemony, such as Sandra Cisneros’s “Woman Hollering Creek” and “Never Marry a Mexican”, Acosta argues the students, “develop critical consciousness ... of their heritage and history (2007, 38). A consciousness that can be both painful and transformative, and that produces a necessary intervention in the face of the class oppression binary of Freirean pedagogy. As Audre Lorde argues, “There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives” (1982). Living in the Borderlands requires resistance strategies that address an

environment that is layered with multiplicities of micro and macro trauma.

CAN THE SUBALTERN SPEAK SPANISH?

In Tucson, the myriad lived conditions of a marginalized Borderlands populace exist amongst the directives and narratives of an intractable conservative state; this includes the attenuating effects of migration and border security. Juxtaposing the consolidation of majoritarian discourse within the “neatly charted” (2003, 189) borders of the academy, with the “porous” borders of economic and cultural globalization, Mohanty argues education and the “fate of First World citizens is inextricably tied to the fate of refugees, exiles, migrants and immigrants” (189). For decolonial pedagogues in the US Mexico borderlands, where Chicana and Latina communities suffer daily critical deportation from the “neatly charted” First World to a colonized space of “refugees, exiles, migrants and immigrants,” (189) revolutionary pedagogical praxis then becomes an imperative. As Mohanty asks:

What knowledges do we need for education to be the practice of liberation? What does it mean for educators to create a democratic public space in this context? And what kinds of intellectual, scholarly, and political work would it take to actively work ... for social and economic justice? (189)

In the planning of MAS, the seeking of pedagogical justice took the form of the disavowal of hegemonic Western systems of knowledge. In drawing here on Walter Mignolo’s concept of the “coloniality of knowledge” (2011, 205), MAS in Tucson sought to “shift the geography of reason” from the Greco-Roman towards Mesoamerica, “deploying in their coevalness forms of knowledge and ways that have been pushed aside or buried in the past to make way for the triumphal march of modernity” (205-206). For as Christine Sleeter insists:

Schools are an instrument of the maintenance of the colonial relationship to schooling in that they constitute an arm of the state through which the belief system and cultural relationships are taught. Public school curricula proclaim the ‘triumph of democracy’ to the virtual exclusion of any serious analysis of the U.S. conquest. (1999, xvii)

On its “march” through Arizona, “modernity” in this respect found deployment throughout the state’s schools. As Ernest Gellner proposes: “A modern society is ... like a modern army, only

more so. It provides a very prolonged and fairly thorough training for all its recruits, insisting on certain shared qualifications” (71, 2010). These “shared qualifications” are a necessary part of what Gellner terms, “exo-socialization, the production and reproduction of men outside the local intimate unit” (79). Individuals, Gellner asserts, can no longer “be made by a village or clan”, for the development of the nation state requires “education proper” (78), wherein

individuals acquire the skills and sensibilities which make them acceptable to their fellows, which fit them to assume places in society and which make them ‘what they are’, by being handed over by their kin groups ... to an educational machine which alone is capable of providing the wide range of training required for the generic cultural base. (78)

Culture here is produced and reproduced as a “necessary shared medium, the life blood” (78), “necessary” for the maintenance of critical acceptability, an acceptability that cannot be found in a “diversified, locality-tied, illiterate little culture or tradition” (79). The task of producing a “literate and unified culture” (78) falls to the state, and in Arizona, the state representative encharged with exo-socialization was Tom Horne, Attorney General from 2011-2015.

In 2007, Horne, then State Superintendent of Public Instruction, gave an address at the Heritage Foundation, a right-wing think-tank in Washington, DC.³² Horne, who was to become the instigator of the dismantling of MAS, spoke to what he saw as the “dysfunctional” No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), comparing it to “Soviet bureaucracy trying to micromanage the Soviet economy” (2007a). NCLB, despite bipartisan support upon its enactment, was seen by Tea Party conservatives, such as Horne, as federal interference in the working of individual states. However, in his address, Horne insisted that for Arizona the act’s federal accountability prevented localized response to “a tidal wave of illegal immigration” into the state, and the presence of “over 100,000 students that [were] English Language Learners (sic)” (2007a). The inability to deal directly with these matters was, he insisted, the equivalent of Soviet-style

³² The Heritage Foundation is an ultra-conservative education and research institution whose mission “is to formulate and promote conservative public policies based on the principles of free enterprise, limited government, individual freedom, traditional American values, and a strong national defense”. See: www.heritage.org.

directorates, which left “huge piles of fish rotting on the dock because someone in the bureaucracy did not provide for it to be marketed” (Horne 2007a). Horne, as a state representative using a rotting fish analogy, can be seen as reflective of historical responses in Arizona to the undocumented and to those for whom English is not a first language. The state has long had a critically contentious attitude to, and relationship with, its Indigenous and Spanish-speaking communities. In 1919, for example, English-only instruction was mandated in Arizona, with this coming to an end in 1965 with the passing of the Civil Rights Act. However, as Donal M. Sacken and Marcello Medina’s study of Arizona’s bilingual education legislation reveals, “the larger, historic environment of Arizona’s public policy culture” lingered well past the mid-1960s (1990, 390). In 1984, educators and advocates for bilingual programs in the state’s schools, proposed Senate Bill 1160 (SB 1160), otherwise known as the Bilingual Bicultural Education Program. Proponents of the bill sought to provide for strong representative teaching, including “native language instruction in schools serving 20 or more students with the same language. Below 20 students, other programs, such as such as English as a second language (ESL) [would become] an option” (394). The bill passed, but not without significant concessions being made to both its breadth and its name. In SB 1160’s final incarnation, as the Bilingual Programs and English as Second Language Programs Act, “all [school] districts [were] permitted to choose freely between bilingual and or English only programs” (394). Without this massive concession, which “remov[ed] all prescription of native language instruction” (394), SB 1160 would not have made it onto Arizona’s statute books. Yet, despite this “success”, increasingly hostile attitudes towards immigration across the United States in the 1980s, found reflection in Arizona in 1988 with a constitutional amendment passed through Proposition 106, making English the state’s official language. Ten years later the amendment was ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court and struck down; yet, in an Anzaldúan reading, the battle to “tame a wild tongue” (2012 [1987], 54) continued.

In 2000, Proposition 203 was passed, ushering into Arizona state law the English Language Education for Children in Public Schools Act.³³ Its introduction abolished Arizona's Bi-Lingual Education (BLE) program replacing it with Sheltered English Immersion, an approach widely viewed by bilingual pedagogues as untenable. In what Elisa Bordin argues as the "Anglophonization of Arizona" (2013, 114), bilingual teachers, whose first language was Spanish, were then reassigned to teaching English. Moreover, Bordin argues:

[Arizona's] Department of Education sent auditors to schools to control the flawlessness in accent, grammar and writing of the English instructors for second language learners. If the teachers did not match the required standards, they could try to plug the gap, but if they failed in the attempt they risked being removed, reassigned, or even dismissed. (114)

With a demographic showing Latinx Arizonans at 30 percent of the population in 2008, up from 16 percent in 1980, English language directives can be seen to be focused primarily on a Spanish-speaking populace.³⁴ Bordin's research shows that the aforementioned standards of accent "flawlessness" were not required for teachers of languages such as French, German, or Italian, thereby highlighting state-sanctioned discriminatory practices against native Spanish speakers. With, as Borden asserts, Spanish in a "troublesome position" in Arizona, a state where "it is considered subaltern to mainstream English" (116), the concurrent effect of English language hegemony upon many of Arizona's Latinx students was devastating. As Eric J. Johnson and David Cassels Johnson report, "Within a few years after the implementation of Proposition 203, schools with high numbers of language-minority students began suffering severe academic consequences while struggling even harder than before to meet state and federal standards" (2014, 101). The pressure increased further in 2006 with the passing of Prop.

³³ The full act can be found at: cms.azed.gov/home/GetDocumentFile?id=58d003651130c012d8e906e5

³⁴ For a multidimensional analysis of English language directives in Arizona, see; Arias, Beatríz M and Christian Faltis Eds. *Implementing Educational Language Policy in Arizona: Legal, Historical and Current Practices in SEI*, Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2012. For an analysis of the impact of shifting demographics in the state, see Saenz, Rogelio. "Latinos, Whites and Shifting Demography of Arizona", *Population Reference Bureau*, 2010, and Santa Ana, Otto and Celeste González de Bustamente Eds *Arizona Firestorm: Global Immigration Realities, National Media, and Provincial Politics*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishing, Inc., 2012.

103, which reinstated English as Arizona's official language.³⁵ Republican State Representative Russell Peace, who in 2010 would provide full legislative support for Arizona's SB 1070, considered the nation's toughest anti-immigration measure, was one of the official sponsors of the bill. Pearce argued, "By making English the official state language we provide an even greater incentive for all immigrants to learn English, become empowered and productive citizens, and participate in society as full Americans" (Arizona. Prop. 103). These cumulative directives function as linguistic profiling in a state that legislates that in order to be a "productive" American, English must be spoken, whilst at the same time failing to produce successful representative English language programs in which students and teachers can participate. Due to this pedagogical failure, fifteen years after the adoption of Proposition 203, Arizona was granted a "flexibility request" by the United States Department of Education, "in light of continuing civil rights concerns related to [the state's] identification of and provision of service to English Learners" (Whalen 2015). In 2015, after almost 100 years of English-only state-sanctioned linguistic profiling, Arizona was no closer to recognizing the legitimacy on its soil either of the Spanish language or of those who spoke it.

THE CORE OF CULTURE

For Spanish-speaking Chicanx and Latinx communities across the United States, one's mother tongue has long been marked as an impediment, as a critical disability that requires "special education." In Arizona, state directives to retain linguistic supremacy operate alongside measures to protect "cultural literacy". What were required by the state were pedagogical directives that would provide Latinx students with the ability to, as Bordin postulates, "adjust to Eurocentric white authority" (116). This "adjustment" was to encompass not only language,³⁶ but also "culture, economy, and law" (116), and was to take the form of the

³⁵ As of 2017, Arizona is one of 36 US states whose constitutions enshrine English as the state's official language.

³⁶ The marking of Spanish as an "impediment" has long been far from symbolic. In the face of lawsuits in 1970, the national Director of the Office for Civil Rights issued a memorandum ordering that "School districts must not

propagation and protection of knowledge that was seen to be as “essentially” American as the English language. In his address to the Heritage Foundation, Tom Horne bemoaned NCLB’s “proficiency obsession” (2007a) in areas such as linguistic literacy but not, he argued, in American History. It was this accountability “dysfunction” (Horne 2007a) that had led to what Horne saw as an “abysmally low” (2007a) lack of historical knowledge essential for the “preserv[ation] [of] our free institutions” (2007a). Horne’s solution was a pedagogical method to which he had subscribed since 1996: “I am a proponent of a curriculum developed by E. D. Hirsch, called Core Knowledge. Students get a content-rich curriculum in American history, the Greco-Roman basis for Western civilization, and science” (2007a). Born from the development of Hirsch’s best-selling book, *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*, Core Knowledge argues that “only by accumulating shared symbols, and the shared information that symbols represent, can we learn to communicate effectively with one another in our national community” (1998, xvii). Hirschean pedagogy functions by “banking deposits [of] easily-processed reality, reality “motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable” (Freire 1978 (1970), 71). Moreover, Core Knowledge ideals of a “common” national knowledge, that which “possess the basic information needed to thrive in the modern world” (Hirsch 1988, xiii), speaks to the heart of right-wing foundational narratives of the nation. Jill Lepore sees as the “historical fundamentalism”, a mind-set

marked by the belief that a particular and quite narrowly defined past—‘the founding’—is ageless and sacred and to be worshipped ... that the Founding Fathers were divinely inspired; that the academic study of history ... is a conspiracy and, furthermore, blasphemy; and that political arguments grounded in appeals ... to the Founding Fathers, as prophets, are therefore incontrovertible” (2010, 16).

assign national origin-minority group students to classes for the mentally retarded on the basis of criteria which essentially measure of evaluate English Language skills” (Qtd. in Valencia 2008, 138). The practice still continues. For studies on limited English proficiency viewed as a learning disability see: Adair, Jennifer Keys, “The Impact of Discrimination on the Early Schooling Experiences of Children from Immigrant Families”, *Migration Policy Institute* 2015; Harry, Beth and Janette K. Klingner *Why Are So Many Minority Children in Special Education? Understanding Race and Disability in Schools*, Teachers College Press, 2014, pp. 122-131; and MacSwan and Kellie Rolstad “How Language Proficiency Test Misdlead Us About Ability: Implications for English Language Learner Placement in Special Education,” *The Teachers College Record* vol.108 no. 11, 2006, pp. 2304-28.

In appealing to the histories of a Brown student body over the body-politics of a White conservative state, in a Lepore reading, the Tucson MAS program was an act of “blasphemy”. “Blasphemy,” however, was not an intent of the program. As Augustine Romero argues, in the application of a critically conscious curriculum in the MAS classroom “I am not saying our story is more important than the current narrow narrative; however, I am saying it is equally important” (2014, 22). This imperative for representative pedagogy functions as a counter to, as Richard Delgado argues, “The stories or narratives told by the ingroup [which] remind it of its identity in relation to outgroups, and provide it with a form of shared reality in which its own superior position is seen as natural” (1998, 229). Delgado, with co-author Jean Stefanie, has two texts on the MAS bibliography, *Critical Race Theory* and *The Latino Condition*. Of the latter, he writes:

This is a critical book which offers many ways of interpreting American racial history. It looks for patterns, it gives people a vocabulary for analyzing relations between the dominant group and the various minority population. It offers ways of talking about American racial past and it draws comparisons between groups, Black, Latinos Asians, etc. And I would guess that the reason why the Tucson authorities thought that would be a bad book to have in the hands of academics. (Qtd. in Steiner 2012)

Said “ways of talking” in order to interrogate the founding and functioning of nation was part of the praxis of the program. For Romero, it was imperative to “remind” the MAS students of their identity, “given the recent developments of the right, such as the tea party movement ... legitmi[z]ing the Anglo story as the only American story” (2014, 21). Romero and his team included in the framework of the program a number of “critical consciousness-building exercises” (22). The pedagogical value of these exercises was that they encouraged an understanding that students’ “stories and those of their families and communities [were] legitimate American stories” (22). For the assignment, My History, students had to complete five sections of critical praxis: History of My Life, My Family’s History, My History at High School, My Views of My Community and the World, and My Future. As Romero reveals,

in the quest [here] to push [their] intellectual capacity” the students were encouraged to ask, “A few simple but provocative questions ... Why do you believe this? Where did

that belief come from? Who does that belief benefit? Who are we? Why do we do these things? What is our identity? How was our identity constructed? (22)

In seeking answers to these questions, Romero argues the students “realize and strengthen their humanity” (22). Moreover, they begin to question the socially subordinate position they have been assigned. In a Richard Delgado analysis, the counter-storytelling of *My History* provided a critical platform to not only “build consensus ... enrich imagination ... [And] quicken and engage conscience”, but to also show “what we believe is ridiculous” (1998, 260). It is in this unmasking of the “ageless and sacred and to be worshipped” (Lepore 2010, 16), that powerful narratives lie. As Romero remarks in a *New York Times* interview, “All of our forefathers have contributed to this country, not just one set of forefathers. We respect and admire and appreciate the traditional forefathers, but there are others” (Lacey 2011). In Arizona, shared narratives of the “others” provided the potential to guide “the way out of the trap of unjustified exclusion” (Delgado 1998, 260); moreover, “can help [communities] understand when it is time to relocate power” (260).

Horne’s pedagogical muse, Hirsch, also sees the strength in drawing from shared histories. Arguing that “Cafeteria style education” had caused a communication rift, “result[ing] in a steady diminishment of commonly shared information between generations and between young people themselves” (1988, 12), Hirsch postulates, only through the inculcation of tradition, i.e.: “information, attitudes and assumptions that literate Americans share ... can we learn to communicate effectively with one another in our national community” (127). Hirsch’s prescriptive pedagogical solution can be found in *Cultural Literacy*’s 62-page appendix, entitled “What Literate Americans Know”. Here Hirsch provides what he terms, “The List” (152), a roll call of concepts and dates that are to provide access to common literate knowledge. This access, Hirsch purports, is all-inclusive, for he argues “Literate culture is the most democratic culture in our land: it excludes nobody” (21). However, Hirschean inclusivity, coming from what Charles Taylor terms a “supposedly neutral set of difference-blind

principles” (1977, 108) rejects as it accepts. “Difference-blind” is akin to a philosophy of color-blindness, one that in claims of equality in fact renders invisible structural oppressions under which communities of color exist. A philosophy to which Horne adheres when, in critically high-jacking the philosophies of Martin Luther King Jnr, he states, “I believe people are individuals, not exemplars of racial groups” (2007b). For Hirsch, effective neutral cultural literacy requires a focus on the stability of basic “canonical” knowledge rather than on the epistemologies embodied in the My History exercises of MAS, “Although everyone is literate in some local, regional, or ethnic culture, the connection between mainstream culture and the national written language justifies calling mainstream culture *the* basic culture of the nation” (emphasis author, 21-22). “The List” then contains these “basic” cultural “defaults”, and includes the Founding Fathers, the planets, the major battles of the American Civil War, various European composers, the Protestant Work Ethic, the Monroe Doctrine, a number of European scientists, children’s nursery rhymes, the Beatitudes, and the Boston Tea Party. This focus on White hegemonic culture, as Taylor posits, “negates identity by forcing people into a homogeneous mold that is untrue to them.... As it turns out, then, only the minority or suppressed cultures are being forced to take alien form” (1977, 108). Said form further relates to the homogeneity of the teaching and not “simply” the homogeneity of what is being taught.

Pierre Bourdieu argues that a key power of the “educational system” is in its “contribut[ion] to the reproduction of the structure of class relations”, moreover, in the “concealing, by an apparently neutral attitude, the fact that it fills this function” (1973, 57). Education mirrors the endowment of symbolic wealth, that which is “designated as worthy of being sought and possessed” (57); a wealth defaulted to and reproduced by majoritarian systems of knowledge. Hirsch, however, justifies his cultural literacy philosophy in arguing that its pedagogical effectiveness comes not from alienating “alternative” epistemologies, but by the fact that it addresses the needs of the most marginalized of students. He contends that the “most straightforward antidote to their deprivation is to make the essential information

more readily available inside the schools” (24). This “essential information” is that possessed by those who are concurrently rich in symbolic wealth. For Hirsch, the Common Core approach provides a critical readiness to access this capital, to succeed in the greater, i.e.: majoritarian, society. Moreover, he argues this readiness is crucial in countering the debilitating effects of the diversity of critical literacy; a literacy embedded in the pedagogical models utilized by MAS. Hirsch contends:

To withhold traditional culture from the school curriculum, and therefore from students, in the name of progressive ideas is in fact an unprogressive action that helps preserve the political and economic *status quo*. Middle-class children acquire mainstream literate culture by daily encounters with other literate persons. But less privileged children are denied consistent interchanges with literate persons and fail to receive this information in school. (23)

In privileging “mainstream literate culture”, Hirschean pedagogy denies the cultural capital of communities of the “less privileged”. Moreover, its application denies, as Howard Adelman and Linda Taylor argue, “the whole child” (Weiss 2013).³⁷ In this respect, Common Core fails to address the impact of intersectional issues such as

restricted opportunities associated with poverty and low income, difficult family circumstances, excessive mobility, lack of English language skills, violent neighborhoods, substance abuse, inadequate health care, and lack of enrichment opportunities.” (2013)

Tom Horne does likewise, denying the whole child critical literacy of the MAS curriculum when asserting, “Those children should be taught that this *is* the land of opportunity, and if they work hard they can achieve their goals” (emphasis author 2007b). Horne further reflects the Tea Party’s adherence to economic individualism, wherein hard work equals success, in arguing, “[They] should be taught this is the land of opportunity” (2007b). The inculcation of “common” knowledge silences those who, in a Du Boisian reading, raise the veil of the United

³⁷ See also Michael W. Apple, *Official knowledge: Democratic education in a conservative age*, 2nd ed. Routledge, 1999; Wayne Au, “Coring Social Studies within Corporate Education Reform The Common Core State Standards, Social Justice, and the Politics of Knowledge in U.S. Schools.” *Critical Education*, vol. 4, no. 5. 2013; *Critical Literacies and Young Learners: Connecting Classroom Practice to the Common Core*. edited by Ken Winograd, Routledge, 2015;

States, “to view faintly its deeper recesses - the meaning of its religion, the passion of its human sorrow, and the struggle of its greater souls” (2009 [1903] 4). The Hirschean pedagogical project, renders illiterate the “progressive ideas” of those who speak of and from the “recesses” (23), ideas, he asserts, “education professors and school administrators have followed over the past fifty years” (1998, xiii). Namely, the federal post-WWII push for greater accessibility to higher education for all US citizens,³⁸ the profound changes of the Civil Rights to US education and society with school and university desegregation, and post-1965, the rise of Race, Class, and Gender Studies.

For neoconservative academics like Amy Wax and Larry Alexander, “the past fifty years” has been a period when

[a] combination of factors — prosperity, the Pill, the expansion of higher education, and the doubts surrounding the Vietnam War—encouraged an antiauthoritarian, adolescent, wish-fulfillment ideal — sex, drugs, and rock-and-roll — that was unworthy of, and unworkable for, a mature, prosperous adult society. This era saw the beginnings of an identity politics that inverted the color-blind aspirations of civil rights leaders like the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. into an obsession with race, ethnicity, gender, and now sexual preference (2017).³⁹

Wax and Alexander argue that identity politics have sounded a critical death-knell for “respectability, civility, and adult values”, and in order to “significantly reverse society’s pathologies ... the arbiters of culture—the academics, media, and Hollywood—[will need] to relinquish multicultural grievance polemics and the preening pretense of defending the

³⁸ For comprehensive studies of US Higher Education post-1939, see: Cardozier, V.R. *Colleges and Universities in World War II*, New York: Praeger, 1993; Gumpert, Patricia et al. “The United States Country Report: Trends in Higher Education from Massification to Post-Massification” *RIHE International Seminar Reports*, no. 10. Hiroshima: Hiroshima University, Research Institute for Higher Education, 1997; and Trow, Martin, “Reflections on the Transition from Elite to Mass to Universal Access: Forms and Phases of Higher Education in Modern Societies since WWII” *International Handbook of Higher Education, Springer International Handbooks of Education* vol. 18, pp.243-280, Springer, Dordrecht, 2007.

³⁹ In a 2017 Op Ed in the *Philadelphia Enquirer*, Wax, Robert Mundheim professor at the University of Pennsylvania Law School, and Alexander, distinguished professor at the University of San Diego School of Law, argued that “the breakdown of the country’s bourgeois culture” was at the root of “society’s pathologies”. The script to follow was: “Get married before you have children and strive to stay married for their sake. Get the education you need for gainful employment, work hard, and avoid idleness. Go the extra mile for your employer or client. Be a patriot, ready to serve the country. Be neighborly, civic-minded, and charitable. Avoid coarse language in public. Be respectful of authority. Eschew substance abuse and crime.”

downtrodden (2017). Hirschean “cultural literacy” pedagogy then, as Jim Cummin’s analysis argues, “represented a call to strengthen the national immune system” (2003, 44) in its provision to protect “the more stable elements of our national vocabulary, like George Washington, the tooth fairy, the Gettysburg Address, Hamlet, and the Declaration of Independence” (29). For Horne, this canonical roll call presented a “content rich curriculum” (Horne 2007). This a curriculum which when applied in Arizona would serve to combat the effects of progressive ideals and the critical menace of cultural and linguistic multilingualism; the critical menace of the Mexican American Studies program.

PRECIOUS KNOWLEDGE

In 2002, the founder of MAS, Augustine Romero, had a plan but, as he writes, “the project at that point did not have a home” (xix). This recognition of the physical need for a dedicated space was also the symbolic recognition that this space had yet to exist in the formal context of state education; had yet to exist in, in Romero’s words, “a system constructed to marginalize, exclude, or exploit [Chicanx students] as a means of perpetuating America’s racial and social order” (xiv). What the program did have, however, was a cultural archive of resistance to draw upon, as Romero explains, “The creation of MAS and the Chicana/o educational struggle ... is part of a larger legacy” (54). This was legacy such as the high school walkouts, and the first National Chicano Youth Liberation Conference (NCYLC) held in Denver, Colorado in 1969.

Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales through the community based urban civil rights organization, Crusade for Justice, had convened the NCYLC. Gonzales was a strident cultural nationalist, and the conference was led by this. For here in Denver, the ideology of Chicanismo was born, an ideology defined by José Angel Gutiérrez as “an operational working definition of Chicano culture” (1985, 147).⁴⁰ Gutiérrez, a key figure in the Texas *movimiento* argues the

⁴⁰ In 1967, Gutiérrez co-founded the Mexico American Youth Organization (MAYO) in San Antonio. Three years later, at a MAYO meeting in Crystal City, Texas, he also co-founded El Partido La Raza Unida, a political party to fill the representational gap between the two main political parties, the Democrats and the Republicans. At the

term “Chicanismo”, like other pieces of Chicano rhetoric iconography, “broke with assimilationist thought because [it] set up an ideological framework of action against the Anglo system” (147).⁴¹ One of the actions taken at the NCYLC was the creation of an operational framework. The poet Alurista, along with by Gonzales and Juan Gómez-Quiñones, drafted one of the defining manifestos of El Movimiento, *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán*. *El Plan* conceptualized a Chicano homeland in the pre-colonial North American southwest, “from whence,” Alurista writes, “came our forefathers” (Anaya, Lomelí, Lamadrid 2017 [1989], 27). The ancestors of whom Alurista speaks are the Aztecs, with Aztlán considered their mythical homeland—a region split by the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, where Mexico ceded a little over fifty-percent of its territory to the United States in a bid to end the Mexican American War. The claiming of the Indigenous precolonial southwest has become a key component of Chicana identity. As Rafael Pérez-Torres suggests:

Within a Chicano/o context, Aztlán ... has served as a metaphor of connection and unity. During ... its modern incarnation Aztlán has come to represent a nationalist homeland, the name of that place that will at some future point be the national home of a Chicano people reclaiming their territorial rights. (2017 [1989] 211)⁴²

At the 1969 conference, *El Plan* presented as a both critical disavowal of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and as the blueprint for a “cultural mapping” of the contested space of the borderlands. Tucson’s MAS program can be seen as a successor to *El Plan*’s pedagogical directive, which called for Chicana education to be, “relative to our people, i.e., history, culture,

meeting, following a fierce election battle with Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales, Gutiérrez was elected La Raza Unida’s first national party chairperson.

⁴¹ Other examples Gutiérrez gives are, “Chicano, Aztlán, La Raza, La Causa, Huelga, [and] Carnalismo” (147).
⁴² Post 1969, as Mary Pat Brady argues, “Aztlán took on a life of its own” (2002, 140); from poetry to murals, tattoos to t-shirts, literature to music, “[It] emerged as a flexible cultural symbol with a mystified history” (140). However, as “flexible” as cultural symbols such as Aztlán may be, they become problematic when their development and maintenance requires adherence to rigid cultural “commonalities.” Alicia Gaspar de Alba argues, “For nearly 40 years, Aztlán, or the lost land, has been at the core of a Chicano male identity... In this gendered relationship to land (or homeland), sexual politics is clearly articulated into the ideology” (qtd. in Miner 2014, 63). Intersecting sites of sex/gender inequality within the Chicano Movement were subordinated with heteropatriarchy setting the parameters of justice and equality. Writing in the 1980s, Cherrie Moraga in her essay “Queer Aztlán” further interrogates *El Movimiento*’s obstructive gender politics, calling out its heteronormative cultural nationalism, “When *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* was conceived a generation ago, lesbians and gay men were not envisioned as members of the “house”... We were not counted as members of the “bronze continent” (1993, 159).

bilingual education, contributions, etc. Community control of our schools, our teachers, our administrators, our counselors, and our programs” (“El Plan Espiritual”). As MAS director Augustine Romero argues, “When we created this opportunity, we did so with the intent to foster a greater sense of educational sovereignty for the students, parents and the community we serve” (2014, 15). The MAS claiming of “educational sovereignty” took Aztlán as homeland one-step further. MAS in Tucson turned to indigeneity in the framing of culturally representative pedagogy through maíz-based epistemologies.

Roberto Cintli Rodríguez, professor at the University of Arizona, Tucson, and a member of the MAS community advisory board, argues:

At the core of the dispute is [Tom] Horne’s insistence that the MAS-TUSD does not emphasize Greco-Roman culture. Actually, he is correct ... the philosophical foundation of MAS is derived from maíz culture, which unlike Greco-Roman culture is indigenous to this continent. (2014a, 174)

Maíz has been a diet staple of the Americas since its domestication approximately 9,000 years ago in Southern Mexico’s Balsas River Valley.⁴³ One of a triumvirate known to various North American native groups as the “Three Sisters” (the other two being squash and beans) maíz is equally food stuff and powerful cultural artifact. It was considered by the Mayan peoples to be a gift from the gods. Legend tells that the gods mixed their own blood with the corn flour to create humankind. The Maya, the Aztecs, and their descendants, are considered therefore, “children of the corn”. As Adelita Sanvincente Tello and Aracelí Carreón tell us, “Corn created community and the community made corn in a symbiotic relationship in which one is not explained without the other” (2017, 340).⁴⁴ Rodríguez, who worked closely with the MAS

⁴³ For a phylogenetic study of Mexico’s Central Balsas River Valley see, Matsuoka, Yoshihiro et al. “A single domestication for maize shown by multilocus microsatellite genotyping.” *PNAS*, vol. 99, no. 9, 2002, pp 6080-6084.

⁴⁴ For many Chicana households, the tradition of corn continues to play a central role in the retention and celebration of heritage. See: Abarca, Meredith *Voices in the Kitchen: Views of Food and the World from Working-Class Mexican and Mexican American Women*, Rio Grande/Río Bravo: Borderlands Culture and Traditions, 2006; and Morton, Paula E. *Tortillas: A Cultural History*, UNM Press, 2014. For analysis and practice of a “traditional” Mexican diet and the decolonial turn, see, Calvo, Luz and Catriona Rueda Esquibel, *Decolonize Your Diet: Plant-Based Mexican-American Recipes for Health and healing*, Arsenal Pulp Press, 2015. Corn remains a cornerstone of life in modern Mexico, particularly amongst the nation’s myriad Indigenous communities. This is threatened

program, argues that in centering “the story of maíz” in the pedagogy for a Chicana community, “Our students began to understand that they had roots, literal roots in what we call Cemanahuac, Pacha Mama, Abya Yala or what others call the Americas. [And] once that is understood it is difficult to view oneself as a foreigner or alien” (2015).

Maíz culture in the MAS classroom has the capacity to decenter colonial tropes where, in a Mignolo reading, “regions and people around the world have been classified as undeveloped economically and mentally” (2009, 162). As Sean Arce, former director and co-founder of MAS, writes,

these liberatory educational practices took place within the context of over 500 years of colonization, bringing us to the contemporary situation where many Xicana/o, Mexicana/o, and other Indigenous origin people have internalized this oppression and have developed a post-colonial identity manifesting itself through internalized oppression in which Xicana/os view their own culture as inferior to the dominant white culture. (36)⁴⁵

Within the praxis of maíz based narratives there is a provision of critical sustenance in the face of neocolonialism, or as Rodríguez articulates, “the United States and its culture wars” (2014a, 112). These are wars in which, he argues, “The corn tortilla is metaphorically counterposed to white bread ... form[ing] the quintessential civilizational binary” (111). A binary in which

by the disintegration of the state, largely due to the War on Drugs, and by government policies supporting the use of US technologies for farming, technologies such as GMOs. For an analysis see: Ackerman, Frank et al. “Free Trade, Corn, and the Environment: Environmental Impacts of US-Mexico Corn Trade Under NAFTA” *Global Development and Environment Institute: Working Paper No. 03-06*, Tufts University, June 2003; Castellanos, Erick and Sarah Bergstresser, “The Mexican and Transnational Lives of Corn: Technological, Political, Edible Object” *Edible Identities; Food as Cultural Heritage*, edited by Ronda L. Brulotte and Michael A. Di Giovine, Routledge, 2014, pp. 201-218; and Keleman, Alder and Hugo García Rañó, “The Mexican Tortilla Crisis of 2007: the Impacts of Grain-price Increases on Food-production chains” *Development in Practice*, vol. 21, no. 4-5, pp. 550-565., 2011. In the United States, the production of tortillas is a burgeoning \$5 billion market. For an analysis of the industry and worker racialization see: Bank Muñoz, Carolina. “Mobile capital, immobile labor: Inequality and opportunity in the tortilla industry” *Social Justice*, vol. 31, no. 3, 2004, pp. 21-39. Campoy, Ana “I tried to make my own tortillas from scratch the Mexican way in the US, and it was a disaster” *Quartz* May 5, 2016 Web Jan 31, 2017.

⁴⁵ David Stovall writes, “Sean’s work is emblematic of a collective struggle to ensure the rights of students throughout TUSD to ask critical questions of themselves and society while making informed decisions based on such inquiry. By providing a model for young people to interrogate the disparities familiar to their conditions, they are simultaneously creating pathways to guarantee quality education for current and future students in the district. For these reasons (and countless others), their program should serve as a national model for Ethnic Studies initiatives in K-12 education” (qtd. in Biggers 2011).

“America symbolically equals white and wholesome, whereas Mexican equals brown and impure” (112). Breaking this binary opens a third space for epistemological engagement with the cultivation of a crop, which, as Rodríguez emphasizes, “Created many civilizations with advanced agriculture, math, astronomy, architecture, etc” (2015)—civilizations which were rendered either obsolete or barbarous (or both) by coloniality and master narratives of the Americas. Pancho McFarland, whose work looks at maíz-narratives within Chicano Hip Hop, takes this further. McFarland argues that the decolonization of Indigenous knowledges offers solutions to the pressing challenges of our times, seeing maíz-epistemologies as “common sense ecological, sustainable, and democratic practices that if heeded could save our planet from global burning and climate chaos” (2016, 165). Juan Bruce Novoa argues that Chicana literature can be similarly “heeded” as an answer to oblivion. He writes, with its elegiac quality it “seeks some transcendence presence ... which would enable the writer, the reader, and the community to survive and project themselves into the future” (1982, 8). I argue that the MAS founders, in the centering of maíz-narratives, centered a transcendence presence. In doing so, a pedagogical process was developed where Indigenous epistemologies enabled, in a Bruce Novoa reading, “denial of death, a response to the chaos of ceasing to be” (12). For maíz-narratives, as Chicana literature, respond to various forms of “threat ... from death itself to ... urban renewal, schools, technological change, written culture, or simply time” (8). Moreover, these epistemologies also critically function as elegy, as “the prayer [that] evokes the deceased” (8). Here the prayer is the recitation of knowledges of the children of the corn, critically disappeared by the praxis of colonization. Through this “prayer” the curriculum framework “returns” Indigenous epistemologies “as the center of the ritual, through which the heroic virtues or special qualities are displayed and offered to the people as their common inheritance” (8). In the MAS classrooms, this return of inheritance was displayed on the walls in the form of images of the four creator gods of Aztec mythology—Tezcatlipoca, Quetzalcoatl, Huitzilopochtli, and Xipe Totec. In Bruce Novoa’s words, this created “their own heroic

system, played out within the space they call “our world” (11) for the MAS students and teachers, and concurrently community.

Each of the four images represented the curriculum’s use of the Four Movements of the Aztec Calendar, or Nahui Ollin. Arturo Meza Gutiérrez writes Nahui Ollin is “an indigenous philosophy that refers to life and a decision making process that fosters community, harmony and balance of mind, body, and essence” (qtd. in Anita Fernández 2016, 242).⁴⁶ Alejandro Salomón Escamilla, who taught MAS at Tucson’s Wakefield Middle School, utilized the Nahui Ollin through leading students in the daily recitation of an interpretation of its concepts. The interpretation was developed by Acosta at Tucson High:

Tezcatlipoca: self-reflection. Smoking mirror. We must vigorously search within ourselves, by silencing the distractions and obstacles in our lives, in order to be warriors for our gente and justice. Quetzalcoatl: precious and beautiful knowledge. Gaining perspective on events and experiences that our ancestors endured, allows us to become more fully realized human beings. We must listen to each other and our elders with humility and love in order to hear the Indigenous wisdom in our hearts. Huitzilopochtli: the will to act. As we grow in consciousness, we must be willing to act with a revolutionary spirit that is positive, progressive and creative. Xipeec Totec: transformation. Our source of strength that allows us to transform and renew. We must have the strength to shed the old, which may hinder us, while embracing and accepting our new consciousness in order to transform the world. (Escamilla 2018, 171)

For Sean Arce, Nahui Ollin was the program’s “foundational and liberatory pedagogical tool” (2016, 13). Its application, he states, “contribut[ed] to the development of strong cultural identities and the closing of the pervasive achievement gap for Xicana/o youth, which in effect created a Xicana/o epistemological praxis” (31); this a praxis of “living knowledge” (12) that challenges and celebrates the potential of the students. As Arce writes:

The engagement of Huitzilopochtli, the will to act, demonstrates the agency held by

⁴⁶ For a study of the Aztec praxis of Nahui Ollin, see: Kirkhusmo Pharo, Lars, *The Ritual Practice of Time: Philosophy and Sociopolitics of Mesoamerican Calendars*, Brill, 2014, pp. 282-284. For an investigation of the application of Nahui Ollin in the MAS classroom, see Godina, Heriberto “Mesocentrism and Students of Mexican Background: A Community Intervention for Culturally Relevant Instruction” *Journals of Latinos and Education*, vol. 2, no. 3, 2003; and Luna, Nora A. Bret Davis and William P. Evans, “Indigenous Mexican culture, identity and academic aspirations: results from a community-based curriculum project for Latina/Latino students” *Race, Ethnicity, and Education*, vol. 18, no. 3, 2015, pp. 341-362. In her study of Frida Kahlo, Nancy Deffebach writes of the artist’s work, *Autoretrato con monos*, “the *ollin* glyph that Kahlo displays on her *huipil* together with the number four ... suggests that in 1943, three years after remarrying Riviera, she saw herself in a new era, the Fifth Sun, known as Nahui Ollin” (2015, 65).

Xicana/o youth to critically reflect upon their past and present lives (Tezcatlipoca), while strengthening their resiliency through the obtaining and constructing of knowledge as well as the development of the necessary academic skills, social capital, and confidence (Quetzalcoatl), and to take action as historical beings in constructing their futures (35) ... Xipe Totec encapsulates the three principles of Tezcatlipoca, Quetzalcoatl, Huitzilopochtli, for the accumulation of the processes within all three of these principles results in transformation. (35)

A further part of the MAS classroom's transformational pedagogical praxis came in the utilization of Mayan greeting, In Lak'Ech. In Spanish, In Lak'Ech can be translated as "Tú eres mi otro yo", in English as "You are my other me". In its application, it is the recognition that fundamentally we are all one connected being. Rodríguez interprets the greeting in this way:

In Lak'Ech is the principle of love and respect for your fellow human being. It humanizes humankind by eliminating the ego. It unites as opposed to disuniting; it humanizes as opposed to dehumanization and fragmentation. It is the ultimate principle of spiritual love. (2010, 7)

In the closing lines of *Notes toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, Judith Butler speaks to the humanizing potential of what she calls "a life lived with others" (2015, 220). As McFarland see maíz narratives as "common sense" in the face of "chaos", so too does Butler see transformational practice in the recognition of interdependency:

In avowing the need we have for one another, we avow as well as basic principles that inform the social, democratic conditions of what we still call "the good life." These are critical conditions of democratic life in the sense that they are part on an ongoing crisis, but also because they belong to a form of thinking and acting that responds to the urgencies of our time. (2015, 220)

Luís Valdez, widely regarded as the father of Chicano theater,⁴⁷ incorporated the Mayan principle into his epic poem *Pensamiento Serpentino*:

"IN LAK'ECH: Tú eres mi otro yo.
Somos espejos para cada uno
We are mirrors to each other.

Así es que no andes criticando [so do not go criticizing]
o maltratando a otras gentes [or mistreating other people]
deal with your own límites" (1994, 191).

⁴⁷ Jorge Huerta, introduction to *Zoot Suit: A Bilingual Edition*, by Luis Valdez (Houston: Arte Publico Press, 2004), vii. In the theater world, as Ramón H. Rivera-Servera writes, Valdez remains "one of the most socially engaged and politically invested playwrights in US history" (2007, 159).

The MAS educators adopted Valdez's work. It was adapted to become part of the performative practice of CCI.⁴⁸ In Lak Ech was recited at the beginning of each class before the Nahui Ollin:

Tú eres mi otro yo / You are my other me.
 Si Te hago daño a ti / If I do harm to you,
 Me hago daño a mi mismo / I do harm to myself.
 Si te amo y respeto / If I love and respect you,
 Me amo y respeto yo / I love and respect myself.

Curtis Acosta explains that having the students recite In Lak'Ech was an opportunity "to show them they are in a different space, and that this is a space of love and that this is also a space of respect, and its love and respect for our cultura as well" (2012). Connected to the praxis of In Lak'Ech was the application of the unity clap, or Isang Bagsak [Tagalog *If one falls, we all fall*], an expression of solidarity deeply embedded in borderlands resistance.⁴⁹ Performed in a group, the clap, over just a few seconds, replicates the quickening of a heartbeat. It begins slowly and softly, building in momentum and sound towards a final resounding finish. During the Delano grape strike in 1960's California, the clap was utilized to bridge language barriers between Mexican/Mexican American and Filipino members of the United Farmworkers Union (UFW).⁵⁰ For the UFW workers in the precarious space of poverty, the unity clap bridged

⁴⁸ On the dismantling of the MAS program, Valdez writes, "As a result of Arizona House Bill 2281 targeting the Mexican American Studies program, my plays have been banned in Tucson public schools, along with other works of Mexican American literature. I condemn this latest violation of American constitutional principles. I attribute it to a historic blindness and ignorance that will only embarrass the good people of Arizona for generations to come. Chicano Studies is quite simply the root of American Studies. Human history in this hemisphere does not begin in 1492 C.E. but rather in 3113 B.C.E. with the creation of the Mayan calendar, if not before with the Ancients in Peru."

⁴⁹ In 1969, Armando Navarro writes, the Brown Berets introduced a US President to the unity clap: "They became involved in the "Biltmore Hotel Incident." Then Governor Ronald Reagan was speaking at an event at the hotel when several fires broke out; he was interrupted several time with the Chicano clap and shouts of "Viva La Raza"" (2005, 373). Rosalio Muñoz, co-chair of the first Chicano Moratorium, recalls the crowd's response after giving a speech at an anti-Vietnam war protest where he had refused to be drafter: "I got a huge applause in the form of a Chicano clap" at the end of which "Some shouted out ¡Que Viva La Raza!" (qtd. in García, Mario T. 2015, 243). Oscar Zeta Acosta's fictional account of a Vicki Carr concert includes a particularly sexualized performance of the clap, "When she finishes, the clapping is soft and slow at first. Then it builds up and up, faster and faster, harder and harder, faster-harder-faster. harder, until we are drowned in a sea of madness" (1973, 173).

⁵⁰ The UFW was born of a coalition of two farm worker committees—the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (majority Filipino) led by Larry Itliong, and the National Farm Workers Association (majority Mexican/Mexican American) led by César Chávez. Despite the Filipinos, who were known as the Delano Manongs, being the first group in California's Coachella and San Joaquín valleys to take an unprecedented stand against their inhumane working conditions, history has centered Chávez and the Chicano narrative of the farmworker struggle. Little scholarly work has been written about the Delano Manongs and the man who led them, Larry Itliong. Itliong became vice-president of the UFW yet his work remains hidden. Marissa Aroy's film,

experiences of labor discrimination, marginalization, and racism. As Butler writes, such acts acknowledge, “[O]ur shared exposure to precarity is but one ground of our potential equality and our reciprocal obligations to produce together conditions of a livable life” (220). In the MAS classroom, the clap avowed the need students and teachers had for one another as they also sought to move forwards towards, like the farm workers in 1960s California, “the good life” (220).

CHANTE SWEET CHANTE

Mignolo argues part of the “fundamental task of de-colonizing knowledge and being ... requires ... build[ing] and affirm[ing] corporeal apparatus of enunciation-others upon which knowing-otherwise is already the step to being-otherwise” (2008). In Tucson, such an apparatus was built upon the intersections and affirmations of the lived knowledges of the students, and of histories and literatures that mirrored, and challenged, their understandings of their lives. In *Precious Knowledge*, the 2011 documentary that follows the struggle to keep MAS in Tucson’s schools, Curtis Acosta begins teaching Ana Castillo’s *So Far From God* by drawing the students’ attention to the book’s cover. The image is that of the top of an adobe Spanish mission church tower, with a large bronze bell hanging underneath. “This looks like home,” he says, “This looks like where you’re from. It’s a *Chicano* novel, right?” (emphasis in the original, 26:06). Laura Gutiérrez argues, “The notion of home (or homeland) is among the most important preoccupations for diasporic communities residing permanently in the United States” (2003, 65). In this respect, the imagining of Aztlán during the Chicano Movement, was, she argues, necessary “to explain [the communities] indigenous roots, their nomadism, and therefore their “lack” of territorial space” (65). In Tucson, the MAS program claimed territory through the construction of a space, to paraphrase Acosta, which looked like home. Moreover,

Delano Manongs: The Forgotten Heroes of the United Farm Workers (2014) was lauded upon its release. In a profile of in the New York Times, Dawn Bohulano Mabalon comments of the UFW, “In popular culture, it’s seen as a Chicano movement, not as the multiethnic alliance that it actually was” (qtd. in Leigh Brown 2015).

it was a space that looked like them, their “enunciation”, their “knowing”, their “being.” Where La Loca in *So Far From God* sought never to venture into “the bigger world” because “At home she had everything she needed” (1993, 152), so did the MAS classroom enable the students to see that they had the capacity to build a critically bigger world and to build it out of their home.

In her essay, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle The Master’s House”, Audre Lorde argues that in utilizing the majoritarian epistemologies of “the racist patriarchy ... only the most narrow perimeters of change are possible and allowable” (2000, 94). Moreover, this change often comes, she writes, at the expense of those “who have been forged in the crucible of difference” (95). In the MAS classroom, educators utilized the “difference” of Chicana and Latina literature as a strategic tool to dismantle “the master’s house”, here the repressive structure of the state school system. Tara J. Yosso theorizes this as “critical race counter storytelling”, which in pedagogical practice “strengthen[s] traditions of social, political, and cultural survival and resistance, nullifying the majoritarian narrative of reality” (2006, 10).⁵¹ Yosso’s argument echoes that of El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán which recognizes, “Cultural values of our people strengthen our identity” (1969). In this way, Curtis Acosta’s Xicano Literature class, when covering themes such as alienation, marginalization, and immigration, draws from what he terms, “Resistance Literature” (see Appendix III). Acosta here teaches the writings of, for example, Ana Castillo, Ramón García, Luís J. Rodríguez, and Malcolm X. All of these works, in Lorde’s words, “forged in the crucible of difference” (9), provide counterstories that “bring attention to those who courageously resist racism and struggle

⁵¹ For an analysis of how critical race methodology informs counter-storytelling in education, see: Solórzano, Daniel G. and Tara J. Yosso, “Critical Race Methodology: Counter-Storytelling as an Analytical Framework for Education Research” *Qualitative Inquiry* Sage Journals, vol. 8, no. 1, 2002, 23-44. For counter-storytelling in praxis, see; Hughes-Hassell, Sandra “Multicultural Young Adult Literature as a Form of Counter-Storytelling” *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy* vol. 83, no. 3, 2013, pp. 212-228; and Williams, Bronwyn “The Truth in the Tale: Race and “Counterstorytelling in the Classroom” *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* vol. 48, no. 2, 2004, pp. 164-169.

towards a more socially and racially just society” (Yosso 2006, 11). In the MAS program’s history classes, the work of scholars such as Rodolfo F Acuña, Elizabeth S. Martínez, and Howard Zinn was utilized.⁵² To ensure that the students became active participants in the reclaiming of their subjectivities, they were encouraged to engage critically with the work. Holding aloft Ana Castillo’s, *So Far From God*, Curtis Acosta addresses the class, “[W]hen these stories haven’t been around, and when these stories haven’t been on stage, and when these stories haven’t been in our history books, you become the historians” (2012, 01:27). The prioritizing of culturally reflective literature and history was part of the process of decolonizing the space of the classroom; a space Acosta writes of as “our *chante*, our home” (2012, 81). In using the Caló term, “*chante*” Acosta draws from a language that Leticia Gallindo argues, “has been part of the Chicano experience since ... [the] 1930s ... and it has always been a very integral and vibrant part of the Chicano speech community that exist in barrios throughout the Southwest” (1982). Moreover, as Anzaldúa writes, “language is a homeland” (77), and utilizing Caló in the MAS classroom supports the program praxis to name their “home” with both border bibliography and “border tongue” (77).⁵³ This decolonizing praxis dismantles systems of linguistic silencing as experienced by historic and contemporary borderlands communities. Anzaldúa recalls, “[A]t Pan American University, I, and all Chicano students were required to take two speech classes. Their purpose: to get rid of our accent” (2012 [1987], 76). In Anzaldúa’s case, this purpose did not succeed, for as she writes, “[W]ild tongues cannot be tamed. They can only be cut out” (76). The “cutting out” in Tucson was the removal of the

⁵² In 1969, Acuña was one of the first Chicano academics to submit a proposal for a Mexican American Studies Department at his California campus. He is widely considered to be the godfather of Chicano Studies, with his seminal work, *Occupied America*, the first comprehensive history of Chicanos. Acuña has been a staunch support of the TUSD MAS program. For his analysis of the program, and the political and judicial responses, see *Assault on Mexican American Collective Memory, 2010–2015: Swimming with Sharks*, Lanham: Lexington Books, 2017.

⁵³ In *Chicano Discourse*, Rosaura Sánchez theorizes Caló as an “intra-group subcode ... an element in group solidarity, whether it forms part of the verbal interaction of gangs or of youth in general” (1994, 134). For further studies of the affective nature of Caló, and its roots in Romany, see: Ornstein-Galicia, Jacob L. “Chicano Caló: Description and Review of a Border Variety” *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, vol.9, no. 4, 1987. For a comprehensive study of Chicano English see, Fought, Carmen. 2003. *Chicano English in Context*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

voices on the MAS bibliography, an act, in Anzaldúa's words, of "linguistic terrorism" (72). Whilst the program was in effect "wild tongues" were accommodated, they narrated and therefore created their own space. Within this space of *chante* other "wild tongues" were welcomed. For what the MAS program had created was a site of critical citizenship not only for Chicana and Latina voices but also for a multiplicity of "enunciation-others" (Mignolo 2008).

Chandra Talpade Mohanty explains that it was within the diversity of perspectives of women of color that she found what she writes as

home, not as a comfortable, stable, inherited and familiar space, but instead as an imaginative, politically-charged space where the familiarity and sense of affection and commitment lay in shared collective analysis of social injustice as well as a vision for radical collective transformation. (2003, 128)

In building a home space of radical pedagogy, the MAS program had a similar commitment to the "collective". Writing one year before the dismantling of the program, Curtis Acosta revealed:

In my senior class, we studied multi-ethnic voices, multi-identity, Shakespeare. One thing those voices all had in common is that they were counter-narratives. I tried to find themes of silenced voices and getting that narrative out there. There were some Latino voices, but not to the exclusion of everything else. (2014)

Acosta also shared how the aesthetics of the classroom brought leaders of radical collectivism into the space: "Our room is filled with pictures ranging from Emiliano Zapata to Frida Kahlo to Angela Davis. From Dolores Huerta to Malcolm X to Che Guevara" (2012, 81). Alongside this transnational roll call of the revolutionary hung familiar faces of community, Acosta again, "An entire wall is dedicated to pictures of alumni and former students who were essential in creating that very space" (81). This put the students and the revolutionaries in a dialogical engagement. As Freire theorizes as "communion" (1998, 152), such as the communion, he argues, that Guevara had with the Cuban people. As a pedagogical engagement, this was critically essential for the program's radical praxis. For through sharing the same space as the revered, the student would begin to recognize their own potential as revolutionary, outside of

that preordained for them by the discriminatory machinations of the state. As the MAS creators argue, “This third space challenges the status quo and the stereotypes that exist within our educational institutions” (Romero, et al 2009, 227). Moreover, in the MAS classroom the students could begin the process of recognize themselves as agents of change, for, as Romero et al. argue, the program “was driven by the need to challenge the epistemological and ontological understandings of our students” (227).

The MAS framework of learning decenters Eurocentric narratives of national canonical figures and in doing so, in a Mignolo reading, “opens the possibility of entering into a plural dialogical of equals in a common march” (2013, 499). This particular decentering caused Republican Arizona Senator John Huppenthal, upon visiting Acosta’s class, to remark: “I look up at the wall, and I see a poster of Che Guevara, who many of us think was a thug, and I don’t see anything on Benjamin Franklin. I have a problem. I have a problem” (2010). In response, Augustin Romero, who was also present, shared with the senator and the class:

Benjamin Franklin also warned ... of the darkening of the country. And he was against the inclusion of the “tawny” people. It’s not a disregard of those Founding Fathers, but we try to encourage in our students and facilitate a process wherein we have the courage to examine our history for what it is. (2012)⁵⁴

Romero’s enunciation of MAS practice, exhibits Mignolo’s theorizing of border thinking, “When different local histories and their particular power relations are taken into consideration” (2012 [2000], 67). In attempts to include in the discourse counter-legacies of the Founding Fathers, Romero engages in a release of “an other thinking”, this is done, as Mignolo asserts, “not in order to tell the truth over lies, but to think otherwise, to move towards “an other logic”—in sum, to change the terms not just the content of the conversation” (69-70).

⁵⁴ Romero here draws from Benjamin Franklin’s 1751 essay, “Observations concerning the Increase of Mankind, Peopling of Countries, &c”. Franklin writes, “And while we are, as I may call it, Scouring our Planet, by clearing America of Woods, and so making this Side of our Globe reflect a brighter Light to the Eyes of Inhabitants in Mars or Venus, why should we in the Sight of Superior Beings, darken its People? why increase the Sons of Africa, by Planting them in America, where we have so fair an Opportunity, by excluding all Blacks and Tawneys, of increasing the lovely White and Red? But perhaps I am partial to the Complexion of my Country, for such Kind of Partiality is natural to Mankind.” archive.org/details/increasemankind00franrich

In its pedagogical practice, Acosta's classroom becomes a site where, in a Mignolo reading, "Europe is not the home of knowledge because knowledge is produced everywhere" (205).⁵⁵ In the MAS space of learning "border thinking" releases epistemologies of the "tawny" people into history, "thinking from and beyond disciplines and the geopolitics of knowledge ... from and beyond colonial legacies; from and beyond the gender divide and sexual prescriptions; and from and beyond racial conflicts" (95). The "epistemological potential" of this release then, "has the possibility of overcoming the limitation of territorial thinking" (67).

Chairing the State Education Committee vote on HB 2281 a few weeks later, Huppenthal recollected his encounter with Romero and the MAS program:

Let me provide some guidance on this issue. The students asked me to come down to the classroom. While I was [there] the founder of La Raza started talking about Benjamin Franklin being a racist, and I think it's completely inappropriate to trash our Founding Fathers who put their lives on the line for our freedom and prosperity. (*Precious Knowledge* 2011, 52:12)

Huppenthal's interpretation of Romero's comments speaks to the persistence of the colonial way of imagining the world, of imagining history, of the "us" and the "them", of "theirs" and "ours", of "civilization" and "savagery". The MAS classroom in the honoring of the "thug", Guevara, rather than national hero, Franklin, threatens to dismantle, as Mignolo enunciates "the iron cage of imperial "absolute knowledge"" (2012 [2000], xiv). This dismantling would then "de-seat" majoritarian narratives of "freedom and prosperity", narratives espoused by the Tea Party, for whom Huppenthal is a frequent guest speaker, and whose manifesto warns, "Counter-revolutionaries are running the show in America" (Farah 82, 2010). Joseph Farah, who penned the manifesto, argues in the closing of the text, "The enemy controls (sic) the culture. We must take it back" (130).

⁵⁵ Gloria Ladson-Billings similarly argues "there are well developed systems of knowledge, or epistemologies, that stand in contrast to the dominant Euro-American" (2000, 258).

“REPUBLICANS HATE LATINOS”

Freire writes, “To exist, humanly, is to *name* the world, to change it”, warning that as praxis “saying the word is not the privilege of some few persons, but the right of everyone” (emphasis in original 1998, 69). In Arizona, in act of “dehumanizing aggression” (69), the MAS program fell afoul of those who sought to control “the word”, and sought to do so through the judiciary. A neocolonial act, as Roberto Cintli Rodríguez argues, rooted in “a system of European jurisprudence that determined what was legal/legitimate, what constituted knowledge, who was human (even who/what was beautiful) and who was entitled to full human rights” (2010). As Teun A. van Dijk further articulates, such “entitlement” is tied to privilege, that in which “The power elites also have the access to measures to control dissent and resistance, for example, through selective hiring and funding, by subtle or more overt censorship, through defamation campaigns, and by other means to silence “radicals”” (2008, 37). This, what van Dijk terms “discourse access” (84); was not afforded to the MAS program. Furthermore, any attempts to vocalize injustice were manipulated to suit the rhetorical needs of, in van Dijk’s words, the “symbolic elite”—those who create conditions of censorship which “determine the contents and organization of public knowledge, the hierarchies of beliefs and the pervasiveness of the consensus” (36). As Arjun Appadurain further articulates, “It has to do with the valuation of rational debate, of the right to dissent, of the value of dissent as a sign of the larger value of free speech and opinion, and of the freedom to express dissenting opinions on matters of public moment without fear of retribution” (63). In the spring of 2006, the students of Tucson’s Magnet High invited Dolores Huerta, United Farm Workers co-founder and Presidential Medal of Freedom winner, to speak at the school. The students had been participating in walkouts protesting the congressional implementation of HR 4437, the Border Protection, Anti-terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005.⁵⁶ The legislation was widely viewed

⁵⁶ HR 4437 is also known as the “Sensenbrenner Bill” after its sponsor, Rep. F. James Sensenbrenner (R-WI-5).

by activists as vehemently anti-immigrant in its authorization of Homeland Security “to take all appropriate actions to maintain operational control over the US international land and maritime borders” (United States, Cong. 2005). HR 4437 allowed for the implementation of high-tech “systematic surveillance”, a reinforcement of “physical infrastructure”, border patrol recruitment drives, and the “increas[ed] deployment of United States Customs and Border Protection personnel to border areas with high levels of unlawful entry” (United States, Cong. 2005). If implemented into federal law, the bill would have seen the introduction of increased penalties for undocumented immigration and for those seen as “aiding and abetting” the undocumented (including family members and employers); moreover, individuals found to be unlawfully present in the US would be liable to be convicted as felons. The US House of Representatives passed HR 4437 in December of 2005, it failed, however, to pass by the Senate; nonetheless, its very proposal sparked protests nationwide. On May 1, 2006, these protests had culminated in The Great American Boycott, also known as A Day without Immigrants. More than a million people across the country boycotted schools and businesses and took to the streets. In Tucson in 2006, the Day without Immigrants had begun two months earlier on March 29. On this date four local schools saw several hundred students, mainly Chicanx and Latinx walk out of their classroom—actions reminiscent of the Chicano Movimiento “blow outs” of the late 1960s. Dolores Huerta had been invited to Magnet High to suggest less disruptive alternative methods of protest. Her response was “to name the world” (Freire 1998, 69). Huerta proposed a postcard campaign to the Senate Republican National Committee with the theme, “Republicans Hate Latinos” (2006, 14:30)⁵⁷ This protest motif, this “naming”, was to become the catalyst for the removal of Mexican American Studies from Tucson’s state schools.

On May 12, one month after Huerta’s address, Tom Horne went to Magnet High. A special school assembly had been called where Horne’s deputy, Margaret Garcia Dugan, gave

⁵⁷ For the full audio of Huerta’s address, go to: quill.tusd.k12.az.us/doloreshuertaaddress.

an address refuting Huerta and arguing, “Republicans Hate Latinos is nothing more than a political statement designed to incite an emotional response. Of course, it's not true and cannot be backed up with evidence.” In backing up her argument Garcia Dugan provided “evidence”, stating, “As I said before, I happen to be a Latina and have been welcomed into the Republican Party, along with many other Latinos” (2006). The remainder of Garcia Dugan’s statement drew from a conservative Republican platform, with an emphasis on individualism and the destructive nature of social programs. The students were warned, “Relying on someone else for your needs kills an individual's spirit to become self-reliant and self-sufficient” (2006). The response Garcia Dugan’s words “incited” came in the form of a silent protest led by the campus MEChA chapter. In a Foucauldian reading, the students refused to be “docile” in the face of discipline; they refused to be “subjected, used, transformed and improved” (1997 [1977], 136). The Tucson Citizen reports, “70 Tucson High Magnet School students took off their overshirts and displayed pro-Latino T-shirts.” The slogans—“You can silence our voices but never our spirit,” “Prop. 203 is anti-Latino” and “English only is anti-Latino” (2006)—reflected ongoing resistance to the English language legislation, Prop. 203, introduced by the state in 2000. A number of the students took it upon themselves to reclaim their voices by symbolically taping their mouths. They then “spoke” through gesture. Students raised their fists; the semiotics of which hark back to Honoré Daumier’s fist shaking proletariat in his 1860 painting, *The Uprising*, illuminating dissent in the face of industrialization. In the early 20th century, the raised fist was the logo of the Industrial Workers of the World; it remains an iconic symbol of the Black Power movement of the Civil Rights era. US sprinters, Tommie Smith and John Carlos raised their fists on the winners’ podium at the 1968 Mexico City Olympic Games. Smith calls the gesture a “human rights salute” (“Silent Gesture”). Tricia Goodnow argues, “Because the symbolic meaning of the fist's strength has been ingrained in the public consciousness, users of the symbol can transfer the power of one movement to the next” (2006, 176). At the height of the movimiento, Chicana took the gesture to the streets along with the

cries “Chicano Power” and “Viva la Raza!” In the 21st century, the raised fist continues to be used by historically marginalized groups as a powerful expression of defiance and unity in the face of systematic oppression.⁵⁸ In Magnet High’s school assembly, the students utilizing the gesture followed in this tradition, keeping their fists aloft as they rose in silence and *en masse* exited the school hall at the end of Garcia Dugan’s address.

MAS had interrupted, as Foucault writes, “a machinery of power”, one which, as it works upon the body, “explores it, breaks it down, rearranges it” (138). In Arizona, this epistemological “interruption” threatened the state’s control of the narrative. The state responded. In his missive of the following year, “An Open Letter to the Citizens of Tucson”, Horne recalls, “In hundreds of visits to schools, I’ve never seen students act rudely and in defiance of authority, except in this one unhappy case.” He then pinpointed what he saw as the source of the students’ actions, “I believe the students did not learn this rudeness at home, but from their Raza teachers.” Horne further argued that these classes embodied “a kind of destructive ethnic chauvinism” and that the students “should not be taught that they are oppressed” (2007). George B. Sánchez reports that in November 2007 Horne filed a public records request in the commencement of an inquiry into the MAS program’s training, funding, and curriculum. Upon discovering that as State Superintendent of Schools he had no jurisdiction to interfere with what was taught in Tucson schools, this being the remit of local school boards, Horne dropped the investigation. However, the determination to end the program remained, with Horne turning to legal redress to consolidate his position. As van Dijk argues, “Whatever the power of directors, top politicians ... their real power seems to have formal consequences only when somehow “fixed” in writing or print” (2008, 54). In a Freire

⁵⁸ See Goodman, J. David “Raised-Fist Salute Has Varied Meanings.” *The Lede*, The New York Times, April 16, 2012. thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/04/16/raised-fist-salute-has-varied-meanings/. Patton, Phil “Not Your Grandparent’s Clenched Fist” *AIGA Journal of Design* Jan 10, 2006. www.aiga.org/not-your-grandparent-s-clenched-fist, and Clancey Russell’s analysis of the “The Fist as a Symbol of Black Power”, *Black Power in American Memory*, American Studies at Chapel Hill, April 18, 2017. blackpower.web.unc.edu/2017/04/the-fist-as-a-symbol-of-black-power/

reading, what was required to critically fix the “defiance” in Tucson’s classrooms was a “culture of silence” (1985, 30). Not physical silence in which the students mouths-taped refused to engage with the state as oppressor, but a judicial silencing which replaced resistance with unbiased, apolitical, and objective pedagogy, where, “the masses are 'mute', that is, they are prohibited from creatively taking part in the transformation of their society and therefore prohibited from being.... [Thus] alienated from the power responsible for their silence” (30). In an Anzaldúan reading, the students “wild tongues” (2012 [1987], 75) needed to be removed.

In April 2008, Arizona State Legislator Russell Pearce (R-Mesa) sponsored legislation that made clear the parameters of “acceptable” education in the state:

A public school in this state shall not include within the program of instruction any courses, classes or school sponsored activities that promote, assert as truth or feature as an exclusive focus any political, religious, ideological or cultural beliefs or values that denigrate, disparage or overtly ENCOURAGE dissent from the values of American democracy and western civilization, including democracy, capitalism, pluralism and religious toleration. (emphasis in original AZ 2008)

The legislation was introduced as an amendment to SB 1108, a Homeland Security Bill also known as the “Anti-Ethnic Studies” bill (Ariz. 2008). If enacted, the parameters of acceptability would have extended outside of the classroom for the bill’s provisions also targeted on-campus college and school organizations such as MEChA, Native Americans United, and black student unions. Although the bill passed through the House Appropriations Committee, it failed to pass the House. It has not yet been enacted. In 2009, further legislation was introduced. An amendment to SB 1069 called for the prohibiting of classes “designed primarily for students of a particular ethnic group” (Ariz. 2009). The amendment had been sponsored by Senator Jonathan Paton (R-Tucson) “at the urging of Superintendent Horne” (Lundholm 2011, 1054). Again, the proposed legislation failed to pass. Then on February 15, 2010, Representative Steven Montenegro (R) proposed amendments to HB 2281. This bill, pre-proposed changes, addressed student discipline. The language of the amendments functioned as the disciplining of the MAS program through the “dehumanizing aggression” of, as Freire’s writes, “those

whose deny others the right to speak their word” (1998, 69). MAS-educator José González articulates this denial in arguing:

They call us racist, and that’s the total antithesis of what we believe. Do we talk about race in this class? Do we talk about class? Do we talk about sexism? We talk about all systems of oppression but that doesn’t necessarily make us sexist, does it? Or classist. But they like to throw racist at us. (2012, 01:52)

The “naming” of the MAS program as racist highlights the historic and contemporary critical maneuvering of majoritarian discourse to prevent communities of color from speaking their oppression. In Arizona, the second amendment to HB 2281, ARS 15-112 (A), clarifies the state’s interpretation of, and response to, what MAS “talk about” (González 01:52):

- A) A school district or charter school in this state shall not include in its program of instruction any courses or classes that includes any of the following:
1. Promote the overthrow of the United States Government.
 2. Promote resentment towards a race or class of people.
 3. Are designed primarily for pupils of a particular ethnic group.
 4. Advocate ethnic solidarity instead of treating pupils as individuals (AZ Leg. 2010).

The amendment exemplified the state’s interpretation of free speech as, in Freire’s words, a “crafty instrument for ... domination” (Freire 1998 [1979], 70). In Tucson this was the domination of Horne’s narrative that the MAS program had been infiltrated by “a small group of radical teachers, anti-capitalists, anti-Western civilization, anti-free enterprise, teaching the kids that boundaries are artificial” (qtd. in Herrares 2010). This is a narrative that reflects anti-immigration discourse, with its “us” and “them”, with its “legal” and “illegal”; judicial storytelling, as Anna Ochoa O’Leary et al. argue, “reliant on a racialized national ideology to undermine a historically subordinated group’s claims of belonging by making them the object of fear and rage” (2012, 100). The “kids”, as Horne called them, understood this; they understood what Horne’s boundaries were - that the First Amendment didn’t apply to them and that the majoritarian gatekeeping of the US Constitution in Arizona had allowed *racial animus* to “amend” their rights to free speech. They took direct action.

The board brought the full “glory” of state sanctioned violence upon its citizens. Two weeks before HB 2281 was signed into state law, nine students chained themselves to the desk

and chairs in the TUSD board's chambers, preventing a meeting. They were part of group calling themselves United Non-Discriminatory Individuals Demanding Our Studies! (UNIDOS!).⁵⁹ During the protest, they hung a banner that read, "UNIDOS Presents The New School Board" effectively countering the state's claim on their education. In response, the following week's meeting saw the TUSD school board bring "discipline" to the proceedings. On May 3, the area around the district's headquarters was militarized, with riot police inside the building and heavily armed officers surrounding it. There were police helicopters hovering above, and those who wished to give testimony and/or attend the meeting were wanded for weapons at the door.⁶⁰ If a testimony ran too long said individual was escorted out by officers and in a number of cases arrested, including Lupe Castillo one of the founders of MALCS in 1968.⁶¹ Crowds turned up in support of the students. Despite the protests and accumulated evidence showing the effectiveness of the MAS program for student achievement, on May 11, 2010 Senator Jan Brewer (R) signed HB 2281 into law. It became effective on December 31. Tom Horne immediately declared MAS to be in violation of the revised statutes and began proceedings to dismantle the program.

In May of 2011, John Huppenthal, who had replaced Horne as Arizona's Superintendent of State Instruction (Horne was now State Attorney General), commissioned an audit of the program.⁶² Cambium Learning, an organization specifically chosen by Huppenthal, was given

⁵⁹ Rodolfo F. Acuña reports, "in December 2010, students began to question why their voice was not part of the discussions surrounding Mexican American Studies, it was their education at stake" (2017, 49). UNIDOS! Was formed the following January, with Acuña arguing that the group "energized the movement in the fight for Ethnic Studies" (43). As Irene Vásquez writes, "UNIDOS! actively organized a variety of support activities. The students organized meetings and community celebrations, attending TUSD board meetings, participated in public demonstrations, marches, and walkouts, hosted cultural events, and convened workshops and teach-ins. The non-responsiveness of the TUSD board to the students' concerns led them to engage in acts of civil disobedience" (2012). For more on the activities of UNIDOS, see: www.unidostucson.org/

⁶⁰ Cabrera, Nolan. Elisa L Meza, and Roberto Dr Cintli Rodriguez report, "K-9 units were on the prowl for bombs, snipers were stationed on the building's roof, a bomb squad patrolled the front of the building, and a helicopter hovered above. Dozens of officers lined the streets, and there were police vehicles as far as the eye could see. Near the entrance stood a makeshift altar set up by local clergy" (2011).

⁶¹ D. A. Morales reports, "69-year old Mexican American History professor, Lupe Castillo, who walks around with two crutches due to a disability, arrested by a swarm of about a dozen police in full riot gear and helmets, guns" (qtd. in Biggers 2012, 218). For video of the arrest: www.youtube.com/watch?v=qHrB1bLfKs4

⁶² Prior to taking up the post heading Arizona's Department of Education, Huppenthal declared that upon his

the directive to determine whether ARS 15-112 (A) had been violated. The audit cumulated in a one-hundred and twenty page document which cleared the program of any wrongdoing, “During the curriculum audit period,” it reads “no observable evidence was present to suggest that any classroom within Tucson Unified School District is in direct violation of the law” (2011, 53). Moreover, the audit revealed “Data indicates that the graduation rate of students in the MASD program is higher than those not in the program”, reporting, “In light of the data collected and reviewed, student achievement is due to the sense of pride that develops through their accomplishments with highly effective teachers” (49). In summary, the Cambium team argued, “[A]ll evidence points to peace as the essence for program teachings. Resentment does not exist in the context of these courses” (55).⁶³ Despite Cambium’s conclusions, Huppenthal, like his predecessor, also issued a finding that the MAS program was in violation of the state statute. The matter went to the judiciary, with Administrative Law Judge Lewis D. Kowal ruling on December 27, 2011 that the program was “biased, political, and emotionally charged” (35). Moreover, that its course of instruction was “designed for Latinos as a group that promotes racial resentment against “Whites,” and advocates ethnic solidarity of Latinos” (34). Kowal’s ruling was a recommendation only, yet one that Huppenthal utilized to instruct the TUSD to cut MAS or lose ten-percent of its state funding. The school board conceded, and on January 10, 2012 MAS was shut down.⁶⁴

Following the program’s termination, and the contract termination of many of its

appointment he would “stop La Raza” (qtd. in Rodríguez, Gregory. 2012).

⁶³ In 2012, as part of evidence presented in the MAS legal case, Nolan L Cabrera, Ronald W Marx, and Jeffrey F. Millem prepared a study for the special master, Dr Willis D. Hawley, to consider the relationship between student achievement (2008/2010 cohort) and participation in the program. The multivariate analysis showed that “MAS students in the 2010 cohort were 64 percent more likely to pass their AIMS [Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards] tests, and MAS students in the 2008 cohort were 118 percent more likely to pass” (5). For further empirical analyses of the MAS program see: Cabrera, Nolan L. et al. “Missing the (Student Achievement) Forest for All the (Political) Trees: Empiricism and the Mexican American Studies Controversy in Tucson” *American Educational Research Journal*, vol 51, no. 6, 2014, pp. 1084-1118;

⁶⁴ In the meantime, students and teachers had filed a federal appeal, *Acosta et al. v Huppenthal*, claiming HB 2281 violated their First Amendment rights to free speech. On March US District Judge A. Wallace Tashima found the MAS program in violation of A.R.S 15-112(A), effectively rendering it illegal and shutting it down.

educators, teachers in the affected schools were advised by the local school board in future planning to stay away from any books where "race, ethnicity and oppression are central themes" (Biggers 2012, 182). These are the very themes that question the romantic fiction of a post-racial era promulgated in the age of Obama; a romantic fiction, I argue, which veils acts of cultural, social, and political violence against those seen as outside of the norm. As Sumi Cho argues, post-racialism "ignores the bulk of racial disparities, inequities, and imbalances in society, and pursues race-neutral remedies as a fundamental, *a priori* value" (2009, 1592).⁶⁵ The pursuance of race neutrality in Arizona suited the state's needs to enact control upon its Chicanax populace; control where, in Cho's words, "equality principles are rearticulated to exercise continued privilege and where critiques of racism are rendered morally equivalent to racism itself" (1616). The "race-neutral universalisms" (Cho, 1621) as embodied in ARS 15-112 (A) rendered the MAS program "immoral." José González, a teacher on the program, voices the closure of MAS through "race neutral remedies" (Cho 2009, 1592) as a critical wounding, as the afflicting upon the community of "more historical trauma" (2012). For the architect of the program, Augustine Romero, the dismantling of MAS was "the state of Arizona ... trying to tell us that what we thought might be good for our students is now bad, such as learning about oppression, closing the achievement gap, and implementing local control over our schools" (2014, 11). Salomón Baldenegro, who in 1969 had led the struggle to bring representative education to Tucson's schools and has remained a stalwart of community ever

⁶⁵ As Sumi Cho argues, "post-racialism obscures the centrality of race and racism in society. Second, it more effectively achieves what the Racial Backlash movement sought to do over two decades ago—forge a national consensus around the retreat from race-based remedies on the basis that the racial eras of the past have been and should be transcended. Third, post-racialism as an ideology serves to reinstate an unchallenged white normativity. Post-racialism is fast becoming the "race card" of whites, deployed with obligatory reference to Barack Obama's presidency in an effort to trump the moral high ground held by survivors of racial discrimination in a country with centuries of racial injustice and inequality. Finally, post-racialism denigrates collective Black political organization." (2009, 1593). See also, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva and Robert L. Reece, "From Obamerica to Trumpamerica: The Continuing Significance of Color-Blind Racism" in Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America*, 5th ed., Rowman & Littlefield, 2018, pp.203-307.

since,⁶⁶ ties the silencing of the program to centuries of oppression, arguing “Since 1848 when the war ended with Mexico, there have been attempts to marginalize us” (qtd. in Biggers 2017, 235). Despite this, he continues, “We are resilient. Our history is not one of victimization. Our history is one of achievement. We have not only survived all manner of attacks, we have gone forward. And we’re going to win again” (235).

Much of this history was contained in the books of the MAS program’s bibliography. Here could be found the history of the walkouts, the legal battles, the Chicano Movement, celebrations of indigeneity and migration, language and identity, all intertwined with numerous literary responses to chaos. The books became portals to worlds of representation and resistance. Upon the closing of the program, a letter went out to the teachers in which the titles on the MAS bibliography were ordered, “cleared from all classrooms, boxed-up and sent to the Textbook Depository for storage” (qtd. in Biggers 180). Most of the texts became available for library use only; however, seven were removed completely from circulation - Rodolfo Acuña’s *Occupied America*, Bill Bigelow’s *Rethinking Columbus: The Next 500 Years*, Richard Delgado’s *Critical Race Theory*, Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales’ *Message to Aztlán: Selected Writings, Chicano!* Elizabeth Martínez *500 Years of Chicano History in Pictures*, and Arturo Rosales *The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement*. As Curtis Acosta shares:

In sum, we have been told that we cannot teach any race, ethnic or oppression themed lessons or units. However, there has been no specific guidance and since our pedagogy is also deemed “illegal” than we are not sure HOW to teach either. I asked if I could start teaching Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* and was told no, due to the themes that are present and the likelihood of avoiding discussions of colonization, enslavement, and

⁶⁶ In *Occupied America*, Acuña celebrates Baldenegro’s work arguing, “Baldenegro has remained a gadfly in opposition to injustice and a strong advocate of student and community control of Mexican American Studies” (2011, 56).

racism were remote. (qtd. in Kasprisin, 2012).

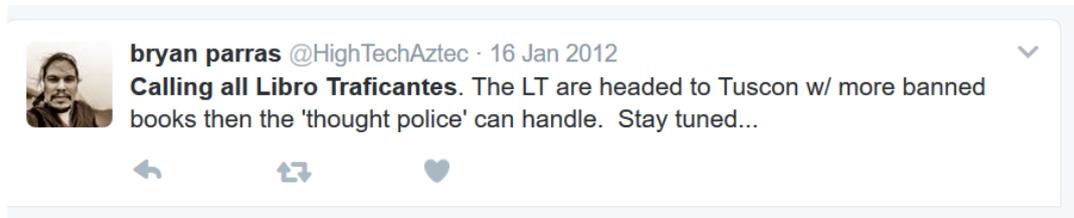
In the words of Bryan Parras, one of the five founding members of the Librotraficante movement, “And so that says something about this program, right? It says something about what the power of these books really can do. And yes, [the authorities] are scared; they are scared of folks reading these books, because they empower you” (NacFilm Theory 2012).

CHAPTER TWO

“V FOR VICTORY, VATOS!”

DAY ONE: HOUSTON

We have a tradition of migrations, a tradition of long walks.
Gloria E. Anzaldúa



Houston, the home of the Librotraficantes, is a city rich with the histories of its Mexican populace. An interrogation of which uncovers dynamic collective action for justice, for civil, political, and cultural rights, action that counters majoritarian narratives of illegality, criminality, and civic illegitimacy. It is in fact a city built upon the backs of those marked outside of the national story. Following the 1836 battle of San Jacinto, where it took a mere eighteen minutes for General Sam Houston’s Texian volunteers to engage and overpower General Antonio López de Santa Anna’s Mexican army,⁶⁷ a group of captured Mexican soldiers were forced, alongside the enslaved, to clear and drain swampland along the Buffalo Bayou. Two New York real-estate speculators, John and Augustus Allen, had purchased the land. On August 30, with the swamp reclaimed, the two brothers declared the city of Houston founded. The prisoners-of-war received their freedom, and a number returned home, but those who stayed constituted the first Mexican settlement of the region. In its commitment to illuminate voices of community, the Librotraficante Movement runs fueled by the histories of those who sought to settle in the city. In English, the movement’s name translates as “book smugglers”;

⁶⁷ “Texian” is a term used to describe Anglo Americans living in Texas when it was still the Mexican province known as Coahuila-Tejas. Over time, “Texian” became “Texan”. Those who fought with Houston at San Jacinto were volunteers.

connotatively, however, the term subverts rhetorical borders claiming space for myriad stories of the United States. Stories that provide what I term a “cultural poultice”, a relief against historical and contemporary wounds.

DISSIDENT VOICES

Writing on oppositional storytelling, Richard Delgado argues that not only do “stories [and counterstories] build consensus, a common culture of shared understandings, and deeper more vital ethics”, but they can also “serve an equally important destructive function. They can show us what we believe is ridiculous, self-serving, or cruel. They can show us the way out of the trap of unjustified exclusion. They can help us understand when the time is right to reallocate power” (1998, 260). On Wednesday April 22, 1998, at the Chapultepec restaurant in Houston’s Montrose district, over one-hundred people attended the launch of *Nuestra Palabra: Latino Writers Having Their Say*. It was evident by the original numbers that, in a Delgado reading, the time had long been “right” for such events. This was something that the prevailing discourse on Latinx literacy misrepresented, for, to be “literate” in the United States is to be a speaker of English, despite the United States not having an official language. To be a speaker of English, therefore, is to be a “legitimate” citizen. As Guadalupe Valdés argues, hostility towards Latinx communities is tied to majoritarian ethnolinguistic identity in the United States. “[T]here is a fear all over the country,” she argues “especially in states where recent influxes of Latino immigrants have increased dramatically - that Spanish might replace English and that the dominant culture will be polluted by foreigners” (2011, 115). The bilingualism of *Nuestra Palabra*’s name disrupts this narrative of “pollution”, clearing the air instead for a fuller more inclusive understanding of the linguistic diversity of Latinx communities and their legitimate claim to define what it means to speak “American”, to have, therefore, “their say”.

When Díaz arrived in 1992, the Latinx demographic of Harris county, where Houston is located, stood at almost three-quarters of a million (Texas Dept. of State Health Services

2011). However, whilst undertaking a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing (MFA) at the University of Houston (UH), Díaz was to experience first-hand the lack of representation for the stories of the county's Latinx populace; a populace whose history is so closely tied to the development of Houston, one of the nation's most prosperous cities. What Díaz encountered on the MFA was the US literary canon, as Toni Morrison writes, "American literature that, according to conventional wisdom, is certainly not Chicano literature, or Afro-American literature, or Asian American, or Native American....It is somehow separate from them and they from it" (124, 1988). Priscilla Solis Ybarra, a *Nuestra Palabra* volunteer who was a graduate student in the English Department at UH in the early 2000s, recalls, "I had a wonderful mentor and dissertation director in José Aranda, but he was the only professor who specialized in Chicana/o literature on the faculty" (2016, 176). For Díaz, this lack of representation extended to his fellow students and to the program's alumni. He was one of only three Latinx accepted in the program's history, and the first Chicanx. Moreover, as with the majority of creative writing MFAs, the faculty was white. This pedagogical lens can be problematic, for as David Mura writes, "the unconscious ways whites perceive people of color are more likely to come out, since creative writing arises out of the unconscious" (2015). In this respect, he continues:

What the MFA student of color experiences in a predominantly white institution is not simply an obscure or numerically insignificant occurrence. Instead, it is symptomatic and revelatory of the ways the voices and consciousness of people of color are suppressed in our society. (2015)

What makes the lack of representation on the UH program particularly distinctive, is that it operates on the same campus as *Arte Público*, the oldest, largest, and most prestigious publisher of Latinx literature in the country.

Nicolás Kanellos founded *Arte Público* in 1979 at Indiana University. Six years earlier, he, and Luís Dávila had published the first edition of the literary journal *Revista Chicano-Riqueña*. As a student, Kanellos had been heavily involved with labor activism and the Chicano

Movement, *Revista* was a product of this. At that time, there were a number of journals coming out of the movimiento, as Felipe De Ortega y Gasca writes:

Chicano writers hooked up with ephemeral publishers or set up garage presses ... to get their works out to the public, principally activist Chicano readers anxious to devour works by their own. In academia today this is not considered reputable publishing. But this was all that was available to us then. (2009, 116)

Those “eager to devour”, found reflection in the manner in which Kanellos and Dávila devised *Revista*. From the outset, the input and commitment of students and community had been invaluable to the project. Often they were the very voices contained within the journal’s pages. “The idea we had,” Kanellos shares, “was to create a place for all of those writers and artists we had met and were meeting who were involved in the [Chicano] movement. [*Revista*] was to be national in focus and representation and inclusive of all Latinos” (136, 2017). When Kanellos moved to UH in 1989 to take up a professorship, *Revista Chicano-Riqueña* and *Arte Público* moved with him. *Arte Público* took the impetus of the journal and created a space for greater representational scope. *Arte* publishes fiction, non-fiction, plays, poetry, and memoir. Through its imprint, Piñata Press, *Arte* also publishes bilingual children’s books and YA literature.⁶⁸ Summarizing *Arte*’s mission, Kanellos states, “The idea of the press is to publish works by Hispanic authors, because basically the publishing industry doesn’t publish them” (interview with Wilson 1994, 201). On *Arte Público*’s award-winning publication list are writers, poets, and playwrights such as Ron Arias, Daniel Chacón, Rolando Hinojosa, Jasmine Méndez, Pat Mora, John Rechy, Sergio Troncoso, Luís Valdez, and Evangelina Vigil-Piñón. In 1984, *Arte Público* published Sandra Cisneros’, *The House on Mango Street*, and in 1991, *Rain of Gold* by Victor Villaseñor, both seminal works of the Latinx canon. The road to success, however, has not been easy. Kanellos’ experiences may go some way to explaining the apparent disconnect between *Arte Público* and the MFA program. “You know how many

⁶⁸ For more on the press see artepublicopress.com/

times my articles were not published because I would attack the U.S literary canon for keeping Hispanic literature and art out of schools?” he shares. “Do you know how many grants I got denied for Arte Público?” Moreover, Kanellos reveals, “there [have] been two times when the University has stopped me from printing a book” (interview with Alegria 2018). Critically, Kanellos argues, even when Latinx writers are recognized and signed to the big mainstream publishing houses what is missing is the rich diversity of community. “Historically and to the present,” he asserts, “commercial publishing has trafficked in stereotypes” (interview with Wilson 1994, 201).

Fourteen years before “trafficking” books to Arizona, Tony Díaz had ideally positioned himself to create a new literary space, an imperative that followed in the footsteps of Kanellos. Early in 1998, Díaz had published his first novel, *Aztec Love God*, which won the Nilon Award for Excellence in Minority Fiction. He recalls,

I remember thinking that it would great if someone started a reading series for Latino writers since there was a demand and a big need for it. With my MFA, with my novel, with my experience teaching in the school system as well as in community centers, it finally dawned on me that I had to be the one to do it. (“About”)

Born and raised in Chicago, the son of migrant Mexican cotton pickers, Díaz has been from an early age a bridge between cultures and language. Arguing, “Language helped me protect my family” (“Voices” 2014), he became his parents’ voice for the critical negotiation of life in the United States. Díaz would translate for his parents at medical appointments, parent-teacher meetings, car-dealerships, and in the paying of utility bills. In his youth, however, Díaz had not been aware that these experiences had found home in literature, as he reveals, “I didn’t read a Latino novel until I went to college” (interview with Massey, 2014). That novel was Piri Thomas’s memoir, *Down These Mean Streets* (1967). This coming-of-age story chronicles Thomas’s youth as he negotiates 1930s Spanish Harlem, the violence and drugs of his gang involvement, and, as a dark-skinned Cuban Puerto Rican, his experiences of both racism and colorism. Thomas’ work resonated with Díaz, who was then an undergraduate at Chicago’s De

Paul University and who had spent his formative years on the streets of Chicago's South Side. *Down These Mean Streets*, he writes, "was set in the rough urban sprawl of New York that looked and smelled like the South Side of Chicago. It was packed with crazy confrontations and barriers. If we can just survive the weekend, the book showed, we can get to school on Monday to keep fighting" ("Voices" 2014). As a youth, like Thomas, Díaz's gift for language provided both solace and escape. Moreover, he shares, "Language helped me defend myself" (2014). Storytelling as "defense" was in fact a family trait. "I get it from my mom," he says. "She never went to school, but she taught herself how to read. She would keep all of our family spellbound when she told stories about her life in Mexico or in the fields, or about the misadventures of family members navigating their new life in Chicago" (2014).

For historically marginalized communities, storytelling is an act of resistance. Díaz's mother recounting "misadventures" gives us, as Fran Leeper Buss argues of oral history, "a revised, often expanded vision of life, as well as alternative forms of knowledge" (2017, 167). Therefore, despite Díaz expressing that he had only come across Latinx literature as an undergraduate, he had in fact been educated in it and through it for much longer. The disconnect was that his mother's stories were not on school reading lists, they could not be found on television, or at the movies, they were kitchen-table tales, not the "real" stories of the United States - the land of the free, the home of the brave, where English was the language of progress, and assimilation was the key to success. However, by the time Díaz entered the MFA program at UH, he knew something was missing. *Down These Mean Streets* had shown him this, as well as the support of Ted Anton, the professor who had passed the book onto him. Díaz recalls, "[Anton] would ask me why I didn't write about my family, my story. I remember wondering if that was even allowed since I had never seen that in a book" ("Voices" 2014). In 2012, Post-MFA, Díaz was the recipient of a Visiting Scholar Fellowship from the UH Center for Mexican American Studies (CMAS). During his fellowship year, armed with a critical understanding of the role literature plays in the empowerment of self and community and with the support of

Nicolás Kanellos, he launched *Nuestra Palabra: Latino Voices Having Their Say* [NP].⁶⁹

HAVING THEIR SAY

In the development of *Nuestra Palabra*, Díaz encountered a community psychically marked by misrepresentation. Juan Bruce Novoa writes of this when he argues how Chicana literature responds to those forced to live in an “alien space”, whereby they are confronted with images of themselves within “the Other’s territory” (1982, 212). Lupe Méndez, *Librotráfico Lips*, shares, “*Nuestra Palabra* originally was Tony’s ... response to white people, who still to this day tell us ... “Brown people don’t buy books. There’s not enough brown scholars to write stuff”” (2016). However, Díaz encountered this narrative from within the community. “We faced the same push-back from other Latinos,” he shares. “From other Mexican Americans, “Our people don’t read, they don’t write”” (interview with Massey, 2016). Kelly Oliver argues,

the alienation of oppression is what I call double alienation insofar as it results not just from finding yourself in a world of ready-made meanings but from finding yourself there as one who has been denied the possibility of meaning making or making meaning your own without at the same time denying your own subjectivity. (2002, 56)

For individuals and communities of color, the result of this critical denial can lead to, as Oliver postulates, “the flattening of psychic space” (63). This “flattening,” reveals itself in the internalization of majoritarian narratives of intellectual ability. Díaz’s experiences when setting up *Nuestra Palabra* highlight how self-perception in Latinx communities can find its source in the racist tropes of illiteracy. In order to dismantle this narrative, *Nuestra Palabra*’s core ideology centers on the belief that in the face of psychic self-doubt and pejorative representations all members of the community have a story to tell. Moreover, that all of these stories are valid and key representations of a US experience. As Alice Canestaro-García reveals, NP volunteer from 1999 to 2003, the organization’s approach deconstructs tropes of, “the bad guys, the drug runners, the nannies and gardeners.” Instead, she writes, *Nuestra*

⁶⁹ Kanellos is on NP’s board of directors.

Palabra embraces “more presence of our culture ... as ALL of who we are: sure, the dedicated custodians, and the steady-footed construction workers walking high-rise rascacielos [skyscrapers] I-beams [,] but [also] the singer/songwriters, the chefs, the artists, the scientists, too” (emphasis author, 2014). The “ALL of who we are” found reflection in the NP monthly showcases that brought not only literature, but comedy, music, and theatre to an audience as representative of the community as the work itself. The showcases also broke the third wall between audience and writer/performer. This praxis supported a sense of camaraderie, which in turn reinforced the relationship between cultural production and community. This approach encouraged community members to hear/see versions of their experiences not only read/performed, but to imagine themselves as potential producers of the work. Therein lies what Díaz terms a “Latino Literary Renaissance”. For not only, in Díaz’s words, is a “Literary Renaissance when community members personally know poet laureates” (2018), or when community members achieve this literary status, but also when community members of myriad identities see themselves as laureates of the future.

Díaz’s terminology follows in the cultural footsteps of Felipe de Ortego y Gasca, who, in a 1971 article “struck by the panoramic sweep of the literary works being produced by Chicano writers since 1966” (2009, 117), coined the phrase “Chicano Renaissance.” Arguing, how he was “struck by the panoramic sweep of the literary works being produced by Chicano writers since 1966” (2009, 118).⁷⁰ Ortego was writing at the height of the Chicano Movement, when “few Chicano writers had “made it” ... into the American literary mainstream” (117). In latter writings he acknowledges the critique his phrasing received, “principally that the word

⁷⁰ Cordelia Chávez Candelaria argues seen in hindsight this was not only a period of literary works, but also one of “artistic, literary, and political activism”. “The era” she writes, “was marked by gatherings of committed activists at local and regional meetings, demonstrations, national conferences, literary festivals, the painting of murals and installation of art exhibitions, and college and community organizing projects such as Corky González’s gathering, the Youth Liberation Conference, in Denver, Colorado, that produced the *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* (1969), or the *Spiritual Plan of Aztlán*, which opens with Alurista’s poetic call to collective action of all Mexican Americans.” “Chicano Renaissance.” *Hispanic Heritage Month Spotlight on the Chicano Movement*. ABC-CLIO, 2019. Web. 13 June 2019.

“renaissance” suggested that Chicanos had been asleep; also, that calling Chicano literary production thus far a “renaissance” was premature” (118). However, Ortego continues to stand by his belief that at that point in time his critical interrogation was a key player in, he writes, “opening the aperture of the American literary canon to include Chicano literature” (118). I argue this is an aperture devised in the conceptualization of the European Renaissance, as Emma Pérez argues, “a historical moment that further privileged those already privileged” (1999, 24), and where, in the words of Walter Mignolo, “the rhetoric of modernity (salvation, newness, progress, development) went hand in hand with the logic of coloniality” (2009b, 43). The Spanish Renaissance, for example, supported modernity in Spain through engagement in genocide and dehumanization across the Caribbean and the Americas. In the face of this “civilizing” project, a heritage of resistance echoes across Chicanx and Latinx literature. As Ortego writes, “The roots of Mexican American literature lay in the pre-1848 Hispanic past and its traditions were wrought in the post-1848 world in which Mexicans, now Mexican Americans, struggled to survive” (124). In celebrating the literary panorama of Houston’s Latinx voices as a “Latino Literary Renaissance”, *Nuestra Palabra* recognizes, like Ortego, that the past crosses over into current literary work. As Díaz argues, “that talent has always existed. Quick proof of that was in my hands when I saw a flyer from a play by a Mexican American performed in Bay Town, Texas from the 1930’s” (2018). This renaissance then is not the critical rebirth per say of a literary production, but the celebrating of a powerful, still thriving aesthetic.

In 1999, the City of Houston declared April 22, “*Nuestra Palabra Day*”, in recognition of the organization’s service to the community. That same year, NP moved to a bigger space, *Talento Bilingüe de Houston (TBH)*, an English Spanish cultural arts and education center in *Segundo Barrio*, in the words of Lupe Méndez, *Librotráfico Lips*, “a space that’s brown” (2016). TBH had originally started out as *Teatro Español de Houston*, founded in 1977 by Nuyorican, Arnold Mercado, and located at *Casa de Amigos* on the city’s north side. Mercado, who had received a grant to get the theater company off the ground, was “forced” into a name-

change after pushback from a representative of the funding body, who was concerned that government money was financing a Spanish-language project. The grant that Mercado had received was CETA, which provided monies for Community Engagement and Touring Artists. In this respect, Spanish language speakers would only be recognized as “community”, if English at the theater had “equal billing.” This is reflective of the “All Lives Matter” response to the “Black Lives Matter” movement, for as bell hooks writes, “Language is also a place of struggle” (2015 [1990], 146). “Teatro Español” was not founded to suggest that English-language theater did not “matter”, but what critically mattered was providing Latinx, and non-Latinx Spanish-speakers, access to theater in Spanish and concurrently visibility and representation for linguistically marginalized communities. In choosing “Talento Bilingüe” to replace “Teatro Español”, Mercado privileged Spanish, and in doing so emphasized the Latinx community’s talent to navigate the cultural meritocracy of language in the United States.

In 1979, TBH moved to its current site, which was then the Ripley House Community Center.⁷¹ Tony Díaz had led creative writing classes at TBH whilst completing his MFA, and he was still teaching at the center when he launched *Nuestra Palabra*. Playwright Alvaro Saar Rios was one of Díaz’s students, “It was momentous to meet Tony,” Saar Rios recalls. “[He] was the first writer I had ever met. To have that writer be Latino, with the same type of background as me, made me realize that it was something I could do” (interview with Carson, 2016).⁷² Bryan Parras, who would become one of the five founding members of the

⁷¹ For more on TBH see, Reyes, Richard. “Center of Dreams: Talento Bilingüe de Houston.” *Houston History*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2012, pp. 44-47.

⁷² On a blog post on the *Nuestra Palabra* website, “Can you tell me where the revolution is tonight?”, Saar Rios shares the first time he heard about the showcases, “One day in class, Tony handed out flyers for the April event. “It’s called *Nuestra Palabra*: Latino Writers Having Their Say, and it’s going to be a monthly gathering for people in the community to share their own writing.” This was the first time I heard the word “Latino.” Afraid to show my ignorance, I didn’t ask what it meant. I just looked at the word again and upon seeing the word “Latin” I assumed it referred to the language I found on quarters, one dollar bills and the periodic table-the mother tongue of Ancient Rome, the dead lingo. I imagined my instructor joined by others reciting poems and stories from ancient scrolls. This was what I had in mind when I showed up to *Nuestra Palabra*... I am proud to say that every poem, short story, essay shared that night was in a language I did understand-English, Spanish, and a mixture of both. “Can you tell me where the revolution is tonight?”” June 3, 2014. nuestrapalabra.homestead.com/NP_History.html?entry=can-you-tell-me-where

Librotraficantes, was encouraged by his mother Susie Moreno to attend one of Nuestra Palabra's early showcases. Here, on the third Wednesday of each month local writers, and those more established, such as Stefanie Griest, Luís J. Rodriguez, Alisa Valdés-Rodriguez, and would take to the stage to read their works. What Parras encountered surprised him. "It was cool," he recounts. "For the first time I was around smart Latinos, Latinas, and there was a whole crowd in the audience. It was packed. Over one hundred and fifty people were coming to these readings, and that was very rare. I had never seen that before" (interview with Massey, 2016). Parras shares, in a similar vein to Díaz, that Latinx literature was something he had only become aware of in college. Moreover, prior to Nuestra Palabra, he "hadn't been exposed to any Latino authors" (2016). From its early days, as Parras explains, the organization worked to counter that. "One of things that *Nuestra Palabra* was really trying to do at the time was to get more people into MFA programs. That was the core mission.... We knew there was a need. [Tony] knew there was a need, for more" (2016). To address this "need" Nuestra Palabra developed programming that would take Latinx literature to local schools and community colleges. The ability to do so came out of a cross-sectional community reach, this a strategy that allowed NP to draw from a broad set of skills and experience, a strategy that would lay the groundwork for the Librotraficante Caravan. Liana López, founding member of the Librotraficante Movement, shares, "It was like having seven mini book fairs at one time" (interview with Massey, 2016). Speaking on the 16th anniversary of Nuestra Palabra, Tony Díaz remarks of the organization:

I didn't know it would become a massive grassroots movement that would go on to organize the largest book fairs in Texas, create the leading literary radio show in the state, propel members from our community into literary, academic, and activist worlds. I didn't even know it would create the foundation for the Librotraficante Movement. But I always suspected. ("Nuestra Palabra" 2014)

When Laura Acosta, a further founding member of the Librotraficantes, became involved with

NP, she was the academic advisor for the federally funded grants program, GEAR UP [Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs], at Lee College, Baytown, in the Goose Creek school district. Prior to this, Acosta had been a high school teacher. At Lee, Acosta was advising students who were set to be the first in their respective families to attend college. Part of this role was encouraging said students to take Pre-Advanced Placement (Pre-AP) classes, classes that would prepare them for the more rigorous Advanced Placement (AP) classes, which in turn would take them, if successful, to a four-year college. With her experience in the classroom, and her cultural knowledge of the Baytown, Acosta was all too aware of the epistemological obstacles some of the Latinx students faced. “I knew that kids needed to relate to the curriculum,” she shares, “They were being forced to read Dickens and some other things, and the kids just hated it, hated it, hated it” (interview with Massey, 2015). Acosta and Díaz formulated a Latino Literature Studies workshop for the district’s teachers. They approached the district’s school board with it. “It took a lot of hard sell,” Acosta recalls. “It did ruffle some feathers.... And I knew they were setting me up to fail.... But they couldn’t turn it down because it was a free service that was being provided to their teachers, so how could they say no?” (2015). Instead, the school board stipulated that in order for the participating teachers to get their Continuing Education credits, which allowed for one extra day of vacation over Thanksgiving or Christmas, they would need to show twelve hours of training, which no other workshop required. Acosta continues:

Even I started to doubt just a little bit, but Tony [Díaz] wouldn’t let me back out. He was, “Yes! We’re going to do this. We’re going to give away free books. It’s not a big deal. Don’t worry about it. We’re going to give them free books, why wouldn’t they come?” And we had standing room only at every session. It was well over thirty teachers every time. We even had a principal from one of the middle schools decide to participate on his own, and the day that Tony had them write poetry [that principal] got up and wrote a poem....It showed Goose Creek that their teachers were hungry to connect to their students, and that the administration was so disconnected from that. (2015)

Acosta regrets that due to time and money constraints, NP had not been able to return to Goose Creek on such a scale. However, as Nuestra Palabra has grown, the organization has created a

network of writers from the community who go into local schools on a voluntary basis to teach creative writing classes. Promotion material for NP's educational programming outlines its focus and mission, stating, "Our workshops, for teachers and students, are designed to provide culturally and linguistically relevant literature and lessons to Houston's Hispanic and Latino students at all grade levels" (Houston Metropolitan Archive Center [HMAC]). Alongside a focus on general writing skills, the workshops seek to encourage students through what Kris D. Gutiérrez terms, "sociocritical literacy ... a historicizing literacy that privileges and is contingent upon students' sociohistorical lives, both proximally and distally (149, 2008). Sociocritical literacy then draws upon the students, and in turn, their families and communities funds of knowledge (Amanti et al 2005). In Nuestra Palabra workshops, this equates to an emphasis on "cultural and linguistic pride" (HMAC), an approach which, as Amanti et al argue, "facilitates a systematic and powerful way to represent communities in terms of resources [and] the wherewithal they possess" (2005, ix-iv). This then ties in with a further key emphasis of the school workshops—"awareness that writing is an important means of expression" (HMAC). The students are guided towards the realization that not only are their life experiences a critically valid and rich fund to draw from, but that through writing they can become powerful producers of knowledge. In order to emphasize and support this, the NP program lists "strong self-esteem" (HMAC) as an integral part of the curriculum for workshop participants. This is coupled with "practice [in] public speaking" (HMAC), the development of said skill opening space for students "having their say" to reclaim subjectivities of Self and community, subjectivities historically silenced, or distorted, by the practices of systemic racism.

Nuestra Palabra's educational programming not only encourages a new generation of storytellers, but it also builds bridges between students of multifarious ethnic and or racial backgrounds. Zelene Pineda Suchilt, *Librotráficoante Rebelené*, was in the 7th grade at Lanier Middle School when she was first exposed to the work of Nuestra Palabra. Two of her teachers had reached out to the organization for help in setting up what became The Latina Girls Writing

Club. Alvaro Saar Rios, a graduate of Lanier, had already set up one up for the boys. Of the girls group, Suchilt recalls, “It wasn’t just Latina girls coming to the meetings; it was also other girls of color” (2014). Suchilt and her peers were in “Cluster A” classes; classes populated by the poor predominantly black and brown children of, in her words, “questionable neighborhoods.” At that time Suchilt, who had been born in Mexico, was undocumented. “The odds were against us,” she writes. “Gang culture, sex, pregnancy and drugs etc....[T]he things one should really wait till college to try out were more accessible to us than anything else” (2014). Nuestra Palabra volunteer creative writing teacher, Elisa Garza, took the girls’ experiences as their literary starting point. As Suchilt remembers, “she encouraged us to write about our families, our neighborhoods, our bodies, people, places and things that were developing” (2014). This storytelling approach, drawing from the sharing of the familiar, creates, as Richard Delgado argues, “bonds, [which] represent cohesion, shared understandings, and meanings” (1989, 229). In this respect, it creates family amongst “outgroups, groups whose marginality defines the boundaries of the mainstream, whose voice and perspective—whose consciousness—has been suppressed, devalued and abnormalized” (229). Moreover, this approach can complicate cultural and racial boundaries and within these critical complications can lie space for dialog, an effective tool for community cohesion. As Latinx communities are multi-ethnic; they are, as Juan Flores and George Yúdice write, a “very heterogeneous medley of races and nationalities” (1993, 199). Moreover, this heterogeneity extends to multiplicitous and intersecting axes of, for example, gender, sexuality, and ability. In the Nuestra Palabra classroom then, myriad “outgroups” could then find themselves “in” the stories of others. As Suchilt shares, “We read the work of other girls and women of color, we finally saw ourselves, our lives, from a broader and intricate perspective, apart and unique from the white mainstream that was shown to us at school and on television” (2012). For Suchilt, the writing group was, she says, “nothing short of empowering” (2014). In 2002, at the age of 13, she read on the same stage as Sandra Cisneros. Suchilt recalls, “I was invited by Nuestra

Palabra to read one of my poems at the Alley Theater. I would be the opening act for Ms. Cisneros before she read excerpts of her new novel “Caramelo” (sic). I was very excited, elated, beyond proud and full of myself” (2015). In 2015, Suchilt joined forces with Lorna Dee Cervantes to revive Mango Publications, founded by Cervantes in 1976. The two had met during the Librotraficante Caravan. For her contributions to the Mexican community in Texas, in 2009 Suchilt received the Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz Women of Achievement Young Visionary Award from The National Museum of Mexican Art in Chicago. She now works as a multidisciplinary artist and an immigrant rights activist in New York City, operating under her Librotraficante moniker, “Rebelené [I rebelled]”.

On March 20, 2001, in order to extend the reach of the organization, Nuestra Palabra launched a weekly community radio show of the same name, hosted by Pacifica Network’s Houston station 90.1 KPFT.⁷³ Rather than seeking voice within mainstream media, Nuestra Palabra claimed autonomy on the airwaves. The show broadcasts live from 6pm to 7pm each Tuesday. Its opening intro’ has remained the same from day one: “This is Nuestra Palabra: Latino Writers Having Their Say, on the air. Tuning you into the Latino Literary Renaissance in all its splendor - interviews, teatro, rap, fiction, poetry, memorias, composer spotlights, and more. Always más [more].” The focus on “más” reflects Nico Carpentier’s theorizing on the capacity of community media that although their limited size may weaken the ability to enact far-reaching social change paradoxically this can also bring operational flexibility:

The close connection of community media with their respective local communities provides them with a diversity of content and collaborators. Their small scale makes them sensitive to the access and participation of their publics, and enables them to actually include more than token participatory practices, both at the level of content generation and management. (2007, 10)

⁷³ Founded in Berkeley, California in 1949, Pacifica is grassroots and community-sponsored. KPFT Houston is one of five radio stations it owns across the US. The politics of KPFT have a history of provoking backlash from local White supremacists. In 1970 and 1971, it was bombed off the air twice by Jimmy Dale Hutto, a Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan. In 2008, a shot fired through a KPFT studio window narrowly missed the station’s programmer, Mary Thomas.

Part of the NP radio show's ability to be critically flexible lies in its tie-in programming with literary events in and around Houston, and with local, national, and transnational issues facing Chicax and Latinx communities. Through literature and political commentary, hosts, guests, and listeners participate in the myriad subjectivities of Chicax and Latinx identity, and concurrently Chicax and Latinx literature. In this respect, NP radio operational framework reflects, what Sonya M. Alemán and Enrique Alemán Jr. define as "a critical race media project":

[A] media production by people of color that seeks to dismantle majoritarian ideologies embedded in mainstream news and entertainment fare by centering the voices, bodies, histories, experiences, and resiliency of racially marginalized communities using a racial realist perspective. (289, 2016)

Alongside literary programming, each show includes Díaz and López dissecting the community impact of local and national legal and political directives in areas such as immigration, education, health care, and voting rights. Each week guests can include Latinx authors, community leaders, local politicians, and immigration rights specialists. Listeners are encouraged to call in, to a part of the conversation, and to create dialog. This runs in direct contrast to mainstream media where, more often than not, Chicax and Latinx communities are talked of, rather than talked too, where their expertise in a field is rarely identified, and where majoritarian narratives are used as the lens for communities' experience. The type of engagement NP encourages then is potent for communities and individuals facing the narrative misrepresentation of systemic racism. As Yosso argues, "They become empowered participants, hearing their own stories and the stories of others, listening to how the arguments against them are framed and learning to make the arguments to defend themselves" (2005, 76). To be noted, an integral part of Nuestra Palabra's flexibility "to defend themselves", whether it be in the form of activism on the air or in the lines of a poem, comes from the organization's decision not to file for nonprofit status. Doing so would have brought tax-relief, but would have prevented the organization from being "political", from undertaking any form of lobbying, and

would have required them to ensure partisanship in, for example, voter education. Operating independently means that Nuestra Palabra reports to no one but the community.

Community input and participation has been integral to Nuestra Palabra's success. Volunteers, for example, are the backbone of the organization, not "simply" for their labor, but for what their work brings from and offers to the community and for possibilities for future civic engagement. As Priscilla Solis Ybarra argues, "NP not only promotes literacy advocacy in its public forums, but it also grooms generations of leaders who emerge from volunteering with priceless skills and experience" (2016, 176). Writer Icess Fernandez Rojas, who has been involved with NP almost from its inception, shares:

I brought my writing to my first Nuestra Palabra volunteer meeting, but instead of talking about writing, we talked about stamps. Yes, stamps. And mail outs and getting the Houston Chronicle to notice what we were doing and work. We talked about work because when you become part of Nuestra Palabra it is work, more work than you can imagine. (2014)

This multiplicity of the "work" involved speaks not only to the logistics of running a community arts organization, but to the many fronts, social, political, pedagogical, judicial etc., from which Chicana and Latina communities have had to fight. Key to success in this regard involves not only bringing the activities of NP to the attention of local communities and news media, but in linking with Latina initiatives on a national scale. For Tony Díaz, this involved reaching out to Latino Literacy Now (LLN), an organization co-founded in Los Angeles in 1997 by actor and filmmaker, Edward James Olmos, and publisher and activist, Kirk Whisler. LLN's programs include The International Latino Book Awards, The Latino Books Into Movies Awards, the International Society of Latino Authors, and the Edward James Olmos Latino Book and Family Festivals.⁷⁴ Nuestra Palabra collaborated with the latter program. In September 2002, they then co-sponsored the Houston inaugural, Edward James Olmos Latino

⁷⁴ See: edwardjamesolmos.com and lbff.us. Cities that have hosted the LBFF include Chicago, Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, Phoenix, San Bernardino, and San Diego.

Book and Family Festival (LBFF) at the city's George R. Brown Convention Center. "Our delusions of grandeur," Díaz said at the time, "[are] that after Sept. 29 everyone is going to think of literature differently and that the Hispanic community will think of itself differently and others will think of us differently, as well " (Lanham, 2012). The four-day event drew over 15,000 people. Olmos launched and headlined the festival and presented images from *Americanos: Latino Life in the United States*, a recently published book of photographs he had co-curated with Lea Ybarra and Manuel Monterrey. The book would tie-in with a primetime PBS show. Cheech Marin was also a headliner, promoting *Chicano Visions: American Painters on the Verge*, a work that accompanies the exhibition of the same name. In 2002, the exhibition, an unprecedented collection of Chicano art, was on tour nationwide.⁷⁵ Alongside over forty showcases from established authors, poets, and playwrights, cultural commenters, critics, and media personalities, including Dagoberto Gilb, Evangelina Vigil-Piñón, Ilan Stavans, and Victor Villaseñor, up-and-coming writers had the opportunity to meet with local and national publishing houses. In the acknowledgments to his first work, *Creepy Creatures and Other Cucuys*, Xavier Garza, children's book author and illustrator, writes:

There are so many people to thank that it is hard to know where to begin, but to get the proverbial ball rolling I will start with Tony Díaz, author of *The Aztec Love God*, and founder of Nuestra Palabra in Houston, Texas. It was Tony who first invited me to the Latino Book and Family Festival in Houston where I met Dr. Nicolás Kanellos of Arte Público Press. A brief conversation with him set the foundation for the book you now hold in your hands (2004, vii)

The festival not only provided exposure for new writers, but it also increased exposure for the work of Nuestra Palabra. On October 16, 2002, for example, over 3,000 people attended a writers' showcase at the Arena Theatre featuring Emmy awarding-winning Univisión anchor, Jorge Ramos. Ramos, oftentimes referred to as "The Walter Kronkite of Latin America", was on a book tour for his memoir, *No Borders: A Journalist's Search for Home*. Ramos' message

⁷⁵ Much of the work has now a permanent home in The Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art, Culture, and Industry of the Riverside Art Museum. thecheechcenter.org/

to Latinx audiences on the tour tied in with that of NP, and with the ethos of Latino Literacy Now, “I wanted to let them know who we are and to make very clear that immigrants are here to work and make this a better country and that we are not criminals and that we are not terrorists” (McDaniel 2002). In 2015, Ramos was on the cover of Time magazine, for its “100 most influential people in the world” issue.⁷⁶ His statement therefore highlights how even those members of the Latinx community who have found global critical success, still remain tied to narratives of illegality.

Reflecting a 2012 Nielsen report conclusion that, “the future US economy will depend on Hispanics” (1), Houston’s Latino Book and Family Festival showcased not only powerful community voices but also the repositioning of the Latinx community, and its myriad diversity, from the margins of representation to the center of the city’s and the nation’s economy. By 2004, attendance numbers for the Latino Book and Family Festival had grown to 30,000. This happened, as Díaz argues, “In a city where [Latinx communities] were called the dropouts. In a city where we were told, our culture didn’t care about literature. And we defied everybody” (interview with Massey, 2015). Alongside a focus on representative and accessible literature, from author signings to creative writing workshops for all ages, success also lay in how the festival reflected NP’s commitment to a broad social pedagogy. This took the form of a holistic approach to community, an approach founded on the belief that the mastery of health and financial literacy or, as Alfred Marshall defines economics, “the ordinary business of life” (qtd. in Coase 2009, 11) would be just as critical as the mastery of language and literature. In this respect, the festival’s framework took the form of five “villages”. NP’s philosophy here being

⁷⁶ See, time.com/collection-post/3823152/jorge-ramos-2015-time-100/ and jorgeramos.com/en/biography/. At a press conference during Donald Trump’s 2015 presidential campaign, Ramos attempted to quiz the then candidate about his proposal to deport eleven million undocumented people. Trump told Ramos to “Go back to Univision”; the reporter was then removed from the room. See, PRI “Jorge Ramos: We can’t “be neutral” with a president like Trump.” *PRI*, 4 May 2018, www.pri.org/stories/2018-05-04/jorge-ramos-we-cant-be-neutral-president-trump. For footage of the incident, “Jorge Ramos Thrown out of Trump Event.” uploaded by ABC News, 26 Aug. 2015, www.youtube.com/watch?v=31dZ5mjncNk.

that “Each [village] caters to a particular pillar that must be in place for a family to embrace literacy at its most profound level” (Houston Metropolitan Archive [HMAC]). In 2006, the “pillars” of this profundity took the form of Book Village, Careers & Education Village, Health Village, Culture & Travel Village, and Mi Casita Village [Real Estate]. Each village offered tailored workshops, including not only creative writing but also healthy living, personal and family budget management, credit and debt control, home buying, résumé advice, and careers guidance. Exhibitors included book publishers, colleges and universities, corporate human resources departments, hospitals and health care professionals, media organizations, realtors, banks, and insurance companies. These villages not only reflected the multiplicitous needs and interests of the community, but also the impact of the rapid gains of the city’s Latinx demographic, which in 2006 stood at 33.7% of the metropolitan area’s total population, second to the Anglo demographic of 42.6% (Texas Department of State and Health Services, 2014). Latino home ownership in Houston reflects these statistics. Since 1990, the community’s property purchase has seen double-digit growth (11.7 points), a gain outranked only by Chicago (13.0 points) (Young 2017). The rising demographic has also affected Houston’s consumer market. In 2008, Latinx purchasing power in the city was at \$27 billion, the highest for the demographic in the state, and the fourth highest for the demographic in the nation (Greater Austin Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, 2008).⁷⁷ Symbolically, the festival villages became Houston’s Latinx consumer market in “bricks and mortar”. However, for corporate sponsors and exhibitors, successfully negotiating this space required an understanding of not only this potential market, but of how *Nuestra Palabra* sought to cultivate the community’s intellectual capital. A disconnect with the latter would close the doors on the Houston festival in 2008.

⁷⁷ In his NERA report “Making America Rich Again: The Latino Effect on Economic Growth”, Jeffrey A. Eisenach, argues of Latinx demographics, “To an extent few appreciate, the US Latino population is growing, young, increasingly educated, employed, connected, entrepreneurial, and upwardly mobile in terms of income as well as consumption” (2016, 2). Further, what said demographic impact means for the US economy, “The younger profile of the Latino population has direct and significant implications for economic growth because economic research shows a clear link between the aging of a population and productivity growth” (15)

The Latino Book and Family Festival “franchise” is reliant upon corporate sponsorship. As Díaz explains, Nuestra Palabra operated the Houston event, “with minimal money. Every dollar we got we made it do twenty times that work” (interview with Massey, 2014). Bringing on board likes of Continental Airlines, Time Warner, Nestlé USA, Marathon Oil, and Wells Fargo Bank would present an opportunity to build the festival into a lucrative revenue-generating business. This, however, did not synchronize with the grassroots activist ethos of Nuestra Palabra. For an event that was very much about representation and the transmission of community voices, corporations requiring “their say” would disrupt what NP was trying to achieve. Critical success in this respect would not tally with those who had a financial rather than ideological stake in the festival. This financial stake, reflecting mainstream tropes, relied on Latinx communities as compartmentalized consumers, not as conscious participants in the market. As Arlene Dávila argues:

The production of Latinos as easily digestible and marketable within the larger structures of corporate America is ... revealing of the global bases of contemporary processes of identity formation and of how notions of place, nation and race that are at play in the United States ... come to bear on these representations.” (2001, 3-4)

Dávila’s theorizing of the “digestible” Latino finds reflection in Tony Díaz’s commentary on mainstream acceptability and cognizance of Latinx communities, “We register on the American Imagination in three phases. First, we are invisible. Then, we are vilified. Then, we are accepted, but only as a consumer group. We are never imagined as Intellectuals (sic)” (qtd. in Capo 2013). In the face of such pejorative “registration” Nuestra Palabra, like the MAS program in Tucson, seeks to create space which, as Romero et al argue, “is driven by the need to challenge the epistemological and ontological understandings of [community]” (2009, 227). The book festival was to be such a space, where the “community are bearers and creators of knowledge” (Arce 2016, 34). However, the temporary relocation of the festival in 2006 revealed that the corporate imperative at the festival did not include space for the Latinx community’s cultural and intellectual imaginings. Problems had initially arisen in the fall of

2005 when Houston's mayor, Bill White, ordered the requisition of the George R. Brown Convention Center to accommodate New Orleans residents impacted by Hurricane Katrina. This left Nuestra Palabra without a venue for that year's book festival. Díaz approached Houston Community College (HCC), where he was teaching literature and creative writing classes, successfully secured the site for a smaller two-day event in May of 2006. Attendance figures ran into the high thousands despite the festival's reduced size. The new location offered more "intimacy" than the vast hall of the Convention Center, an intimacy that allowed for greater author-attendee interaction. It also provided space to create and share work that disrupts, as Dávila argues, "notions of place, nation and race" (2001, 4) which have come to define mainstream interpretations of Latinx communities. Lupe Méndez, one of the five founding members of the Librotraficantes, recalls, "The authors loved it, they had access to classrooms [and] better facilities for workshops" (interview with Massey, 2018). Headliners in 2006 were *Like Water for Chocolate* novelist Laura Esquivel and Univisión anchor and author, María Elena Salinas. The remainder of the festival line-up included Emmy award-winning writer, and Sesame Street's "Maria", Sonia Manzano, authors Michael Jaime-Becerra, Luís Alberto Urrea, and Alisa Valdes-Rodríguez, poet Gwendoline Zepeda, playwright and performer Monica Palacios, Grammy award-winning saxophonist Paquito D'Rivera, and publisher of The Rivard Report, Bob Rivard. In promotional material sent out to corporate sponsors, Nuestra Palabra emphasize the uniqueness of the campus location, and highlight its pedagogical tie in, part of the ethos of the organization. "People are programmed to be educated when they step onto a college campus," NP argues. "As such, [we] think this year's crowd will be more engaged than ever" (HMRC). However, despite the enthusiasm of both the organizers and the authors for the new venue, for its knowledge-creation value, Méndez remarks that the larger sponsors and exhibitors "hated it" (interview with Massey, 2018). The location did not resonate with their needs. "Because," as Méndez explains, "they felt they weren't getting the footfall" (Massey 2018). After the festival, corporate sponsors and exhibitors expressed their

discontent with the financial returns of the HCC location with Latino Literacy Now. In 2007, when the festival returned to the convention center Latino Literacy Now shared the sponsors feedback with Nuestra Palabra. Díaz and the team realized corporate sponsorship would eventually strip community authorship of the event. Lupe Méndez recalls NP's response to corporate disquiet was "we asked a lot of people to give up their time and effort, and you want to make this less about the books and more about you" (interview with Massey, 2018).

The irony was that whether at the HCC or at the convention center, Houston's Latino Book and Family Festival had been the most successful of the franchise. The attendance numbers had outstripped those of other host cities such as Los Angeles, Dallas, and Chicago. Reflecting this success, in 2007 Latino Literacy Now had reached out to the Nuestra Palabra team asking them to share their festival strategy. LLN wanted NP to visit other sites to train local groups. Díaz and the team were happy to do so, until advised that they would receive no resources, travel expenditure, or financial compensation. It was not, however, the prospect of shouldering prohibitive costs that led NP to turn down LLN's request. NP's main concern was reproducing success that relied entirely on long-developed relationships with the community. As Méndez explains, the other festival co-producers "didn't have a grassroots base" (interview with Massey, 2018). Nuestra Palabra without their base would not have produced what was at its height not just the biggest Latinx book fair in Houston, but the biggest book fair, Latinx or not, in Texas. Despite NP clearly understanding that the bottom line for communities was self-representation and that focusing on this would bring dividends, cultural and economic, corporate sponsors chose to see the bottom line purely in terms of profit. A future relationship between the two was untenable. The Edward James Olmos 6th Annual Houston Latino Book and Family Festival, held on September 20 and 21, 2008, was to be the last incarnation of the

event.⁷⁸

Laura Acosta, Librotraficante La Laura, shares, “I was a little heartbroken when we broke the book fair” (interview with Massey, 2015). However, due to the application of successful grassroots strategizing for community engagement not broken were ties fostered during the course of the festival. When, in January 2012, the state dismantled the MAS program in Tucson these ties became the foundational base of the Librotraficante Movement. As Díaz explains, the group has access to “writers, authors, intelligentsia all across the country, [for] we’ve worked with most of the banned writers, either bringing them to Houston or having them on the radio show” (2012^a). Upon deciding to take the books back to the students, an idea proffered by Bryan Parra, the first person the group called was Sandra Cisneros.⁷⁹ Díaz paraphrases Cisneros’ response, “Mijo, that’s so great. It’s never going to work. But I’m going to give you some money. And you can stay at my house” (2015). The next on the list was Dagoberto Gilb, who wanted to know if the caravan included camping. On a purely logistical basis, the organizing experience gained over six years the festival, would provide, as Acosta shares “comfort”, for she continues, “When we sat to plan everything ... we didn’t panic” (interview with Massey, 2015). This planning included creating a website, locating allies on the route and off the route, reaching out to legal connections, researching spaces for events, finding food hosts and accommodation, logo personification, and getting press releases out.

The first of the latter reads:

The caravan is intended to raise awareness of the prohibition of the Mexican American Studies Program and the removal of books from classrooms, to promote banned authors and their contributions to American Literature and celebrate diversity. Children of the American Dream must unite to preserve the civil rights of all Americans and create a network of resources for art, literature and activism. (2012)

⁷⁸ 2008’s headliners include Gustavo Arellano, author of the syndicated column, *¡Ask a Mexican!*, then publisher of Orange County’s, *OC Weekly*. Arellano was at the festival to promote his memoir, *Orange County, A Personal History*. Also on the line-up were Stephanie Elizondo, Alvaro Saar Rios, Victor Villaseñor, and Gwendolyn Zepeda.

⁷⁹ In conversation, Carmen Tafolla said she had had the idea to return the books to the students (interview with Massey, 27 Feb. 2014).

I argue this community access also extends temporally, for in Houston Nuestra Palabra draws from over one-hundred and eighty years of cultural capital invested by each consecutive generation of the city's Latinx communities. In 1836, the Mexican prisoners of war laying the foundations for the city of Houston were also symbolically laying the foundations for the work Arte Público, Monica Villarreal, Zelene Pineda Suchilt, Nuestra Palabra, and the Librotraficante Movement. This temporal displacement echoes with myriad stories and histories shared on the radio show, at Nuestra Palabra showcases, in the high school workshops, and on the stages and in the villages of the book festival; the narratives that would fuel the caravan carrying the Librotraficantes to Tucson.

TAKING IT TO THE STREETS

The term “caravan” derives etymologically from the Middle Persian, *Karwān*. Touraj Daryae and Khodadad Rezakhani argue the term came into being between the third and seventh centuries in North Africa and Western Asia and is used to denote “a trading party” (2016, xv). The Encyclopedia Iranica extends this understanding in defining “Caravan” as “a form of collective transport of men and goods organized to ensure defense against armed attack, sufficient provisions ... and adherence to predetermined routes and schedules (1990, 795). In this respect, caravans throughout the history of the United States have played a part in the “defense” of the “predetermined”—in Bonilla-Silva’s words, this being “the collective interests of the dominant race (whites ...) [that] lie in preserving the racial status quo” (2001, 11). Collective interests here such as colonialism, national mythology, and racialization. These caravans have taken the form of the wagon trains of settler colonialism, missionary parties, Indigenous death marches, and the transatlantic and internal slave trades. Caravans, however, have also formed as resistance to the multiplicitous effects of the “defense” of white supremacy - dehumanization, racism, marginalization, poverty, dispossession, and genocide. The protest framework of the Librotraficante Movement travels in communion with historical and

contemporary human and civil rights activism, with those who have taken to the streets in attempts to relocate alternative narratives of belonging, of agency and survival, of historical trauma and of cultural memory. Raúl Homero Villa argues, “In these struggles, the persistence and power of memory is crucial, being simultaneously effective—as practically informing *history* in the politics of community defense—and affective—as emotionally orientating *story* in the politics of textual representation (200, 235). It is effective and affective memory that in 2012 enabled the Librotraficante Movement to simultaneously locate and map the borderlands, guided as it was along routes of remembering contained in Tucson’s banned bibliography smuggled by the caravanistas back to Arizona. For those who had gone before had created and traversed critical pathways, which both signaled and negotiated multiple mechanisms of oppression and resistance.

From Bryan Parras suggesting the returning of the books to the students to the morning of the Librotraficante caravan leaving left Houston on March 12, 2012 was a period of three weeks. In that time, over two hundred texts of the MAS bibliography were gathered. Upon the caravan’s arrival in Tucson, this number had swelled to over one-thousand. Publishers and authors, many of whom had been associated with Nuestra Palabra since its beginnings, donated the majority. Contributions, however, also came in on route. When the caravan stopped at his home in the New Mexico desert, Rudolfo Anaya presented the Librotraficantes with multiples of his award winning *Bless Me Ultima*. Taking one text from a box he held it aloft, quietly declaring, “I give you the blessing of a healer named Ultima” (2012), for what the caravanistas “trafficked” were recognized strategies for community self-defense. As Chela Sandoval argues:

The skills, perceptions, theories, and methods developed under previous and modernist conditions of dispossession and colonization are the most efficient and sophisticated means by which all peoples trapped as insiders-outsiders in the rationality of postmodern social order can confront and retextualize consciousness into new forms of citizenry/subjectivity. (2000, 36.7)

In a Sandoval reading, the “skills, perceptions, theories, and methods” articulated by Chicana

literature creates a citizenry possessing “oppositional consciousness” (62.3). A citizenry whose “processes generate the other —the counterpoise” (62.3); myriad voices exchanging narratives which both “confront”, and provide antidotes to, contemporary and historical “dispossessions and colonization.” In “smuggling” these voices, the Librotraficante movement offers a dynamic response to narrative dispossession. Moreover, the Librotraficante caravan, the resistance framework by which Nuestra Palabra “confront and retextualize consciousness”, follows in a temporal pattern of the (freewill or forced) movement (freewill or forced) of “peoples trapped as insiders-outsiders”. For, as Sandoval further argues, “Those not destroyed ... develop modes of perceiving, making sense of, and acting upon reality that are the basis for effective forms of oppositional consciousness” (34.5). In the histories of oppressed peoples in the United States, “Those not destroyed” formed the caravans of the Underground Railroad, the marches of the United Farm Workers and, as collective movement protest in lyrical form, the corrido [narrative border ballad]. In a transcontinental respect, the tradition of the caravan, just as the “tradition” of its use and effect, has roots that predate “the collective interests” (Bonilla Silva, 11) of white supremacy. Indigenous peoples across the Americas have for millennia engaged in seasonal migration and in complex long-distance trade.⁸⁰ Robert Allen Warrior notes that the importance of the latter (I apply this argument also to the former) lies not only in trade routes having been “the loci of exchange for countless generations” (2005, xxx), but that they enabled the “learning along the way [of] new ideas that form the creation of new knowledge” (xxi). Across the Americas, destruction of these epistemological pathways drew from a colonial blueprint used to construct, to use Audre Lorde’s words, “the master’s house” (1984, 113). From the early

⁸⁰ None more renowned for geotechnics than the Qhapaq Ñan, the Great Inca Road, studies of which play a part in dismantling lingering colonial tropes of primitive hunter-gathers, tropes designed to legitimize land seizures, dispossession, and genocide. See, Francisco Garrido “Rethinking imperial infrastructure: A bottom-up perspective on the Inca Road” *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology*, Vol. 43, 2016, pp. 94–109; Ramiro Matos, Jose Barreiro editors, *The Great Inca Road: Engineering an Empire*, Washington DC: Smithsonian Books, 2015; and John Murra, “Did Tribute and Markets Prevail in the Andes Before the European Invasion?” edited by Brooke Larson and Olivia Harris, *Ethnicity, Markets, and Migration in the Andes: At the Crossroads of History*. Duke University, 1995, pp. 57–72.

days of colonialism, tropes of the “savagery” of Indigenous routes and practices became white supremacy’s foundational framework. In the United States, the Indian Removal Act of 1830 underpinned the expansion of coloniality. In 1838, following forced displacement from their ancestral homelands, caravans of Cherokee peoples, brutalized by federal soldiers, were led on a 1,000-mile death march from east of the Mississippi to allocated territory in present-day Oklahoma. On this Trail of Tears, 4,000 of the Cherokee lost their lives. Clearing the way for myriad caravans of Europeans to head westward, the United States “settled” into White Supremacist systems of exploitation and repression, embedding in turn, in the annals of US history, the exceptionalism of the “plucky” pioneer.⁸¹

The making of the United States required Indian removal, European settlers, the blessing of God, further caravans. Almost two-thirds of the over 1,500,000 enslaved peoples of African descent within the United States were subjected to slave caravans. Robert H. Gudmestad writes, “the interstate slave trade increased in volume and proportion during the 1820s and 1830s as white migration declined and the demand for labor increased in the Lower South” (2003, 20). Cotton was king; with Great Britain’s demand for the crop fueling the U.S economy. This in turn fueled the need for low cost high profit labor. Those participating in supplying said labor were not only dedicated slave traders but also small farmers looking to increase their dividend. Writing in the 1830s, Joseph Ingraham shares the interstate trading activities of the latter, “He finds it profitable; and if his inclinations prompt him, he will return home, after selling his slaves, and buy, with ready money, from his neighbors, a few here and a few there, until he has a sufficient number to make another caravan” (qtd. in Rhodes 2013,

⁸¹ The “de-clawing” of settler colonialism echoes in the words of President Donald J. Trump when addressing, in 2018, Naval Academy graduates, “In recent years and even decades, too many people have forgotten that truth. They’ve forgotten that our ancestors trounced an empire, tamed a continent... We trekked the mountains, explored the oceans, and settled the vast frontier” (“US Naval Academy”).⁸¹ Said Davy Crockett narrative “tames” Indigenous histories, thereby re-settling colonized territory through rhetorical erasure. This neocolonial act then recommits genocide and displacement.⁸¹

37). The interstate slave trade, however, relied on more than “a few here and there”. As Edward E. Baptist’s research shows, “By 1820, whites had already transported more than 200,000 enslaved people to the South’s new frontiers in the years since 1790. By 1860, that number would reach 1,000,000” (3, 2016). Those who hawked, speculated on, and auctioned off the subjected and the dehumanized were the hot commodity traders of their day. In a neocolonial world, the business of dehumanization and the transportation and trading of human capital continues to produce not only dollars and cents but also the “common sense” of identity markers. These racialized tropes keep the wheels of the “slave caravans” of capitalism turning.

Stuart Hall theorizes identity as:

the meeting point, the point of *suture*, between on the one hand the discourses and practices which attempt to “interpellate”, speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be “spoken.” (italics author 1996, 5-6)

Majoritarian narratives of the US Mexico borderlands then, in a Hall reading, “hail ... into place” the subaltern, “social subjects” stripped of legitimacy and stitched into place. Gloria Anzaldúa writes, “Gringos in the US Southwest consider the inhabitants of the borderlands transgressors, aliens—whether they possess documents or not, whether they are Chicanos, Indians or Black” (2012 [1987] 5). Said “consideration” journeys deep into US Mexico relations, entangled in the “*suture*” of the Treaty of Guadalupe in 1848. For its annexation of almost fifty percent of Mexican territory did not bring with it an end to US interests in its southern neighbor. In 1910, journalist John Kenneth Turner, reporting on the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution, reveals, “[T]he United States has virtually transformed Mexico into a slave colony” (qtd. in Galeano 2009, 121).⁸² As Eduardo Galeano writes, “Mexico’s mutilated

⁸² Over the ten years of the conflict, with the revolution threatening to dismantle economic interests, the United States built and broke alliances with successive Mexican governmental regimes. US intervention was not only political. US diplomats, at the behest of President Wilson, organized assassinations and US marines staged a number of military incursions along the Mexican gulf coast and the interior. All activities with the intent to destabilize those whose revolutionary philosophies threatened to either take land and power back from the US and

territory suffered from US investment in copper, petroleum, rubber, sugar, banking, and transportation” (2009, 121). “Mutilated” also was the character of the Mexican populace. As John A Britton writes, the revolution merely validated racist tropes, with “social unrest and political dispute translated into banditry and demagoguery” (1995, 25). In a Stuart Hall reading, Mexican peoples were “chain[ed] into the flow of public discourse” (6). “Chaining” here follows in a colonial praxis of dehumanization, producing for US economic interests and Mexican capitalists a workforce for mineral mines and plantations. In the midst of political upheaval, violence, and dispossession, hundreds-of-thousands of Mexican nationals migrated northwards; in what Luisa Moreno describes as “Caravans of Sorrow” (2001, 119). Those who found work in the United States faced precarious living and working conditions. This often resulted in further dispossession, with the internal migration of individual, families, and communities to northern US states. Texas labor agencies signed on and shipped out thousands of Mexican workers to the Midwest.⁸³ Between 1917 and 1919, the Pennsylvania Railroad Company caravanned Mexican immigrant steel workers from the fields of South Texas to the industrial centers of Allentown and Pittsburgh. A route memorialized in the corrido, *El Pensilvanio*. Jaime Javier Rodríguez argues:

On one hand, it is a narrative of Mexican migrants cheerily journeying to a better life in Pennsylvania, and on the other hand, equally important, it is a narrative of Texas Mexican Americans, or Tejana/os, making a hard turn into the local with an angry response to a more internal condition of dispossession and racism. (2014, 77)

Composed in the late 1920s, artist unknown to the historical record, *El Pensilvanio*’s “angry response”, ties into Américo Paredes’ description of the corrido as “the Border-Mexican ballad

put it into the hands of the Mexican elite, or threatened to put it into the hands of the Mexican peasant and proletariat.

⁸³ Zaragoza Vargas argues that one driving factor was the seeking of safe spaces. “Texas racism” he writes, “furnished an additional reason for Mexicans to respond readily to the labor agents’ call”, *Proletarians of the North: A History of Mexican Industrial Workers in Detroit and the Midwest, 1917-1933*, UC Press, 1999, p.13. See also Vargas, “Armies in the Fields and Factories: The Mexican Working Classes in the Midwest in the 1920s”, *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1991, pp. 47-71. Mark E. Resininger, “Determinants of Latino Migration to Allentown, PA”, *Multicultural Geographies: The Changing Racial/Ethnic Patterns of the United States*, edited by John W. Frazier, Florence M. Margai, 2010 pp 171-189, 2010.

of border conflict” (1958, 15). Paredes argues that corrido narratives counter Anglo-Texan mythologies, “a set of attitudes and beliefs about the Mexican which form a legend of their own” (15). This is “legend”, as Paredes outlines, replete with Mexican “thievery”, “degeneracy”, and “savages” (16). In response, corridos rearticulate narrative borders. As Hall writes of “cultural identity”, the *El Pensilvanio* expresses “constant transformation” (225), here in the face of the fixity of Anglo-Texan mythmaking:

Estos versos son compuestos	[These verses were composed
Cuando yo venía en camino,	When I was on my journey,
Son Poesías de un Mexicano	They are poems of a Mexican
Nombrado por Concestino	by the name of Concestino] (lines 41-44)

Rather than being categorized as “*the Mexican*” of majoritarian myth (emphasis mine), Concestino “composes” Self in a narrative transformation of becoming—“When I was on my journey”. Rodríguez argues, “It is almost as if the *corridista* composer already senses how identity might be an effect of movement” (Italics author, 82). Movement here being the impact of globalization, bringing both literal and figurative displacement. Space is located within this journey for a commonality of “Mexican” migrant experience, but is acknowledged as individual interpretative lens, that of Concestino’s. At the same time, our protagonist’s name is heavy with identities. “Concestino” translates into English as, “with basket”. The “basket” here being the “baggage” of migrant subjectivities. As Martha I. Chew Sánchez writes of the border ballad, our protagonist “express[es] what it means to be ... vulnerable to the exploitation, surveillance, and dehumanization stemming from the racism and classism of the host country” (2006, xvii). However, *El Pensilvanio* provides not only a personalized analysis of the aforementioned vulnerability, but also expresses critical agency. In verses seven and eight, the corrido speaks of control over choice of workplace (factories rather than fields),⁸⁴ and the avoidance of

⁸⁴ Dan Dickey writes, “The [cotton] harvests of the 1920s were a main source of income for many Texas-Mexicans; still the intense back pain, difficult working conditions, constant travel, low wages, and seasonal insecurity of the work, eventually made cotton picking in Texas a most dreaded form of employment. The *corridos*...composed throughout the 1920s reveal a gradual transition in the attitude of the workers towards cotton work” (103), “Corridos y Canciones de las Pizcas: Ballads and Songs of the 1920s Cotton Harvests” *Western Folklore: Lessons of Work: Contemporary Explorations of Work Culture*, vol. 65, no. 1/2, 2006, pp. 99-136.

racialized displacement (being rendered itinerant on contested/ancestral land). It also disturbs narratives of belonging and migration by locating the cities of Fort Worth and Dallas in the story, as Rodríguez argues, “By referencing these north Texas urban centers, the *corrido* directs listeners to a broader history of Mexicanos and *Tejana/os*” (italics author 2014, 84):

Adiós, estado de Tejas con toda tu plantación, Ya me voy pa' Pensylvania por no pisar algodón.	[Good-bye, state of Texas with all of your crop-fields, I'm going to Pennsylvania to keep from picking cotton] (lines 21-24)
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Adiós, Fort Worth y Dallas, pueblos de mucha importancia, Ya me voy pa' Pensylvania por no andar en vagancia.	[Good-bye, Fort Worth and Dallas, towns of much importance, Now I'm going to Pennsylvania to avoid being a vagrant] (lines 25-28)
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In the early to mid-1930s, “Good-bye” would take a reverse spatial turn. In the United States in this period, the Great Depression was engulfing the nation, with majoritarian narratives of Mexican “vagrancy” reversing the movement of both internal and transnational migration. As Balderama and Rodríguez argue, in “a frenzy of anti-Mexican hysteria” (2006, 1) repatriation/deportation saw caravans of approximately 500,000 workers deported across the southern border, a number of whom were US citizens. In 1942, however, the economic needs of the nation reversed this movement. WWII labor shortages brought about the creation of the Bracero Program. Estimates of between three and four million Mexican nationals on short-term visas filled the fields, farms, and factories of the United States until the program’s end in 1964.

Translated into English, “corrido” is “running”. The *Librotraficante* caravan, like *El Pensilvanio*, runs as “a narrative of Texas Mexican Americans” (Rodríguez 77), its strategy of mobility a dynamic space of resistance through which counterstories find safe passage. In crossing rhetorical borders and in doing so creating a space of narrative refuge it runs with the histories of the dispossessed and the deported. It also runs with the histories of flights for freedom. For example, with Harriet Tubman’s caravans that helped countless numbers of the fugitive enslaved connect to the Underground Railroad - a covert network of abolitionists who provided sanctuary en route to northern states and Canada. The *Librotraficante* caravan also

runs with the social justice movements of the Civil Rights era and beyond, those that took myriad forms of mobility in response to the shifting nature of institutional racism and white supremacy. The caravan connects therefore with those who staked civic claims to access public spaces policed by majoritarian narratives of belonging, social norms, and racialized tropes. In 1961, for example, the Freedom Riders risked their lives riding interstate buses seeking the desegregation of said public transport. Two years later, Martin Luther King led the March on Washington, its climax, the “I Have a Dream” speech at the Lincoln Memorial. César Chávez and the farmworkers marched from Delano to Sacramento in 1966, with Chicax youth in Los Angeles showing support for weeks afterwards by forming one hundred-plus car-caravans cruising from the Eastside to downtown. Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales led a caravan from Colorado to The Poor People’s March in Washington DC in 1968, the same year as the mass student walkouts. In 1970, 25,000 Chicax took to the streets of Los Angeles for the National Chicano Moratorium march. In 1971, the National Chicano Moratorium committee led the Marcha de la Reconquista, a 1,000-mile human caravan from Calexico to San Gabriel in protest against both Chicano and Vietnamese deaths in the Vietnam war.⁸⁵ One-hundred and forty years after the Trail of Tears, The Longest Walk, a five-month, cross-country march from Alcatraz Island to Washington, D.C. in 1978, protested legislation that threatened Native sovereignty. In recent times, caravans have led calls for justice. The twelve-day Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride (IWFR) of 2003 connected nine US cities and culminated in a rally in Washington D.C. In October 2017, the first caravan of Central Americans left Honduras to seek refuge in the United States, in the words of Karma R. Chávez a “caravan as coalition in

⁸⁵ The words of Rosalio Muñoz on a flyer for the march read, “Chale No...We won't go!!! We Chicanos will not offer our lives to a government who perpetuates war against poor Vietnamese struggling for freedom.” The flyer is held in Special Collections and Archives at UC San Diego Library, Herman Baca Papers, MSS 0649. Special Collections & Archives, UC San Diego. A digital copy is available at: library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb0991060m/_1.pdf

motion” (12, 2019).⁸⁶ A coalition ruptured by Trumpian “Build That Wall” border politics—the denial of human rights, the separation of children from families, the expansion of subpar detention centers, and the embedded criminalization of migrant communities. In 2012, in traversing hostile territory, the Librotraficante caravan became part of a historical coalition. This, then, is a twenty-first century flight for freedom mapped by the counter-stories of those who gone before; a flight that would require the ability to negotiate myriad spaces of misrepresentation.

BUSINESS END OF A ROPE

Three weeks before the caravan’s departure, Bryan Parras, appeared on a panel at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, in New York City. Parras recounts that the first time he heard of the closure of the MAS program was in a Jeff Biggers article in Salon.⁸⁷ Recognizing the weight of the events in Tucson as part of a historical and contemporary pattern of oppression, he began to undertake research. Despite scouring the internet, the only other coverage Parras located was on a blog called *The Narcosphere*, a find to which he comments, “Maybe we are subversive” (“Librotraficante: Bryan Parras” 2012, 0:05). The blog is an offshoot of website, *The Narco News Bulletin*, which focuses on the impact of the War on Drugs across the Américas.⁸⁸ The website’s “Opening Statement” reads:

Narco News is a strange title, we agree. "Narco," because that's what Spanish-speaking Americans call the illegal drug trade: The Narco ... "News" implies that something new is being said. The Narco News Bulletin's first task is to translate -- both words and sentiment -- for the US public the news and analysis that is being reported in Latin America, and in some pockets of the US media yet ignored by the mass media. (2000)

Symbolically, a *Narcosphere* entry focusing on the dismantling of the MAS program ties the

⁸⁶For an analysis of factors driving the caravan, specifically the impact of US intervention in the Americas, see Ann Deslandes, “The Migrant Caravan Was Born of Calamity”, *Eureka Street*, Vol. 28, No. 24, 2018.

⁸⁷ “Who’s Afraid of The Tempest” Jan.14, 2012. www.salon.com/2012/01/13/whos_afraid_of_the_tempest/

⁸⁸ *The Narcosphere* is an offshoot of website, *The Narco News Bulletin*. The latter focuses on the impact of the War on Drugs across the Américas. Brenda Norrell wrote the piece Parras found, simultaneously publishing it on her blog, *Censored News*, the mission of which is “To provide a voice for grassroots people struggling for human rights who are censored by other media” (2007).

marginalization of borderlands communities in Tucson to the struggles for rights and representation of marginalized communities in the Américas. This connection, however, is more than symbolic. Since the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, majoritarian narratives have tied Chicana communities to the “narcosphere”, a racialized space of drugs, crime, illiteracy, and illegality. As René D. Flores and Ariela Schachter argue, “Illegality is written upon their bodies” (840, 2018). In its naming and focus, *The Narcosphere* counters and reclaims this space, operating from a resistance framework within which the *Librotraficantes* traverse. Tony Díaz, in sharing a Latino Book and Family Festival anecdote, reveals the very concept of “*Librotraficantes*” came from a historical understanding of the assumed threat of “Mexican” activities:

We’re helping some of the book vendors load up after all the glamour [of book fair], we’re at the back, in the dark, loading books, and I remember thinking, “Yo, if cops come now, and see all these boxes, they be all like, “What are you guys doing?” We’re like, “We’re *Librotraficantes*. We got books,” and they be like, “Shut the fuck up, get in the car.” (interview with Massey, 2014)

Díaz’s recollection highlights how Anglo-Texan legend, as theorized by Paredes, continues to shape the discourse of degeneracy. As Carl Scott Gutiérrez-Jones argues, “The process by which Chicanos have become institutionally and popularly associated with criminality has a long and complex history that is intimately related to their construction as a social group in the United States” (1995, 3). The policing of said “criminality” has long proven deadly for Chicana communities in the Borderlands. In 1823, Stephen F Austin, “The Father of Texas”, hired ten men to protect early settlers from the Comanche. Over time, this small group expanded becoming known as, the Texas Rangers.⁸⁹ From the mid-1800s the Rangers “functioned as”, in David Montejano’s words, “the military police of occupation, waging sporadic warfare whenever the need arose” (1987, 34). As reported at the time, they terrorized borderlands

⁸⁹ The Rangers were more commonly referred to by Spanish speaking communities as *la Rinche*. A pejorative term used more in contemporary times for the US Border Patrol.

communities in the drive to make the burgeoning United States, “a white man’s country” (qtd. in Montejano 1987, 127). In doing so, thousands died at their hands.⁹⁰ The Rangers enforced frontier justice at the expense of Indigenous peoples, black communities, and, in the greatest numbers, Mexicans. In 1924, a new threat appeared in the form of the newly founded US Border Patrol; an organization who, as Kelly Lytle Hernández argues, continues to “distribute state violence in the pursuit of migration control” (2010, 5). In the early 19th century, for Spanish-speaking individuals and communities seeking to make rightful claims to land and citizenship, or to simply work on the state’s expanding agricultural ranches, the threat of state violence was ever present. In Nicolás Villanueva Jr.’s study of mob violence in Texas during the Mexican Revolution, he argues that the US authorities and those deputized to represent them, “justified their crimes against Mexicans in the borderlands with claims that they were policing the border and protecting the national security of US citizens” (2017, 2). William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb’s study of the lynching of Mexicans post the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo reveals,

Anti-Mexican mob violence in the Lone Star State was greater in scope and longer in duration than anywhere else in the United States....Indeed, it is the duration of mob violence against Mexicans in Texas more than the absolute number of victims, that is the strongest testimony of a deep-seated racial prejudice on the part of Anglo-Texans. (2013, 56)

Carrigan and Webb report that between 1848 and 1928, there were two-hundred and thirty-two confirmed cases of mob violence against Mexicans in the Lone Star State (6). This number, they argue, is a mere fraction of deaths from vigilantism, with the real data difficult to recover,

⁹⁰ In 1935, Western historian, Walter Prescott Webb, published *The Texas Rangers: A Century of Frontier Defense* seen for many years as a definitive account of the organization. He writes of “the cruel streak in the Mexican nature” (14), and of the “heroic...daring and courage” of the Rangers (519). Nicholas Villanueva Jr.’s research complicates Prescott Webb’s account, he argues, “Historians now largely agree that most [Mexicans] killed by the Rangers were innocent” (139) *The Lynching of Mexicans in the Texas Borderlands*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2017. Contemporary texts continue to hero the Rangers, those that instead seek to illuminate the violence are William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb, “The Lynching of Persons of Mexican Origin or Descent in the United States, 1848 to 1928” *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 37, No. 2, 2003, pp. 411-438; Charles Houston Harris and Louis R. Sadler, *The Texas Rangers and the Mexican Revolution: The Bloodiest Decade, 1910-1920*, UNM, 2004.

but conservative estimates of murders during this time-period run into the “thousands” (6). The project, founded by a group of Texas academics in 2013, reveals,

The dead included women and men, the aged and the young, long-time residents and recent arrivals. They were killed by strangers, by neighbors, by vigilantes and at the hands of local law enforcement officers and the Texas Rangers. Some were summarily executed after being taken captive, or shot under the flimsy pretext of trying to escape. Some were left in the open to rot, others desecrated by being burnt, decapitated, or tortured by means such as having beer bottles rammed into their mouths. (RTF)⁹¹

In July 1877, for example, a group of Anglos avenging the murder of a Nueces County rancher by the name of Lee Rabb rounded up forty “unknown” Mexicans, shot, and then hung them. The Mexican deaths remain officially unconfirmed, although recorded that same year during an investigation on “Texas Border Troubles” by the US House Committee on Military Affairs 45th Congress (Carrigan and Webb, Appendix B). Carrigan and Webb report that twenty years earlier, approximately seventy-five Mexican freight-runners in Texas were lynched by vigilantes. These deaths *were* recognized by both the US and Mexican governments, but as the killings were conducted in secret “they were not reported in the newspapers or other sources until much later depriving us of names, specific dates, and specific locations” (240). Richard Delgado takes this further, arguing the lynching of Mexicans is “largely absent from America’s collective record and memory”, assigning this to a number of factors, but concluding, “Latino lynching falls outside the dominant paradigm of American history” (2009, 304).

However, “incomplete” the studies (Carrigan and Webb, 5), in respect of available data, each piece of work contributes to processes of historical recovery. This in turn interrupts, in Michel Foucault’s words, a Texan “regime of truth” (2010, 131), embodied by the founding myths of the state supporting the enacting of violence upon those designated “outsiders”. In

⁹¹ On Oct. 14, 2017, a Texas State Historical Marker was erected outside of San Benito, Texas at the site of what is known as, The Matanza [massacre] of 1915, where a group of Texas Rangers murdered dozens of Mexicans, suspected of being allied to bandits. At the dedication of the site, John Moran Gonzalez, Director for the Center of Mexican American Studies at the University of Texas at Austin, remarks, “Although we gather today to remember the tremendous violence perpetrated against the border Mexican community, just over a century ago, we also take this opportunity to commemorate and reflect upon our community’s resilience in the face of this great injustice” UTRGV, *YouTube*, 25 Oct. 2017 www.youtube.com/watch?v=gFcOrABD9Lg

her poem, “We Call Them Greasers”, Anzaldúa’s narrator, a Texas Ranger at the turn of the twentieth century, recalls a brutal encounter with husband and wife campesinos. As a representative of the state, the ranger testifies “truth” in describing the condition and character of the “Greasers”.⁹² “Weren’t interested in bettering themselves”, “cowards they were, no backbone”, “tole ‘em they owe taxes”, and, “them not even knowing English” (1987 [2012], 156). A roll call here of racial signifiers, allowing a response to fit the crime of “being” Mexican. After raping and then suffocating the woman, the Ranger passes judgement on her husband, whom he describes as, “keening like a wild animal”; he then recounts his sentence, “Lynch him, I told the boys” (157). Texas artist Vincent Valdéz’ work documents said systemic violence. He reveals, “The Strangest Fruit (2013) is a series of paintings that is inspired by the lost—and often erased—history of lynched Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the United States from the late 1800s well into the 1930s” (4, 2015). In this respect, as Andrea Lepage writes, “Valdéz occupies the role of history-maker to produce a visual counter-text to Anglo US history and to invoke notions of public remembrance and rebellion” (108, 2018). Further, Valdéz extends the temporal space of execution in further arguing:

The noose has been disguised and resold to the American public as acceptable agent of mass incarceration and for-profit prison industries, the endless American drug war, the war on terror, the military industrial complex, the criminalization of poverty, broken educational systems and biased justice systems, stop and frisk programs and racial profiling, mass deportation and nationalism, and police brutality, all of which lend themselves to a fearful and forgetful America. (4, 2015)

In the US Mexico borderlands, those migrating northwards are both the forgotten and the feared; this renders them the most vulnerable. As a 2017 press release by the United Nations’ International for Migration reports, “As the likelihood of arrest grows, migrants tend to seek out more remote areas to avoid apprehension” (IOM). This has a particular impact in Texas, where the numbers of border crossing deaths are rising—191 deaths were reported in 2017, a

⁹² A derogatory term for peoples of Mexican descent and for peoples assumed to be.

25 percent increase on the previous year (IOM 2017). Moreover, as with the numbers that Carrigan and Webb analyzed, figures on migrant fatalities are incomplete due to local reliance on the Border Patrol for data. As Julia Black reports, “This means that federally reported figures could seriously underestimate the real number of deaths” (IOM 2017).

Houston artist, Monica Villarreal’s 2014 installation, *Migration is?*, at the city’s Project Row Houses, illuminates the realities of death in the borderlands.⁹³ Through live performance, printmaking, large-scale painting, and installations, Villarreal’s work creates what Mary Louise Pratt theorizes as a “contact zone”, a social space “where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they lived out in many parts of the world” (1991, 34). The installation includes a replica of a cardboard coffin used to transport the dead home, a large patch of sand littered with small white crosses, a Book of the Dead (listing names, ages, nationalities, and cause of death), a large statue of La Virgen de Guadalupe, and outside, a rusted-to-scale section of the border wall. Black and white transparencies of photographs cover the windows of the space, images of detention centers where chain-link pens hold men and women sitting on concrete wrapped in foil survival blankets. Outside the pens, cowboy-hatted immigration officers patrol. For these migrants, death comes not through loss of physical life, but through deportation. Villarreal brings the voices of border crossers into this contact zone through the picking-up of a phone, where recordings can be heard of the last calls of migrants lost in the desert and requesting assistance from US police departments, or dictating messages to be sent to their families in the event of death.

⁹³ Villarreal writes of the installation, “Migrant workers have played a key role in the development of what we now call the United States. As the number of migrant workers from Latin America continues to rise, discourse surrounding these migrations focuses on their value as human beings by treating their bodies as exploitable commodities. The intention of *Migration is?* is to address and reframe this discussion by examining migration from the underrepresented perspective of the migrant. I will present a series of works exploring the experiences of Latin America migrant works through the use of printmaking, installations, large-scale paintings, and live performances. I want to analyze the treatment of migrant works and shift discourse from their worth as commoditized bodies to their intrinsic value as human beings” Monica Villarreal, *Tumblr*, 7 Nov. 2014. realmonica.tumblr.com/post/102019079941/migration-is-art-installation-by-monica

Concurrent with the work of artists such as Villarreal and Valdéz, DNA recovery projects in the borderlands are now seeking to take over where the calls end. Organizations such as Arizona's Colibrí Center for Human Rights (CCHR), who work with the Pima County Medical Examiner's (PCME) office, identify human remains in the Sonoran Desert.⁹⁴ Colibrí also works in Texas and California, but both entangled bureaucracy and the reluctance of undocumented families to hand over DNA to the authorities renders the process of recovery complex. By 2016, Colibrí records contained data on more than "900 unidentified remains believed to be migrants" (CCHR). There are, however, over 2,300 missing persons on the organization's database, with the likelihood that the figure is higher due to families either not knowing that a loved one is missing, or not knowing how to report it. The mob violence of a militarized border, of draconian immigration legislation, and of divisive political rhetoric creates an environment in which both numbers and representations of the dead are rendered incomplete. Become in this respect, therefore a "lost history. As Anzaldúa writes in the preface to the first edition of *Borderlands/La Frontera*, "This book, then, speaks of my existence" (2012, 19), one could argue that *Forgotten Dead*, and the documentation gathered accomplish a similar function. The work of artists such as Valdéz, and Houstonian Monica Villarreal, disallow a forgetting. In a Foucauldian reading, such work has the capacity to release "the grip of very strict powers" (1995 [1977], 136), those of systemic forces operating like a noose upon the body politic. For in Texas, as Tony Díaz, *El Librotraficante*, argues, "The Mexican with the big mouth would catch the business end of a rope" (2014). The construction of that "Mexican" persists. Donald Trump when speaking of Latinx migrants in 2018, "You wouldn't believe how bad these people are," he declares, "These aren't people. They're animals" (BBC 2017). This

⁹⁴ Alongside their DNA work, The Colibri Center for Human Rights run The Missing Migrant Project, and Red de Familiares | Historias y Recuerdos [Families Network | Stories and Memories] www.colibricenter.org/. Other borderlands human rights organizations are: Derechos Humanos (Tucson, AZ) who amongst other initiatives run The Missing Migrant Project; In 2004, a coalition of faith and local community groups in Tucson formed No More Deaths • No Más Muertes, this civil initiative is now a ministry of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Tucson nomoredeaths.org/en/

dehumanization authorizes the throwing of the rope over the branch of legislative lynching, reflecting a history of state sanctioned violence in the guise of protecting the nation.

UNLAWFULLY PRESENT

Todd Gitlin argues, “Of all the institutions of daily life, the media specialize in orchestrating everyday consciousness—by virtue of their pervasiveness, their accessibility, their centralized symbolic capacity” (2003, 2). Moreover, this “everyday consciousness” when supported by and fused with legislative initiatives on immigration, education, and border protection, produces a societal “common sense” —a bias, both implicit and unconscious, that these communities just do not “belong”.⁹⁵ Otto Santa Ana, for example, argues that network journalists consistently mis-reflect and under-represent Latinx communities who make up 17% of the population but only 1% of the reported news. Asked in an interview why this inconsistency exists, Santa Ana responds, “I think it is because Latinos are not considered, by the media, to be part of the social fabric of the United States” (C-Span 2014). Santa Ana argues that not only are Latinx communities failed through this lack of visibility but when their communities are considered newsworthy, journalists fail to make distinctions between community, origin, generation and legal status. He writes, Latinx peoples are then viewed as, “an undifferentiated group. [And] as a result the American public ... tends to consider all non-Caribbean Latinos to be unauthorized Mexican immigrants” (2013, 6). In recent years, there has been a move by some sectors of the mass media to delink Latinx communities from

⁹⁵ For studies on the persistent tropes of Latinx criminality as perpetuated through mainstream media see, Travis L. Dixon and Charlotte L. Williams, “The Changing Misrepresentation of Race and Crime on Network and Cable News”, *Journal of Communication*, Volume 65, Issue 1, February 2015, Pages 24–39. See, Federico Subervi, Joseph Torres, and Daniela Montalvo, “The portrayal of Latinos & Latino issues on network television news, 2004 with a retrospect to 1995: Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis of the Coverage.” *Network Brownout Report 2005*, National Association of Hispanic Journalists, Austin and Washington, DC, 2015. Travis L Dixon, and Daniel Linz’s research, interrogates connections between the media marking of Black and Latinos as “lawbreakers” in Los Angeles and Orange Country, “Overrepresentation and underrepresentation of African Americans and Latinos as lawbreakers on television news”, *Journal of Communication*, 2000, pp. 131-154.

terminologies of illegality. In 2011, at the Excellence in Journalism Conference in New Orleans, the Society for Professional Journalists (SPJ) recognized that “mainstream news reports are increasingly using the politically charged phrase ‘illegal immigrant’ and the more offensive and bureaucratic ‘illegal alien’ to describe undocumented immigrants, particularly Latinos.” At the conference, the SPJ simultaneously submitted and passed a resolution, “urg[ing] journalists and style guide editors to stop the use of illegal alien and encourage continuous discussion and re-evaluation of the use of illegal immigrant in news stories” (2011). Two years later the Associated Press [AP] made a similar change to its stylebook in advising “users that “illegal” should describe only an action such as living in or immigrating to a country illegally” (Colford 2013). Following an online petition from Define America and the National Association of Hispanic Journalists (NAHJ), CNN announced in September 2015 that it would also reissue its editorial guidelines for the use of “illegal”. The aforementioned changes on one hand move towards challenging the rhetoric of illegality, but associations made between Latinx communities and unlawful entry have long persisted in the making of the nation.

In a Derridean reading, the term “illegal” even in its erasure remains tattooed to a national narrative. This is a narrative that reflects and legitimizes what Foucault terms as a society’s “regime of truth” (2010 [1984], 131), truth here being distorted racialized assumptions of Latinx communities, transmitted through various forms of media and propagated through the discourse of anti-immigration legislation. Moreover, tied into this distortion are the majoritarian “truth” narratives of colonization and Westward expansion. The creation of the nation was the creation of a consciousness of critical belonging, of “Americans” and “Others”—master and slave, cowboy and Indian, citizen and alien. As Mae M. Ngai argues, “Our understanding of immigration has been powerfully influenced by nationalism ... the nation’s self-proclaimed, absolute right to determine its own membership” (2004, 11), and further that this membership is supported by deportation policies. Moreover, in the development of border control policies in the early twentieth-century, one group emerged as

“iconic illegal aliens” (58), Mexicans. Analyzing the Immigration Act of 1924, Ngai underlines how, “casting Mexicans as foreign distanced them both from Anglo-Americans culturally and from the Southwest as a region: it stripped Mexicans of the claim of belonging they had had as natives, even as conquered natives” (59). In the media, this iconic “casting” has translated to the fulfilment of prescriptive racial stereotypes that create, Ngai argues, “illegal aliens, alien citizens, colonial subjects, and foreign contract workers—all liminal status categories that exist ... outside the normative teleology of immigration, that is legal admission, permanent-resident status and citizenship.” (13). Santa Ana’s research shows that these racialized productive acts normalize and naturalize what he terms the “national orthodoxies” of legality, and in doing so prop up, “the cardboard cutouts that the John Waynes or the Clint Eastwoods are defending America against” (C-Span Book TV, 2014). In Arizona and Texas, for example, the idolatry of the American West and its heroes, as mythologized by majoritarian histories and Hollywood, shapes legislative responses to “bad guys” and belonging.

In 2010, the same year that Tucson’s MAS program was to be dismantled by the district’s school board, the state of Arizona created a new line of defense in the form of Senate Bill 1070 (SB 1070), signed into the legislature by the then governor, Rep. Jan Brewer. The bill, whose full title reads, “Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act”, ratified an “attrition through enforcement” (AZLEG) approach to immigration. In seeking to ensure a “safe neighborhood”, here a white suburban state, SB 1070 would place a critical target upon the backs of Latinx communities in the borderlands, communities historically dehumanized and prey to the politicking of protectionism. As Zygmunt Bauman asserts:

Political authorities, with rising support among their electors, set aside categories of people to whose treatment the canonical moral commandments do not apply—or apply in a severely cut down measure: terrorists, people suspected of giving them shelter and so fit for the role of the drones and artillery fire, “collateral casualties,” heretics or members of the wrong kind of sects, illegal immigrants, or the varying circumstantially in composition “underclass”—no longer a social problem but a problem of “asocial behavior” and therefore of “law and order.” (2014)

SB 1070’s narrative of “law and order” subjects Arizona’s most marginalized communities to

an extensive stop-and-search ruling applicable to “any person ... if reasonable suspicion exists that the person is an alien who is unlawfully present in the US” (AZ 2010). With “reasonable suspicion” embedded in historical and contemporary narratives that mark brown bodies as “illegal”, SB 1070 casts all Latinx communities in Arizona as the “unlawfully present”.⁹⁶ Despite the US Supreme Court striking-down much of the bill, critically, the “show me your papers” provision, Section 2(B), was left untouched. Such legislation embodies “the drones and artillery fire” Baumann speaks of; and in doing so legitimizes the actions of the “John Waynes” and “Clint Eastwoods” of 21st century politicking (2014).⁹⁷ Moreover, SB 1070 legitimizes what Natalia Molina terms as “racial scripts”, majoritarian narratives that “make it both possible and permissible to consider racist ideas as simply common sense” (140). A “common sense” that in 2015 led to the 84th Texas Legislature passing House Concurrent Resolution No. 130, naming May 26 as John Wayne Day. Presiding over the Senate for the proclamation, then Texas Republican Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick declared, “When you think of Texas you think of John Wayne. Not only does he embody our proud traditions and rich history but the fundamental can-do spirit and persevering attitude of our state” (PR Newswire 2015). The local press reports Patrick was “Wearing a brown plaid coat worn by John Wayne in 1945’s “Flame of Barbary Coast,”” (Moravec 2015).⁹⁸ Wayne was born in Iowa, but such detail is cursory. Instead, “birthed” as Texas, the figure of Wayne reanimates frontier myth as official

⁹⁶ On June 30, 2010, the ACLU released a travel advisory for Arizona, warning that said state’s “lawmakers meant to create a hostile enough environment for Latinos and other people of color that they voluntarily leave the state”. www.aclu.org/news/aclu-issues-arizona-travel-advisory

⁹⁷ SB 1070 opened the door to copycat bills across the American South. In 2011, the state legislatures of Alabama, Georgia, Indiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Utah adopted very similar immigration rulings, covering not only stop-and-search directives, but also the prevention of access to basic utilities, such as electricity and water. Alabama’s HB56, adopted in 2011, is considered by the ACLU to be the strictest immigration bill in the nation, “A shocking throwback to the days of de jure segregation, HB 56 attempts to make a class of individuals non-persons in the eyes of the law” ACLU “Preliminary Analysis of HB 56, “Alabama Taxpayer and Citizen Protection Act ” *ACLU American Civil Liberties Union*. 2011.

⁹⁸ Patrick is from Baltimore, and utilizes rhetoric of the frontier to tie himself to Texas. In a 2018 podcast, Patrick questions the official estimate of 11 million undocumented peoples residing in the US In order to “prove” his argument that said number is higher, he uses what he terms “Cowboy Math” to come to a figure of between twenty-five and thirty-million, www.danpatrick.org/cowboy-math/

state narrative:

WHEREAS, Over the course of his acting career, John Wayne practically invented the Western Hero by combining rugged masculinity with the courage to stand up to authority when necessary, the strength to match any opponent, and the determination to prevail against great odds. (Legis State Tx.)⁹⁹

This “Western Hero” remarked in a 1971 interview:

I believe in white supremacy until the blacks are educated to a point of responsibility. I don't believe in giving authority and positions of leadership and judgment to irresponsible people....I don't feel we did wrong in taking this great country away from [Native Americans], if that's what you're asking. Our so-called stealing of this country from them was just a matter of survival. There were great numbers of people who needed new land, and the Indians were selfishly trying to keep it for themselves. (Playboy, 4)

The narrative of John Wayne as the “embodiment”, to use Patrick’s terminology, of “traditions” and “histories” of the United States compresses space and time. This thereby allows Dan Patrick’s anti-immigration policies to appear as necessary “cowboy” heroism prevailing in the face of the “unlawful”. As Richard Slotkin argues, “the process of mythogenesis in a culture is one of continuous activity rather than dramatic starts and stops” (2010, 4). In November 2010, Patrick filed Senate Bill 126 (SB 126), “Relating to the duty of a peace officer to inquire into the lawful presence of certain persons” (Texas Legislature 2011). Like SB 1070 before it, SB 126 did not make it to ratification. However, its introduction reflects the “constant activity” of frontier myth, or to use Parades’ terminology, “Anglo-Texan legend” (1994 [1958], 15). For the deification of figures such as Wayne lassoes “civilization” versus “savagery” together with twenty-first century tales of border “banditry”—invasion, Ebola, drug wars, kidnappings, and, according to Fox News, ISIS insurgents just eight miles south of El Paso (2014). Moreover, locating courage as marker of the “unselfish” Western hero justifies political rhetoric that places blame for migrant struggle and death at the feet of the most vulnerable. Said rhetoric also erases the courage required for these journeys, as Oscar Martínez argues, “Crossing the

⁹⁹ John Wayne had bipartisan appeal. On his death, President Jimmy Carter eulogized “He embodies the enduring American values of individualism, relentless bravery and perseverance in pursuit of what is right”, qtd. in John Shelton Lawrence, Robert Jewett *The Myth of the American Superhero*, William B. Eerdmans, 2002, p.99.

border without documentation entails many risks....That so many are able to survive and to accomplish their objectives is a powerful testimony to the human spirit and the will to progress” (146, 1994). Moreover, further erased is the impact of the “risks.” In December 2018, after crossing the US Mexico border into Texas with her father, seven-year-old Jakelin Caal Maquín died whilst in CBP custody. The response from then Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen highlights how state border narratives shift blame from the enactment of inhumane border policies to a “common sense” rationale for migrant death.¹⁰⁰ Speaking live on Fox News, Nielsen argues, “This is just a very sad example of the dangers of this journey....This family chose to cross illegally” (2018). In a Baumann reading, the “canonical moral commandments” (2014) of Republican family values, “the hope of a better tomorrow, the promise of a safe and secure today, and an appreciation and respect of yesterday” (Republican Party of Texas), do not apply to the children of Latin America.¹⁰¹ For what is to be adhered to, secured and respected is the “wagon train” protectionism of Western law/lore; a shifting protectionism that requires, and has required, constant negotiation by embattled communities in the borderlands and beyond.

EL TEATRO LIBROTRAFICANTE

Juan Flores and George Yúdice argue, “The border houses the power of the outrageous, the imagination needed to turn the historical and cultural tables” (1990, 80). In 2012, the “outrageous” had happened. For Chicanx communities, the dismantling of Tucson’s MAS program threatened to reverse decades of pedagogical and epistemological gains. However, in

¹⁰⁰ As of June 2019, there have been six deaths of children related to migrant detention centers, all six from Guatemala. In May 2019, during a congressional hearing, Rep. Lauren Underwood (D-Ill.) remarked, “With five kids that have died...the evidence is really clear that this is intentional, it’s a policy choice being made on purpose by this administration, and it’s cruel and inhumane.” Rachel Frazin, “Dem Rep: ‘Evidence Is Clear’ That Migrant Child Deaths are ‘Intentional’”, *The Hill*, May 22, 2019. thehill.com/homenews/house/445027-dem-rep-evidence-is-clear-that-migrant-child-deaths-are-intentional.

a Flores and Yúdice reading, said communities in seeking to “turn the tables” have long usurped tactics of oppression through resistance that radically re/imagines the world. A radical imagination is therefore critical, for without it, as Alex Khasnabish and Max Haiven argue, “we are left only with the residual dreams of the powerful, and for the vast majority, they are not experiences as dreams but as nightmare of insecurity, precarity, violence, and hopelessness” (2014, 4). The revolutionary imaginings of the Chicano Movement, for example, born from a people narrated into the margins of society, produced art, film, and literature, political, epistemological, and pedagogical praxis that continues to re/claim voice and space in myriad territories of contestation. As Jorge Huerta writes, “There is no monolithic or essential “Chicano experience,” but the period [of the civil rights era] was a crucial moment in the development of a Chicano consciousness” (2002, 24). In the re/telling of nation making and belonging, the radical production of the Chicano Movement re/centered the histories, oppressions, and resistance of historically marginalized communities. A vital praxis, for, as Khasnabish and Haiven warn, “Without the radical imagination we are lost” (4, 2014).¹⁰² In this respect, the aesthetic, literary, political, and pedagogical production of the Chicano Movement created a cultural ecosystem; a dynamic conservation project, as Kai M. A. Chan et al. theorize, “associated with spiritual values, cultural identity, social cohesion, and heritage values” (2012). This is a cultural ecosystem that nurtured the pedagogy of Tucson’s MAS program and continues to nurture the social protest of the Librotraficante Movement. Moreover, it is a system of cultural sustenance born from the very workings of the earth. For in 1965, in Delano, California, the radical imaginings of migrant fieldworkers in the mid-1960s would become the catalyst for change.

¹⁰² Of the power of radical imagining, Robin D.G. Kelley argues, “Progressive social movements do not simply produce statistics and narratives of oppression; rather, the best ones do what great poetry always does: transport us to another place, compel us to relive horrors and, more importantly, enable us to imagine a new society. We must remember that the conditions and the very existence of social movements enable participants to imagine something different, to realize that things need not always be this way”, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*, Beacon Press, 2002, p.9.

On September 8, 1965, majority Filipino and Mexican grape-pickers of the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee [AWOC] downed tools in the fields of nine farms in Delano, California. The strike, led by Larry Itliong, protested the disparity in wages between AWOC workers and those of the Mexican braceros.¹⁰³ Approached one week later by Itliong, the braceros, led by César Chávez and Dolores Huerta of the National Farmworkers Association [NFWA], voted to join the strike. The two unions merged, forming the United Farm Workers [UFW]. By mid-September, over two-thousand UFW members had begun to picket in the streets and fields of Delano. Their call was not only for higher wages, but also for better working and living conditions and the right to unionize without fear of reprisal. In a Flores and Yúdice reading, the UFW's tactics of collective mobilization were "outrageous" (1990, 80). The strike, known as *La Causa*, created a space in which Delano's farmworkers, through the reclamation of their voices, bodies, and labor, could radically reimagine the worlds in which they lived. The strike, and concurrent national grape boycott, ended in 1970 with collective bargaining agreements seeing labor contracts signed by grape growers and the UFW. It was a watershed moment for migrant workers' rights in California's Central Valley. Moreover, as Jorge Huerta writes, the impact of the collective praxis of the UFW was to prove to be profound:

The UFW's efforts and the larger antiwar movement led to the Chicano Movement, spurred, in part, by student unrest in high schools and universities in the late 1960s. Chavez's refrain, "¡Ya basta!" ["We've had it!" or "That's enough!"], echoed throughout the barrios, especially among students and their teachers." (2002, 28)¹⁰⁴

In 1965, the organizing tactics of the UFW shifted to include a cultural arm. Luís Valdez, a theater graduate from a familial heritage of fieldwork, arrived in Delano with a plan to encourage membership of the fledging union through community-based theater. Following

¹⁰³ See page 125.

¹⁰⁴ As the word of the Delano Grape Strike spread to the San Francisco and Los Angeles areas, outside volunteers, mostly university students, began arriving in Delano wanting to volunteer their services. See, *U.F.W. Documentation Project Online Discussion*, December 2004 and January 2005, [libraries.ucsd.edu/farmworkermovement/disc/December\[1\]%20REVISED.pdf](http://libraries.ucsd.edu/farmworkermovement/disc/December[1]%20REVISED.pdf)

talks with Dolores Huerta, Valdez founded El Teatro Campesino [ETC], widely regarded as the first Chicano theater company.¹⁰⁵ Of ETC's impact, Huerta shares, "It was as powerful, if not more powerful, than the picket lines we had going" ("Dolores Huerta" 2017, 01:12). In the company's early days, workers comprised its company, performing comedic, improvised actos [skits] based on their experiences, actos that poked fun at employers and at the nature of the workers' circumstance. Yolanda Broyles-González writes, said praxis, with cultural orality functioning as the grassroots theater company's "conceptual bedrock" (1994, 6), locates ETC in the Mexican "popular performance tradition" (1994, 6). More specifically here, Valdez acknowledges, in the "whole comic Mexican tradition of the carpa, the tent" (qtd. in Broyles-González, 10).¹⁰⁶ Carpa, a form of itinerant folk theater, as Broyles-González argues, has long "served as a counterhegemonic tool of the disenfranchised and the oppressed" (7). In post-revolutionary Mexico, for example, the carpas ribald satire spoke to the struggles of the turbulent nation's proletariat and Indigenous communities.¹⁰⁷ Tomás Ybarra-Frausto argues that for Mexican heritage communities in the 1930s and 1940s in the US Mexico borderlands the carpa tradition "helped to define and sustain ethnic and class consciousness ... and helped establish a new sense of self-identity" (1984, 53).¹⁰⁸ El Teatro Campesino carried this legacy into the civil rights era, enacting in this respect, as Ybarra-Frausto writes, "the struggles of Chicana/os within the larger Euro American and global classist and racist society" (55). Where

¹⁰⁵ Rebecca M Gamez argues, "The literal translation of *campesino* as "peasant or farmworker" does not adequately convey its meaning in Mexican Spanish, which alludes to a history of the social, cultural, and political relationships between people and the land" (note 1, 227)

¹⁰⁶ Nicolás Kanellos argues, "The term Carpa is ancient Quechua for an awning made of interwoven branches. In Spanish it signifies canvas cover, tent, and finally, a type of folksy and down-to-earth circus" qtd. in Rita E. Urquijo-Ruiz, *Wild Tongues: Transnational Mexican Popular Culture*, UT Press, 2012, p. 26. For an analysis of iconic Mexican comedian Cantiflas and the Carpa tradition, see Jeffrey M. Pilcher *Cantinflas and the Chaos of Mexican Modernity*, Scholarly Resources, 2001, p. 1-33.

¹⁰⁷See, Natalia Bieletto, "The Poor and the Modern City: Recognition and Misrecognition of the Carpas Shows in Mexico City (1890-1930)", *Mester*, Vol. 43, No. 1, 2014/15, pp. 79-98.

¹⁰⁸ Of the role played by the carpas for embattled borderlands communities, Nicolás Kanellos writes, they became "a sounding board for the culture conflict that Mexican-Americans felt in language usage, assimilation to American tastes and life-styles, discrimination in the United States and *pochos*-status [sell-out] in Mexico", *Reference Library of Hispanic America, Volume 3*, Education Guidance Service. Gale Research, 1992, p.512

the carpas post-revolutionary storytelling praxis brought theater and circus to the dispossessed of Mexico, ETC's cusp of the Chicano Movement stories came directly from those who worked the land.

In interview, Valdez shares that at one of the company's first meetings, "I asked for volunteers to act out what was happening on the picket lines" (qtd. in M. Theresa Marrero 2002, 41). This "acting out" voiced by the workers at the site of oppression shifted understandings of power. "The performance" Harry J. Elam Jr. argues, "rearticulated and reimagined the fields not only as a site of the farmworkers' exploitation but as also as a site of resistance and even the actualization of the strike cause" (2001, 77). A key tool of ETC's performative praxis was the performance space itself, the back of flatbed trucks, the type of vehicle used to transport workers to and from the field. This stage, a resistance aesthetic that echoed the migratory experiences of the workers, created a space that functioned to reclaim not only the site and the nature of oppression but also the body politics of migrant labor. In a Michel Foucault reading, reclaiming said site interrupted the constitution of the self, "those continuous and uninterrupted processes which subject our bodies, govern our gestures, dictate our behaviors" (1980, 97). Moreover, the truck bed as site performance reflects, in the words of Amalia Mesa-Bain, "the Chicano phenomenon of *rasquachismo* [where] aesthetic expression comes from discards, fragments, everyday materials" (300). *Rasquachismo* then is born from historical and contemporary community ingenuity in the face of lack of resource. As Ybarra-Frausto writes:

In an environment always on the edge of coming apart (the car, the job, the toilet), things are held together with spit, grit, and *movidas*. *Movidas* are the coping strategies you use to gain time, to make options, to retain hope. *Rasquachismo* is a compendium of all the *movidas* deployed in immediate, day-to-day living. Resilience and resourcefulness spring from making do with what is at hand. (qtd. in Olguín 2010, 25)

What was "at hand" was ingenuity to recycle the site of oppression, the trucks, and materials used for packing and transporting the produce. From cardboard boxes, the company produced masks and neck-signs. These identity markers (For example, "churches", "the union", "migra

[border patrol]”, and “campesino”) delineated the “heroes” (who never wore masks) from the “villains” (often represented as pigs). Hand-painted cardboard placards bearing simple slogans such as “Huelga!” [Strike] signaled audience embedded in the performance. This not only foregrounded the UFW’s activities but also foregrounded tactics of participatory change, for the company functioning as a tool to invert labor conditions had a profound impact on the understanding of UFW activities and on the union’s reach. As Muñoz argues, “Teatro Campesino dramatically and effectively rallied farmworkers to the cause” (qtd. in Marino 2017, 187).¹⁰⁹ Moreover, ETC’s rasquache aesthetic enabled historically marginalized workers and audience to contest the marking and regulation of their bodies through the centering of self-narrated counterstories. In this sense, the workers produced themselves and said self-liberatory praxis shifted power relationships, and, as in the words of Carlos Muñoz, ETC “became central to a political struggle” (Qtd. in Marino, 187). However, in 1967, despite collaborative success, ETC’s relationship with the UFW ended. The theater company broadened its representational remit seeking to address both rural and urban inequities. This also led Valdez to move focus from direct labor activism to bringing Chicano visibility to a mainstream audience. As a teaching tool, ETC’s radical imaginings were shared in the classrooms of Tucson’s MAS program, with the daily recitation of a poem Valdez adapted from the Mayan precept, *In Lak’Ech*. Valdez explains this phrase as meaning, “we are all part of the same universal vibration” (2014), a vibration that the radical imaginings of the Librotraficante Movement relayed back to Arizona in 2012.

Amongst the two-hundred-plus individual titles in its hold, the Librotraficante caravan transported to Tucson the Valdez anthology, *Zoot Suit and Other Plays*, published in 1982 by Arte Público Press. In carrying the anthology, the Librotraficante caravan operates as both

¹⁰⁹ Since 1971, the award-winning work of Luís Valdez and El Teatro Campesino has continued from the company’s base in San Juan Bautista in northern California.

mode of cultural transport and as a site of safe passage, a “caravanseraí”. From the third century AD, as Kevin D. O’Gorman and Richard C. Prentice write, caravanserais across the Islamic world “provid[ed] hospitality and care for travellers, both pilgrims and strangers” (2008, 2). In this respect, having *Zoot Suit* onboard, the Librotraficantes afford hospitality to the students and faculty of MAS, the writings of Valdez, Arte Público’s catalog, the El Teatro Campesino company, the organizing of the UFW, the fieldworkers of Delano, and the revolutionary roots of the Mexican carpa. Moreover, within this space of cultural wealth and collective welcome, the Librotraficante caravan is further symbolically transformed. The fifty-seater bus becomes a flatbed truck, a carpa, becomes a dynamic site of critical pedagogy and performance. Where ETC actos had “smuggled” critically disruptive union activism, the Librotraficantes “smuggle” critically disruptive texts. Where ETC’s mobile praxis took the company to picket lines, churches, fields, and protest marches, the Librotraficantes’ routed the caravan to sites of grassroots activism, to caravanserais of resistance. Where the ETC donned masks and signs in the subversion and reclamation of identity, the Librotraficantes donned apodos [nicknames]. Naming here a cultural praxis that Patricia Covarrubias argues, “reflect[s] and constitute[s] a particular Mexican way of life” (2000, 10), a way of life in which “a variety of pointing terms are used to personalize one’s communications with another and to inform intimacy, friendship, [and] esteem” (11). As Covarrubias further articulates, apodos, like character names worn around the necks of the campesinos in performance, speak to a familiarity of experience, or “*confianza*, which is a blend of trust, respect, confidentiality, and unity” (11). As Lupe Méndez shares of the naming practice prior to the caravan, “It was either Tony or Bryan that did the naming, or the caravanistas themselves” (interview with Massey, 2019). The five founders of the movement became Librotraficante La Laura (Laura Acosta), El Librotraficante (Tony Díaz), Librotraficante LiLó (Liana López), Librotraficante HighTechAztec (Bryan Parras), and Lupe Méndez, following a mispronunciation of his first name at a Nuestra Palabra event,

became Librotráficoante Lips.¹¹⁰ Post-caravan, with the deputizing of new Librotráficoantes, Méndez became the namer. His approach speaks further to Covarrubias' articulation of *confianza*. "I wanted to figure out names" Méndez shares, "that were both easy to use but were also characteristic of people's place and skill in the movement" (interview with Massey, 2019).

¹¹¹ Léo Treviño, a San Antonio based Librotráficoante, was given the apodo, El León [The Lion]. As Méndez explains, "[Léo] is a military vet, with a brave heart for the cause and working with youth. He was a leader of a pride of kids and never afraid to speak the truth" (2019). Rubén Garza, then Vice President of the Mexican American Studies Club at the University of Texas, Pan American, in the Río Grande Valley, was similarly afforded an apodo that spoke to his particular skillset. Méndez sees Garza as "a great orator" (2019), naming him accordingly:

At the time when we were going after the State for wanting to redefine "comprehensive US history", Rubén ... who was a college student [,] was able to rally other students and speak eloquently about why we needed to study all history—I asked him if he wanted to go by Librotráficoante "Speakerbox" and he agreed (2019).

Confianza among the Librotráficoantes, and the celebration therein of personal knowledge, was

¹¹⁰ The Caravanistas - Belinda Acosta Librotráficoante "la prensa"/ Cecilia Balli Librotráficoante "Texas Monthly" / Gabriel Carmona Librotráficoante "El Comandante" / Ruben Castilla Herrera Librotráficoante "Buddha-zas" / Dennis Castillo Librotráficoante "Youngblood" / Victoria Corona Librotráficoante "Hasta la Victoria" / Tony Díaz "El Librotráficoante" / Blas Espinosa Librotráficoante "Blaze" / Megan Feldman Librotráficoante "Daily Beast" / Tony Garcia Librotráficoante "Crusher" / Augustin Laredo Librotráficoante "El Guti Q" / Laura Lee Oviedo Librotráficoante "La Solderada" / Adam Efrén López Librotráficoante "Pancho Flópez" / Diana López Librotráficoante "DLO" / Liana López Librotráficoante "LiLó" / Antonio Maldonado Librotráficoante "Smokey" / Brandon McGaughey Librotráficoante "High-Tech Hybrid" / Lupe Méndez Librotráficoante "Lips" / Susie Moreno Librotráficoante "La Mom" / Paolo Mossetti Librotráficoante "El Italiano" / Bryan Parras Librotráficoante "HighTechAztec" / Delia Perez Meyer Librotráficoante "La Hashbrown" / Laura Razo Librotráficoante "La Laura" / Gloria Rubac Librotráficoante "La Gloria" / Branden Selman Librotráficoante "Pelo-Chin" / Jacob Shafer Librotráficoante "Sound" / Harbeer Singh Khabardaar Librotráficoante "Indio" / Zelene Suchil Pineda Librotráficoante "Rebelené" / Joceyln Viera Librotráficoante "yolibrotráficoante" / [Unknown] Librotráficoante "Mustang."

¹¹¹ He explains his process, "Librotráficoante "La Vecina" was Georgina Perez—because she knew tons of activist chisme, but also knew the contacts of who was doing what. Just like a "nosey neighbor" - the cultural [sic] reference to the lady who sees everything, but doesn't say a word. (El Paso) ... Librotráficoante "El Símbolo" - Hugo Rodríguez, he wrote a poem describing the profile [sic] of a Librotráficoante and so the idea was to give him the name in honor of his description. His poem was a symbol of what one could be. TBH - I am such a comichead that I [sic] loved the idea of making up names - I kept thinking of the code names of all the comic book characters I read, and I wanted to figure out names that were both easy to use but were also characteristic of people's place and skill in the movement. We have a great orator in the group - at the time when we were going after the State for wanting to redefine "comprehensive US history" Rubén Garza, who was a college student [,] was able to rally other students and speak eloquently about why we needed to study all history - I asked him if he wanted to go by Librotráficoante "Speakerbox" and he agreed" (personal correspondence with Massey, Facebook Messenger, March 30, 2019).

not the only impetus behind the naming ritual. Just as service personnel in combat if captured by enemy forces are trained to give out only name, rank, and serial number, so are all Librotraficantes to give only their apodos to the authorities if caught “smuggling” cultural contraband.¹¹² Said empowerment technique presents as a performative subversion of the majoritarian marking of illegality. For the Librotraficantes, presenting as what I term “cultural coyotes”, abiding by the law is illogical. As Tony Díaz explains:

Nuestra Palabra has been involved in cultural causes for 13 years now. ‘And you know what? Logic doesn’t work. We’ve had professors and other experts come and share their very logical analyses of a situation, and it hasn’t worked. So, if logos isn’t working we must resort to pathos. (Acosta 2012)

The Librotraficantes understand that “in the face of decades of pejorative labeling, this naming, this re-coding was a necessary emotional act” (Massey 2016). For no matter their communities’ activities, be it in the form of Mexican American Studies, or the claiming of asylum at the US Mexico border, the state’s rhetoric of “illegality”, like the police imagined by Díaz in a dark garage at the end of a book festival, will makes its presence known. The ritual of naming then becomes a site where embattled communities, in an Alvina E. Quintana reading, “involve [them]selves in a self-fashioning process that engages someone else’s political agenda” (1996, 8-9). In this respect, the Librotraficantes involve themselves in the renaming of self and community judicially labeled as “resentful”, “un-American”, and “seditious”, and as previously argued, marked by majoritarian discourse as “illegal.” “Renaming oneself in this situation,” as Quintana continues, “represents a symbolic act of resistance that requires imagination, fluidity, and finesse” (1996, 8-9), a criteria the apodo strategy of the caravanistas

¹¹² Teo Reyes writes of a bus that was taking part in the 2003 Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride and stopped by CBP outside El Paso, “The Freedom Riders were well prepared for any questions by Immigration. All carried a special badge listing their name, picture, and originating city. The badge included a card making clear that no rider would say or sign anything without first speaking with an attorney. If for any reason a bus was detained, all the riders pledged to give no information and present only this ID. That way, if there were any undocumented riders, they would be protected by everyone’s nonviolent resistance.” “Rallies Across the Country Greet Immigrant Worker Freedom Riders.” *Labor Notes*, 1 Nov. 2003, labornotes.org/2003/11/rallies-across-country-greet-immigrant-worker-freedom-riders.

meet. Naming here also operates as decolonial praxis, one that resists a legacy of the anglicization of Spanish and Indigenous names and attempts therein of cultural erasure. In the rolling aftermath of what Octavio Pimentel and Nancy Wilson express as “colonization’s cultural bomb” (2016, 127), naming rebuilds and reconstructs. As Gloria Anzaldúa writes, “Naming myself is how I make my presence known, how I assert who and what I am and want to be known as. Naming myself is a survival tactic” (2009, 164). For the Librotraficantes, naming was but one tactic used to make “presence known”, another, social media.

Where El Teatro Campesino advertised its activities and performances through posters, flyers, and through word-of-mouth, the Librotraficantes turned to social media. The first “casting call” for the movement went out two weeks after the TUSD voted 4-1 to end the MAS program, with Bryan Parras posting, “Calling all Libro Traficantes. The LT are heading to Tucson with more books than the thought police can handle. Stay tuned” (Jan 12, 2012) on Twitter. Two days later, he uploaded a short video on YouTube. Titled, “Wet Books: Smuggling Banned Literature Back into Arizona”, the video was the beginning of a social media campaign to raise awareness of the dismantling of the TUSD MAS program, and to raise donations for the forthcoming caravan. Filmed on the driveway of Tony Díaz’s home in a suburban middle-class neighborhood of North-West Houston, “Wet Books” presents a radical spatial reality, one that Andrew Wiese speaks to in his work challenging paradigms of suburban history. Writing of the need to “reconceptualize suburbanization” (2004, 4), Wiese argues, “Whether the term evokes images of Big Wheels and minivans, political conservatism, or restrictive gender roles, in common parlance “suburb” is still likely to be understood to mean a white community” (5). In locating the call for “trafficking” support in this said framed space, Díaz disrupts, as Sherene S. Razack theorizes, “the spatiality of the racial order” (2018, 127). An order, Razack writes, through “which whites secure their dominance in settler societies” (127). Díaz then represents what anti-immigration politicking fears the most, a property owning, Chicana author, educator, activist, and community leader, the child of migrant

workers, living in, and operating out of, claimed land. As Díaz states in a 2012 interview, “I’m a Mexican American citizen with a master’s. I know my rights” (Phippen 2015). In this way, Díaz, in a Jody Agius Vallejo reading, “contradicts worries, research and persuasive stereotypes about Mexican Americans, and provides a more optimistic glimpse into the future” (2013, 2). An optimism that threatens marginalization and counters, as Agius Vallejo argues, “Common assumptions and widespread panic that Mexican immigrants’ native-born descendants will remain poor and uneducated becoming a permanent drain on America’s coffers” (2).¹¹³ Díaz represents, as Harry Pachon, president of the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute, articulates of the changing face of the suburbs of Southern California, “the great untold story of the Latino community ... We are, everywhere” (Qtd. in Ramos 1997). To return to Razack, this “everywhere” disrupts “the spatiality of the racial order” (127). An order in which anti-Ethnic Studies and anti-immigration legislation seeks to render certain groups immobile and therefore easier to “contain”. A containment that a Chicana life lived in the suburbs resists.

In “Wet Books”, Díaz stands to the right of the open back of a book-filled mini-van. He wears a leather jacket, dark sunglasses, and has slicked-back hair. Throughout the video, Díaz’s appearance, language, and gestures produce a performativity of defiance. One that embodies, in a Walter Dignolo reading, both the “epistemic disobedience” (2013, 133) of the MAS program and the perceived civic disobedience of those racially marked. For Díaz’s performance engages in, as Roberta Wolfson writes, “a discursive battle with institutionalized risk discourses” those which Wolfson defines as “rhetoric used by the state to justify the

¹¹³ See Agius Vallejo’s “Latina Spaces: Middle-Class Ethnic Capital and Professional Associations in the Latino Community”, *City and Community*, 2009, and Agius Vallejo and Jennifer Lee, “Brown Picket Fences: The Immigrant Narrative and ‘Giving Back’ Among the Mexican-Origin Middle Class”, *Ethnicities*, Vol. 9, No. 1. Pp. 5-31. David Hayes-Bautista’s research also illuminates the multifaceted dynamics of Latinx communities, see *State La Nueva California: Latinos from Pioneers to Post-Millennials*, UC Press, 2017. Leo R. Chavez’s work similarly reconsiders prevailing negative narratives of Latino communities. See, *The Latino Threat: Constructing Immigrants, Citizens, and the Nation*, 2nd ed., SU Press, 2013.

containment and policing of black and brown bodies in the name of national security” (2018, 21). Bookstands are on either side of the vehicle, propped upon them texts from the MAS program’s bibliography. These include *Viva la Raza: A History of Chicano Identity* (Yolanda Alaniz and Megan Cornish 2008), *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (Junot Díaz 2007), and *Woodcuts of Women* (Dagoberto Gilb 2001). The framework of Nuestra Palabra supports the new movement. As Díaz reveals, “We’ve got years of book smuggling activity in my garage....Yeah, all the evidence” (interview with Massey, 2015b). Díaz faces the camera operated by Parras, he introduces himself, “My name’s Tony” [0:01]. In the face of myriad distorted representations of Latinx communities, Díaz’s “costume” and claim to his name speaks to resistance, a resistance as reflected in the naming praxis of the Librotraficantes. He continues, “You might have heard that Arizona had the audacity to ban Latino Studies. Well, I am here to introduce a few new words into the lexicon of Arizona, courtesy of *The Protestor’s Handbook* written right here in Houston, Texas” (0:02). At “*Protestor’s Handbook*” (0:12), entangling the praxis of the Librotraficante Movement with that of El Movimiento, Díaz raises his fist in a posture reminiscent of resistance gestures of the Civil Rights era. What follows operates as a lexical subversion, one that serves as counternarrative to historical and contemporary discourse of identity and belonging. As María Lugones writes, “Linguistic resistance includes strategies to counter or survive co-optation, appropriation, and ossification. Linguistic resistance also refuses a “natural” conception of meaning” (2000, 247). In this respect, “Wet Books”, in refusing imposed majoritarian definitions of Chicanx and Latinx communities, functions as that which Lugones terms, “contestatory dictionaries”. “Wet Books” intervenes, and in doing so, “unmasks and upsets domination through words in ways that mirror the transgressive lives and possibilities of those who create meaning and of those who compile

the transgressions” (247).¹¹⁴

The first word Díaz introduces from this resistance lexicon is “Libro-Traficante” [0:18]. As he speaks, the term appears in quotation marks in a chalk-like font on the bottom of the screen. Said font is reminiscent of classroom blackboards, of contested sites of knowledge, and in this way links the resistance praxis of the *Librotraficantes* to that of MAS in Tucson. The video then becomes an extension of the program, adding a text to the removed bibliography. Moreover, the allusion to chalk, in a Mesa-Bain reading of *rasquachismo*, an “everyday material” (2003, 300), combined with the other props in the video, the mini-van with broken trunk hatch held open by a bookstand purchased at a liquidation sale, connects the video’s graphic connect to the *rasquache* aesthetic of *El Teatro Campesino*. In the case of ETC and the *Librotraficantes*, this is an aesthetic that claims, as Mesa-Bains argues, “a stance that is both defiant and inventive” (300). Díaz’s stance of defiance and invention announces the caravan. “Me and my fellow *Librotraficantes*” he declares, “will be smuggling contraband books back into Arizona this Spring Break, March 2012” [0:21]. He then proceeds to outline the activities of the caravan through the introduction of two further terms, the first being “Wet-Book” [0:42], again appearing in the “chalk” font at the bottom of the screen. Here Díaz inverts the pejorative term “wetback”, a racialized epithet born of a US imaginary of the “Other”—peoples of Mexican descent entering the United States “illegally”, with clothes soaked from their swim across the Rio Grande. Moreover, this is a term inscribed into the “national encyclopedia”. For in 1954, under the Eisenhower administration, the US Border Patrol instituted “Operation Wetback”—a directive that culminated in the deportation of over a million migrants to Mexico.¹¹⁵ The “Wet-Books” entry in the *Librotraficante* lexicon circumvents majoritarian

¹¹⁴ For further analysis of the gendered and raced discourse of dictionaries see, Cameron, Deborah “Making Change Can We Decontaminate Sexist Language?” *Counterbalance: Gendered Perspectives on Writing and Language*, edited by Carolyn Logan, Broadview Press, 1997, pp. 220-221

¹¹⁵ For a historiography of Operation Wetback see Juan Ramón García, *Operation Wetback: The Mass Deportation of Mexican Undocumented Workers in 1954*, Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980, S. Deborah Kang, *The INS on the Line: Making Immigration Law on the US–Mexico Border, 1917–1954*. New York: Oxford

narratives, claiming entry for knowledges soaked in the counternarratives of marginalized communities. The inclusion of “Wet-Books” on the Librotraficante caravan, in a Flores and Yúdice reading, “turn[s] the historical and cultural tables” (1990, 80). For in stating, “These are books that we’ll smuggle illegally across the border” [0:43] the video’s narrative here troubling the “legality” of mass deportation. Moreover, centralized is the critical necessity of the “deported” texts. Díaz explains that these ““Wet-Books ... will be used in underground classes where we will conduct Latino literary studies” [0:46]. With the MAS program symbolically reinstated the MAS program picks *Woodcuts of Women* from the bookcase behind him. Reversing the decision of state and returning the author as “contraband” back to the community, he holds the book up to camera and declares, “This is a lethal dose of Dagoberto Gilb comin’ at ya, Arizona” [0:56]

The third expression in the Librotraficante lexicon is “Dime-Book” [1:08], defined by Díaz as, “paperbacks that used to be worth only ten dollars” [1:09]. In drug slang, a “Dime bag” indicates ten dollars of product, this play on the term then inverts racialized tropes of Chicana and Latina communities trafficking in and partaking of illicit substances. Tropes adhered to during Donald Trump’s presidential campaign, where his pronouncement, “[Mexicans] they’re bringing drugs” (2015), drew from a discursive framework, as Lindsay Pérez Huber argues, of “racist nativism ... [that] assigns real and perceived subordinate values to People of Color, generally—and Latinas and Latinos especially” (2016, 221). A further reading of “Dime-Book” ties contemporary discourse to nativism of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. During this time-period, “dime novels”, inexpensive, mass-

University Press, 2017, and TC Langham “Federal Regulation of Border Labor: Operation Wetback and the Wetback Bills”, *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, 1992, pp. 81-91. Studies on sociopolitical impact of Operation Wetback include, Avi Astor “Unauthorized Immigration, Securitization and the Making of Operation Wetback”, *Latino Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 2009, pp.5-29; Kelly Lytle Hernández, “The crimes and consequences of illegal immigration: A cross-border examination of Operation Wetback, 1943 to 1954”, *Western Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No. 4, 2006, pp. 421-444.

produced paperbacks, became popular. Vicki Anderson suggests that at a time of rising immigration and persistent systemic White Supremacy, said texts “reflect[ed] the cultural nationalism with their sincere efforts at ideological teaching—in personal morality and ethics, in humanitarian reform and political thought” (2005, 4).¹¹⁶ These “teachings” propagated foundational myths of the United States, particularly those of race and of Manifest Destiny. As Bill Brown argues, “The dime novel makes visible the ways in which the narration of the West aestheticizes the genocidal foundation of the nation, turning conquest into a literary enterprise that screens out other violent episodes in the nation’s history” (Qtd. in Streeby 2002, 216). One such “violent episode” fictionalized in dime books is the Mexican American War. As Jaime Javier Rodríguez argues, “dime novels capture the process through which the US-Mexican War’s disruptive contractions slipped into the pool of Anglo American amnesiac essentialism” (2010, 97).¹¹⁷ The “Dime-Books” of the Librotraficante caravan fill the gaps of this memory deficit. In this way, Díaz argues, Arizona’s “fascist laws” [1:13] in removing the texts from circulation render them “invaluable” [1:11] Where, as Tara J. Yosso argues, “Majoritarian narratives tend to silence or dismiss people who offer evidence contradicting ... racially unbalanced portrayals” , “Wet Books” is a space for the transmission of said “evidence”. Díaz holds Sandra Cisneros’ *House on Mango Street* up to camera [1:18]. First published by Arte Público Press in 1984, *Mango Street* is a collection of forty-four vignettes whose narrative voice is that of the book’s twelve-year old protagonist, Esperanza. Of the text Alvina E. Quintana, writes, “Cisneros defined a distinct Chicana literary space—oh so gently she flung down the gauntlet, challenging, at the least, accepted literary form, gender inequities, and the

¹¹⁶Rebecca S. Wingo’s research reveals that the term “Dime novel” was born from an advertisement in a nineteenth century New York newspaper. In June of 1860, publishing house Beadle and Adams launched a new line of paperbacks, their first title a work by Ann Sophia Winterbotham Stephens, *Malaeska, Indian Wife of the White Hunter*. The advert tagline in the paper read, “BOOKS FOR THE MILLION! Dollar books for a dime”, and so the genre was born (emphasis in original 2017).

¹¹⁷ For an early study of the making of Mexicans in the dime novel see Norman D. Smith “Mexican Stereotypes on Fictional Battlefields: Or Dime Novel Romances of the Mexican War,” *Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 13, 1980, pp. 526-540.

cultural and economic subordination of minorities” (1996, 55). This “distinct” space also provides for wider representation. Cisneros argues of the wider impact of *Mango Street*, “Many people have said it was how they came to know about Latino life....The most intimate relationship they have with the Latino community is reading this book” (interview with Queirós, 2009). Díaz speaks to the critical and cultural value of author and text in emphasizing that the “trafficked” text is the, “twenty-fifth anniversary edition” [21] of *Mango Street*. He moves then towards camera and book in hand “goads” the state. “Arizona” he says, “I hear [Cisneros] is leaving San Antonio” [1:23]. Díaz postulates, with now only his head and shoulders centered in the frame, “Maybe we can convince her to come live in Arizona” [1:26]. He then refers to Cisneros as, “Contraband people” [1:30], commenting here on the broader implications of the dismantling of Ethnic Studies programs such as MAS In the final shot, with lexical resistance inscribed, Díaz stretches out his right arm out and pointing directly into camera announces a Librotraficante verdict. “Arizona”, he charges. “We’re throwing the book at you” [1:32]. To return to Flores and Yúdice, here it is “the power of the outrageous” (1990, 80) that turns the judicial tables.

The video closes with Díaz, head-tilted, making a two-fingered “V” sign with his right hand and proclaiming, “V for victory, vatos!” [1:35]. Said gesture now a Díaz performative trademark. Laura Razo Librotraficante La Laura explains that this “nod” to tropes of subversion received negative feedback. “The flack that did sting me bad” she reveals, “was that [Tony] looked like Donnie Brasco (interview with Massey, 2014).¹¹⁸ Díaz’s performance was not the only part of the video that brought comment. As Razo continues, for some members of the community, ““Librotraficantes” sounded too much like we were narcos or something. My parents even questioned it a little bit” (2014). In an Anzaldúa reading, said response to the

¹¹⁸ Donnie Brasco is the title character in a 1997 movie, based on a true story, in which the protagonist is an undercover police-office who infiltrates the New York Mafia.

video's performativity and narrative reveals the "open wounds" of identity. Through reclaiming pejorative tropes as an organizing principle, the Librotraficante Movement "threatens" to disrupt protections seen as afforded to those who present as patriotic and law-abiding, or, as Arturo Madrid writes "the magnifying glasses of Mexican American middle-class defensiveness" (2003, 20). Yet, as Benjamin Alire Sáenz articulates, being a "good citizen" comes at a price. "A nationalist discourse" he argues, "requires complete acquiescence" (1997, 94). In this respect, Sáenz continues, "You are allowed only one name: American. We are all so sure we know what that label means. To some it means erasure" (1997, 94). The Librotraficantes refuse said erasure, and in doing so mock the Faustian bargain of this "allowance". They operate from a critical understanding that, in the words of Eduardo Mendieta, "We are damned if we don't, but we are equally damned if we do. We must live in the middle of this both/and, neither/nor" (2001, 540). The video is then a study in borderlands subversivity. However, Díaz's performance ties the subversive here to gendered defiance, and, in doing so, reinstates a form of erasure the movement seeks to escape.

"V for Victory, Vatos" echoes "¡Hasta la victoria siempre!" [Always to victory!], a slogan tied to Che Guevara and the Cuban Revolution.¹¹⁹ A phrase that Anthony T. Spencer argues, "functions as an ideograph in the Cuban cultural myth" (2007, 16). Throughout "Wet-Books", Díaz's performance is similarly culturally bound. Voto Latino blogger Viva Samuel Ramírez, when covering the Librotraficante Caravan's arrival in Tucson, describes Díaz as, "a relic of the Chicano Movement", and that he "posed for photos with his chin-up in the defiant ""Q-vole"-style Chicano pose" (2012). This a pose Díaz frequently repeats when photographed. Díaz's walking posture in Tucson is similarly embodied ideography, "He glided across the floor like El Pachuco" Ramirez reports, "invoking the spirit of the

¹¹⁹ See, Anthony T. Spencer, *Hasta La Victoria Siempre: The Ongoing Rhetorical Revolution in Cuba* Texas Speech Communication Journal, Vol. 31, Winter, 2007, pp. 16-23

Movimiento.” (2012). Said performativity reflects Fernando Pedro Delgado’s research on resistance rhetoric of El Movimiento, “Resulting from material deprivation and injustice” he argues, “the Chicano movement developed and sustained itself through the articulation of culturally appropriate and constitutive ideographs” (2009, 448). In 1978, Luis Valdez provided said sustenance in centering the figure of el pachuco in his play, *Zoot Suit*, an exposure of police brutality, judicial injustice, and media bias in Los Angeles in the early to mid-1940s. A work contained in a Valdez anthology of the same name, and as previously noted carried by the *Librotraficante Caravan to Tucson* (see page 128). The play retells the “Sleepy Lagoon Case”, where a group of young Chicanos were tried and falsely convicted of the murder of one José Díaz. It is set, as the trial was, against the backdrop of what became known as the “Zoot Suit Riots”. In Marci R. McMahon’s words, “a “conflict” over space and race” (2013, 9), where, over a ten-day period in June 1943, thousands of white US servicemen roamed majority Mexican and Mexican American neighborhoods seeking out, beating, and disrobing pachuco/as.¹²⁰ This a youth subculture marked by dress, the zoot suit, a particular style of clothing consisting of high-waist draped trousers or knee-length pleated skirt, long broad-shouldered jacket, often accessorized with an extra-long watch chain and a large hat with feather plume. Of the particular significance of the suit, Catherine S. Ramírez articulates, “For some the look symbolized youthful insouciance and nothing more. But for many others it signaled rebellion, difference, and even un-Americanism - hence the violence to which its wearers were subjected” (2009, xiv).¹²¹ Richard Griswold del Castillo’s study of the riots

¹²⁰ Studies of the riots include, Luis Alvarez, *The Power of the Zoot: Youth Culture and Resistance During World War II*, UC Press, 2008; Eduardo Obregón Pagán *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon: Zoot Suits, Race, and Riot in Wartime L.A.* UNC Press, 2003; Mauricio Mazón, *The Zoot-Suit Riots: The Psychology of Symbolic Annihilation*, UT Press, 1984.

¹²¹ Ralph Ellison writes of the Zoot Suiter, “His masking is motivated not so much by fear as by a profound rejection of the image created [by dominant institutions to usurp his identity]” (qtd. in Marta E. Sánchez 2005 36). Victor Hugo Viesca argues of the oppositional presence of the Zoot Suiter, “The visibility of the Other was not taken lightly by whites in the city...Using their bodies and each other as resources, Filipino, Mexican, and African American zoot suiters carved a cultural space for themselves and challenged their own subordination through a politics of zoot style that utilized their own bodies as a critical site of opposition.” “With Style: Filipino Americans and the Making of American Urban Culture”, *Our Voice*, 2003. www.oovrag.com/essays/essay2003a-1.shtml.

argues that those who wore the suit were often portrayed in the media and by law enforcement as ““baby gangsters”” and “hoodlums” (2000, 370). Valdez’s play counters this portrayal. Rosa Linda Fregoso writes that the work is representative of a particular resistance aesthetic of the period, writing, “Chicano Movement cultural workers ... affirmed repressed identities” (662-663). The narrator-protagonist of *Zoot Suit* is “El Pachuco”, thereby elevating the zoot suiter from the margins, as object, to the center of the story, as subject (1992, 15). In *Zoot Suit*, affirmation sees El Pachuco as master of ceremonies, who in controlling the narrative, counters, in a Guillermo Gómez-Peña reading, “the more ordinary myths, which link [Latinx communities] with drugs, supersexuality, gratuitous violence, and terrorism, myths that serve to justify racism and disguise the fear of cultural otherness” (1988, 40). This strategy begins with El Pachuco’s entrance where, with switchblade in hand, he tears “through the giant facsimile of newspaper front page ... [and] emerges from the slit” (1992, 24-25), symbolically disempowering, or disemboweling, the press. Tony Díaz is similarly “armed” in “Wet-Books”, and therefore figures as narrative controller. His “weapon” is a lexicon of critical resistance; one that he uses to tear through “ordinary myths” propagated through the media and judicial misrepresentation. However, Díaz, in channeling Valdez’s narrator-protagonist also channels the patriarchal sensibilities at the heart of the Chicano Movement. Re-centering, in this respect, the Chicano cultural subject, represented in, as Angie Chabram-Dernersesian articulates, “a myriad of male identities: el pachuco, el vato loco, el cholo,...the militant Chicano,... [and] the political Chicano” (1992, 82). This a centrality that during El Movimiento, as Maylei Blackwell argues, created and supported “internal organizational practices and masculinist political culture, which were exclusionary, undemocratic, and unfair” (2011, 8).¹²² Valdez, in producing *Zoot Suit* in the late 1970s, continues this legacy with his figure of El Pachuco

¹²² The images depict the creation of movement archetypes through icons of the pachuco the stoic worker, or the romanticized revolutionary, which came to constitute a field of subject positions where La Raza (the people), the “heroes” of the people, and the national subject were viewed as male (2011, 111)

functioning as the alter ego and inner voice of the play's central character, Henry Reyna. In Act I, El Pachuco whispers in Henry's ear, "Haven't I taught you to survive?" (1992, 29). This reinstates into the cultural canon an argument that community endures due to masculine hegemonic resistance. In interview, Valdez insists, El Pachuco holds, "*the internal authority*," and is "a symbol of our identity, our total identity" (italics in original) (qtd. in Roberta Orona-Cordova, 100), moreover, likening his misunderstood narrator-protagonist to Christ. However, as Ramirez's research shows, violence during the Zoot Suit Riots was inflicted upon pachuco and pachuca alike, yet the resistance of the latter remains "excluded from most Chicano accounts of what is generally deemed a watershed moment in Mexican American history" (xiv).¹²³ Valdez does not locate gendered resistance solely in the circumstances of Sleepy Lagoon racial profiling and socio-judicial injustice, *Zoot Suit* reaches back through centuries of oppression. In Act II, he retells the events of the riots, tying the violence to colonization. As El Pachuco emerges stripped from a beating at the hands of US sailors, stage directions read, "The only piece of clothing is a small loin cloth. He turns and looks at Henry with mystic intensity. He opens his arms as an Aztec conch blows" (81). Rosa Linda Fregoso describes this scene as, "a symbolic convergence of two historical events: the Marines' attack on Pachucos (1943) and the Spanish conquest of the Aztec nation (1519)" (1993, 669). A convergence that at the end of the play passes the baton of resistance to the next generation of masculine hegemony, for as El Pachuco closes the final act he declares, "Henry Reyna ... El Pachuco ... The man ... the myth ... still lives" (94).

¹²³ Elizabeth R. Escobedo "The Pachuca Panic: Sexual and Cultural Battlegrounds in World War II Los Angeles" *Western Historical Quarterly* Vol. 38, No. 2, Summer, 2007, pp. 133-156. Rosa Linda Fregoso, "Homegirls, Cholas, and Pachucas in Cinema: Taking over the Public Sphere" *California History*, Vol. 74, No. 3, Fall, 1995, pp. 316-327. Amaia Ibarra-Bigalondo, *Mexican American Women, Dress and Gender Pachucas, Chicanas, Cholas*, Routledge, 2019. Catherine S. Ramirez "Saying "Nothin'": Pachucas and the Languages of Resistance", *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*. Vol. 27, No. 3, 2006, pp. 1-33.

In channeling Valdez's narrator-protagonist, Díaz's performance keeps "the myth" alive and in doing so re-authenticates the centering of the Chicano cultural subject. El Pachuco, "dons ... a zoot suit" (25). Díaz, frequently seen wearing a slightly more tailored version of the suit, dons the apodo, "El Librotraficante". Where Jorge Huerta argues, "El Pachuco represents the defiance against the system", Díaz's bio on his website reads, "leader of the Librotraficantes". In this he also echoes the figure of Henry Reyna, for where Reyna is the leader of a pachuco gang, Díaz argues of his role, "If we were a band, I'd be the lead singer" (2014, 36). This also channels a problematic legacy of El Teatro Campesino, i.e.: the critical "canonization" of Luis Valdez, with the result of "subsuming" as Yolanda Broyles-González argues, the work of a group of people under the name of one man" (2006 [1994], 130). This is not to say that Díaz operates the Librotraficante Movement from a position of sole authority. In interview and public appearance, Díaz refers to both Nuestra Palabra and the Librotraficantes through the collective "we". He refers to Parras, López, Méndez, and Razo as "cofounders" of the Librotraficantes, and "dear friends" (2012). Díaz further argues that collectivity is at the heart of their activist praxis, "There's a bunch of us" he insists, "If there's one idea out of the mix this thing doesn't happen" (interview with Massey, 2016). This a critical approach that Liana López Librotraficante LiLó speaks to when insisting, "What I love about our little group, we each keep each other going, we keep each other relevant" (interview with Massey, 2014). Díaz further recognizes the skillset and experience of the Librotraficante founding members, "I've been in the corporate world and the non-profit world", he states. "We couldn't pay for these people; I would put this team up against Madison Ave, [and] Hollywood" (interview with Massey, 2014). However, Díaz's frequent centering, in posture, stance, and rhetoric, of masculine heteronormative figures of the Chicano Movement, fails in Blackwell's words, "the vital forms of Chicana political consciousness and organizing that existed in this period" (2011, 4). Díaz's use of "we" could then be read as Chabram-Dernersesian reads the "'us'" of Chicano identity within El Movimiento's "cultural nationalist discourse" (84) for

said collective pronoun, “was more often than not a “he” and not a s/he” (84). Broyles-Gonzalez further articulates the impact of said gender marginalization in arguing that in the centering of Valdez in the work of El Teatro Campesino, lost are “names [that] stand for the variety of human forces, interactions, contradictions, clashes and resolutions that constitute Teatro history” (133). In this respect therefore, the Librotraficante Movement fronting “El Pachuco” in 2012 stultifies the vitality of shifting subject positions within Chicana identities of the 21st century. Said stultification further reflected in the Librotraficante Manifesto, written by Díaz a month after the caravan’s return from Tucson.

THE LIBROTRAFICANTE MANIFESTO

Martin Puchner writes, “Manifestos do not articulate a political unconscious that needs to be excavated through careful analysis ... rather, they seek to bring this unconscious into the open ... articulating what has been hitherto unarticulated” (2008, 2). Throughout the Chicano Movement, the technology of the manifesto illuminated the very urgent conditions of marginalized lives. This took the form of a series of plans, penned calls for justice and radical self-determination that drew from a Mexican revolutionary tradition. In October 1910, whilst living in exile in San Antonio, Francisco Madero, denied his legitimate right to the presidency of Mexico by the country’s then dictator, José de la Cruz Porfirio Díaz, published El Plan de San Luis Potosí. In declaring, “it is necessary to eject from power the audacious usurpers whose only title of legality involves a scandalous and immoral fraud”, the document marked the beginning of the Mexican Revolution. In 1911, Madero became president of Mexico, but in November of that same year, arguing that Madero had betrayed the revolution, Emiliano Zapata released El Plan de Ayala. Its revolutionary ideals synthesized in the plan’s declaration of, “Reforma, Libertad, Ley y Justicia” [Reform, Freedom, Law and Justice], Zapata’s document announced intent to remove the president from office and to institute sweeping land reform. Four years later, said principles found foment in a small south Texas town. Whilst revolution

battled on in Mexico, here a group of nine Tejanos released the Plan of San Diego, a radical manifesto named for its locale that sought to reestablish Mexican governance in the borderlands. The plan included a call for the overthrow of the United States Government in the southwest, with the intent therein to return land lost to Mexico in the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. In the words of the document, land “robbed in a most perfidious manner by North American imperialism” (Pekka Hämäläinen and Benjamin Heber Johnson 2012, 394). The Plan of San Diego also sought liberation and restitution for other oppressed groups in the region. It called for “liberty for the black race” (394), the return of lands to Indigenous communities,¹²⁴ and opened up its revolutionary ranks, the “liberating Army for Race and Peoples” (394), to Black and Japanese communities (395). Like El Plan de Ayala before it, Plan of San Diego also operated under a unifying slogan, “Equality and Independence”, a slogan that was to appear on a red and white banner to be carried into the insurrection (394). However, before the plan could be brought to fruition, state and federal authorities rounded-up its signatories and dismissed the revolutionary rhetoric as “border talk”, the empty machinations of the dispossessed. What was not so easily dismissed was cultural memory, one that refused, as Lazaro Lima argues, the “institutionalized cultural amnesia” (2007, 24) of the burgeoning United States. For in the face of myriad erasure, the Plan of San Diego and the Madero and Zapata manifestos of self-determination and justice continue to function as repositories of a revolutionary legacy; a legacy in which the leaders of the Chicano Movement situated the struggle to address sociopolitical injustices of the time.

Emiliano Zapata featured as a cultural signifier from the early days of El Movimiento. Images of the revolutionary hero could be seen on walls at UFW meetings, on buttons produced by El Taller Gráfico, the union’s graphics section, and in 1966 Zapata appeared on the front

¹²⁴ This was with the understanding that with lands restored the Indigenous communities would support the uprising: “to the end that they may assist us in the cause which we defend” (2012, 394).

cover of the union's newspaper, *El Macriado* (UCSD archives).¹²⁵ In a Samuel Brunk reading, for the UFW, Zapata not only “represent[ed] those who have lost in Mexican history” (1995, 239), but also stood “for the lasting ability and willingness of the dispossessed to maintain their dignity and to resist” (239). As the cultural arm of the UFW, *El Teatro Campesino* frequently centered Zapata and other insurgent leaders in their early actos. The Worker character in “*Quinta Temporada*” (1966) declares, “I’m going to fight for my rights like Pancho Villa, like Emiliano Zapata” (Valdez, 1994, 35). Chicano #2 in “*The Militants*” (1969), similarly implores, “Look at our history, at Pancho Villa, Emiliano Zapata—they had what it takes” (92).¹²⁶ In this way, ETC incorporates the radical imagining of the Mexican Revolution into what Valdez describes as “the social vision” (1994, 11) of the actos. Said incorporation also extends to the manifestos of the Chicano Movement. For as Puchner argues, “The history of successive manifestos is ... also a history of the futures these manifestos sought to predict, prefigure, and realize” (3). The *Plan de Delano* (1966), composed by Valdez and written “for the liberation of the Farm Workers” (1) was modelled on *El Plan de Ayala*. In it Valdez declares, “We are sons of the Mexican Revolution” (3), extending the temporal space of the insurgence to realize justice in the borderlands.¹²⁷ Said revolutionary legacy can be identified in *El Plan de Barrio*, penned in 1968 by Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales, a national leader of the Chicano Movement. *El Plan de Barrio*’s demands for better housing, education, job

¹²⁵ See Brunk *The Posthumous Career of Emiliano Zapata: Myth, Memory, and Mexico's Twentieth Century*. UT, 2008, p. 182.

¹²⁶ Valdez’s first play prior to ETC, *The Shrunken Head of Pancho Villa*, centered Villa’s decapitated “Valdez used the head of Pancho Villa as a grotesque character in his play: the oldest son of a poverty-stricken Chicano family. It signified the spirit of the Mexican Revolution, envisioned as a precursor of the Chicano Movement, which could “ride” again if only an appropriate “body” were found” (394) *The Female Subject in Chicano Theatre: Sexuality, “Race,” and Class* Author(s): Yvonne Yarbrow-Bejarano Source: *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 38, No. 4, *Theatre of Color* (Dec., 1986), pp. 389-407.

¹²⁷ For the full text of *Plan de Delano*: libraries.ucsd.edu/farmworkermovement/essays/essays/Plan%20of%20Delano.pdf. For further analysis of Zapata’s influence on the UFW and the Chicano Movement see, Theresa Avila *Emiliano Zapata: Figure, Image, Symbol*, UNM, 2007; also, Samuel Brunk *The Posthumous Career of Emiliano Zapata: Myth, Memory, and Mexico's Twentieth Century* UT Press, pp. 182-183 and pp. 193-194. Furthermore, *The Plan de Delano* also allies the activities of the UFW with a global proletariat struggle; reflecting the cross-racial and ethnic alliance intent of *El Plan de San Diego*. See *Message to Aztlan: Selected Writings of Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales* pp. 32-34. 2001.

development, judicial justice, land and agricultural reform, and wealth redistribution, further the ideals and vision of Zapata's manifesto. In 1969, said calls for radical justice expanded when a group of Californian Chicano academics and activists released El Plan de Santa Barbara.¹²⁸ With its demand for Chicano Studies, said manifesto became, as del Castillo and De León argue, the "rallying point for establishing scores of academic departments and programs within California universities" (1996, 131). It also marked the founding of MEChA [Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán], a national student organization focused on the development through education of Chicano unity, cultural pride, and community self-determination. El Plan de Santa Barbara and MEChA both radical imaginings that would find reflection in the pedagogical "revolution" that was MAS in Tucson. 1969 also saw the penning of the one of key manifestos of the Chicano Movement, El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán; written by "Corky" Gonzales in collaboration with the poet Alurista and Juan Gómez-Quíñones. With its focus on cultural nationalism, this document, in a Puchner reading, is a successor to the revolutionary rhetoric of Zapata and to that of other Mexican and borderlands insurgents. (3) For as Armando Navarro argues, "Not since El Plan de San Diego had Mexicanos addressed the national question of forming their own independent nation or Aztlán's re-annexation to Mexico" (2015, 66). However, where manifestos of the Chicano Movement functioned as calls to justice and self-determination drawing from ideologies of the Mexican Revolution, they also embedded the masculine heteronormativity of said radical imagining.

Where Character #2 in "The Militants" centers the figures of Villa and Zapata, arguing both are examples of "a real revolutionary willing to die" (1994, 92), concurrently centered are paternal forms of power; in this respect, embedding the Mexican Revolution's gender hierarchy upon the psyche of the UFW and El Teatro Campesino. Not only does this hierarchy "set the stage" for the Chicano Movement but it also essentializes gender, for what represented their

¹²⁸ See n.37, page 41.

abilities, what Villa and Zapata “had” Character #2” exclaims, were “bigotes”, mustaches. This then not only erases women’s contributions during the Revolution, for as Vicki L Ruiz articulates, there were myriad “women who fought in their own right, in their own units, [and] shouldered multiple responsibilities in the course of one day” (8).¹²⁹ It also ignores that calls for justice and representation were not universal, with Gabriela Cano’s research showing that “tolerance towards marginalized sexualities was not the norm in the Zapatista movement” (2006, 45).¹³⁰ Antonia Castañeda similarly argues of the Chicano Movement, “It was male-defined. It was sexist, misogynistic and homophobic,” she writes. “The movement was about economic, educational and political equality, but fundamentally, it was not about gender equality” (Qtd. in Roberto Rodriguez, 1996, 6).¹³¹ Armando B. Rendón’s 1972 monograph, *Chicano Manifesto: The History and Aspirations of the Second largest Minority in America*, argues the Chicano community’s “ingrown rebelliousness has been prefigured by the Mexican rebels” (1971, 6) and in doing so celebrates the masculine heteronormative ideology and influences of El Movimiento. As Dernerseian-Chabrán argues, “like many other Raza manifestos of the period *The Chicano Movement* only served to reinforce the saliency of the Chicano male subject within authoritative Chicano/a cultural production” (84). Forty years after Rendón’s publication, Tony Díaz released *The Librotraficante Manifesto*, the rhetoric of which draws from a Rendón reading of the Chicano Movement’s “rebelliousness”. Díaz wrote

¹²⁹ As Katherine Elaine Bliss argues, “in many ways the revolution was a decidedly patriarchal event in which male authority was ever more consolidated at levels ranging from high politics to family life” (2007, 127). See Stephanie J. Smith *Gender and the Mexican Revolution: Yucatán Women and the Realities of Patriarchy*, UNC Press, 2009.

¹³⁰ See also Stephany Slaughter, “Queering the Memory of the Mexican Revolution: Cabaret as a Space for Contesting National Memory”, *Letras Femeninas*, Vol. 37, No. 1.

¹³¹ In 1964, Luis Valdez travelled to Cuba as part of a delegation from the Marxist Progressive Labor Party. Whilst there, the group issued “Venceremos! Mexican-American statement on Travel to Cuba”, a document Carlos Muñoz Jr. refers to as “the first Mexican American radical manifesto” (2013, 8). “The Mexican in the United States has been [...] no less a victim of American imperialism than his impoverished brothers in Latin America. In the words of the Second Declaration of Havana, tell him of “misery, feudal exploitation, illiteracy, starvation wages,” and he will tell you that you speak of Texas; tell him of “unemployment, the policy of repression against the workers, discrimination [...] oppression by the oligarchies,” and he will tell you that you speak of California; tell him of US domination in Latin America, and he will tell you that he knows that Shark and what he devours, because he has lived in its very entrails. The history of the American Southwest provides a brutal panorama of nascent imperialism” (8).

the document upon his return to Houston at the end of the caravan. He is its sole signatory.

The manifesto's full title reads, "From Banned to boom. Experience the Latino Literary Renaissance. The Librotraficante Manifesto" (see Appendix I, 1). It contains ten demands. Five of which directly address Tucson's MAS program—demand one, repeal of HB 2281; two, the program's reinstatement, and that of director, Arce; and three, the lauding of the teachers and student. The remaining demands read as a partial synthesis of El Plan de Aztlán's organizational goals. These include representative educational institutions (both K12 and in Higher Education) offering "Ethnic Studies Programs that provide a global perspective ... and local history" (3). Representative school boards, "who truly care about our youth, who will answer to the people of a community" (3). Further, the protection of MAS programs (both K12 and in Higher Education) "We must never tolerate impositions on Freedom of Speech at our schools of higher learning" (3). Prior to the list of demands, the manifesto first historicizes the caravan, explaining it "was intended to smuggle books back into the hands of our youth, after they were boxed up and carted out of class rooms during class time, in order to comply with Arizona House Bill 2281" (1). The manifesto then goes on to speak of how the caravan route wove together shared experience, i.e.: of the convening with "our brothers and sisters in the southwest (sic)", and with "the Madrinós and Padrinos of our literature" (1). Díaz's rhetoric here echoes that of the Valdez penned, El Plan de Delano. For the UFW manifesto, composed for the April 1966, 2,000-mile farmworker march from Delano to Sacramento, similarly speaks to a collective familiarity of "the long historical road we have travelled ... and the long road we have yet to travel" (2). In this respect, the historic and contemporary encounters in and concurrent attachments to the San Joaquín valley. Where Valdez declares of the UFW march, "This is the beginning of a social movement" (2), Díaz similarly writes of the caravan that it soon "became clear that our magic bus of mind-altering prose was marking the launch of the new Latino Renaissance" (see Appendix I, 1). There are also parallels in the Librotraficante Manifesto to El Espiritual de Aztlán. Where the latter speaks of "a proud historical heritage"

and “the determination of the people of the sun”, Díaz speaks of the “Aztecs, creators of the sun stone” (1), and further of a sixty-year cycle of renewal that connects the Civil Rights Movement to the Librotraficante Movement. This then marking, Díaz argues, “the beginning of the new world that the Maya were predicting” (1). In formulating the manifesto, Díaz admits to drawing directly from what he refers to as the Chicano Movement’s “sacred texts” (1). He writes that during the many hours spent on the bus he “had time to re-read some of these most important texts”, a re-reading that allowed him to “step in to the minds of our greatest thinkers and help [him] see history differently” (1). One of the “thinkers” Díaz refers to, and whose work he draws from, is the F. Arturo Rosales. Díaz writes, “We are reliving the Civil Rights movement archived in the book CHICANO” (emphasis in original, 1); this a critically acclaimed text written by Rosales to accompany a PBS series of the same name, and published in 1997 by Arte Público Press. The Librotraficantes are in this way located in the Chicano Movement, flexing the temporal space of El Movimiento. An argument Díaz extends when postulating, “We are like the members of the Raza Unida party” (1). Here he connects the work of the Librotraficantes to this third political party, founded in 1970 by Mario Compean, Martha Cotera, José Angel Gutiérrez, and Virginia Múzquiz in Crystal City, Texas. However, despite being co-founded by Chicanas, the Raza Unida Party [RUP] marginalized, in operational framework and rhetoric, the concerns of women, installing in this respect the Chicano male subject at the head of the political table. This persistent gendering of the radical, veiled Chicanas, who Cotera argues, “share the history of involvement and participation which has been a way of life for the Chicano community in the US since 1848” (1976, 12).¹³² In drawing

¹³² For recent studies on Chicana activism see, *Chicana Movidas: New Narratives of Activism and Feminism in the Movement Era*, edited by Dionne Espinoza, María Eugenia Cotera, Maylei Blackwell, UT Press, 2018; *Chicana Leadership: The Frontiers Reader*, edited by Yolanda Flores Niemann et al. UN Press, 2002; Margaret A Reiser, *Creating Bridges: Intersectional Activism & Rhetorical Strategies Between the Chicana and LGBTQ Movements*, 2016, openworks.wooster.edu/independentstudy/7266/; and *Las Obreras: Chicana Politics of Work and Family*, edited by Vicki L. Ruiz, Aztlán Anthology Series, UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Publications, vol. 1, 2000.

from work ascribed to the cultural heroism of masculine heteronormativity, Díaz reinstates said veiling. None the more so than when he further locates the rhetoric and aims of the manifesto, and concurrently himself, in the anthologized work of one man:

I urge all of us to assume our full power and vision and step boldly into this historical charge, and for this I offer up as did my predecessor Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzalez (sic) with the writings in his confiscated book MESSAGE TO AZTLAN, I, Tony Díaz, El Librotraficante, offer to history, the Librotraficante Manifesto (emphasis in original, 1).

Here, Díaz re-centers critically problematic leadership of the past in calls for justice for the present and future. In *Message to Aztlán*, Gonzales speaks of the role women in the movement, he argues, “you can’t leave women out of it. Your women have to march with you. There were Zapatas and Pancho Villas but there were also Adelitas and Valentinas” (2001, 55). Here women appear as passive subjects whose involvement in El Movimiento will only occur at the behest of “their” men. Gonzales further embeds this notion even when Chicanas are in more “executive” roles, “And we find that when we have a problem, our women can assume the leadership, and take care and keep the thing rolling on and on” (55). Again the Chicano male subject is elevated, is the universal “we” of the movement. For in bringing in the Chicana as problem-solver, thereby positioned in traditional role of care, the Chicano does not step-aside, does not relinquish control, he merely “steps-up.” In critical comparison to Gonzales, Díaz’s rhetoric is less overtly male-centered, yet, it rearticulates gender binaries. In its “brothers and sisters” expressed three times, and “Madrinos and Padrinos”, heteronormativity functions as its revolving axis. Further, with Librotraficante Manifesto then routed in a manifesto Rafael Pérez-Torres writes that “help[ed] establish the discursive habits by which Chicano culture asserts its autonomy” (1995, 67). The, routed by Díaz in the writing of The Librotraficante Manifesto then “offer[s] to history” (Appendix I, 1) a gendered ideology drawn from the past, and in doing so reflects a praxis of repression against which Chicana feminist epistemologies have both struggled and thrived.

With the Chicano male subject as its “radical” lens, the Librotraficante Manifesto’s fifth

demand is thereby troubled; an organizing principle of critical inclusivity developed by Díaz termed, Quantum Demographics [QD]. As Díaz outlines on the NP radio show, “I tell people, we are not Ronald Reagan’s Hispanics anymore, we believe in Quantum Demographics. The ideas is ... we expand beyond what is the typical pale of what is imagined is the Latino issue of the day” (2012 07:51). He writes:

[The concept] embraces deep links between cultures that seem disparate at first glance. We want and need to study our own history so that we can then study other histories more fully. We do not strive to exclude others from our history or to deny others their history. We strive for the day when we all know our own stories to such an extent that we can see the links and bridges to the stories of others (“What is Quantum”, 2012).

QD reflects an understanding that self and community knowledge can lead to broad-based coalition building. The development of said principle expands the framework of representative pedagogy. The application of which represented by the cross-cultural bibliography of MAS; as Liana López Librotráficoante LiLó argues, “It is powerful that we are united by these stories. People don't want us to congregate, to look in each other’s souls and minds, and have an affinity for one another. And this is what these books do” (2014). This a necessary radical tool, for as Manuel Castell insists, “a movement develops not only in relationship to its own society, but also in relationship to a world-wide social system” (xviii). This was a tool utilized in 1965 by Chávez, Huerta, and the Delano Manongs when joining forces to create the United Farm Workers union [UFW]. In 1968, the UFW allied with the Black Panther Party, who similarly understood, as Lauren Araiza writes, that “the camaraderie and coalitions across racial lines were imperative for obtaining social justice and economic equality” (2009, 201). The Nuestra Palabra radio show uses QD as a programing paradigm, highlighting historical connections between marginalized communities in the state of Texas and beyond. For example, celebrating the little known history of the Underground Railroad that ran south from Texas to Mexico:

It’s Juneteenth and we’re celebrating interwoven cultures of Tejas. Our slave state history is “often lost to the southwestern image of cowboy culture” but there once was time when Texans were making historic escapes across the Rio Grande INTO Mexico—a time when Mexicans were helping our African American brothers & sisters gain their freedom. Original black-brown unity work—IMAGINE THAT! (emphasis in

original López 2012).¹³³

In seeking to build coalitions through the illumination of historical and contemporary solidarity, the Librotraficantes position QD as a tool to support and illuminate unity. “One generation had Affirmative Action, another generation had Multiculturalism,” Díaz asserts, “We have Quantum Demographics” (“What is Quantum” 2012). In this way, the Librotraficante Manifesto seeks to develop connections often neglected in the telling of the Civil Rights Movement; bridges built yet often rendered invisible in historical and contemporary media representations of social protest; bridges unpalatable to neoliberal right-wing politicking but which provide passage for a myriad of US voices. More QD seeks also to present the multiplicity of Chicanx and Latinx voices. For as the seventh demand in the Librotraficante Manifesto argues, “Under quantum demographics (sic), it should be obvious that we do not suggest that we would vote for only Mexican American candidates. In fact, there are some Latinos that we must vote out of office” (Appendix I, 3). QD as an organizing principle is a powerful way for the Librotraficantes to chart what Juan Bruce Novoa terms “an intercultural *nothingness*” (emphasis in original 1990, 98); a communal space wherein Mexican and American in the claiming of realities “are pushed out and apart” but in said pushing create “interlocking tensions” (98). In this respect, QD reunites shared histories, not as absolutes, but as pathways to critical engagement. However, where histories are of the masculine

¹³³ Juneteenth marks the June 19, 1865, the date that saw slavery abolish of slavery in the state of Texas. For a study, William H. Wiggins *O Freedom!: Afro-American Emancipation Celebrations*, UT Press, 2000, J. L. Jeffries work highlights the realities of emancipation and continued calls for sociopolitical, judicial, and economic justic, “Juneteenth, Black Texans, and the case for reparations”, *Negro Educational Review*, 2004, vol. 55. no. 2-3, pp.107-115. Of an underground railroad heading south, Thomas Mareite argues “little evidenc115.e exists of similarly (semi)-organized networks of assistance for slave refugees in the Texas-Mexico borderlands. Support networks for flight in the US Southwest were especially precarious, when compared to (relatively) more stable northern routes for escape ... In the specific context of the Texas-Mexico borderlands, assistance came as much from mobile people in frequent contact with slave refugees, or interested financially in such action, as from ideologically committed individuals striking against institutionalized slavery. “Abolitionists, Smugglers and Scapegoats: Assistance Networks for Fugitive Slaves in the Texas-Mexico Borderlands”, 1836-1861 *Mémoire(s), identité(s), marginalité(s) dans le monde occidental contemporain* 19 | 2018, Nichols, James D. « The Line of Liberty: Runaway slaves and Fugitive peons in the Texas-Mexico borderlands », *Western Historical Quarterly*, v.44, n°4, 2013, p. 413-433. Roger Di Silvestro; Shirley Boteler Mock “Freedom train to Mexico” *Americas*, Vol. 52, Iss. 6, 2000, pp. 22-31.

heteronormative, claim to unity is problematic.

QD was born prior to the caravan, with *Nuestra Palabra* grappling with what Stuart Hall writes as the “process of becoming”:

Identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not ‘who we are’ or ‘where we came from’, so much as what we might have become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we represent ourselves. (1996, 4)

Díaz had been contemplating this “process” in 2008; interrogating, in the work of NP, the universality of Chicano and Latino aesthetic production. He writes:

Nuestra Palabra is bringing in Sandra Cisneros in to Houston in 2009, but she's not just a Latino writer any more. She's at the point where for her to be thought of as just a Latino writer is a disservice to her work and to other folks who can embrace her writing, even though they're not Latino. So I think this is the time for us to come up with new ways of how to be authentic to who we are but also open up to other communities. It's not enough to be multi-cultural anymore. We have to be multi-multi-cultural. (Qtd. in Alvarez 2008)

However, the indexing of the *Librotraficante* Manifesto in patriarchal narratives, and Díaz’s animation of said narratives in the form of “El Pachuco”, locates notions of the “authentic” in essentialized representations of a Chicano past. The “our history” of QD then speaks to exclusivity rather than inclusivity. In this way, Díaz’s argument that QD requires, “Understanding your own culture so profoundly that you are fulfilled enough, wise enough, and knowledgeable enough to seek out bridges to cultures that may seem far removed from your own” (“What is Quantum” 2012), can be read as problematic claim to profundity. Moreover, the bridge metaphor, as the conceptual framework of QD, heavily echoes the work of Anzaldúa and Moraga, *This Bridge Called My Back*, and Anzaldúa and AnaLouise Keating, *This Bridge We Call Home*. Something Díaz does not formally recognize. Nor recognized are the connections to *Borderlands / La Frontera* and Anzaldúa’s claim that, “Ignorance splits people, creates prejudices. A misinformed people is a subjugated people ... We need to know the history of their struggle, and they need to know ours” (1994, 108). The echoing of the work of Anzaldúa extends further across Díaz’s strategizing rhetoric. For example, his explanation

of how the “multi-multi-cultural” turn of Quantum Demographic translates to the everyday, reads:

Cinco de Mayo is the perfect holiday for we book smugglers. We celebrate Cinco de Mayo by eating Binh Mai Sandwiches at our favorite Librotraficante hole-in-the-wall-Vietnamese-Taco-Shop ... Of course, if you want to get an advanced degree in Librotraficante Studies, you should enjoy your Cinco de Mayo Binh Mai sandwich with some Carménère wine made from French grapes smuggled into Chile ... Isn't Quantum Demographics delicious?" (“Cinco de Mayo”)

Díaz narrative here imitates the rhetoric of Anzaldúa's poem, “To live in the Borderlands means you” (2012 [1987] 194). Stanza four of which reads:

To live in the Borderlands means to
 put chile in the borscht,
 eat whole wheat tortillas,
 speak Tex-Mex with a Brooklyn accent;
 be stopped by la migra at the border checkpoints (2012 [1987], 194)

Where Anzaldúa's work is part of concept of hybridity she terms, “mestiza consciousness”, a pluralist survival strategy to keep “intact one's shifting and multiple identity and integrity” (20), Díaz's formulation of QD could be argued as less located in, as Hall theorizes multiculturalism, “the movements of resistance” (2000, 210) than in an uncritical consumption of transculturation. Díaz applying the concept of QD to culturally responsive pedagogy further reveals a lack of critical representation. He writes, “The Ultimate Ethnic Studies Course would cover the Texas Immigration story and feature the histories of how the Poles, Mexicanos, the Polish, and Vietnamese came to Texas, or even more specifically came to Houston” (“What is Quantum” 2012). Critically missing here is engagement with Indigenous Texas, histories that reach back 12,000 years, and, under settler colonialism, the histories of dispossessed Indigenous nations uprooted from their lands to the state. Further absent, Black histories, for example, those that tell of the Texas constitution of 1836 that banned free Blacks from residing in the state. Those that tell of the founding of the Colored Carnegie Library in 1913 by African American community leaders after being denied access to the Houston Lyceum and Carnegie Library, as Cheryl Knott Malone argues “an act of resistance [that] turned Jim Crow ... into an

opportunity for autonomy” (1999).¹³⁴ Moreover, how in 1836 it was the enslaved, toiling alongside Mexican prisoners of war, who laid the foundations for the city that would become home to Nuestra Palabra, and on March 12, 2012, the departure point for the caravan of Librotraficantes.

¹³⁴ For further research on histories of African American Houston, see Howard Beeth and Cary D. Wintz *Black Dixie: Afro-Texan History and Culture in Houston*, Texas A&M, 1992, Robert Doyle Bullard, *Invisible Houston: The Black Experience in Boom and Bust*, Texas A&M, 1987. For an anthology of collected work see, Bruce A. Glasrud, James Smallwood editors, *The African American Experience in Texas: An Anthology*, Texas Tech, 2007. For a seminal focus on Black women in the state, see Ruthe Wingarten, *Black Texas Women: 150 years of Trial and Triumph*, UT Press, 1995, and its companion volume, *Black Texas Women: A Sourcebook*, UT Press, 1996

CHAPTER THREE

“ARMED WITH LIBROS AND VEINS”

DAY ONE & TWO: SAN ANTONIO

I am standing here in your poem. Unsatisfied.
Adrienne Rich

Fundamentally, I started writing to save my own life.
Cherríe Moraga

I am afraid that we will be forgotten.
Carolina Hinojosa-Cisneros

Juliàn Castro (D), former mayor of San Antonio and 2020 presidential hopeful, insists, “Demography tells us that San Antonio is the New Face of the American Dream. The nation's seventh-largest city looks today like the Texas of the next decade and the America of 2040 and beyond” (2013, S294). In San Antonio in late autumn 1835, what Texas was going to “look like” was being fought out by colonists and Tejanos in what would become known as the Texas Revolution; a six-month series of skirmishes and military campaigns cast in majoritarian history as a democratic rebellion against a dictatorial state, Mexico. Mythology of the Revolution continues to frame White violence in its myriad forms as heroic individualism overcoming mob savagery from south of the border. Said narrative elides historical realities, for as Gary Clayton Anderson claims, “Rather than a fight for liberty, the 1835 Anglo-led revolution was a poorly conceived Southern land-grab that nearly failed” (2005, 3). Phillip T. Tucker extends this analysis, insisting, “Most Texans were either slave-owners or aspired to become so in order to fully exploit the promises of the land” (2010, 7). Yet, through myth, boundaries of critical citizenship have been set and re-set; demarcating those who “belong” to the Texas founding epic from those cast to its margins. As Richard Slotkin writes, “In the end myths become part of the language, as a deeply encoded set of metaphors that may contain all

of the “lessons” we have learned from our history, and all the essential elements of our world view” (1985, 16). In this way, the patriotic pedagogy of the Texas Revolution embeds triumph over tyranny in the annals of majoritarian US history creating a cultural blueprint for designations of and responses to those who seem to do America harm. Central to Texas myth is the Alamo, the first stop for the Librotraficante Caravan, and the most visited historical landmark in the state. As Suzanne Bost writes, as “a marker of loss, a great tomb, a place of horror to many ... where the floor was shoe deep in the blood of friend and foe” (2003, 497). The remembering of the battle fought there in the spring of 1836 frames the metaphorical impulse of the Texas Revolution and concurrently the making of the nation. As Jutta Zimmerman insists, “The numerous retellings of the Alamo ... have an important function in affirming and legitimizing the nation-state—first Texas, later the United States” (24). Flores similarly argues that for “American cultural memory ... [the] primary importance of the Alamo lies not with remembering 1836 but with inscribing, in the moment of telling, a more contemporary lesson” (2002, xvi).” In its remembering, the Alamo has created a borderlands “Ground-Zero” for historical and contemporary anti-Mexican/Latinx public and political sentiment; sentiments against which Chicana narratives talk back.

CONTRABAND PEOPLE

The Caravan’s press conference took place on Alamo plaza, a broad public space at the front of the mission building. A small group of Librotraficantes stood in a semi-circle holding homemade placards reading, “Literature informs, educates, makes you think. Open your mind, read more!”, “Arizona legislators tried to erase our history, we are making more!” and, “The Libro Traficante Caravan, smuggling contraband literature back into Arizona” (Parras 2012); this rasquache aesthetic echoing that of the performative praxis of El Teatro Campesino in the fields of Delano in the early 1960s. The signs confront the Alamo visitors with narratives that counter majoritarian representations of Mexican and Mexican heritage communities, many of

which found form through the remembering of the site. The signs speak of knowledge, of education, of critical thinking, and of literature. The caravanistas here then embody cultural resistance to the historical and contemporary denigration of their intellect and the attempted silencing of their stories. Moreover, standing with backs to the Alamo, the Librotraficantes symbolically refuse the site's majoritarian narrative of remembrance and the systemic violence therein. Instead, they face towards community storytelling, forming a backdrop to a makeshift performance area containing a portable speaker and the bookstands from the "Wet Books" video. Texts found on the MAS bibliography fill the stands, works such as Richard Delgado and Jean Stefanie's *Critical Race Theory*, Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Carmen Tafolla's *Curandera*, and Luis Valdez's *Zoot Suit*. Where the dismantling of the MAS program had confined the texts to state regulated spaces, the Librotraficante gathering brings their release. Moreover, benefiting from connections made through the then fourteen years of *Nuestra Palabra*, the Librotraficantes bring the "big guns" of Chicana literature to the contested space of the Alamo. As Díaz announces in a live video of the event, "While other states ban literature, we have the banned authors among us" ("Librotraficante: Carmen Tafolla" 0:17). He refers to said authors as "Contraband people" (0:27). Holding aloft Carmen Tafolla's collection of poetry, *Curandera*, Díaz then reemphasizes the "illicit" activities of the Caravan by telling the crowd, "I believe we crossed state lines with some contraband" (0:30). Mocking the judicial basis for the MAS program's termination, which includes sedition and racial animosity, he continues, "I am not sure if I should be saddened or scared to hear the words that were banned in Arizona" (0:38). He then welcomes Tafolla forward. They hug, and she turns to the gathering of Librotraficantes declaring, "Un abrazo por todos aquí [A hug for everyone]. For you are doing the work of democracy" (0:38).

Born and raised in San Antonio, Tafolla's career initially began in academia. In 1973, she became the first Chicana to head a Mexican American Studies Center; this was at Texas Lutheran University in Seguin. Now Professor of Transformative Children's Literature at UT

San Antonio, she obtained her PhD in Bilingual education from UT Austin. Tafolla has authored over thirty books, and draws her inspiration from, she writes, “ancestors whispering over my shoulder” (2019). In 2012, she was appointed San Antonio’s inaugural Poet Laureate by then mayor Juliàn Castro. In 2015, she became Poet Laureate of Texas.¹³⁵ Her work, “the sights, smells, sounds and language of San Antonio, the centuries of unsung heroes in its people” (Qtd. in Fish 2012), has been widely anthologized both in the United States and internationally. Tafolla was one of the first authors to show her support for the Librotraficante Movement. The day the “Wet Books” video went live on social media, she posted to her Facebook page, “I can just imagine having to smuggle [the books] into Arizona in unmarked brown paper bags” (2012). One month later, as support for the caravan grew, Tafolla further posted, “What more powerful weapon to smuggle into an oppressed state than books!” announcing, “Wings [Press] is sending 100 copies of my banned book *Curandera* to Tucson with the Banned Books Caravan” (2012b). The copies that were sent were the 30th anniversary edition of a text that had originally been published in San Antonio in 1983 by M&A Editions, a small press founded by Angela and Moisés de Hoyos. Angela de Hoyos was one of the first published Chicana poets, whose work during the time of the Chicano Movement, as Deborah Madsen writes, “gave expression to the cultural nationalism that accompanied the growing political awareness that the desperate social status of Mexican Americans was not the product of any inherent racial inferiority but had clear historical and economic motives” (1998, 115). Following de Hoyos death in 2009, Tafolla wrote, “Raul Salinas was right, but in a very understated way, when he called her “the den mother of the Chicano Movement”. She empowered us” (2010). This empowerment for Tafolla led to the first published collection of her work:

I had been writing, publishing a poem here and there, reading everywhere I could, and she said to me one evening, “Carmen, I’d like to publish a book of your poetry. Moisés

¹³⁵ See, Carmen Tafolla Performance and Resource Site carmen.texaspublicstudio.org/

and I can do it, in our garage. Through M&A Press. Just give me the poems. We'll take care of the rest." My book *Curandera* (sic) was the result (2010).

In English, "Curandera" translates as "Folk Healer". Across Tafolla's work, the curandera is one who heals not only through myriad traditions of Indigenous medicine, but also through, as Elizabeth de la Portilla argues, "social actions as healing" for in order to cure the individual, one must also cure society's sickness (2009, 36). The dismantling of the MAS program is one such "sickness". In the poem, "And When I Dream Dreams", Tafolla shares her experience of a Texas schooling system that continues to haunt the poet despite her plethora of literary awards and her PhD; thereby inviting the reader into a personal wound:

when I dream dreams,
I dream of YOU,
Rhodes Jr. School
and the lockers of our minds
that were always jammed stuck (emphasis in original, lines 1-5)

Tafolla was born and raised in the West Side barrios of San Antonio, the formation of which arose from the transformation of the city in the mid-nineteenth by, as Raquel R. Márquez et al. write, "the rising dominance of the Anglo population and the subsequent "subordinating" practices" (2007, 291). Said subordination took the form of "the systematic underdevelopment of a community" (301). This included inferior schooling born of, as Angela Valenzuela argues, a "system of educational accountability [that] has failed, and will continue to fail, Latinx and other minority youth and their communities" (2005, 1).¹³⁶ Tafolla's poem is an indictment of said system, whose psychic impact even past graduation keeps Chicanx and Latinx communities locked into "the toughest junior high in town" (2012, line 63):

Like Lupe's mind
 that peels potatoes
 and chops *repollo* [cabbage]
 and wishes its boredom was less

¹³⁶ For a study of the geographies of schooling in San Antonio see, Christine M. Drennon, "Social Relations Spatially Fixed: Constructions and Maintenance of School Districts in San Antonio, Texas" *The Geographical Review*, Vol. 96, No. 4, 2006, pp. 567-593. For a history of the fight for educational equity in the state, see Guadalupe San Miguel Jr's *Let All of Them Take Heed: Mexican Americans and the Campaign for Educational Equality in Texas, 1910-1981*, College Station: Texas A&M, 2000.

than the ants in the hell
 and never learned to read because
 the words were in English
 and she
 was in Spanish (lines 116-124)

Tafolla here also speaks to the debilitating lack of pedagogical support for Spanish speakers. For, as Valenzuela writes, the “job” of schools “is to reproduce the social order along race, class and gender lines” (2005, 88), and in the United States said “social order” is controlled by English-speaking Whiteness. Tafolla’s poetic response to said reproduction illuminates an embattled community, for whom conformity was illusive in the face of myriad oppression:

no matter *how* hard You tried,
 we messed up the looks of the place
 and wouldn't be neat and organized
 and look like we were sposed to look
 and lock like we were sposed
 to lock (lines 8-13)

Yet it also speaks to resilience, to the tenacity of those who “wouldn't be” (line 10) repressed. However, Tafolla recognizes the far-reaching consequences of an inferior education. What this system of marginalization produces, the poem continues, is a cohort of suppressed individuals and communities whose experiences after graduation would echo those within the school walls.

For they would go on to,

carry other books,
 follow other rules,
 silence other tongues,
 go to other schools -
 Schools of Viet Nam
 Schools of cheap café
 Schools of dropout droppings, prison pains, and
 cop car's bulleted brains (lines 66-73)

Curandera is an antidote to books that in their lack of representation cause harm, rules that lead the follower to only more rules, and the silencing of marginalized voices. It was included on the MAS programs bibliography as part of the readings for the English/Latino literature course for grades 5-6 (Cambium 2011, 118). At the Librotraficantes’ press conference, Tafolla shares her response to the censoring of the text:

When they first banned this book, I pulled it off my shelf again. It was published thirty years ago. I don't know, maybe I put something really bad in there. I went back. I read it again. I read the whole thing. Do you know what it talked about? It talked about peace. It talked about ending wars. It talked about being proud of who we are as human beings, all of us. Of our culture ("Librotraficante: Carmen Tafolla" 1:34).

Tafolla gestures back, towards the Alamo, and declares, "It talked about the fact that San Antonio's history didn't start with that building there" (2:05). She then speaks directly to the systemic marginalization of Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous histories, those that *Curandera* illuminates. She speaks back to the state of Arizona's arguments that programs such as MAS in Tucson are based on a framework of sedition. Tafolla shares that the students were graduating at a rate of "nine-five percent" (3:51), and that within this statistical reality lies the truth of the removal of the program. She argues:

It's not about us tearing down the government, it's about us becoming people of the United States. They don't want us. They don't want us. They want to pretend that the Latinos, that the Mexicanos, that the Indigenous people don't belong here. They want to pretend that United States history began when the Europeans arrived. That is racist. They accuse our material of being racist, but the material that is on the textbooks right now is racist (4:06).

Tafolla then continues:

The state of Arizona has not banned Ethnic Studies. It has only banned Ethnic Studies that deals with people they don't want to be part of their history. It is okay to talk about the Puritans, who were an ethnic group. It is okay to talk about the early Anglo-American settlers, who were an ethnic group. It is okay to discuss the values of the dominant culture. It is okay to study Ethnic Studies in Arizona as long as the Ethnic Studies are not our Ethnic Studies (5:02)

Illuminating in her argument here that Arizona's narrow articulation of MAS as a course of study "designed for a certain ethnicity" (AZLeg HB 2281) supports Whiteness as universal and normative. Said normativity centers Anglo Europeans in the founding of the United States, leaving all other groups on the periphery of history. It also erases White genealogies of those who are multiracial, this disinheritance silencing the violence of settler colonialism and the very construction of Whiteness as a social identifier of supremacy. Removing Ethnic Studies from the curriculum then eliminates critiques of race and power and in doing so, as Laura S. Abrams and Jene A. Moio argue, "precludes analysis of contradictions among claims of

neutrality, fairness, and equality, and the below-surface reality of discrimination in everyday practice and policy” (2009, 250). Majoritarian histories are then restored as the “everyday” lens to view the founding and the functioning of America.

The next author welcomed to the Librotraficante press conference has created, like Tafolla, work that counters the “everyday” of White supremacy. In Díaz’s introductory words, she is “la mera mera [the boss],” Lorna Dee Cervantes” (“Librotraficante: Lorna Dee Cervantes” 0:46). Cervantes was born in San Francisco’s Mission District, and raised from an early age in the Horseshoe Barrio of East Side San Jose.¹³⁷ She self-describes as “a Chicana writer ... a feminist writer ... a political writer” (qtd. in Madsen 2000, 201-202) whose early schooling, like that of Tafolla, was sub-par. At the Librotraficante Alamo gathering, Cervantes shares her personal experience of institutional racism:

I am commemorating my high school teacher asking me what I wanted to do when I grew up, and I said, “I wanna go to college,” and she said, “Oh? What level?” I said, “PhD,” and she said, “Oh? Where do you wanna go?” I said, “University California, Santa Cruz,” and she said, “Oh? What do you wanna be?” and I said, “A university professor,” and she just about swallowed her tongue. Right away, she spit out at me, “You are not college material. You will only fail. I do not think you should apply to Yale University, or any university, because you will only fail.” This was based on nothing but the fact that I was Mexican American. Because she had told my White boyfriend, when he came to that school, Abraham Lincoln High School, in San Jose, California, do not expect anything from this school, it is eighty-six percent Mexican (“Librotraficante: Lorna Dee Cervantes” 01:57).

One of the MAS program’s teachers, Eduardo Olivas, who taught eighth grade history at Tucson High School, had had a similar experience in Arizona. “Many Chicanos and Chicanas were being relegated to vocational and secretarial classes,” he says, “and not enough was done to get us into college” (2012, 01:51).¹³⁸ Aonghas St-Hilaire’s research speaks to the impact of embedded racial tropes in US schools:

Mexican-American youth are commonly viewed by school personnel, as well as by society in general, as lacking the linguistic, cultural, moral, and intellectual traits that the school curriculum demands. Accordingly, Mexican American students are

¹³⁷ See Francisco A. Lomelí, Donald W. Urioste, and María Joaquina Villaseñor, *Historical Dictionary of U.S. Latino Literature*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2017 pp. 70-74.

¹³⁸ Olivas, along with Salomon Baldenegro, had led the 1969 Tucson school walkouts.

systematically and disproportionately placed into tracks where low-ability skills are traditionally taught (2002, 1029).¹³⁹

Cervantes tells the crowd at the press conference that her first response to said tracking was anger. “I got really mad,” (“Librotraficante: Lorna Dee Cervantes” 03:20) she says. What she says next talks back to societal tropes of the violence of Mexican and Mexican heritage communities, “What did I do? I didn’t blow anything up. I didn’t set any fires. I didn’t commit any vandalism. I didn’t break anything” (03:23). Instead, Cervantes shares, “You know what I did, because I was pissed-off? I started doing my homework” (03:36). “Doing [her] homework” took Cervantes first to San Jose Community College and then onto San Jose State University, where in 1984 she graduated with a BA in Creative Arts.¹⁴⁰ Four years before graduation, she published her first book of poetry, *Emplumada*, which remains a key text in the field of Chicana Studies. Of the impetus for the work, Cervantes shares:

I was having this vision of some little Chicana in San Antonio going, scanning the shelves, like I used to do, scanning the shelves for women’s names, or Spanish surnames, hoping she’ll pull it out, relate to it. So it was intentionally accessible poetry, intended to bridge that gap, that literacy gap (González 2007, 167).

Emplumada won an American Book Award in 1982, and has yet to go out of print.

Cervantes body of work creates a literacy of resistance. It is contained in five of the anthologies on the MAS program bibliography.¹⁴¹ Cherríe Moraga speaks of the writer as “our Chicano poet laureate” (qtd. in Kevane and Heredia 2000, 105). Astrid M. Fellner writes, Cervantes work, “mediates between issues of race, class, and gender” (2007, 436). Moreover,

¹³⁹ St-Hilaire’s study draws Robert A DeVillar’s, “The Rhetoric and Practice of Cultural Diversity in the U.S. Schools: Socialization, Resocialization, and Quality Schooling,” *Cultural Diversity In Schools: From Rhetoric to Practice*, edited by Robert A. DeVillar, Christian J. Faltis, and James P. Cummins, SUNY, 1994, pp. 25-56. See also Ruben Donato and Carmen de Onis, “Better Middle-Schooling for Mexican Americans.” *Education Digest*, Vol. 61, 1995, 43–70, Maria Eugenia Matute-Bianchi, “Ethnic Identification and Patterns of School Success and Failure Among Mexican-Descent and Japanese-American Students in a California High School.” *American Journal of Education*, Vol. 95, 1986, pp. 233–55, and Richard R. Valencia, “Mexican Americans Don’t Value Education!” On the Basis of the Myth, Mythmaking, and Debunking.” *Journal of Latinos and Education*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 2002, pp. 81-103.

¹⁴⁰ See Karin Ikas, “*Chicana Ways: Conversations with Ten Chicana Writers.*” University of Nevada Press, 2001, pp. 27-44.

¹⁴¹ Rebolledo, Tey Diana and Eliana Suárez Rivero. *Infinite Divisions: An Anthology of Chicano Literature.* University of Arizona Press, 1993, pp. 116-119, 151-152, 154-156, 284-287, 293.

as Edith Vásquez argues, Cervantes has not only “steadily produced a body of poetry which insist[s] on the historical reckoning of injustices committed against her Mexican and Native communities” but a storytelling praxis that speaks to “other populations who have been subject to violence, genocide, or oppression” (2009, 291). Cervantes in fact credits the work of African American writers for her politicization, commenting, “I’ve always wanted to write a poem called “On thanking Black Muses,” because I’ve said often that poetry saved my life” (qtd. in González 2007, 165). At the press conference, Cervantes spoke of her early introduction to Chicano poetry, emphasizing its transformative impact:

When I was in history class 1A, we had the Brown Berets come into my high school, into my history class, and read Lalo Abelardo’s, “Stupid America”. And I sat there with my head gonging in the back of the room, sitting there all Chola’ed out and everything, like I didn’t really care, y’know. But I’m sitting there with tears in my eyes, thinking, man, I do not want to die with ten thousand masterpieces hanging only from my mind (“Librotráfico: Lorna Dee Cervantes” 03:40).

Abelardo’s 1969 poem illuminates the marginalizing effects of systemic and institutional racism on Chicano youth. Cervantes references the poem’s closing lines:

stupid america, remember that chicanito
flunking math and english
he is the picasso
of your western states
but he will die
with one thousand masterpieces
hanging only from his mind (2011, lines 14-20)

It had a profound effect on the young Cervantes’ future trajectory. She tells the press conference that from that point, “I dedicated my life to getting this poetry out” (04:49). Díaz’s introduction to Cervantes at the press conference references the impact of said dedication. “If you think of any of the writers who are banned,” he says, “many were first published in her journals” (Parras 2012a, 00:22). Cervantes founded MANGO publications in San Jose on July 4, 1976.¹⁴² On her blog she writes, “I was the original ‘kitchen table’ press which inspired writers such as

¹⁴² “Lorna Dee Cervantes shares MANGO Publication History” *YouTube*, uploaded by MANGO publications, 3 Aug. 2015. www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ZfjB0ZDYZ8.

Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherríe Moraga, Patricia Smith and others back east” (2006).¹⁴³ MANGO was part of a developing community of small presses whose founders pushed back against both racial and gender oppression. As Tey Diana Rebolledo writes, “The women writing at the time were not supported by mainstream presses at all and not strongly supported by the few existing Chicano or ethnic presses. Many small and self-established presses sprang up to promote both poetry and narrative by the women writers” (xiv).¹⁴⁴ On her blog, Cervantes reminisces of the early days of MANGO, “There was just a gal with her press who wasn’t afraid to get dirty or lose a finger. Who didn’t care how the house smelled in the morning or if the dishes were washed” (2006). Cervantes opened that house up to writers, creating, like Nuestra Palabra at Houston’s Chapultepec Restaurant, a site of literary resistance. She says, “Years ago when I was running my press, I would have these ‘Mango Toast & Jam’ events. I’d invite poets from all over for pot-luck spin-the-bottle readings. Over 60 people in my little one-bedroom house and yard” (2009). From this community building, Cervantes has published writers who are now

¹⁴³ Here Cervantes references Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, founded in 1980 in New York by Audre Lorde and Barbara Smith. Kitchen Table published the second edition of *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings By Radical Women of Color* (1983), edited by Cherríe Moraga and Gloria E. Anzaldúa. See, Sara A. Ramírez, Norma E. Cantú, “Publishing Work that Matters: Third Woman Press and its Impact on Chicana and Latina Publishing”, *Diálogo*, University of Texas Press, Vol. 20, No. 2, Fall 2017, pp. 77-85, and Barbara Smith, “A Press of Our Own Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press”, *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* Vol. 10, No. 3, Women and Words, 1989, pp. 11-13. In a Facebook post, Cervantes outlines all her MANGO roles, “Founding Editor/Publisher/Printer/Stapler/Collator/Typesetter/Rub-offLetterBurnisher/EventCoordinator/Publicist/Producer BookDesigner/Chief Officepainter/Mail Clerk/Paste-Up Artist/Press Cleaner/Janitor/Distributor/Accountant/Book Binder/Art Director/Grant Writer/Fence-Mender/Typist/Business Manager/Agent/Judge/Garbage Man/Literary Critic/Fire-Maker/Director/Folder/Chicana Theorist/Ad Executive/Floral Arranger/Legal Consultant/Sage Burner/Mock-Up Man/Mic-Checker/Travel Agent/Mexican Gardener/Bookseller/Book Display Case Builder & Designer/Creative Artist/Company Visionary/Tiny Dancer/Projects Director/Manager/Lighting Director/Head Chef & Caterer/Chairman-of-The-Board/Teacher/Press Mechanic/Stage Director/Copy Editor/MC/Darkroom Specialist/Resident Rascal/Stockroom Clerk/Philosopher-In-Arms/Community Organizer/Archivist/ y más; always a poet; i.e., Lorna Dee Cervantes, CEO of MANGO Publications, then as now”

¹⁴⁴ In 1979, Norma Alarcón founded Third Woman Press whilst completing her PhD at Indiana University. The press relocated with her to California after she joined Berkeley’s faculty in 1987. That same year Third Woman published the Sandra Cisneros poetry collection, *My Wicked Wicked Ways*. Of the press, Alarcon says, “I have seen Third Woman Press as an activist vehicle, within the range of my talents and abilities. Sometimes if you’re not out there speaking into a microphone, you may not be thought of as an activist, but activism can take many forms”, Cathy Cockrell, “A Labor of Love, a Publishing Marathon: Professor Norma Alarcon’s Berkeley-Based Third Woman Press Turns 20”, *Berkeleyan*, Vol. 27, No. 34, 1999. www.berkeley.edu/news/berkeleyan/1999/05/12/alarcon.html

part of the canon of Chicana literature.¹⁴⁵ As she posts on Facebook:

Some of you may or may not know, but I “discovered” Sandra [Cisneros] when I was editing, publishing & printing MANGO Publications & The Chicano Chapbook Series in ‘76. I found a poem of hers in Latino magazine & had Gary Soto hunt her down for a chapbook. He thought it’d be impossible. “Gary, she’s a Chicana at the U of Iowa! How hard can she be to find?!” And, the rest, as they say, is Chicana herstory. Ay, que La Sandra. (2012)

The chapbook of which Cervantes speaks is *Bad Boys*, a book of poetry. It is Cisneros’s first published collection.¹⁴⁶ Luis Alberto Urrea, multi-award winning author with four texts on the MAS bibliography, (see Appendix 2), responded to Cervantes’ Cisneros post. He wrote, “You launched us all. I only won Western States Book Award because of your work on my poems” (2012). José David Saldívar similarly responded, “Yes, you launched all of our work at Mango Lorna!!!” (2012). In preparation for joining the Librotraficante Caravan, Cervantes posted, in third-person, that she was “buying back books/mags she published & printed as MANGO Publications, paying what she owes & getting ready to traffic books by authors she published in San Anto” (80). At the Librotraficante press conference, Cervantes questions conservative responses in Tucson to the literature that she has spent her life publishing and promoting. She asks of the bibliographic censorship of Cisneros’s most widely recognized text, published by Arte Público in 1984, “Come on *House on Mango Street*? What is controversial about red shoes?” (“Librotraficante: Lorna Dee Cervantes” 06:02). The “controversy” Cervantes alludes to is in the book’s seventeenth vignette, “The Family of Little Feet”. Here Esperanza, the book’s young protagonist, in borrowed red high heels, negotiates her budding sexuality and

¹⁴⁵ In 2015, Cervantes revived MANGO. On the call for submissions she posts the names of the authors published by the press, “Sandra Cisneros, Victor Martínez, Alfred Arteaga, Ray Gonzalez, Luis Javier Rodriguez, Jimmy Santiago Baca, Alberto Rios, Gloria Anzaldúa, Ana Castillo, Cherrie L. Moraga, Orlando Ramírez, James M Brown, Sherman Alexie, Jose David Saldivar, Juan Felipe Herrera, ronnie burk (sic), José Antonio Burciaga, Emy Lopez, Bernice Zamora, visual artist Emmanuel C. Montoya, Gabrielle Daniels, Luis Alberto Urrea, Haas Mroue, Francisco X. Alarcon, Francisco Aragón, Yuri Kageyama, Alfonso Texidor, Wendy Rose Gary Soto, Leonard Adame ... Gloria Anzaldúa and Dagoberto Gilb.” (*Facebook* 7 Nov. 2015, 09:00). For an overview of Cervantes work and a list of a number of MANGO authors, see Francisco A. Lomelí, Donald W. Urioste, and María Joaquina Villaseñor, *Historical Dictionary of U.S. Latino Literature*, Rowman and Littlefield, 2017, pp. 70-75.

¹⁴⁶ A further post from Cervantes on Cisneros—“Let me know if you have a copy of her chapbook, BAD BOYS, I designed, printed & published which sold for a dollar or came free with subscription to the litmag MANGO. It’s now worth \$1,500+” *Facebook*, Lorna Dee Cervantes, 15 Feb. 2012, 23:40

desire for independence in the face of cultural values and gender norms. “Red shoes” represents the empowered voice of a new Chicana generation, a brown girl with a critical eye who understands what said shoes represent. Moreover, she is prepared to leave home to build a narrative space, not only for herself but also to construct myriad spaces for her community, “One day I will go away. Friends and neighbors will say, What happened to that Esperanza? ... They will not know I have gone away to come back. For the ones I left behind. For the ones who cannot out” (Cisneros 1984, 110). The controversy of the “red shoes” is empowerment. The students in the MAS program could themselves in Cisneros’s work, both in her writing and in her activism, moreover they could see that, “We didn’t always live on Mango Street” (3), a powerful acknowledgement from the opening line of the text that there are stories and memories of other histories, stories and memories of other ways to be. As Cervantes, in an early review of *Mango Street* writes of the Cisneros’s cultural negotiations, “Perhaps, with more respect for past Chicano literary production than she had exhibited or felt some years before” she argues, “Cisneros raises issues which are crucial for the future consideration of this young and vital literature and her own place in it” (qtd. in Zimmerman 2006). At the press conference, Cervantes speaks to the pedagogical impact of the text and the sagacity of the removal of the critically successful program of studies that included it, “I am so proud that now it is in every school across the country, and now they’re trying to ban it. For what?” (“Librotraficante: Lorna Dee Cervantes” 6:28). She then disseminates the power of Cisneros’ work, and consequently why that power needed to be subdued in Arizona. “Because it’s good”, she says. “It is excellent. It makes people think, and most importantly, it gives people, it gives these students what Chicano poetry gave to me, pride! Pride and the truth. The truth” (06:33). Cervantes then gestures back to the Alamo and states, “The *truth* of our history (07:00). The desire to disseminate said “truth” was the impetus behind a further MANGO publication. In 1979, the press published José Antonio Burciaga’s *Drink Cultura: Chicanismo*, a text that is

also included on the MAS bibliography.¹⁴⁷ Burciaga's work celebrates myriad cultural traditions of Chicana communities. In doing so, he illuminates the liminality of Chicanismo; "[t]he ironies" in his words, "in the experience of living within, between and sometimes outside, two cultures; the damnation, salvation, the celebration of it all" (1993, 5). At the press conference, Cervantes, who is of Mexican and Chumash ancestry, speaks of the publication of *Drink Cultura* as an act of decolonization, of epistemic recovery from a system that sought to suppress Indigenous peoples with "the book in one hand and the cross in the other" ("Librotráfico: Lorna Dee Cervantes" 04:37). Burciaga's text in countering narratives of "damnation" weakens the lingering "salvation" discourse of Christianity. At the Alamo, Misión San Antonio de Valero, Cervantes's act of recovery contributes a further layer to memory discourse of the site. Cervantes ends with a plea to those gathered, "Please, please, please donate to this cause" she says. "Buy a banned book. Tell people. People do not know what is going on" (07:00).¹⁴⁸ Here Cervantes speaks to not only the suppression of texts in Arizona, but to the sweeping suppression of stories of America in which majoritarian narratives of the Alamo play their part.

SOUTHWEST WORKERS UNION

In the shadow of the Alamo, four blocks to the east, lies the Southwest Workers Union [SWU]. It was founded in 1988 in Hondo, Texas, to support and organize local school workers who were calling for better working conditions and a living wage.¹⁴⁹ Their remit soon expanded. The SWU site in San Antonio opened in 2003. The homepage of the union's website lays out

¹⁴⁷ Burciaga was also a successful journalist, an artist, muralist, and cartoonist. He was MANGO publications art editor. Mimi R. Gladstein and Daniel Chacón argue, "He is a multidisciplinary artist, equally adept at creating artistic truth through the medium of words of the medium of images ... Because of his amazing versatility, he often defied categorization" (2008, 2).

¹⁴⁸ Luís Javier Rodríguez, author of "Please everyone, come to Tia Chucha's and buy banned books. Also for libraries, schools, and community spaces. Gracias a todos y a Tony Díaz y los Librotráfico everywhere", 25 Jun. 2012

¹⁴⁹ See Southwest Workers Union: A Project of Centro Por La Justicia, "SWU 30 Years: International Workers Day 2018" *SWU*, 9 May, 2018. www.swunion.org/single-post/2018/05/09/SWU-30-Years-International-Workers-Day-2018

its current mission:

As an organization of low-income, working class families and youth, SWU unites in one collective struggle for self-governance based on dignity, respect, justice and liberation. SWU organizes its grassroots members through de-colonization, emancipatory education, leadership development and direct action for worker rights, environmental justice, and systemic change. We envision all inclusive sustainable healthy communities rooted in dignity, justice and respect for self-determination, social-economic well-being autonomy and pachamama.

Co-founder Chavel López synthesizes the union's purpose, "to liberate ourselves, liberate our community, and liberate ourselves from the oppression that we have suffered for so many years" ("The Southwest Workers Union" 2014, 00:36).¹⁵⁰ Bryan Parras, Librotráficoante HighTech Aztec, had chosen the site as an event venue for the second night of the caravan. Parras is co-founder of Houston-TEJAS [Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services] and has had a long-standing relationship with SWU through numerous grassroots collaborations, a number of which have involved caravans.¹⁵¹ As Parras explains, SWU "have a long history of work" (interview with Massey 2016, 01:29) in mobile organizing. "More specifically", he continues, in the operational praxis of mobile actions, for example, "visiting sites along the way, [making] stops, not just going from point a to point b, but picking up new people, having events ... at those stops, [and] picking up more people for the final journey" (01:35). This experience was, Parras says,

good fodder for how to put together the Librotráficoante Caravan. We knew a lot about the logistics of what it would take, the expense of getting the bus, and that it could be done logistically, corralling forty-five people into a hotel, feeding them, working with a tight schedule, making sure we were doing things of importance, connecting the right people, and leaving something behind (03:23).

¹⁵⁰ Rubén Solís García is SWU other's co-founder.

¹⁵¹ Bryan and his father, Juan Parras founded T.E.J.A.S. The organization "is dedicated to providing community members with the tools necessary to create sustainable, environmentally healthy communities by educating individuals on health concerns and implications arising from environmental pollution, empowering individuals with an understanding of applicable environmental laws and regulations and promoting their enforcement, and offering community building skills and resources for effective community action and greater public participation" tejasbarrios.org/ For more on Bryan's work see, Bryan Parras and Bret Gustafson, "In Houston After the Storm, *la lucha sigue*" *NACLA Report on the Americas*, vol. 49, no. 4, 2017, pp. 489-494, for a study of Juan Parras see, "TEJAS: Environmental Justice Texas Style A conversation with Juan Parras and Natalie Garza" *Houston History*, vol 10, no. 2, 2013, pp. 19-23.

Parras first worked with a SWU caravan following Hurricane Katrina. He shares:

After Hurricane Katrina, Southwest Workers Union had helped organize a big bus tour along the Gulf coast, along the routes that were impacted ... It led to the formation of a group called the Gulf Coast Fund that I later became an advisor to. It was an organization that distributed four to six million dollars over ten years” (02:08).¹⁵²

Parras further collaborated with SWU in 2007 for The People’s Freedom Caravan [PFC], a one-week, multi-city, eight-bus, travelling collective of eighty grassroots organizations from across the south and the southwest. The caravan’s final destination was the inaugural US Social Forum [USSF] in Atlanta,¹⁵³ as Jackie Smith and Jeffrey S. Juris write, “one of the largest and most diverse political gatherings in U.S. history” (2008, 373). Parras explains the TPFC’s organizational framework:

Because we were starting in New Mexico and working our way to the East Coast, the idea was to build coalitions. So we had representatives from each city that we were going to stop in helping to organize the entire caravan; with the idea that there would be a handful of organizers from each city beginning the journey and then organizing an event in the city that they were from (interview with Massey 2016, 8.49).

One of the events SWU organized when the caravan arrived in San Antonio on June 23 was an immigrants’ rights protest at the Alamo.¹⁵⁴ In this respect, in reclaiming this contested space the Freedom caravan reclaimed a contested city. San Antonio has one of the highest poverty levels in the nation. According to the US Census Bureau, almost twenty-percent of San Antonio’s citizens live in poverty. In 2012, the year of the Librotráfico Caravan, the city’s Hispanic communities made up sixty-two percent of the population, and twenty-four percent

¹⁵² The fund founded on 15 September 2005 operates as a Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors special project, “it is committed to supporting work that focuses on environment, social justice, human rights, and rebuilding civil society capacity in the region to ensure that communities are healthy, equitable, and sustainable....The Fund supports grassroots and advocacy organizations that are led by and address the needs of historically disenfranchised communities in the region—such as the African American and immigrant communities—and organizations that engage in work that encompasses environmental health and justice, civic engagement, voting rights, labor rights, housing, health care, youth services and education, and many other issues.” The Gulf Coast Fund, *About Us*, www.gulfcoastfund.org

¹⁵³ Parras argues that Hurricane Katrina had been a catalyst for social justice activism in the US. The US Social Forum came out of this The See, Laura Cushing and Jill Johnson. “Milestones of a Movement: Reflections on the People’s Freedom Caravan”, *The United States Social Forum: Perspectives of a Movement*, edited by Marina Karides et al., Changemaker Publications, 2010, pp. 143-155; and *Handbook on World Social Forum Activism* edited by Jackie Smith et al., Routledge, 2016.

¹⁵⁴ See, Nancy Martinez, “Standing up for immigrants [at the Alamo?].” *San Antonio Express-News*, 24 Jun, 2007.

of those living below the poverty line. These statistics stand in stark contrast to those of White communities, who make up twenty-five percent of the city and ten percent of those living in poverty (US Census Bureau 2018). For SWU's director, Diana López, "In San Antonio, it's very clear who's making money off of whom" (interview with Massey 2016, 25:40). She argues:

[SWU] is so close to downtown, about four blocks away, right? So we see high-rises and taxes, we see a lot of just cultural appropriation of stuff. We see a lot of Mexican restaurants in San Antonio, but how many of those Mexican restaurants are actually owned by Mexicans, by Mexican Americans, by brown people? (24:01).

The Freedom Caravan's protest at the Alamo was then, to paraphrase Cervantes at the Librotraficante press conference, to tell the city what was going on. Moreover, to speak of immigrant and migrant communities who historically have been left out of the conversation.

The following day Parras, as a representative of the Southern Human Rights Organizers network, welcomed the then three-bus Freedom Caravan into Houston. Its arrival was the city's biggest gathering of grassroots activists (SWU 2007, 7). There was a rally with speakers, as Parras explains, "[B]ecause one of the points was to educate folks... We had some people talk about the issues that were pertinent to [their] particular community, like environmental issues ... [and] like immigration" (interview with Massey 2016, 10:15). Parras says the activism praxis of the PFC was "action-orientated" (interview with Massey 09:48, 2016). He took the self-named "freedom riders" (7) on a Toxic Tour of Manchester, a majority Mexican low-income neighborhood in East Houston, "to show solidarity with the community living adjacent to a massive petrochemical complex" (7), the Valero Houston Refinery.¹⁵⁵ Parras explains the tours, "They are moving educational experiences, experiential learning. With people who live

¹⁵⁵ A Rice University Working Paper states, "The community is surrounded by major industrial facilities including a Valero Oil refinery and a Goodyear Tire plant. Residents have long campaigned to lower their exposure to industrial pollutants and for the right to know what chemicals are at work in neighboring plants. Tired of the health costs linked with living in close proximity to industry, many Manchester residents wish to be bought out by surrounding companies. This approach, thus far, has been a political non-starter" James R. Elliott, Kyle Shelton and Lester O. King, "The Regulatory Nature of Urban Ports: The Case of Houston", *Kinder Institute for Urban Research Working Paper No. 2015-06*, Rice U, 2015, p. 25.

in these communities, telling their story, and explaining what people were seeing and putting some history and context and narrative to that experience” (interview Massey 2016, 02:58); reflecting here the work of Nuestra Palabra. The PFC tour was followed by a march from Manchester’s park to the perimeter of the Valero site. Here art was used as a form of collective resistance, as Parras explains, “We had made these little white crosses to represent all of the people who had died from cancers and other ailments. We put their names on them. We put them on the fence” (10:01). This action reflects the placing of crosses on the US Mexico border wall and in the deserts of Juárez to remember those who have lost their lives negotiating the hostile environment of anti-immigration discourse and politics.¹⁵⁶ Both engagements with the effects of environmental racism illuminate its impact on migrant communities. The PFC left Houston the following day. Parras, Liana Lopez, Librotraficante LiLó, and other activists from the city were on-board, making up bus four of the caravan.

When the Librotraficante Caravan then headed for eastside San Antonio five years later, it ran on a pre-laid and pre-tested route. The caravanistas were met by SWU director, Diana López, a connection Bryan and Liana had made on the PFC. López was deputized and given the apodo, “Librotraficante DiLó.” In 2013, to mark the one-year anniversary of the caravan, the Librotraficante Facebook page celebrated a number of those who had been involved. Of López they posted:

Diana López is a Chicana y pura San Antonian and Librotraficante. For the past 7 years she has been working with Southwest Workers Union to fight the injustices in her community around military contamination, nuclear energy, economic justice, food justice and disparities in education. Diana's work has a strong solutions based approach of promoting the implementation of clean energy sources, sustainable practices through youth leadership and community empowerment. She has received various awards including the 2009 Brower Youth Award from Earth Island Institute, The Urban

¹⁵⁶ See the work of Jessica Aucther, “Border Monuments: Memory, Counter-Memory, and (B)ordering Practices along the US Mexico Border”, *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 2, 2013, pp. 291-311, and Thomas Oles analysis of Albert Caro’s “Border Coffins” installation, *Walls: Enclosure and Ethics in the Modern Landscape*, UC Press, 2015, p. 120. Tuscon Artist, Alvaro Enciso creates crosses and places one a week in the Sonora Desert to mark sites where remains of migrants have been found. His project is called “Donde Mueren Los Suenos / Where Dreams Die”, see Stefan Falke “Alvaro Enciso”, *La Frontera: Artists Along the US Mexico Border*, 12 Dec. 2018, borderartists.com/2018/09/27/alvaro-enciso/.

Renewal Award for community organizing and food sovereignty and has been named one the "15 Most Influential Young People" by Hispanic Magazine. Diana is currently a student at Palo Alto College pursuing a degree in Agriculture with a strong focus on Urban Ag ("Diana López" 2013)

Connecting to López's community work and the activities of the SWU were key to locating the Librotráfico Movement at the intersection of myriad social justice issues. As Díaz explains, "[W]e do want to broaden the audience for books. It is not rare to find writers and academics collaborating. However, especially in the case of San Antonio, it is rare to see those same groups collaborating with a union organizer. Now, we do" (qtd. in Staff, 2012). During the Chicano Movement, collaborations of artists and unions saw, for example, the creation of El Teatro Campesino to support the work of the United Farm Workers [UFW] union. There were also writers who illuminated the plight of the farmworkers. Poet José Montoya was a UFW organizer, his work from that period, such as "La Jefita" (1969), "Resonant Valley" (1969), and "Lazy Skin", speaks to the embattled lives of migrant workers in the fields of California's Central Valley.¹⁵⁷ When Parras first approached López to ask if SWU would be happy to host the caravan, López was initially hesitant; not hesitant to help, but as she says, "SWU has never identified as an arts and cultural organization" (interview with Massey 2016, 26:36). Kimberley Rendón, SWU intern, speaks to the challenges the organization faces in diversifying its focus. "Literacy is fairly low in our community" she argues, "There's not a gravitation towards reading" (interview with Massey 2016, 10:01). In 2012, San Antonio was ranked 71st in a study of the literacy of the largest US cities (Central Connecticut State University 2016). SWU's community, working class African Americans, Mexican, and Central American migrants in the city's east and south, have historically experienced subpar education.

¹⁵⁷ See José David Saldívar's study of Montoya's work in "Towards a Chicano Poetics: The Making of the Chicano Subject, 1969-1982", *Confluencia: Literatura Chicana*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1986, pp. 10-17. Paul F. Chávez and Arturo S. Rodríguez argue of José Montoya, "He walked picket lines, helped organize UFW events and fed the farmworkers during every major strike, boycott and political campaign. He was truly a servant of the farmworker movement" (qtd. in Campbell 2013).

A recent report clarifies conditions,

The Eastside of San Antonio is a diverse, bilingual community with some of the city's oldest and most distressed neighborhoods. Once a thriving area and the heart of the city's African American community, the Eastside has over time experienced significant neglect and increased poverty (City of San Antonio 2017, 3).

In the face of this neglect, SWU's focus has been, as López states, "empowerment". She continues, "[W]e build power. We build community leaders to act, to change the structures that currently have oppressed us in education and the work place and our communities" (interview with Massey, 28:33). SWU had been aware of what was happening in Tucson, and had opened the doors to the Librotraficante Caravan because of connections already made with Bryan Parras, but as López admits, fighting the dismantling of the MAS program, "wasn't necessarily a high-priority in our list of issues" (38:43). However, she continues, the conditions that necessitated the founding of the program, "definitely connected into labor and education and youth" (38:47). As did the inauguration of a library, on the night of the caravan, that would add to the organization's empowerment framework.

GOING UNDERGROUND

R. David Lankes argues, "[T]he mission of libraries is to improve society through facilitating knowledge creation in their communities" (2016, 17). For SWU's communities, subordinated by Eurocentric epistemological systems, "knowledge creation" is a decolonial act. Something against which Tucson's MAS program battled, for said devaluation filters into the individual experience, into the home, and into the community, colonizing, thereby, understandings of culture. As Ana Castillo urges:

Today, we grapple with our need to thoroughly understand who we are—gifted human beings—and to believe in our gifts, talents, our worthiness and beauty, while having to survive within the constructs of a world antithetical to our intuition and knowledge.... Who, in this world of the glorification of material wealth, Whiteness, and phallic worship would consider us holders of knowledge that could transform this world into a place where the quality of life for all living things on this planet is the utmost priority (1995, 149).

Libraries can provide a critical environment to nurture "intuition and knowledge" (Castillo

149). However, as an American Library Association study shows, the profession is 86% White (2012, 2). A demographic that creates a racialized space, for as Todd Honma argues “libraries have historically served the interests of a white racial project by aiding in the construction and maintenance of a white American citizenry as well as the perpetuation of white privilege in the structures of the field itself” (2005, 4). The praxis of the Librotraficante Movement in navigating sites of resistance to “a white racial project” (4) included the construction of libraries as oppositional epistemological spaces creating sanctuaries for cultural knowledge. A necessary radical act, for as George Lipsitz insists:

If we are to address and redress the cumulative, collective, and continuing consequences of the possessive investment in whiteness, we need to have both great libraries and great memories. We need to acknowledge that decisions about what libraries collect and how they make their collections available play an important role in what people know and what they do not know. We need to recognize that the privileges and exclusions that permeate U.S. society pervade the practices of libraries as well. (2009, 9)

It is to these exclusions that the tenth demand of the Librotraficante Manifesto responds, “We must create and maintain Librotraficante Under Ground (sic) Libraries throughout the nation, so that our histories, our cultures are never at the whim of an administration ever again” (see Appendix I, 2). Moreover, the idea for the libraries comes from a place of pushing back against in Lipsitz’s words, “what people know” (9) about Chicanx and Latinx communities.

The creation of “underground” libraries extends the subversive performativity of the caravan, and of its symbolic connection, in the face of racialized tropes of illegality, to a criminal “underworld.” In order to do so, the Librotraficantes effectively conduct a prison-break, as Diaz explains, “The idea was that we wanted to compile at least one full set of the 85 books confiscated from Tucson classrooms” (qtd. in Asofsky and Serrano 2012, 113). These libraries Díaz explains are to be called “read-easies”; “[A]lluding” he states, “to the speakeasies of the Prohibition Era” (Steiner 2012). The operational praxis of the Librotraficante Movement mirrors in many ways the activities of the speakeasies. Apart from both distributing products removed by the state, the Librotraficantes have apodos to protect their identity, the speakeasies

required passwords.¹⁵⁸ The Librotraficantes operate on the production of “clandestine” authors whilst the speakeasies were supplied by an underground liquor industry.¹⁵⁹ However, the founding of the Underground Libraries also connects the Librotraficantes to histories of radical activism within the library sector. In 1969, Librarians for Peace marched at the Vietnam Moratorium rally in Washington DC, with Librarians for Nuclear Arms Control forming in 1981.¹⁶⁰ In 2011, Occupy Wall Street founded the People’s Library. Although the space and its collection were destroyed by the NYPD in November of the same year, it still exists in a mobile form.¹⁶¹ In relation to Latinx librarianship, in 1971, the work of Arnulfo D. Trejo brought about the founding of REFORMA to address the lack of representation in US libraries, not only in the form of texts but also in personnel.¹⁶² In the 21st century the founding of a Latinx focused

¹⁵⁸ Whilst the apodo symbolically “protect” the caravanistas from law enforcement, the speakeasy passwords were very often distributed to the local police. Many studies have shown that police departments nationally engaged in liquor distribution during prohibition. For example, as Daniel Okrent writes, “In Chicago, a brief spasm of serious enforcement efforts collapsed shortly after the revelation ... that an estimated 60 percent of the city’s police force was in the liquor business” *Last Call: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition*, Scribner, 2010, p.141

¹⁵⁹ See Christine Sismondo “America Walks into a Bar: A Spirited History of Taverns and Saloons, Speakeasies and Grog Shops”, OUP, 201, and Louise Chipley Slavicek, *The Prohibition Era: Temperance in the United States*, Chelsea House 2009, pp. 50-65.

¹⁶⁰ For a historiography of radical librarianship see Peter Lehu, “Remaining Responsible, Remaining Relevant: Gen X Librarians and Social Responsibility”, *The Generation X Librarian: Essays on Leadership, Technology, Pop Culture, Social Responsibility and Professional Identity*, Jefferson: McFarland, 2014, pp. 163-175. See also, Melissa Morrone, and Lia Friedman, “Radical Reference: Socially responsible librarianship collaborating with community”, *The Reference Librarian*, vol. 50, no. 4, 2009, pp. 371-396

¹⁶¹ The Occupy Wall Street’s website describes the library as “the collective, public, open library of the Occupy Wall Street leaderless resistance movement...Library 3.0, what we call our twice-resurrected book-sharing system, consists of a few mobile units—shopping carts, crates—used by librarians to ferry free books in and out of the OWS storage facility and to Liberty Plaza and actions around the city.” peopleslibrary.wordpress.com/. For a study of the library see, Jessica Lingel, “Occupy Wall Street and the Myth of Technological Death of the Library” *Annenberg School for Communications*, University of Pennsylvania Scholarly Commons, 6 Aug, 2012 repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1619&context=asc_papers. On November 15, 2011, under orders from Mayor Bloomberg, the NYPD seized 3,600 books, 2,798 of which were either damaged or destroyed. Occupy Wall Street filed a lawsuit against the City of New York, and on April 13, 2013, received a damages settlement of \$47,000. See, Karen McVeigh, “Destruction of Occupy Wall Street 'People's Library' draws ire” *The Guardian*, 23 Nov, 2011, www.theguardian.com/world/blog/2011/nov/23/occupy-wall-street-peoples-library , and Nick Pinto, “City Settles Lawsuit Over the Destruction of the Occupy Wall Street Library” *The Village Voice*, 9 Apr. 2013, www.villagevoice.com/2013/04/09/city-settles-lawsuit-over-the-destruction-of-the-occupy-wall-street-library/

¹⁶² The goals of REFORMA include: “The development of Spanish-language and Latino-oriented library collections, Recruitment of bilingual, multicultural library personnel, Promotion of public awareness of libraries and librarianship among Latinos, Advocacy on behalf of the information needs of the Latino community, Liaison to other professional organizations”, REFORMA: The National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish, www.reforma.org/about. For an edited collection on the particular challenges facing, and the successes of, Latino librarianship see, Salvador Güereña editor, *Library Services to Latinos: An Anthology*, McFarland & Company Inc., 2000.

library, “underground” or not, is in itself a radical act. For as Salvador Güereña and Edward Erazo argue, “The scarcity of professional literature on the early history of library services to the Spanish speaking prompts the assumption that, with few exceptions, library services to U.S. Latino populations are a relatively new development” (2000, 139). Echoing here Trejo’s 1979 sentiments that, “Library service for Mexican Americans is in the embryonic stage. A unique potential exists. The alert, willing, and foresighted librarian should and will accept the challenge” (184). In 2012, this is the challenge that the Librotraficantes communicated upon announcing the operational praxis of the Underground Library:

From now on, we are going to tell all Latino - all authors of color - when they have books published to send them all here. This is our own literature and it will not be in the hands of a system or in the hands of politicians. What I’m hoping with this caravan is to create long term network....Whenever a cultural crisis like this happens again, students will be connected to authors around the country. It will be a network of students, artists and activists. (qtd. in Steiner 2012)

In order for an organization to host a library, they need to meet the following criterion that speaks to a community-focused praxis:

1. The LT UL should be housed at a nonprofit organization.
2. The organization should be known for doing great work in the community. (This means actual great events for our people, not just good events on paper.)
3. The site should not be a bookstore or literary nonprofit.
4. The site should have space to house the books.
5. The site should have the manpower to receive the books, to keep the books safe, accessible.
6. This site should have the infrastructure to run with programs that we develop. This includes a base of volunteers.
7. The organization must have a strong desire to promote literacy in our community.
8. The organization should have a long enough history so that it is clear that the group will be in existence for many years to come.
9. The site should be located in an area accessible to the community.
10. Writers, activists, or nonprofits that we work with and respect should be able to vouch for them (Díaz “Underground Libraries”)

The Librotraficante website explains how the libraries will be initially stocked, “We intend to collect 1 complete set of the books banned by the Tucson Unified School District for each.” Moreover, there is intent to distribute further, “We will also donate copies of the banned books to public libraries once a complete set has been collected for each of the Underground

Libraries” (“Underground Libraries”); ensuring then that Chicana and Latina voices are accessible in both community and public spaces. As a community site focused on social justice, SWU met all Underground library criterion. This was evident in the response to the call out for books. López shares that a week before the caravan, “[T]here were a lot of donations. Authors came by. Our members came by. We had cases of books. Building the library was something we’d wanted. We wanted space ... social justice oriented, people of color oriented, so we had a lot of that literature” (interview with Massey 2016, 35:07). The extended operational praxis of the Underground Libraries provided for “that literature” of which López speaks. For alongside the bibliography of the MAS program, as Díaz outlines:

They add their own additions to the libraries themselves, so not every library looks the same, based on the diversity and the culture of the community that’s there. They add the books that they want to put in there, and the more we can get these books into people’s hands, the quicker we build that support so that the words don’t get lost. (interview with Massey 2014)

The space of the library at SWU provided for the addition of new initiatives to protect against the loss of community narratives. López states, “[F]or us it stemmed a whole new avenue, and stemmed a whole new piece of our work” (interview with Massey 2016, 40:01). Kimberley Rendón explains, “We are doing Book Bridges, it’s a time for people to come, share their favorite stories, and understanding that not everyone is versed in reading but that they have something to say” (interview with Massey 2016, 10:48). Moreover, the library added to plans the SWU already had in place for their site. In 2012, SWU were in the process of developing what they call the Movement Space on the building’s ground floor. They were seeking to provide for those of their membership who were, in López’s words “working class artists” (interview with Massey 2016, 14:31). The organization wanted to address the gentrification of the city, and to begin “shifting the idea ... of art galleries” (15:03) as spaces not of or accessible to working class communities. Moreover, they wanted to provide both site and “the material for art shows ... based on [working class] neighborhoods” (15:08). López explains how the Underground Library has fit in SWU’s social justice praxis post-caravan:

The idea for the library, it's shifted a little bit as the space shifts as well. [It] has been really critical in the gallery in the sense that we wanted it to be very open and exposed; we want it to be kind of a space that was really flexible, bi-lingual, multi-lingual...and that it could be like a resource space.... The library, and the shifts, and the power that it holds had molded the gallery and what it is now. It being an actual community based gallery and space and source of identity, a space to share their stories, just develop as community folks. (interview with Massey 2016)

SWU operates through the conviction that “[W]e can’t incorporate art without addressing the roots causes of what we’re experiencing, and how we build resistance”. In this respect, López continues, literature and literacy have become for SWU’s communities, “tools to help us communicate” (30:07). This communication then supports SWU’s radical grassroots organizing:

We do a lot of action-based work, a lot of protests ... the artists that we work with they help create the visuals. So, we’re creating a movement as we go along, our collaboration together, because in turn we provide the space to continue to create. For us it’s maintaining that trust with the people we work with, and how do we uplift, continuously uplift the work.... It’s beautiful to see the collaboration and to see growth and collaboration outside of this space, working in different areas in the community. (50:01)

These are not the only collaborations. López says, “[W]e’ve increased by like a hundred percent, by one-hundred and fifty percent our relationships with other organizations; with publishers, with artists, even just other teachers and students, and other educational institutions” (40:410). There are now Librotraficante Underground Libraries in Albuquerque, El Paso Houston Louisville, New York, and Phoenix; each of them providing space for the needs of their communities both locally, nationally, and transnationally.¹⁶³ Rubén Garza, Librotraficante Speaker Box, explains the ethos of the library at the University of Texas RGV:

The Gloria Anzaldúa Sin Fronteras Library is our way of responding to recent trends that marginalize Mexican and Mexican American identity and cultural practices. The attack on MAS and the banning of books in Arizona made us realize that, even long after the Chicano and Civil Rights movements, we are still fighting to defend our identity and to legitimize our role in this country. It is a sad realization that the struggle for justice and equality in the United States continues into the twenty-first century, and that today our nation is more divided than ever. (qtd. in Díaz 2013)

¹⁶³ For further information on the location of the libraries see, www.librotraficante.com/Underground-Libraries.html

The Librotraficante Caravan was born from relationships fostered by Nuestra Palabra. The Underground Libraries were created by the Librotraficantes to protect the output of community narratives, such as those produced by NP, and to ensure access to these stories. The individual libraries, whilst providing for the needs of their communities, protect these narratives and encourage the production of more; thus keeping the momentum of resistance moving.

THE LIST

Viktoria Valenzuela, local organizer of 100 Thousand Poets for Change, a global grassroots arts initiative, was invited by Díaz to emcee the event.¹⁶⁴ She explains their connection:

When Tucson Unified School District was banning MAS Studies, I was already connected to Dr. AB Morales a math teacher at TUSD and Nikotlet (sic) Gomez a student at TUSD who shared with me all that was happening on a daily basis in Tucson...I interviewed and wrote about them. I convinced Being Latino founder Lance Rios and the other bloggers that we should really be pushing the news out of Tucson and he agreed to the point that he put out a call for funding to travel to Arizona with blogger Cesar Vargas. Tony Diaz of Nuestra Palabra is the one who helped fund and promote getting them there. (personal communication with Massey 2019)

In planning the caravan, Díaz in turn reached out to Valenzuela. She became the Librotraficantes point of contact for the San Antonio based poets, such as Carmen Tafolla. Valenzuela was also encouraged to source local unpublished writers, so she reached out to Carolina Hinojosa-Cisneros, a Chicana poet from San Antonio's Southside.¹⁶⁵ Hinojosa-Cisneros was invited to read at SWU. She read "The List" a piece she had written in direct response to the dismantling of the MAS program. Stating, "I am afraid that we will be forgotten" (interview with Massey 2015, 05:21), Hinojosa-Cisneros felt an urgency to give voice to the injustice inflicted upon the community. "The List" is a reclamation of the "banned"

¹⁶⁴ The impetus for the organization is outlined on their website, "The first order of change is for poets, writers, musicians, artists, activists to get together to create and perform, educate and demonstrate, simultaneously, with other communities around the world. This will change how we see our local community and the global community. We have all become incredibly alienated in recent years. We hardly know our neighbors down the street let alone our creative allies who live and share our concerns in other countries. We need to feel this kind of global solidarity. It will be empowering" 100tpc.org/about-2/

¹⁶⁵ For more on Hinojosa-Cisneros and her work go to, cisneroscafe.org/.

authors and it is a call to arms. Hinojosa-Cisneros says, “It was very difficult. I felt sick after writing it” (interview with Massey 2015, 03:51). As Eden E. Torres writes, “much of the creative work of Chicanas exposes the wounds,” (2003, 13). Chicana writers bear the pain of community in both writing from their own wounds and in seeking to heal the community as collective. For Hinojosa-Cisneros, this would be her first literary exposure.

Hinojosa-Cisneros begins “The List” by declaring her subjectivity, “I skim the list of banned books” (lines 1) she writes, the “I” a strategy that establishes Hinojosa-Cisneros as a reliable narrator, thereby refusing majoritarian interpretations of community narratives. She argues, “It was the first time I’d written a poem that was actually truth” (interview with Massey 2015, 05:03). A necessary radical act for, as MAS program director Augustine Romero writes, “[T]he truth is irrelevant” for those who brought about the program’s end, and for those who seek to protect “the status quo within America’s historical and racial order” (2014, 53). Hinojosa-Cisneros writes from outside the status quo, from cultural epistemologies, for the books on the list are she writes, “[F]amiliar like té de yerbabuena” (line 2). Yerbabuena is an herb native to the soil of the Western and Southwestern United States. It is used for medicinal purposes by Mexican and Mexican heritage communities as part of a tradition of folk medicine, here then, Hinojosa-Cisneros associates healing with the books on the MAS bibliography. Yolanda Chávez Leyva writes of the practice of healing in the classroom, it has “a crucial and legitimate pedagogical function” with the capacity to “deconstruct historical trauma in a productive way” (qtd in Fernández 2016, 252). In this respect, the MAS bibliography functions as a narrative curandera. It is to this figure that Hinojosa-Cisneros turns in incanting a luminary of Chicana literature, line three of *The List* reads, “I bring my fingers to Anaya.” Rudolfo Anaya’s first published work, considered a foundational work of Chicano literature, is the novel *Bless Me Ultima*, which centers the folk healing praxis of the curandera. The Librotráfico Caravan route included an invited visit with Anaya in New Mexico, where the author donated two boxes of the book. Reflecting the performativity of El Teatro Campesino, the caravanistas

constructing a portable Underground Library in front of Anaya's home, they then reclaimed prevailing narratives of illegality by wrapping the filled bookstands with yellow "Caution" police tape. The "stage" set, Anaya, standing to one side, raised a copy of *Ultima* and announced, "[E]ste una bendición del curandera que se llama "La Ultima." La curandera es nuestra Madre" "This is a blessing from the curandera, Ultima. The curandera is our mother" (my trans; "Librotraficante in Burque" 2012, 4:03). In the book's introduction, Anaya writes "for over four hundred years we had only our home-grown healers, those curanderas I call women warriors who helped restore harmony to the fragmented soul" (1972, ii). In the MAS program, this urge for restoration is reproduced through an Indigenous epistemological impetus, in particular through the application of Tezcatlipoca—self-reflection. Here, self-recognition and acceptance opens space for the decolonization of narratives that harm. Ramon Del Castillo, Adriann Wycoff and Steven Cantu argue similarly of the impact of Curanderismo, insisting that it "can be a spiritual healing process, and acceptance of self, [and] the deconstruction of multiple historical identities that are often used by the dominating culture ... causing consternation and self-hate" (2012, 1). In the MAS classroom, educators Sean Arce and Anita Fernández write, "the liberatory process of reconciliation through writing and sharing their Tezcatlipoca narratives began the healing process we would witness the students engaging in throughout the semester" (21, 2014). For the students, *Bless Me Ultima*'s curandera figure is not then "merely" a character in a novel, but a restorative participant in the program and in the healing of the greater community.

In responses to their representational praxis, the program and the novel have further connections. First published in 1972, *Bless Me Ultima* has appeared frequently on the American Library Association's [ALA] challenged books lists. The ALA categorizes a challenge as "documented requests to remove materials from schools or libraries" (2013). Between 1990 and 1999, the novel was challenged seventy-eight times, and between 2000 and 2009, the novel was challenged thirty-two times. The year after the dismantling of the MAS program, *Bless Me*

Ultima appeared in the ALA's Top Ten Most Frequently Challenged Books list. According to the ALA website, the reasons the book is objected to remain consistent—"occult/Satanism, offensive language, religious viewpoint, sexually explicit" (ALA 2013). At the grassroots level, objections to the book have led to local school boards ordering it removed from classrooms, to its burning by parents.¹⁶⁶ The novel has also received criticism from those within Chicana and Latina studies. Amongst other analyses, *Bless Me Ultima* has been critiqued for its romanticization of rural life, embedded gender norms, and, taking into consideration the novel's publication year, the lack of reference to the many struggles of the Chicano Movement. Horst Tonn, for example, argues that the book "does not seem to harmonize with the historical context, the militant and disruptive political climate of the 1960s and early 1970s" (1990, 1). Aishih Wehbe Herrera further comments, *Bless Me Ultima* "advocate[s] masculinity ideals that respond to heterosexist hegemonic orders" (121). Here, perhaps, we do see how Anaya's novel speaking from a particularly Chicano positionality speaks to the masculine heteronormativity of El Movimiento. However, as Juan Bruce Novoa insists, *Bless Me Ultima* "does pose the question of community survival", and for the text's protagonist, "writing is offered as one solution to the threat to Chicano culture" (1990, 83). For Hinojosa-Cisneros, who in choosing the authors for "The List" argues, "I just referenced books that I am know to be true to me" (03:01), writing that truth becomes a poultice for survival. This, what Juan Bruce Novoa theorizes as, a "response to the chaos" (1982, 12) that can be seen in the work of the next author Hinojosa-Cisneros's work incants.

Line four of "The List" reads, "The C begins Cisneros" (line 4), Sandra Cisneros, a

¹⁶⁶ On the book burning in Colorado see, Margo L. Roberts *Parents Censor High School Literature and are Allowed to Burn Books They Find Offensive*. www.soychicano.com/showthread.php?t=8568. Accessed 1 Nov. 2019. For further challenges see Robert P. Doyle, *Books Challenged or Banned in 2004-2005*, American Library Association Office of Intellectual Freedom, 2006. www.ala.org/advocacy/sites/ala.org.advocacy/files/content/banned/bannedbookweek/ideasandresources/free_downloads/2005banned.pdf. See also the *Bless Me Ultima* section in Herbert N. Foerstel, *Banned in the U.S.A.: A Reference Guide to Book Censorship in Schools and Public Libraries*. Greenwood Press, 2002, pp. 228-229.

writer who frequently appears on lists. Two of her books are included on the MAS bibliography, *The House on Mango Street* and *Woman Hollering Creek*. In 1985, the Before Columbus Foundation awarded Cisneros the American Book Award for *Mango Street*. Amy Cummins research shows that the title, translated into numerous languages and adapted many times for the stage, is “the most frequently assigned book by a Mexican American author in high schools” (2018, 82).¹⁶⁷ Conversely, in 2016, it appeared on the ALA’s list of Frequently Challenged Books with Diverse Content.¹⁶⁸ Asked in interview of *Mango Street*’s attraction, Sandra Cisneros responded, “I think that it speaks to young peoples’ isolation, loneliness, and longing” (“The House on Mango Street” 2009b, 03:58). The book came from that same psychic space. Cisneros wrote *Mango Street* in one weekend whilst a graduate student at Iowa State University. She says:

I had been having a very difficult time.... I had a breakthrough after seminar when we were talking about house of memory, house of imagination. And it occurred to me ... that we had never, in all my years, my education, talked about my house. I had seen other houses in literature, in media, in magazines, but I’d never seen my house. (“The House on Mango Street” 2009a, 01:25)

The author was enrolled in the Iowa Writers Workshop, arguably the most highly acclaimed writing program in the nation. However, she shares:

It wasn’t prestigious to me. It was rather horrible.... I think that we often don’t hear from the dissident voices of people who were enrolled there - people of color, women, working class people - because there are so few of them.... When they do survive that experience, perhaps they’re not in a place where they can voice their opinion.” (WNYC 2009)¹⁶⁹

Where Lorna Dee Cervantes had responded to the marginalization of her identity at high school by founding a representative press, Cisneros planned a space to support “dissident voices”

¹⁶⁷ *House on Mango Street* translations include, Arabic, Chinese, Croatian, Danish, Dutch, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Norwegian, Persian, Spanish, Swedish, Thai, and Zapotec.

¹⁶⁸ See, www.ala.org/advocacy/bbooks/frequentlychallengedbooks/diverse.

¹⁶⁹ See also Sonya Larson’s essay, “Degrees of Diversity: Talking Race and the MFA.” *Poets and Writers*, 19 Aug. 2015. www.pw.org/content/degrees_of_diversity; Lynn Neary. “In Elite MFA Programs, The Challenge Of Writing While 'Other'.” *NPR*, 19 Aug. 2014. www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2014/08/19/341363580/in-elite-mfa-programs-the-challenge-of-writing-while-other?t=1573580028447; and Hope Wabuke, “If We Want Diverse Books, We Need Diverse MFA Programs.” *The Root*, 11 Sept. 2014, www.theroot.com/if-we-want-diverse-books-we-need-diverse-mfa-programs-1790876994.

(2009). “I always had in my mind”, she says, “that if I could have enough money to pay my rent I would like to create a workshop where I taught for free, and that was something I dreamed about” (2009b, 05.55). In 1995, Cisneros founded the Macondo Writing Workshops, initially running them her from home, Casa Azul. Erasmo Guerra, Lambda Literary Award winner and Macondo Fellow, recalls, “After we workshopped our stories, she'd cut up mangos and cucumbers and make tea for everyone” (Queirós, 2009). This hospitality speaks to the very nature of the workshops, a social space that provided literary and cultural sustenance that provided, for Cisneros, the “oxygen” of community (LFLA 2015). In 2006, Cisneros set up a larger project, the Macondo Foundation. She says:

It brings together writers that work in underserved communities, writers that come from communities that are not normally represented in books. We bring together those writers to help encourage and foster their finishing books. To share our expertise with each other. Sometime we offer residencies, sometimes we do community work together we do readings. (2009b, 01:31)

Ruth Behar, who participated in the Macondo Writers Workshop 2011, describes Macondistas to be border-crossers, “Americans of the other America, moving between cultures, languages, classes, homelands, translating our experience for ourselves and others” (qtd. in Rivera 2009, 91). The three-hundred Macondo alumni include Gregg Barrios, Reyna Grande, Laurie Ann Guerrero, Daisy Hernández, Emmy Pérez, and Helena Maria Viramontes.¹⁷⁰ Two of the founding members of the Librotraficantes are Macondistas, Lupe Méndez, and Tony Díaz. The latter was emcee for the Macondo 2018 open-mic. Recalling the event, he writes:

For many of these writers, including myself, our first job was as translator, either of language or culture as we negotiated the world for our parents, our communities. We knew the power of words because heavy responsibility passed through us between institutions to our families: paying the correct amount at the grocery store, explaining our own school report cards, being the first to go to college. Back then our job was to translate the outside world. Now our job is to translate our community to the rest of the world. (2018)

¹⁷⁰ See, www.facebook.com/MacondoWriters, www.macondowriters.com, and labloga.blogspot.com/2007/08/macondo-2007-highlights.html

As cultural mestizos, Macondistas move between worlds; in the words of Cisneros, “We’re the diplomats, the ambassadors, so to speak, during the age of *susto* [fear]” (NPR 2015).¹⁷¹ In 2012, in the face of her planned relocation to Mexico, Cisneros handed Macondo to San Antonio’s Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center. There is a sadness in the city at Sandra Cisneros’s leaving, but as O. Ricardo Pimentel writes, “She and her Macondo Foundation have no doubt spurred much masterful Latino storytelling....A good thing, because Latinos have been a story inexpertly told for years” (2011).¹⁷² Hinojosa-Cisneros’s poem, containing Macondistas, becomes a reading list for those seeking the “expert” telling of the communities’ myriad stories.

“The List” not only records critically acclaimed writers, it also bears witness to a marginalized class. For Hinojosa-Cisneros seeks to reclaim not only the literary voices of the MAS bibliography, but also the communities represented therein. She says, “I was thinking about the immigrants, about the migrant farmworkers” insisting, “Someone needed to speak for them. And I say “them” all the time, but I mean “us”” (03:17). In the poem, Hinojosa-Cisneros writes of an icon of the Chicano Movement who spoke for farmworkers:

And César Chávez marching
Through crop lands

Shaking hands with immigrants
Cultivating the soil to ensure

The potbelly master full
Of ripe blooming bright bulbs (lines 6-10)

In Arizona, the birthplace of Chávez, union representation and rights for seasonal farmworkers to fight “The potbelly master” (line 5) are scarce. Moreover, for undocumented migrant

¹⁷¹ In 2011, Cisneros travelled to Mexico to host the Macondo Gathering for Indigenous Women Writers, in Oaxaca City. Fifteen invited writers shared works written Spanish, Tojolab’al, Tzotzil, Zapotec, and Zoque (Call 2012).Hinojosa

¹⁷² In 2018, the Macondo Writers Workshop moved to Texas A&M University-San Antonio, where it now operates funded by Nuestra Palabra. An A&M statement reads, “The agreement between A&M-SA and Nuestra Palabra essentially establishes a framework for a partnership in which A&M-SA organizes and conducts Macondo Writers Workshop while Nuestra Palabra financially sponsors the workshop’s writing faculty” (qtd. in Rindfuss 2019).

workers, as Meghan G. McDowell and Nancy A. Wonders write, “preemptive social control strategies of racial profiling, harassment, and sporadic immigration raids have become a means to facilitate their economic, political, and spatial subjugation” (2010, 63). The MAS bibliography contained Chávez’s, “Letter to the Commonwealth Club of California”. In his speech, he talks of the “savage conditions” (Farmworker Movement Documentation Project 1) in which the farmworkers live and work, and how they are treated as “beasts of burden to be used and discarded” (2). Chávez’s narrative here mirrors the experience of Erasmo Cisneros, Hinojosa-Cisneros’s father-in-law, who says:

I only went to seventh grade because we were always in the fields working.... My father said education was no good ... because he’s seen colleagues with a high school ring picking cotton just like the rest of us. Even if they graduated at that time in the fifties and sixties they didn’t have opportunities anyway. (interview with Massey 2015, 56: 54)

The UFW had been formed to address said systemic marginalization, Chávez articulates:

I began to realize what other minority people had discovered; that the only answer, the only hope was in organizing. More of us had to become citizens, we had to register to vote, and people like me had to develop the skills it would take to organize, to educate, to help empower the Chicano people. (3)

The students of Tucson’s MAS program, their families, and communities have similar cultural heritage. Chávez’s legacy, and that of Dolores Huerta, gave them a vision for their future and a way to counter the oppressions of their present. Moreover, remembering the work of Chávez created a space in which they could celebrate themselves. In 2011, Tucson’s 11th annual Cesar Chávez march took the theme “Save Ethnic Studies”; empowered, the students marched chanting, “education not deportation” (Monarrez Maldonado 2011). The following year, however, with the MAS program dismantled, the school board “demanded there be no reference to the elimination of the program ... and that no disparaging comments be made about [its] administration” (Biggers 2012). Thereby, effectively censoring the march and in turn Chávez’s legacy.

The author with the highest number of “sacred texts” on the Tucson MAS bibliography,

six works of poetry and prose, is Jimmy Santiago Baca. The author also appears on the ALA's list of the Most Frequently Challenged Authors of the 21st Century.¹⁷³ Cisneros was introduced to Baca's work when she was an undergraduate and he had given a reading at her college. In "The List" Hinojosa-Cisneros finds,

Jimmy Santiago Baca's mountains
Neglected and hidden beneath

Tarps of political plastic waste (lines 9-11)

The political smothering and social neglect of which Hinojosa writes are not new experiences for the Latinx and Indigenous communities. Abandoned at a very young age, Baca was raised by his grandmother and later sent to an orphanage. A runaway at aged thirteen, he survived solitary confinement as a young man in a New Mexico penitentiary to become one of America's finest writers. In the prologue to his critically acclaimed memoir, *A Place to Stand*, Baca writes:

I didn't fit in. I was a deviant....I felt socially censured whenever I was in public, prohibited from entering certain neighborhoods or restaurants, mistrusted by government officials, treated as a flunky by schoolteachers, profiled by counselors as a troublemaker, taunted by police, and disdained by judges, because I had an accent and my skin was brown. Feeling inferior in a white world, alien and ashamed, I longed for another place to live, outside of society. (2001, 4)

Baca's work illuminates the MAS program's "Chicana/o epistemology". A celebration of knowledges, as Augustine Romero writes, that "reflect the unique experience that arises from historic and contemporary social, political, and cultural conditions that are encountered by Chicanas/os" (2014, 31). Moreover, an encounter with one of the books on the bibliography further connects Baca to MAS program. In an essay, he writes of his time working as an emergency room orderly:

One night my eye was caught by a familiar-looking word on the spine of a book. The title was *450 Years of Chicano History in Pictures*. On the cover were black-and-white photos: Padre Hidalgo exhorting Mexican peasants to revolt against the Spanish dictators; Anglo vigilantes hanging two Mexicans from a tree; a young Mexican woman with rifle and ammunition belts crisscrossing her breast; César Chávez and field workers marching for fair wages; Chicano railroad workers laying creosote ties;

¹⁷³ See, www.ala.org/advocacy/bbooks/frequentlychallengedbooks/challengedauthors

Chicanas laboring at machines in textile factories; Chicanas picketing and hoisting boycott signs (1992, 3).

The impact was profound. Baca writes, “Back at my boardinghouse, I showed the book to friends. All of us were amazed; this book told us we were alive” (3). “This book”, which is bilingual, was one of the seven removed not only from the MAS classrooms but also from the Tucson Unified School District’s libraries.¹⁷⁴ The removal of a book, that in Baca’s words “reflected back to us our struggle in a way that made us proud,” reflects the removal of the community’s youth from representative pathways to civic life. Baca’s experiences embedded within the MAS program, speak to the persistence of the disproportionate criminalization of Black, Latinx, and Indigenous youth and the overrepresentation of all three groups in Arizona’s criminal justice system. Baca’s work speaks from a narrative space of resistance, one that draws from myriad hi/stories of struggle, a space within which the MAS students are able to engage with both the context in which they live but also that in which they can affect change. As José González, former MAS teacher, argued in 2012, “We’re going to survive. We’re going to come out strong. It’s going to take some time. But you know, we’re not going anywhere, we’re not hiding, we’re here and we’re going to be here long [after] those politicians careers have come and gone” (*Precious Knowledge* 2011, 48:05). The inclusion of Baca’s memoir on the Tucson MAS bibliography provides evidence that the “mountains” (line 9) of historical trauma of which Hinojosa writes can be, to declassify a colonial term, conquered.

Edén Torres argues, “Over and over in Chicana narratives we see the memories, the personal and communal efforts of our historic wounding, unresolved issues and daily struggles” (38). In “The List”, Hinojosa reaches into this wounding. In lines 15-18, the poem connects the removal of the books to the trauma of the removal of language:

Generations quieted like

¹⁷⁴ The book on the MAS bibliography is an updated version; it now seeks to reflect five hundred years of Chicana history. See Appendix II, author—Elizabeth S. Martínez.

The nuns slapping hands
With wooden metric rulers

You will not speak Spanish
In America you will not (15-18)

Members of Hinojosa-Cisneros's family were "quieted". She recalls, "I remember when my Granma was a little girl and she couldn't speak Spanish in class, because they would make her put her hands out and they would get a ruler and 'slap' every time she would speak Spanish" (interview with Massey 2015). Of the attempts to tame "wild tongues", Gloria Anzaldúa writes, "In childhood we are told that our language is wrong. Repeated attacks on our native tongue diminish our sense of self. The attacks continue throughout our lives" (1994, 80). A text on the MAS bibliography that complicates said narrative of linguistic "attacks" is Richard Rodriguez's memoir, *Hunger of Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez*, in which the author argues of "the value and necessity of assimilation" (1982, 26). The book, an autobiographical Bildungsroman, moves from the writer as a child "able to understand some fifty stray English words" (1), to his adulthood as an essayist and scholar. Born in the United States to Mexican immigrant parents, Rodriguez disavows bilingualism, arguing that English brought access to the public sphere, to "*gringo* society" (emphasis author 26), whereas his mother tongue, Spanish, brought only access only to a private world incompatible with success in the United States. He recalls that as a child attending a school with a predominantly Anglo demographic, he "couldn't really believe Spanish was a public language" (14). For Rodriguez, Spanish was the language of the home and therefore lacking in intellectual nuance. Tomás Rivera argues, "Richard Rodriguez seems to indicate that the personal Spanish voice lacks the intelligence and ability to communicate beyond the sensibilities of the personal interactions of personal family" (1984, 8). In his memoir, Rodriguez associates his parents' use of Spanish with a "native intelligence" (55) that caused him embarrassment. "Simply, what mattered to me" Rodriguez writes, "was they were not like my teachers" (55). If, as Rivera insists, "Rodriguez is a reflection of a North American education" (10), then *Hunger of Memory* rejects

the legitimacy of Spanish and Spanish-speaking communities as does Arizona reject the legitimacy of pedagogical praxis of the MAS program. For both, to be a successful American is to ascribe to linguistic hierarchies and to dismiss cultural heritage that complicates narratives of the United States. In Arizona, however, any veneer of an English language emphasis being purely for pedagogical advantage was lost in 2010 when John Huppenthal replaced Tom Horne as State Superintendent of Schools. For he blogged:

We all need to stomp out balkanization. No Spanish radio stations, no Spanish billboards, no Spanish TV stations, no Spanish newspapers....This is America, speak English. I don't mind them selling Mexican food as long as the menus are mostly in English. And, I'm not being humorous or racist (qtd. in Freeman 2014).

Huppenthal's diatribe highlights how Chicana culture is consumed whilst language and communities are critically and physically deported. Moreover, it reflects how White supremacy seeks to control narratives of racism. Yet, in *Hunger of Memory*, Rodriguez celebrates his private schooling, the type of pedagogical and linguistic training that Horne promotes. "It is education that has altered my life. Carried me far" (4). Whereas the MAS program's holistic approach sought to strengthen community and familial ties, Rodriguez's educational experience distanced him both linguistically and culturally from his family. He writes, "Aztec ruins hold no special interest for me. I do not search Mexican graveyards for ties to unnamed ancestors" (3). There is an argument here that Rodriguez is pushing back on essentialist notions of Mexicaness and the cultural nationalism of Chicanismo. *Hunger of Memory* could be read as a border text with Rodriguez writing from Anzaldúa's concept of the "open wound". However, as Rivera argues, "Richard Rodriguez exists between two cultures, but he believes it more important to participate in one world than the other" (1984, 11). His participation has been well received. Upon its publication in 1982, Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert writes the book, "received remarkable praise in the mainstream media. It was the first book written by a Chicano to be widely and enthusiastically reviewed" (2000, 82). For its assimilationist anti-bilingualism stance the book has received both critical acclaim and scorn. Jeffrey Louis Decker writes,

“[T]he principle objection Chicano critics raise regarding the work of Richard Rodriguez concerns his failure to engage the reality of Mexican experience in America” (quoted in Paravnsini-Gebert 2000, 82).¹⁷⁵ This reality defies Rodriguez’s “simple” linguistic and cultural binaries. For the path to assimilation is not open to all, there are generations of English speakers in Chicax and Latinx communities who do not have access to the public sphere of which Rodriguez writes and where he writes from. His self-descriptor is one of privilege, “a middle-class American man. Assimilated” (1), invited to dinner parties in London’s Belgravia, Los Angeles, and New York (1). These are the public spaces of which Rodriguez writes, American spaces filled with English, whereas his parents’ home is a private space, isolated in its Spanish. In interview Rodriguez insists, “Teachers don’t do a good enough job impressing on students that their job as students is not to express themselves—their job is to make themselves understood by strangers” (quoted in Segura 2019). For Rodriguez, the result of this public desire for understanding estranges the author from his family. He writes, “My *mother!* My *father!* After English became my primary language, I no longer knew what words to use in addressing my parents. The old Spanish words (those tender accents of sound I had used earlier—*mamá* and *papá*—I couldn’t use anymore” (emphasis author, 23). Rodriguez also writes of his parents being reprimanded by nuns for speaking Spanish in the home; nuns, who representing the school, crossed from the public to the private to insist that the family spoke English, “for their children’s well-being” (20). The incident reflects how even the intimate use of Spanish is regulated by oppressive systems of language containment. Systems that affect the most marginalized in society the most harshly and emphasize how little control said communities have over their own spaces. In a Texas court in 1995, a judge in a custody case warned a Latina of the consequences of allowing her child to speak Spanish:

[Y]ou’re abusing that child and you’re relegating her to the position of a housemaid.

¹⁷⁵ Ilan Stavans insists Rodriguez is “arguably the most visible and controversial Chicano” (1993, 20). Although with the persistence of masculine heteronormativity in 21st century manifestations of the Chicano Movement, there is a possibility that Chicana Feminists would argue otherwise.

Now, get this straight. You start speaking English to this child because if she doesn't do good in school, then I can remove her because it's not in her best interest to be ignorant. The child will hear only English. (qtd. in Juan F. Perea 2011, 603)

In the words of Bessie Dendrinós et al, such rulings “typecast ethnicity as a form of devaluation” (2016, 9),¹⁷⁶ as does *Hunger of Memory*. This is also reflected in the Spanish language that is taught in schools and responses to the Spanish of heritage speakers. As Hinojosa-Cisneros shares:

I've always read wrote and spoke in Spanish, because my grandparents raised me. But in school, I remember in eighth grade having to take a Spanish class because we had to take a foreign language, and I thought “I'll take Spanish because that's the easiest”, and I remember being in Spanish class and feeling like such a failure because I *was* spelling Spanish but I didn't know the technicalities of forming a sentence.... Give me a book, I'll read to you I'll write a paper for you but I don't know the technicalities of verbs and adverbs. (emphasis in original interview with Massey 2015, 07:19)

Hinojosa-Cisneros's formative experiences of devaluation echo how Anzaldúa writes of linguistic border crossers:

Estamos los del español deficiente. [We are those with deficient Spanish.] We are your linguistic nightmare, your linguistic aberration, your linguistic mestizaje, the subject of your burla [joke]. Because we speak with tongues of fire we are culturally crucified. Racially, culturally and linguistically somos huérfanos [We are orphans]—we speak an orphan tongue. (1987, 58)

In “The List” Hinojosa-Cisneros also illuminates how this “orphaning” engulfs the mestizaje of the borderlands. The poet's mestiza ancestry is “Irish, Spanish, and Mexican” (interview with Massey 2015, 10:01). Here she recognizes borderlands communities whose ancestry predates the Spanish:

In America you will not

¹⁷⁶ For further work on the impact of English language hegemony and judicial attacks on the Spanish language, see Steven W. Bender, *Greasers and Gringos: Latinos, Law, and the American Imagination*, New York: NYU, 2003 pp.82-103; and Bender, “Old Hate in New Bottles: Privatizing, Localizing, and Bundling Anti-Spanish and Anti-Immigrant Sentiment in the 21st Century”, *Nevada Law Journal*, Vol. 7, 2007, pp. 883-894. For Texas studies see Mariana Achugar, “Counter-Hegemonic Language Practices and Ideologies: Creating a New Space and Value for Spanish in Southwest Texas” *Spanish in Context*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2008, pp. 1-18, Achugar and Silvia Pessoa, “Power and place Language attitudes towards Spanish in a Bilingual Academic Community in Southwest Texas”, *Spanish in Context*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2009, pp. 199-223, and Pamela L. Anderson, Ralph Carlson, and Hugo Mejias, “Attitudes toward Spanish language maintenance or shift (LMLS) in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of South Texas”. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 2002, pp. 158-

Chant beneath the sun
To the unknown gods of the earth (italics in original, lines 18-20)

The region was a polyglot, myriad languages that had numerous dialects, multilingualism, and sign language. Through the wound of colonialism, in a region of Spanish missions, Hinojosa-Cisneros channels historical voices. Rodriguez, on the other hand, has embarked on, in his words, “a lonely adventure” (202).

Whereas Rodriguez celebrates his “Americanization” (27), Hinojosa-Cisneros’s work reflects her experience of being asked to commit to a system that fails her community:

I pledge allegiance to the flag
 And to this republic for which

I stand hidden beneath your
 Histories and your inquisitions (lines 21-24)

Texas is one of only seventeen states to have a formal pledge to its flag.¹⁷⁷ Since 2003, all children attending Texas public schools have been required by law to recite the state Pledge, following the pledge to the US flag.¹⁷⁸ In schools that are majority Chicax, this allegiance is an “inquisition” (line 24). For in Texas, heresy is the denial of state-sanctioned histories and heroes. It is under this heritage that Hinojosa-Cisneros, “stand[s] hidden” (line 23), an acknowledgement of her historical positioning as a Chicana growing up on San Antonio’s Southside, a historically Mexican and Mexican heritage community. Hinojosa-Cisneros says of her young son, who attends a predominantly Chicax school, “What he’s learning about in history first is Texas history, and then African American history. He’s not coming home and asking about Mexican American history. That’s where we fill in the gaps” (09:41). The impact of these knowledge gaps is, as Hinojosa-Cisneros shares, a denial of heritage, “When you tell

¹⁷⁷ The Texas Pledge reads, "Honor the Texas flag; I pledge allegiance to thee, Texas, one state under God, one and indivisible." It was adopted in 1933, nine years before the US Congress adopted the national Pledge of Allegiance. In 2007, it was amended to include “one state under God.” www.tsl.texas.gov/ref/abouttx/flagpledge.html.

¹⁷⁸ See the following Texas state government code, statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/GV/htm/GV.3100.htm#3100.101.

him he's Irish, Spanish, and Mexican, he will automatically tell you that he's Irish" (10:01). Her son, his identity colonized, defaults to the European, to Texas history's heroic central figure. Hinojosa-Cisneros adds that her daughter's history classes are the same, "They don't teach them about Mexican American history," she says, "They assume that's what we'll do" (10:51). Her daughter attends the same school that Hinojosa-Cisneros attended, a majority Chicana school with no Chicana pedagogy. The MAS program in Tucson had responded to a similar epistemological urgency. When Hinojosa-Cisneros is asked why she thinks the program was removed, she responds, "To erase us" (06:09).

Halfway through, "The List" shifts; Hinojosa-Cisneros frames "The literary war" (line 28) with five further historical and contemporary oppressions:

The color war
 The religious war
 The secular war
 The literary war
 The homeless war
 The birth controlled war (lines 25-30)

Each of these "wars" represents what Kimberley Crenshaw refers to as "dimensions of violence against women of color" (1991, 1242) all of which connect to produce sites of "intersectional disempowerment" (1245). Hinojosa-Cisneros experiences these multiple oppressions from multiple positions, as a woman of color, as a self-identified Christian, as a Chicana poet, as a mother, as a resident of the Borderlands, and as a Chicana. In the poem, standing at the intersection of these positionalities, she claims her right to speak. For as Naomi Helena Quiñonez insists:

Chicanas have been negated, devalued, or omitted from two types of discourse: the larger dominant American discourse and the male Chicano discourse. The reclamation and assertion of their identity takes place through the use of strategies that allow them to reclaim their language and assert their own experiences as major themes. (2002, 141)

This new list includes these "themes". Hinojosa writes of "the literary war" being fought in Arizona, but frames it with five other operational oppressions, oppressions that can be read against another list, the 2012 Republican Party of Texas Platform. The platform is passed at

the party's state convention and is "the formal declaration of the principles on which a party stands and makes it appeal to voters" (Texas GOP). Under the section titled, "Preserving American Freedom" we find what Hinojosa writes as, "The color war" (line 25). The GOP document reads, "affirmative action reintroduces race as a divisive force in American life" (3). The Republican Party Platform seeing race as a "divisive force" seeks and allows for the erasure of the recognition of systemic and institutional violence against people of color, and all subsequent correlations with institutional, social, political, and cultural inequity. Where Hinojosa writes of "[t]he religious war" and "[t]he secular war", we see an intersection with "[t]he color war" as a composite of a neocolonial imposition of religious rights and principles. In the twenty-two page document, "God" is referred to twelve times. In the section, "Promoting Individual Freedom and Personal Safety," the document asserts, "America is a nation under God founded on Judeo-Christian principles" (13) an Anglo-majoritarian myth here re-rendering invisible the spiritual practices of Indigenous communities who populated the continent before the arrival of Europeans. Yet a myth that if adhered to marks genocide and slavery as foundational tenets of Christianity.

The fifth of the eleven "Principles," of the Texan Republican Platform is, "Personal Accountability and Responsibility" (1), this culture of self-reliance harking back to Anglo-majoritarian myths of the West being won by lone gun-fighters battling and overcoming a "savage" frontier. In the twenty-first century, the "savagery" of the US-Mexico borderlands is systemic and institutional with communities facing what Hinojosa writes as "[t]he homeless war," and poverty. According to the 2013 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress, Texas is one of five states that account for more than half of the homeless population in the US (HUD). Columbia University's National Center for Children in Poverty documents that 25% of children in Texas, the majority of whom are Latinx (35%) or Black (34%), live below the breadline (NCCP). Despite this the Republican Party Platform seeks to "assist families to self-sufficiency" (10) by removing welfare benefits after two years, requiring random drug-testing,

controlling how recipients of welfare spend the money, and initiating co-payments for health care services. All of this while repealing the Minimum Wage Law, the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, and removing Workers Compensation.

The second principle of the Texas GOP platform is the protection of the “sanctity of human life” (1), in Hinojosa’s words, “The birth controlled war” (line 30). Reproductive healthcare and access to abortion in Texas has long been under attack with state and government officials seeking to strip Planned Parenthood of its funding. The most effected are the poor, as Planned Parenthood holds Medicaid contracts allowing low-income families and individuals’ access to HIV screening, cancer screenings, birth control and other preventative care at its clinics. Hinojosa-Cisneros’s intersectional shift recognizes that the “Innocent Human Life” (8) the Republican Party of Texas purport to protect is not that of the communities represented in Tucson’s banned bibliography.

Hinojosa-Cisneros’s list then is an expansion of the MAS bibliography. She states, “I think there’s still work to be done, a lot of work.” Hinojosa-Cisneros recognizes that as a Chicana her work will be harder, “Do I think we’re louder now, do we have more power? I don’t think so.... Most of the time it’s just easier to stay quiet. Or, when we are talking, nobody’s listening” (28:58). “The List” is a strategy to fracture the silence. In a time of war, it is a call to arms:

How many bombs do I drop
Before you wake up?

How many lies do I expose
Before you speak up?

The end of the list brings
The beginning of uprising

How many books are put to
Death before you declare war? (lines 31-38)

Angela de Hoyos’s 1975 poem “Arise, Chicano!” similarly calls for collective action. She exhorts the farmworkers to declare their oppressions and claim their power,

Arise Chicano!—that divine spark within you
surely says—Wash your wounds
and swathe your agonies.
There is no one to succor you.
You must be your own messiah (lines 26-30)

Where de Hoyos poetics present a traditional gendering of the radical, “The List” calls the Chicana to arise. In doing so, the poet speaks from a Third World Feminist space in which, as Aida Hurtado argues, “women of color are ... like urban guerrillas trained through everyday battle with the state apparatus” (qtd. in Sandoval 2000, 58,9):

My mouth cries out to
the Chicana who will
take her Anzaldúa underground” (lines 42-44)

With Anzaldúa safely in the hands of the Chicana warrior, Hinojosa-Cisneros’s “fingers” then

... take to the pen
For the Native American woman

Who will stash her Silko
Underneath her skirt (lines 45-48)

Leslie Marmon Silko grew up on the Laguna Pueblo reservation in New Mexico. Celebrated as a key figure in Native American writing, Silko is in fact of mixed-ancestry, an identity that shapes her work. Here, her articulation of heritage reflects that of the Borderlands positionality claimed by many Chicana writers:

I suppose at the core of my writing is the attempt to identify what it is to be a half-breed or mixed-blooded person; what it is to grow up neither white nor fully traditional Indian. It is for this reason that I hesitate to say that I am representative of Indian poets or Indian people. (1974, 35)

Silko’s work was included in the MAS program’s bibliography. Upon elimination of the program, the American Indian Library Association [AILA] released a statement expressing “strong disapproval” (2012) of the state’s actions and in support of Silko and fellow writer and Tucson resident, Ofelia Zepeda, of the Tohono O’odham nation. In the statement, the AILA renounces what it calls the “censorship” (2012) of the program and concurrently the community’s “Native voices” (2012), and how the removal of MAS reflects historical and

contemporary oppressions experienced by Indigenous peoples nationally:

The systematic banning of ethnic studies and the discouragement of students learning about their own histories is reminiscent of the US federal government's educational philosophy towards American Indians. As Native Americans, we have witnessed the destructive policies of the federal government in which Indian children were denied knowledge of their own cultures, histories, and languages through the abhorrent practices of the boarding schools and, later, through western educational systems. Because of this history, many Native Americans continue to struggle to maintain the knowledge of our elders and ancestors. (2012)

The Silko poem taught on the MAS program is "Ceremony" taken from her novel of the same name. The poem speaks of the powerful role storytelling plays in the maintenance of ancestral knowledge:

I will tell you something about stories,
[he said]
They aren't just for entertainment.
Don't be fooled
They are all we have, you see,
All we have to fight off illness and death.
You don't have anything
If you don't have the stories.
Their evil is mighty
But it can't stand up to our stories.
So they try to destroy the stories
Let the stories be confused or forgotten
They would like that
They would be happy
Because we would be defenseless then. (1977, 2)

In celebrating storytelling, "Ceremony" clarifies the culturally destructive impetus behind the federal schooling of American Indian children. As K. Tsianina Lomawaima writes:

Using a curriculum that emphasized piety, obedience, and manual labor, these schools aimed to transform the Indian child. The essential transformation would be internal, a matter of Christian belief, nontribal identification, mental discipline, and moral elevation. (1993, 229)

Silko's narrator, in telling a story of stories, is proof that said transformation did not happen. Despite a curriculum designed to strip the children of their Native identities, the tales of "elders and ancestors" (AILA 2012) live on, not "confused or forgotten" (line 12).

The dismantling of the MAS program was an attempt to "destroy the stories" (line 11), for its curriculum was too powerful. Hinojosa's "List" is then a record of the stories, and like

the “I” of “Ceremony”, Hinojosa-Cisneros seeks to ensure that the storytelling of the MAS program is not “confused or forgotten” (Silko line 12). Here then the MAS bibliography is reformed, but with an addition. As the poem closes, Hinojosa-Cisneros adds her name to the roll call of the writers, “Today I declare war on you / Arizona” (lines 48-49). Through the ceremony of her poem, the “uprising” (line 36) has now begun. The poet fires a lyrical warning shot:

Ojala que estes preparado for this [I hope you are ready for this]
 Chicana outlaw armed with libros [books]

And veins (lines 50-52)

Line 50 is the only point in the poem where Hinojosa-Cisneros codeswitches. As a resistance strategy, it emphasizes the poet’s multiple proficiencies, including an ability to negotiate linguistic borders. Hinojosa-Cisneros, therefore “armed” with multiple counter-storytelling strategies, comes to the close of the poem. Here she speaks to the violence of counter-storytelling. The poet is willing to split her skin, a necessary impetus. As Anzaldúa writes, “for images, words, stories to have this transformative power, they must arise from the human body—flesh and bone” (1984, 75). With “veins” open, Hinojosa-Cisneros embodies resistance, embodies the trauma that the work on “The List” represents. That which made the poet “sick” (interview with Massey 2015, 03:54), now becomes part of the process of healing.

CHAPTER FOUR

“BRIDGING THE ABYSS”

DAY THREE: EL PASO

*For women, the need and desire to nurture each other is not pathological but redemptive,
and it is within that knowledge that our real power is rediscovered.*

Audre Lorde

*I drop a rope inside myself and with callused hands covered with blood I pull
on the rope that has my strength on the other end.*

Carolina Monsiváis

La cultura cura

Adam Efren López Librotráficoante Fló-Pez

El Paso and Mexico’s Ciudad Juárez are located together on the world’s longest contiguous international divide. Together the cities constitute one of the largest binational metropolitan areas in the world. This region is on the front lines, literally and metaphorically, of US anti-immigration directives and border militarization. It is also where the globalization of trade crosses borders and where those negatively impacted by said globalization find themselves trapped. In this chapter, I will examine how La Mujer Obrera [LMO], the community organization that hosted the Librotráficoante Caravan on its El Paso stop, operates in this contested space. These are the borderlands; the space of which Anzaldúa writes as “*una herida abierta* [an open wound] where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country—a border culture” (25). La Mujer Obrera are a Chicana and Latina women-led organization who self-identify as “one of the leaders in the struggle against an “undeclared war” on marginalized women workers of Mexican heritage” (“About” LMO). I will begin by examining the background history of the organization; how it was born out of a garment factory strike in the early 1970s to its struggles in the face of the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement a decade later. With NAFTA came heightened border security, from the

increased boots on the ground approach of Operation Hold the Line, to the militarization of current times. I will interrogate the impact of and resistance to the region's historical and contemporary border control directives. Moreover, I will investigate how anti-immigration security directives create dehumanizing markers of foreignness such as "wetback", "illegal," and "diseased." I take my chapter title from a LMO grant application position paper, "La Mujer Obrera and Centro Mayapán: Bridging the Development Abyss for Women Workers on the Border" (2010).¹⁷⁹ In this way, I examine the current development of El Paso and in particular the Chamizal Barrio where LMO is located. Despite the city being built on the backs of the women workers, the "revitalization" of their community creates little space for either their input or their bodies. Lacking in the city's development plans for Chamizal is commitment to, or investment in, the future of four generations of local women whose families have been devastated by global economic "integration" brought by NAFTA. I examine LMO's responses to the threat of dispossession; how its operational framework engages with what Tara J Yosso terms, "community cultural wealth ... an array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression" (2005, 77). I argue that drawing from community cultural wealth as an operational tactic allows LMO to shift the majoritarian narrative of belonging through the voices of women whose autonomy in the face of crippling globalization and hegemony reveal new resistance strategies. These strategies then reframe debates on immigration, reframe the realities of globalization, and reframe the space of women living on, in, and between one of the world's busiest and most-contested borders.

The night that the Librotraficantes were in town, a "Book Bash" was held in LMO's community space, Mercado Mayapan. One of the poets was Griselda Muñoz. I examine the

¹⁷⁹ For an analysis of the environmental impact of sites such as Fort Bliss and ASARCO see: Collins, Timothy W. Martha I Flores, and Sarah E Grineski, "Environmental Injustice in The Paso Del Norte." *Projections 8 MIT Journal of Planning: Justice, Equity and Sustainability*, vol. 8, 2008, pp 156-171.

poem she performed on the evening, “Woman. No Apologies”—how it speaks to an intersectionality of oppressions, and how it celebrates the myriad resistance strategies and strengths of the community of women of La Mujer Obrera. These are borderlands women, whose human capital was once the economic backbone of El Paso, the women who made up 80% of the workforce, 80% of the 35,000 rendered unemployed when NAFTA moved much of the money into US-owned Mexican *maquiladoras*, and El Paso’s textile industry moved out. In the succeeding years, the women have become free trade’s collateral damage. Now, in this border city, where once the population would sit on roof-tops drinking beer and viewing, like Sunday games of football, the Mexican Revolution, the women of La Mujer Obrera are fighting new battles to survive the economic repression of free trade, of low pay and unemployment, and of cultural and social destitution. Yet, they do not only fight against oppression, they build in spite of it. In this respect, I end my final chapter examining a dream. Where the city seeks to revitalize the Chamizal Barrio its way, LMO seek to build an “Oasis in the Desert”—Plan Mayachén —a Community-Led Economic Development Plan designed by Border Women Workers” (2010). If brought to fruition this six-block community hub would be a cultural, research, trading, job creation, and business center dedicated to sustainable representative development. It would also provide affordable housing units and green space. LMO argue that if the city can have a \$64,000,000 baseball stadium, whose ticket prices often prove prohibitive, can it not also have this; a space in the borderlands for all.

¡HUELGA!

Zelene Pineda Suchilt, Librotráfico Rebelené, writes of the caravan’s arrival in El Paso, it “was an amazing feeling to smell the air” she says, “it was the smell of home” (2012). In the initial planning stages of the caravan, El Paso had not been included as an event stop; pressure exerted from locals had persuaded the team otherwise. In the words of the Librotráfico coordinator for the city, Lupe Méndez:

When the caravan was originally proposed, we had only planned to have dinner in El Paso—but when folks there saw “dinner” they lost their shit and TOLD us we had to have a major event there—we of course changed plans and took up making a full on event. They represented well. Best decision ever! (emphasis in original, 2015)¹⁸⁰

The event was hosted by La Mujer Obrera in collaboration with local literary nonprofit BorderSenses and El Paso’s Cinco Puntos Press. The latter had frequently promoted their titles at the Nuestra Palabra run Latino Book and Family Festival in Houston. A local activist who had called for the Librotraficantes to stop was Georgina Cecilia Pérez, Texas State Board of Education member and Librotraficante La Vecina (The Neighbor).¹⁸¹ Like generations of her family before her, Pérez was born and raised in El Paso. Through her organization, Tu Libro, Pérez provides “culturally and historically reflective and responsive instructional materials” for the local community.¹⁸² At the grassroots level, this translates into Pérez gathering new and used books to distribute free to the children of the community. She also works closely with La Mujer Obrera, hosting a number of events at their facilities. On Tu Libros website, Pérez provides resources for educators and promotes many of the books on the MAS program’s bibliography, including José Antonio Burciaga, *Drink Cultura: Chicanismo* Laura Esquivel, *Like Water for Chocolate*, and Paulo Freire *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.¹⁸³ Of her impetus she states:

I don’t need to be in the business of convincing somebody of what history is....My business is making sure people have the opportunity to self-identify. Not be labelled by others....My business is providing culturally and historically responsive literature. And I’ve done this for years and years, before I even knew what was going on in

¹⁸⁰ Jasmine Villa, an El Paso native, came across the caravan schedule on the internet. A blogger on *Latinita* (a site for Latina youth), Villa wrote, “[I] finally looked up the schedule for the Librotraficante movement.... I was anxious to see what events they may bring to EPTX, but then I saw THIS *March 14, 2012:* 7PM Dinner in El Paso. A dinner ... only a dinner?!?! I know you have to eat, but ... anything else...? *But then I saw this:* Thursday, March 15, 2012: Mesilla, New Mexico. 10 AM, Breakfast - Press Conference; Quick Lit Throwdown (sic). I was happy... until I realized I have my internship hours a few hours later and I would hate to come skidding through the door trying to make it on time. Well, according to their volunteer flyer, the EPTX event "might" expand, so I hope they add a few things. FINGERS CROSSED!” 15 Feb. 2012, latinitas.ning.com/profiles/blogs/librotraficante-the-schedule.

¹⁸¹ Lupe Méndez writes, “I gave georgina (sic) that name b/c (sic) every time we were discussing something, she would say Hmmm, oh yeah, you need to talk to blah, blah, blah and then she would give me the local chisme on what was happening in a certain scene in the Chicano world” (Facebook message with Massey, 2016).

¹⁸² For more information on Pérez’s work see, www.tulibro915.com/ and www.georginaPérezsboe.com/

¹⁸³ The full-range of titles that Pérez promotes can be found at, www.tulibro915.com/libros.html

Tucson. (interview with Massey 2014)

For the La Mujer Obrera community, “what was going on in Tucson” had in fact “been going on” in El Paso for decades. Many had witnessed the devastating impact of local and federal politicking. They were critically aware of the type of work required at the grassroots level to address the needs of the most marginalized. John Byrd, Cinco Puntos press owner and publisher, argues:

We’re so far removed from the traditional centers of political power, but yet we’re living through those policies created there. We can see the street-level effects of, say, U.S. immigration policy. So it’s natural for us to be angry and to want to speak to it—and to also want to offer suggestions for ways those policies could be fixed that would actually help El Paso and help our border communities.

In the early 1970s, at the height of the Chicano Movement, the “anger” of which Byrd speaks could be seen in the radical organizing that swept the city. A contingent of the Brown Berets protesting federal immigration policy picketed El Paso’s Immigration and Naturalization Service [INS] office. The Mexican American Youth Association [MAYA], fought for political representation and equitable housing, and at The University of Texas at El Paso [UTEP], Chicano students pushed for culturally responsive education.¹⁸⁴ As Ramon Rentería argues, the Chicano Studies program at UTEP was “born out of conflict” (2010). Felipe de Ortego y Gasca, the programs Founding Director explains that in 1970 “students had put the university and Texas on notice that the good ol’ boy way of doing business with mejicanos was headed for the scrap-heap of history (qtd. in Rentería 2010). La Mujer Obrera [LMO] was founded a decade later,¹⁸⁵ when El Paso’s garment industry was at its height and Chicanx workers were effectively imprisoned in working poverty.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁴ See Benjamin Marquez, *Power and Politics in a Chicano Barrio: A Study of Mobilization Efforts and Community Power in El Paso*. Lanham, 1985.

¹⁸⁵ The organization’s original name was Centro de Obrero Fronterizo.

¹⁸⁶ For a study of bottom-up immigrant Latino labor organizing, see Jennifer Gordon’s *Suburban Sweatshops: The Fight for Immigrant Rights*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005. For a study of Mexican origin workers’ independent organizations in Texas see, Emilio Zamora’s *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas*. Texas A&M UP: College Station, 1995. Maria Gutierrez de Soldatenko’s “ILGWU Labor Organizers: Chicana and Latina Leadership in the Los Angeles Garment Industry” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, vol. 23, no.

From its beginnings, LMO quickly became a vital center of support for many of the region's border-workers. Many of whom commuted daily from Ciudad Juárez, and were struggling under subminimum wages and the substandard working conditions in El Paso's garment factories. In 1986, with Mexico signing the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), many of the cities small subcontracted garment factories suffered major financial losses, with the impact of this felt the most sharply by said workers. To stave off debt, businesses began to force the majority female employees to work for no pay, or to lose hours; workers who had once kept the city and its industry in profit as the women sewed iconic "Made in America" labels onto blue jeans. There were also many instances of factories shutting down operations overnight, providing no compensatory wages, and giving no closure notice. In response, members of LMO members chained themselves to their machines and to the factory fences, and went on hunger strike. They had some success. In 1990, following Department of Labor investigation, legislation was passed which made unpaid wages a felony rather than what it had been, a misdemeanor.¹⁸⁷ For the women of La Mujer Obrera, however, this was just in a series of battles. They had been fighting the debilitating conditions of their employment since the garment trade had exploded in El Paso in the 1950s. Many had made up 85% of the Farah Manufacturing Company workforce who went out on strike from 1972 to 1974, calling for union representation by the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACWA) (Ruiz and Korrol 2006). As Rodolfo F. Acuña, writes in *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*, a key-text on the MAS program's bibliography, "The backbone of the strike were the women.... The high point of the strike had been the leadership of the Chicana workers" (2000, 401).

1, 2002, pp. 46-66; Naples Nancy A. and Manisha Desai. Eds. *Women's Activism and Globalization: Linking Local Struggles and Transnational Politics*. Routledge, 2002.

¹⁸⁷ For more on the early organizing of La Mujer Obrera, see Ortiz, Victor M. "Latinas on the Border: The Common Ground of Economic Displacement and Breakthroughs" *Gender's Place: Feminist Anthropologies of Latin America*, edited by Lessie Jo Frazier, Janise Hurtig, & Rosario Montoya del Solar, Palgrave Macmillan: New York, pp. 197-215. Also, Staudt, Kathleen, "La Mujer Obrera (1981-)" *Latinas in the United States: A Historical Encyclopedia Volume I*, Ed. Vicky L. Ruiz. Indiana University Press, 2006. Zapata, Joel "La Mujer Obrera of El Paso" *The Handbook of Texas*. TSHA Texas State Historical Association, Web. 11. Mar. 20.14.

Chicanas had not only been on the frontline of the strike but had toiled in the factories on the frontline of repressive working conditions, conditions that had sought control their labor and their bodies. They were pressured to take birth-control, provided by the company on-site, and if they did become pregnant there was no maternity pay; when, and if, the women returned to work, for this was not an automatic right, they would lose all of their seniority and start back in a new-entrant position with new-entrant wages (Coyle, Honig and Hershatter 2014). This particular set of experiences gave the women critical insight into the structures of power that sought to control migrant and low-income labor. As articulated by one Chicana Farah striker:

I believe in fighting for our rights, and for women's rights....When I walked out of that company way back then, it was like I had taken a weight off my back. And I began to realize, "Why did I put up with it all these years? Why didn't I try for something else?" Now I want to stay here and help people to help themselves. (qtd. in Coyle, Honig, and Hershatter 2014)

A number of the women who stayed in El Paso would go on to form the basis of the organizing of La Mujer Obrera. Their desire to stay would become more complex as the beginning of the 1990s brought with it new challenges. Burgeoning globalization opened doors for trade, but also brought mobility restrictions for the most marginalized of workers. The impact on socioeconomic opportunities for LMO's membership was devastating, for as Mary Pat Brady argues, "Curtailing women's mobility makes it more difficult for them to take advantage of the economic opportunities that shape spatial production and to challenge systems of social reproduction" (2003, 134). With the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement [NAFTA] in 1994, many who had fought for labor justice in the 1980s found their communities locked once again into low-paid jobs toiling under substandard working conditions.

In June 1997, a group from La Mujer Obrera blocked all traffic on the Ysleta-Saragoza Bridge in an attempt to draw attention to the devastating impact NAFTA was having on borderlands communities and concurrently their families and communities across the Americas. For, as author on the MAS bibliography, Dagoberto Gilb writes, "[T]hey are the

people who are now driven here” (2008), the people dispossessed by an agreement that established one of the largest free-trade zones in the world. On August 17, 2007, LMO held a second protest on the same bridge, this time blocking commercial traffic from crossing into El Paso. They carried placards reading “Los Planes De Desarrollo Economico no incluyen los trabajadores” [The Economic Development Plans don’t include the workers], whilst chanting, “¡Justicia para las trabajadoras!” [Justice for the woman workers!], and “¡NAFTA entiende, las mujeres se defiende!” [NAFTA understand; the women will defend themselves!] (“La Mujer Obrera Protest”). In his remarks at the time of its signing, then US President Bill Clinton had asserted that the agreement’s implementation would “tear down trade barriers” (*Public Papers* 1994, 2140). The result of which would be “an economic order in the world that will promote more growth, more equality, better preservation of the environment, and a greater possibility of world peace” (2140). Imbued with decades of contesting toxic working conditions, La Mujer Obrera understands that this “order” does not extend to all. As Elvia R. Arriola writes:

The only reference to labor interests appears in the Preamble to NAFTA, in which the parties to the agreement (Canada, Mexico and the United States) resolve to “protect, enhance, and enforce basic workers’ rights.” In contrast, the agreement, which covers in detail the rights and duties of the parties on matters of cross-border trade, treatment of investors, intellectual property rights, and other technical barriers to trade, has an entire part (Chap.11) devoted to investors’ rights. (59, n59)

These investors’ rights allow multinational corporations to sue, though the World Bank, local and national governments who institute regulations that the corporates see as detrimental to their ability to do business. By 2014, this investor-to-state dispute settlement system (ISDS) had cost Mexico \$200,000,000 in penalties (Pérez-Rocha and Drew, 2014). Importantly, under the US constitution, corporations are endowed, through the 14th Amendment, with the rights of legal personhood, with equal protection of the law, with citizenship. Moreover, NAFTA’s Article 201, in defining terminology, states, “person means a natural person or an enterprise”,

and “person of a Party means a national, or an enterprise of a Party” (4).¹⁸⁸ In this respect, the United States new corporate frontiersmen have emerged as cyborgs from what Frederick Jackson Turner saw as the “crucible of the frontier” (1921, 3). I take my definition of cyborg as that employed by Grahame Thompson as “an entity that shares properties of both synthetic mechanical operationality (thingness) and properties of humanness (personhood)” (2012, 89). Their “composite nationality” has changed very little from those whom Turner saw as representative of the new nation. For corporate NAFTA is predominantly both white and male. The 2014 Corporate Diversity Survey, undertaken by the office of US Senator Robert Menendez (D-N.J.), revealed that of the participating sixty-nine Fortune 100 companies 63 % of the members of their boards of directors were white men; 69% of senior executives were white men; 92% of procurement dollars spent by these companies went to white male suppliers, and 98% procured professional services from white male business owners. 221 years after Turner wrote, “Another wave rolls on. The men of capital and enterprise come” (emphasis mine, 13), NAFTA’s “wave” is composed of corporate cyborgs prepared to “breach distant ramparts” (Clinton 3) in the expansion of the frontiers of free trade, an expansion unparalleled in its control of the biopolitics of the US Mexico border.

HOLD THE LINE

In November 2010, eleven members La Mujer Obrera travelled to Washington DC to hold ten-day hunger-strike in front of the White House. They sought to call the attention of the Obama administration to the crippling poverty in the border region. Marta Gano was one of those taking part. Holding a sign reading, “Stand Against Violence, Poverty, and Unemployment”, she explains, “One of the reasons I am here today is to ask for investment in the border region, because it is one of the poorest areas in the nation. We are also asking for investment in some

¹⁸⁸ US Code § 1 states, “the words “person” and “whoever” include corporations, companies, associations, firms, partnerships, societies, and joint stock companies, as well as individuals.” See, uscode.house.gov/.

projects that we have planned for unemployed women” (“Gandhi Brigade News” 2010, 0:39). There was investment in the region, but it was that which overshadowed the crippling poverty, in certain places literally. For where LMO looked for economic support for its communities, what had instead been implemented were billion-dollar border security programs. In an interview at the hunger strike, Rubi Orozco, La Mujer Obrera’s press liaison, spoke of the organization’s interpretation of state economic and security interventions on the border:

We believe border security needs to be balanced. Right now, it’s focused on a militarized approach based on fears. We have money coming to [the] border, building walls and more federal agents. Those are Band-Aids. The root causes of instability need to be tackled—(sic), which is impoverishment on both sides of the border. If you want genuine security, you need genuine economic security. (Arrieta)

At the signing of NAFTA, Clinton declared, “every senior military officer with whom I spoke about NAFTA was perhaps—they were as a group perhaps the most intensely supportive of any group I spoke with” (*Public Papers* 1993, 2140). Clinton’s reasoning was that US military leaders “knew we could not afford to turn away from our leadership responsibilities and our constructive involvement in the world” (2140). This “constructive involvement” would take the form of military strategizing being applied to the open borders of trade, resulting in US protectionism at its very worst. As Charles Derber argues of what he terms the “American Umpire” system, its politics not only take the form of “exploitative relationship[s] between the First and Third Worlds...[But] a globalizing military system dominated by the United States polices the globalization game with extreme force” (82); a force none-so extreme as that put into operation on the US-Mexico border.

In 1993, whilst the terms of NAFTA were still in the negotiation stages, the El Paso sector of the US Border Patrol, under its then head, Silvestre “Silver” Reyes, convinced the Immigration and Naturalization Service [INS] to introduce Operation Hold the Line.¹⁸⁹ This

¹⁸⁹ Operation Hold the Line had been originally been called Operation Blockade, but the initiative underwent a name-change three weeks into implementation as “blockade” was seen to be too harsh of a term. See Rodrigo Nieto-Gomez, “Walls, Sensors and Drones: Technology and Surveillance on the US-Mexico Border.” *Borders, Fences and Walls: State of Insecurity?*, Border Region Series, edited by Elisabeth Vallet, Farnham, 2014.

border protection initiative took place along a twenty-mile stretch between El Paso and Juárez, with boots on the ground increased in an attempt to deter northbound undocumented crossers. Border Patrol officers and four-hundred vehicles laid siege for an initial period of two weeks. Washington criticized the operation, specifically the INS who argued that they had been caught off-guard. The operation also fell afoul of the NAFTA negotiators, who were concerned that Reyes' tactics could upset the Mexican government and derail the agreement. However, as Timothy J. Dunn argues in *Blockading the Border and Human Rights*, Reyes' initiative "changed the paradigm of border-immigration reinforcement, becoming the model for a remaking of the Border Patrol's strategy and efforts border-wide" (2009, iv). At the time of its inception, Hold the Line proved relatively successful in and around El Paso, both in terms of its public reception and due to a reported relatable decrease in urban crime. Reyes in fact represents the complexities of immigration narratives and the sociopolitical diversity of Latinx communities. He is a Democrat and was the Border Patrol's first Latinx sector chief. His tough immigration stance proved popular. Reyes was elected to the US House of Representatives in 1997 by a predominantly Latinx and Democrat voter base in El Paso.¹⁹⁰ In Ciudad Juárez, however, the response was far from favorable. *Presidente municipal* [mayor] of Juárez, Francisco Villarreal, argued that not only had US authorities acted unilaterally in the implementation of Operation Hold the Line, but that the persistent narrative of Mexican criminality, even imposed upon documented border-crossers, whitewashed and distorted the realities of border life:

You can't associate crime with Mexican crossers. Whether it's true or not. But if even if it is true, you don't bring it up publicly! Nobody can say that Mexican delinquents go to El Paso. Why don't we talk about the American delinquents who come over here to get drunk before going home? Because I have no reason to say it. I have to see what can be done about it first. At three o'clock in the morning, the people coming out of the bars are pure Americans—children and adolescents that come over here just to raise hell. Why should I broadcast that? I need to call across the border to my counterpart to

¹⁹⁰ See, "Silvestre Reyes." *Hispanic Americans in Congress, 1822-2012*. Prepared under the direction of the Committee on House Administration by the Office of the Historian and the Office of the Clerk, US House of Representatives, Government Printing Office, 2013. Also, history.house.gov/People/Detail/20297.

see what we can do about it.” (qtd. in Bean 1994)

Villarreal’s response here speaks to a different kind of trade agreement, one that if instituted may not yield the anticipated monetary wealth of NAFTA but with its calls for the opening of dialog would allow for the trading of solutions to the challenges of the borderlands, rather than the one-sided closing of doors. In *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Anzaldúa speaks to this agreement of honesty when she asks

white society ... to make public restitution....To say that you are afraid of us, that to put distance between us, you wear the mask of contempt. Admit that Mexico is your double, that she exists in the shadow of this country, that we are irrevocably tied to her. Gringo, accept the doppelganger in your psyche. By taking back your collective shadow the intracultural split will heal. And finally, tell us what you need from us (2007, 107-108).

In 1993, rather than telling Mexico what they needed from her, the El Paso Border Patrol proposed the building of a wall dividing Sunland Park, New Mexico, from the Juárez colonia of Anapra, an area 10 miles to the west of El Paso; the Mexican Press dubbed the venture “the border’s own Berlin Wall” (Bean). In the protection of such, the Border Patrol, as of 2019, employs the use of 10 border drones, three-hundred watchtowers, 21,000 agents, a “virtual wall” of technological infrastructure, and fencing around urban areas spanning 651 miles from the state of California to Texas (ACLU 2013, Schroeder 2014). The Trump administration seeks to have 500 further miles of “wall” erected by the end of 2021. This tightening of border security for the transnational economy does not concurrently extend to maintaining safe spaces for those living in states of vulnerability. For example, maquiladoras that operate in the Mexican borderlands producing US goods for the US market benefit from increase high-profits and minimal taxation whilst employing for their business backbone cheap labor. Many of the latter being those dispossessed following the reform of Article 27 of the Mexican constitution. The revocation of which dismantled the communal ejido system bringing sweeping privatization and concurrent poverty. Sixty percent of maquiladora workers are women, with the majority under twenty years of age, and of these a number as young as twelve. They toil

for crippling low wages in brutal and toxic working conditions, surrounded by and living in hazardous environmental swamps. As Edmé Dominguez et al. report, “Most workers live in poor housing in slum areas that lack infrastructure, where schools and hospitals are quite scarce, and where drug related violence is quite common” (2010, 192).¹⁹¹ The little health care that is available, can often take the form of enforced birth control. The region has become a site of both mass profit and mass femicide; a site of the rape, torture and murder of desperate young women from across Latin America who seek out the *maquilas* in the hope of work, freedom, and a brighter future.¹⁹²

No one knows the true numbers of those whose brutalized bodies have been found, or still lie, in the desert landscape on the outskirts of the border-city of Ciudad Juárez. Alicia Gaspar de Alba writes, “The victims are known colloquially as “*las inditas del sur*,” the little Indian girls from the south of Mexico—poor dark-skinned, and indigenous looking—who have arrived alone and disenfranchised in Ciudad Juárez to work at a twin plant *maquiladora* and earn dollars to send home” (2010, 1). The journeys of many of these young women who live and die alone in the borderlands are mirrored in the experiences of multiple communities of the displaced; as La Mujer Obrera argue:

The violence in Ciudad Juárez also is having a profound impact on the women workers and their families on the border. Nearly a dozen other members/employees of the

¹⁹¹ For an overview of studies linking migration and the maquiladoras see, Michal Kohout, “The Maquiladora Industry and Migration in Mexico: A Survey of Literature”, *Geography Compass*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2009, pp. 135–153. For a study of the maquiladoras impact on and importance to US Mexico border economies, see Lucinda Vargas, *Maquiladoras: Impact on Texas Border Cities*, Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, June 2001, and Eduardo Saucedo et al., *The Impact of the Maquiladora Industry on U.S. Border Cities. Working Paper 1107*. Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, May 2011.

¹⁹²A number of scholarly works have been published linking the femicides to the conditions of women’s employment in the US Mexico borderlands, these include, Sergio González Rodríguez’ *The Femicide Machine*. Semiotext(e): Los Angeles, 2012, Guadalupe Taylor “The Abject Bodies of the Maquiladora Female Workers on a Globalized Border”, *Race, Gender & Class*, Vol. 17, No. 3/4, *Race, Gender & Class 2010 Conference*, pp. 349-363, and Melissa W. Wright, “The Dialectics of Still Life: Murder, Women, and Maquiladoras”, edited by Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, DUP, 2001. For first hand-accounts of life in the maquiladoras see Devon G. Peña’s, *The Terror of the Machine: Technology, Work, Gender, and Ecology on the U.S—Mexico Border*, CMAS: Austin, 1997, and Norma Iglesias Prieto, *Beautiful Flowers of the Maquiladora: Life Histories of Women Workers in Tijuana*. UT Press, 1997. For atheistic and filmic responses to the femicides throughout the borderlands see Marietta Messmer, “Transfrontera Crimes: Representations of the Juárez Femicides in Recent Fictional and Non-Fictional Accounts”, *American Studies Journal*, no. 57, 2012. Web. 21 Oct. 2016, and “Maquilapolis: City of Factories” Directed by Vicky Funari, Sergio De La Torre, Independent Television Service (ITVS), 2006.

organization have lost one or more family members to the violence in the past few years. Yet El Paso is touted as one of the safest communities in the United States, and therefore the trauma and suffering of the women workers and their families is ignored and made invisible (“La Mujer Obrera and Centro Mayapán”, 3).

Activists work tirelessly to reveal and combat gendered violence of the region, but as border scholar Kathleen Staudt reveals, “the voices against violence go unheard in the chambers of power that determine border security policy” (2009, 3). The violence also goes unseen by the corporations who have continued to flock into the region, even in the years when murder rates and cartel wars have escalated (Staudt and Méndez 2015). In a Bloomberg Business Week report, *US Companies Are Still Rushing to Juárez*, Francisco Uranga, Foxconn chief business operations officer for Latin America, commented on the drug cartels: “They don't bother us. We don't bother them” (Power 2010). In the US Mexico borderlands, what lies between Uranga’s narrative of the “us” and the “them” is where globalization feeds. It is in this, to use Anzaldúa’s words “open wound” where Sonia Saldívar Hull argues that NAFTA “has served as one more legally sanctioned economic mode to exploit female labor on the US and Mexican sides of the border” (2000, 107). It is also, where the La Mujer Obrera organization asks: “In the midst of globalization, how do we, as women and as workers, defend our rights and build sustainable communities rooted in justice and human dignity?” (“Mission”). For whilst NAFTA has opened up transnational space for free trade and pathways to neoliberal capitalist globalization, for marginalized communities in the US-Mexico borderlands the accessibility of space, and the concurrent possibilities to claim place requires constant negotiations with power. As Doreen Massey argues, “[s]pace can never be that completed simultaneity in which all interconnections have been established” (2005, 11), using this framework, globalization conversely operates by staking a “Gold Rush” claim to transnational space, with the evidence of completed ownership being the amount of profit multinationals “pan” from the land. What is missing from this corporate land-grab, as Massey insists, is that “imagination of globalization as a historical queue does not recognize the simultaneous coexistence of other histories with

characteristics that are distinct (which does not imply unconnected) and futures which may potentially may be so too” (11); there are then no countries and cultures who can, and will, resist globalization, there are only those who have yet to “follow the path along which the capitalist West has lead” (5). In 1994, the US Border Patrol’s new national strategy, “Operation Gatekeeper” initiated a spatial diversion to be followed, “spatial” here as viewed by Massey as, “an ever-shifting social geometry of power and significance” (3), with the creation of a migrant corridor that in the protection of the fruits of free-trade would lead would-be border crossers away from the staked claims of the West, and towards critical extinction.

The purpose of the Border Patrol’s initiative, “prevention through deterrence” (US Border Patrol 1994, 6), was to restrict migrant movement by cutting off access to urban areas, areas seen as offering “accessibility to roads, rail lines, airports and bus routes to the interior of the country” (2). Under the plan, well-traversed border-crossing locations in California and Texas became heavily fortified, cutting off access to “safe” known routes and thus creating a “funnel effect”, pushing migrants into hazardous areas, such as Arizona’s Sonoran Desert where crossing-conditions are well known to be extreme. The Border Patrol’s 1994 initiative made clear their strategy’s likely outcome: “Illegal entrants crossing through remote, uninhabited expanses of land and sea along the border can find themselves in mortal danger” (2). Speaking in 2009, the former INS Commissioner under the Clinton Administration, and signer of the “Border National Strategic Plan for 1994 and Beyond,” Doris Meissner, admitted, “deaths continue to loom as a tragic byproduct of border enforcement” (qtd. in Jiménez 2009, 73). Since the introduction of the “funnel effect” the numbers of people crossing has greatly decreased, however, concurrent numbers of migrant deaths have increased exponentially, with Maria Jiménez reporting that “the risk of dying was 1.5 times higher in 2009 than in 2004 and 17 times greater than in 1998” (2009, 14). In 2006, the Binational Migration Institute, part of the Mexican American Studies & Research Center at the University of Arizona, published the results of a study on the interconnectivity of the “funnel effect” and migrant deaths in the US

Border Patrol's Tucson sector. Their results show that the intentional redirection policies of the Border Patrol, are "indeed the primary structural cause of death of thousands of North American, Central American, and South American unauthorized men, women, and children who have died while trying to enter the US" (Rubio-Goldsmith, McCormick, Martínez, Duarte 2006, 2). The results of the study also go on to show that there "has been a statistically significant increase in such deaths due to exposure to the elements (especially heat-related deaths) and a decrease in deaths due to all other causes" (3). In 1994, the year that the Border Patrol Strategy was introduced, fourteen migrant deaths were reported in Arizona, an average figure taking into account the preceding years. As the policy was rolled-out and greater militarization implemented, the figure in 2000 had jumped to 90, the following year, 140 deaths were recorded, and in 2003, it had risen to 163. By 2012, the remains of 168 migrants were found in the Sonoran Desert, a human-rights crisis that continues to be ignored by all but the state medical examiners and human rights groups who tally the figures, and gather the remains, and the little belongings that the most desperate of people leave behind (Shivone).

BORDER BREAKOUT/OUTBREAK

El Paso's official website reads, "The mission of the International Bridges Department is to provide cross-border mobility ... [for] residents, businesses, and visitors so that they can participate in the vitality of the greater Paso Del Norte region" (City of El Paso). There are five international points of entry, the newest opening in 2016, five bridges with a combined annual crossing of twenty-three million people per year and one-point-five billion-dollars' worth of goods (Dept. of Homeland Security [DHS] 2016). Five bridges, in the words of a Department of Homeland Security press-release, "essential for maintaining and enhancing North American competitiveness in a globalized world" (2016). The "vitality" of the Paso Del Norte region caters for this "globalized world", with a state university, thirteen golf courses, multiple vineyards, wineries, a new downtown shopping center, a medical school, and a \$64,000,000

baseball stadium; spaces that Hilda Villegas, La Mujer Obrera's Media Center Coordinator, argues, "we don't see ourselves in" (Rebirth Films 2007).

In the maintenance of North American "competitiveness" and regional "vitality", the bridges operate as part of what Mary Pat Brady terms, "an abjection machine—transforming people into "aliens", "illegals", "wetbacks" or "undocumented" and therefore rendering them unintelligible (and unintelligent), ontologically impossible, outside the real and the human" (2003, 50). It is within this "complex system with multiple and diverse nodes of production and reproduction" (51) that *fronterizas*, such as the women of La Mujer Obrera, have long resisted being transformed by the "machine". One act of resistance, that in a little-known history of female civil "disobedience", took place in the midst of the Mexican Revolution at the very site of the state transformation of the abject. In 1892, the Santa Fe bridge was built (renamed the International Bridge in 1967), the second bridge to link El Paso with Ciudad Juárez. Due to the age of the bridge, occasional refitting has been required, one of the changes that has been made was the implementation of temporary barriers at its middle to contend with, in the words of David D. Arreola in his study of Mexican border cities, "the daily flood tide of illegal aliens" (191). In 1917, workers crossing the border on the Santa Fe Bridge from Juárez were seen as a health threat. This was due to a typhus outbreak in Los Angeles that was wholly associated with the city's Mexican community and Mexican migrant workers; leading to the rise of the persistent trope of contaminated brown bodies migrating into the Southwest and posing a threat to the security of the nation's health. As Natalia Molina argues, in her examination of the experiences of immigrant communities in L.A. in the late-nineteenth, early-twentieth century, "Race not symptoms, become shorthand for "disease carrier"" (Molina 2006, 70). In El Paso in 1917, the city's mayor, Tom Lea Sr., sent a telegram to the United States surgeon general, which read in part, "Hundreds (sic) thousands dirty lousey (sic) destitute Mexicans arriving at El Paso daily will undoubtedly bring and spread typhus" (Johnson 2013). Lea asked for the United States Public Health Service (US-PHS) to set up

quarantine facilities on the Santa Fe Bridge, a request at the time considered extreme. The US-P.H.S. did however set up disinfection stations, where before being allowed to enter the US, Mexican workers were stripped-naked, bathed in kerosene and vinegar, checked for lice, sprayed with disinfectants, and then promptly shaved. For one worker this humiliating ritual was a step too far. Carmelita Torres, a 17-year old *juárense*, who worked in El Paso as a house cleaner, refused to get off the trolley car she was travelling on to be subjected to disinfection. Carmelita persuaded thirty other women to do the same. The protestors' numbers rapidly swelled into the thousands, disrupting the "delousing" process, overturning cars, and blocking trolley lines running across the bridge. What later became known as "The Bath Riots" lasted for three days, at which time it was quashed by both US and Mexican troops and Carmelita was arrested. The border disinfection policy continued for four more decades however, with various pesticides, D.D.T., and Zyklon-B widely used (Romo 2005). What also continued, and developed well past the point when the disinfection processes stopped, was the implication that brown bodies, and not the chemicals used upon them, were hazardous to the well-being of the nation. As Molina asserts:

Public health as a racializing discourse worked in tandem with other institutions to both racialize and criminalize Mexicans. The fortification of the border and the development of the border patrol were among the most significant racializing processes and institutions that developed at the same time. (2006, 120)

In July 2014, with echoes of El Paso's mayor back in 1917, Georgia Republican and medical doctor, Phil Gingrey, wrote to Dr. Thomas Frieden, director of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), expressing his concern over the rising number of children from across Latin America who were arriving at the United States southern border,

... reports of illegal migrants carrying deadly diseases such as swine flu, dengue fever, Ebola virus and tuberculosis are particularly concerning. Many of the children who are coming across the border also lack basic vaccinations such as those to prevent chicken pox or measles. This makes those Americans that are not vaccinated—and especially young children and the elderly—particularly susceptible ... (Qtd. in Haslan 2016, 216)

There is no discussion here of why Americans are not vaccinated, where the gaps-in-the-fence

of US healthcare lie, instead the drive to secure the border continues. In the first four decades of the twentieth century, this was at the expense of the health of those being fumigated with toxic chemicals, and in the second decade of the twenty-first century, at the expense of the international community's youngest and most vulnerable citizens. Where El Paso's mayor got a disinfection station to deal with his "Mexican problem", Gingrey's arguments make up the same drive to "cleanse" the United States of a perceived threat from the unsanitary of the Americas. This time a drive to not "simply" fortify a bridge, but to instead increase the fortification of a border; a border system, as Brady argues, "whose ends and methods and effects are far more caught up in the swirl of histories, temporalities, and narratives than any simple glance would suggest" (2003, 52). Said system reaches deep into the sociopolitical landscape of the United States.

Doreen Massey asserts that there are multiplicitous ways for individuals and social groups to move, to flow, and to interconnect. It is power "in relation *to* flows and movement" that is of key importance, as "some people are more in charge of it than others; some initiate flows and movement, others don't; some are more on the receiving end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it" (emphasis author 149). In El Paso, La Mujer Obrera operates against, and in spite of, this imprisonment. The LMO complex is located in the Chamizal barrio, identified in 2008 by the US Federal Reserve as being one of the most impoverished neighborhoods in the country.¹⁹³ That same year, The City of El Paso released its *Chamizal Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy*, a strategy "to promote the long-term and sustainable physical, economic and social revitalization of the neighborhood" (2008, 2); in other words, its "fumigation." The study's demographic analysis reveals that the City is 66.6% Latinx, where the Chamizal is 96.9%; and for 92.8% of the households in the Chamizal, Spanish is spoken at

¹⁹³ See: "The Enduring Challenge of Concentrated Poverty in America: Case Studies from Communities Across the US" *A Joint Project of the Community Affairs Offices of the Federal Reserve System and The Metropolitan Policy Program at The Brookings Institution*. The Federal Reserve System and the Brookings Institution, 2008.

home. The analysis also highlights the income inequality between the neighborhood and the rest of the city—41.4% of households in the neighborhood take home 10,000 dollars a year, whilst in the City of El Paso this income percentage is revealed at 39%. What is interesting about this statistic is that even though residents of the Chamizal earn less than City residents, their rate of unemployment is lower, at 9.4% to 11.1%. The City of El Paso’s narrative on this disparity is that “[i]t is crucial that [the Chamizal] population explore avenues for higher educational attainment in order to join the workforce with the skills and knowledge necessary to find gainful employment” (2). The City’s neoliberal “diagnosis” dismisses the community’s current “skills and knowledge” for the development of the neighborhood, and disregards the increase in the low-wage service jobs that a quarter of Chamizal’s residents are employed in.¹⁹⁴ The onus is also placed on residents to improve their situation thereby erasing the historical social and political structural forces that determine destitution for Mexican and Chicana communities living in the US Mexico borderlands. David Harvey argues that such diagnoses provide a colonial rationale for poverty. He states:

If conditions among the lower classes deteriorated, it was because they failed for personal and cultural reasons to enhance their own human capital, through education, the acquisition of a protestant work ethic, and submission to work discipline and flexibility. In short, problems arose because of the lack of competitive strength or because of personal, cultural, and political failings. In a Spencerian world, the argument went, only the fittest should and do survive. (2006, 34)

The City of El Paso’s narrative fails to take into account that the “avenues” of “attainment” seen as not followed by Chamizal’s populace, are avenues blocked by the collapse of industry; that those seen as the “fittest” for low-paid garment work, are now the very same fighting to survive the “revitalization” of communities once encouraged for their human capital. In the words of Andrade:

This neighborhood was really developed around the factories, the garment factories.

¹⁹⁴ See: “Occupational Employment and Wages in El Paso, May 2015” *News Release—Bureau of Labor Statistics: US Department of Labor*. Southwest Information Office: Dallas, Texas. 24 Jun. 2016, and Cañas, Jesus, Robert W. Gilmer Charles James “Crossroads. Economic Trends in the Southwest: Low-Wage Occupations Remain a Hallmark of El Paso Economy”. *Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas—El Paso Branch*. Issue 1. 2007.

This was the garment district. Verdad? So when ... the factories don't need us, there's no need for our neighborhoods anymore. We don't serve a purpose anymore and therefore all these plans. Verdad? We're just leftover, and our neighborhoods are not necessary. Once the factories were gone that was the only infrastructure that existed for Mexican women. That was it. And so when it's gone, there's no library, no book stores, no but the locals schools were still churning out factory workers, laborers, when the factories leave....They're still turning us out....Except there's nowhere to go. (interview with Massey 2015)

Persistent poverty, institutional racism, and neocolonial notions of success and development, provide fertile ground for social Darwinist attitudes to thrive, and, as Harvey asserts, enable the elite to embed their positions, which in turn reproduces the manipulation of narratives of success and failure (34). This is evident in the “Background and Process” section of the City of El Paso’s strategy report, where the La Mujer Obrera neighborhood is viewed as a historical defect:

Chamizal has often been the first stop for recent immigrants on their way to achieving their American dream. The needs of the neighborhood have always been many. Many social service providers made their home in the neighborhood over the years. Project Vida, La Mujer Obrera, Queen of Peace Convent, Alcoholics Anonymous, and others are working toward alleviating the conditions in the neighborhood. (The City of El Paso 2008, 7)

This narrative renders the neighborhood as historically “needy”, and as bleak and blighted by layers and levels of self-inflicted abuse. Moreover, as the Chamizal is 96.9% Latinx, the report insists upon a critical conclusion that the reason that “[t]he needs of the neighborhood have always been many” must be due to the Chamizal’s ethnic makeup. This “failed” community then, demographically Latinx, “the first stop for recent immigrants”, fulfills right-wing assertions that it “only makes common sense ... they’re sending us not the right people” (Trump 2015). The tactics here of both the City of El Paso and Donald Trump can be seen as forming part of the same power-play of neoliberal “crisis creation”, where rhetorical and financial manipulation saves that which it has destroyed, through a process Harvey terms “accumulation by dispossession” (2003, 137). El Paso, in leaping to the defense of a critically impoverished neighborhood, and the Presidential candidate, in leaping to defend a critically impoverished border, reproduce dominant ideology and in doing so recreate rationale for state

intervention and the development of “needy” space—the construction of Donald Trump’s wall and the “revitalization” of the Chamizal.

Chamizal lies directly to the East of downtown El Paso. In 2006, two years before the revitalization strategy, El Paso’s city council, as part of its downtown development drive, commissioned a \$100,000 branding study from a company called Glass Beach. Upon completion, the study to “[d]evelop a comprehensive branding and messaging platform” (2) was leaked to the press, and reveals prevailing attitudes on the character of the city held by business interests and local officials seeking to repackage downtown with language such as, “Dirty / Old West / Indifferent / Crime / Border Town” (10). The “Personality Imagery” used to represent this “Old West” is that of an “Old Cowboy”, with accompanying photograph of an elderly individual in a cowboy hat, and accompanying keywords: “Gritty / Dirty / Lazy / Speak Spanish”, and “Uneducated” (11). The desired “New West”, on the other hand is, “Educated / Entrepreneurial / Bi-lingual”, and accompanies images of Texan, Matthew McConaughey, and Madrilena, Penelope Cruz. As Lorena Andrade, La Mujer Obrera’s director, explains it, “The El Paso We Don’t Want’ ... it’s “Dirty Mexican”, and it’s a Mexican with a hat. And, “The El Paso We Do Want” and it’s like modern” (interview with Massey 2015). In 2013, Mayor of El Paso, John Cook, stepped down after a fourteen-year term of office. Cook, the city official who was deemed to have “presided over the modern renaissance” (Crowder 2013) of the city, was asked in an interview why the development of downtown had been such a key strategy, in response Cook commented, “[A] downtown is a city’s living room and you do have to keep the living room neat” (qtd. in Crowder).

The *Chamizal Revitalization Strategy* was part of a package of directives that grew from what became known as “The Plan”, launched in 2006¹⁹⁵ by city officials and the Paso Del Norte

¹⁹⁵ See: “Liveable City Sustainability Plan: El Paso Texas” *Office of Resilience and Sustainability*. City of El Paso. 2009. Web. 11 May. 2014. / “Plan El Paso: A Policy Guide for El Paso for the next 25 years and beyond. “City of El Paso, Texas—Comprehensive Plan. City of El Paso Planning and Inspections Department. Adopted 6 Mar. 2012. Web. 12. April. 2016.

Group, a notoriously secretive consortium of regional business elite. Speaking at the time of the unveiling of the project, Stuart Blaugrund, a Dallas lawyer representing a number of downtown businesses, commented, that it was at its core an historical “land grab” (Welsome 2007). The acquisition of land through the implementation of the redevelopment plan would mean the loss of 168 acres of El Segundo Barrio, one of the oldest Mexican neighborhoods in the United States, and known as the “Ellis Island of the border”; in the words of Yolanda Chávez Leyva, chair of the University of Texas at El Paso history department, El Segundo Barrio is the “heart of the Mexican diaspora” (“Museo Urbano” 2011) in the United States, a borderlands Ellis Island. She says:

The housing was meant for one farm worker. One man. That’s why there was one bathroom at the end right? That’s why if you go down to the barrio over there, en el centro, it’s row houses. It’s one room. It’s like a labor camp.... That neighborhood was designed for the needs of the big farms. Verdad? And they would send the cops if you were loitering, and if you didn’t want to work they’d put you in the county, because you needed to go work, right? (interview with Massey 2015, 12:07)

The barrio remains the first community seen when crossing from Ciudad Juárez into El Paso. Its demographics and experiences are almost parallel to those of Chamizal - the community is 96% Latinx, 50% of whom were born outside of the United States, and the annual income of almost 50% of the residents is under 10,000 dollars.¹⁹⁶ In 2008, in a cross-border protest against urban development and community displacement in El Segundo and in the Ciudad Juárez barrio, protestor Lomas Del Poleo, spoke to the press. Echoing the fear of San Antonio’s Carolina Hinojosa-Cisneros—“I am afraid that we will be forgotten” (interview with Massey 2015, 05:21), Del Poleo states, “Are we afraid? Yes, we are. Because these are dangerous people. They could disappear us” (“Two Cities” 2008, 01:53). In a neoliberal landscape, this “disappearance” occurs when the presence of minorities, as David Sibley argues, “interferes with the exploitation of resources by capital and whose values are in conflict with the

¹⁹⁶ “El Segundo Barrio Revitalization Strategy” *Neighborhood Revitalization*. City of El Paso. Approved 10 Feb. 2010. Web. 11 May. 2014.

materialistic, progressive values of capitalism” (84). It can be argued then, that part of the momentum for the drive to change the face of El Paso, is not only “disappearing” the “dirty Old West” and keeping the city “neat”, and concurrently “disappearing” the damage of neoliberalism, but also ridding the city of the power of the excluded to both retain and fight for subject and cultural identity. It is in this contested space that La Mujer Obrera works to secure critical visibility and community survival; works to ensure that they are not lost in the shadow of downtown’s new \$64,000,000 baseball stadium, for, in the words of Irma Montoya, ex-director of the organization, “We women refuse to accept this fate” (WEAP 2010).

BUILDING FOR OURSELVES

During their first decade in operation, fresh from their battles with the patriarchal frameworks of both employment and unionization and armed with the knowledges of marginalized borderlands communities, La Mujer Obrera began to develop multiple approaches to resist the “fate” of which Montoya speaks. The organization recognized that successful empowerment and resistance came from understanding that, as brown women on the border, they must create the conditions to remove themselves from the dynamics of power. The LMO website reads:

Experience showed us that as women we must implement our own ideas and strategies for our community....Today La Mujer Obrera continues to challenge the perception that women are an infinite source of cheap labor and that progress means we are the ones who must sacrifice. We must see ourselves as being at the forefront of defining progress within our community. (“About”)

By both tackling the state and the active processes of community debilitation in the borderlands, La Mujer Obrera engages in critically conscious collective practice, an operational tactic that draws from the power of *fronteriza* epistemologies to recognize and resist multiple sites of oppression. The organization works to resist the “colonial matrix of power”,¹⁹⁷ a

¹⁹⁷ This concept has been further developed by María Lugones, Walter Mignolo, Nelson Maldona María Lugones to understand how gender has been constituted and controlled. See, “Heterosexualism and the Colonial /Modern Gender System.” *Hypatia*, vol. 22, no. 1, Winter 2007, pp. 186-209.

concept advanced by Anibal Quijano whereby “the four basic areas of human existence: sex, labor, collective authority and subjectivity/intersubjectivity, their resources and products” (qtd. in Lugones 2001, 189) create a hegemonic Eurocentric, “subjective universe” (Lugones 191). For just as bio-politics, border security, anti-immigration strategies and policies, NAFTA, neoliberal economics, globalization, gender violence, strategic urban “development”, and the persistent marking of brown bodies as “illegal” and/or diseased operate in sync in the creation and recreation of systems of oppression, so too must strategies of resistance come from a multifaceted axis of operation.

La Mujer Obrera’s operational impetus reflects what Walter Mignolo writes of border epistemology, an “anchoring a politics of knowledge that is both ingrained in the body and in local histories” (2011, 2). For LMO, part of the praxis of this “anchoring” is in the questioning and confronting of neocolonial interpretations of progress on the border. In the creation of an autonomous epistemological universe, La Mujer Obrera works to disentangle itself from, to use Mignolo’s words, the “colonial matrix (or order) of power” (2007, 160). In doing so, said matrix is devalued rather than valorized and majoritarian epistemologies revealed as a system rather than as “common sense.” In the process, the universalism and progress of Western epistemologies is revealed as narrow; with each revelation of the burlesque of the colonial comes the re-emergence and reaffirmation of reason and knowledges denied. As Mignolo articulates:

Decolonization of knowledge shall be understood in the constant double movement of unveiling the geo-political location of theology, secular philosophy and scientific reason and simultaneously affirming the modes and principles of knowledge that have been denied by the rhetoric of Christianization, civilization, progress, development, market democracy (2007, 463).

La Mujer Obrera’s collective praxis recognizes that it is in the control of their labor, bodies, cultural capital, and the production and distribution of knowledge, that power and autonomy lie. In order to sustain this praxis, the organization works to protect, uphold, and advance what it recognizes as basic human rights:

Employment with dignity and justice
 Comprehensive education, for all ages and community members
 Full health and nutrition, including open access to comprehensive health care
 Safe, secure and affordable housing
 Right to live in peace with justice and dignity
 Right to freely and completely participate in the political governing system
 (Mercado Mayapán Project)

These transdisciplinary rights, lived on a daily basis, encompass, “cooking, raising our children, working the land, commerce, artisanry, and cultural celebrations” (“About”). At an operational level this translates into a small medical garment factory, a bi-national trading company, a community farm, micro-enterprise support, workforce training and basic skills education, English-language classes, childcare facilities, access to technology, urban agriculture, healthy living initiatives, and employment and workplace support, all designed, implemented, managed, and controlled by the community of women of the organization.

On May 1, 2009, La Mujer Obrera opened Mercado Mayapán, in one of four disused garment factories the organization had purchased, spaces where once a number of their organization had labored, and had, in the 1970s, walked out of and straight onto the picket lines of the Farah strikes. As Hilda García, affiliated with the organization for thirteen years, explains, “I guess it was just the desperation of the women saying, you know what we haven't got any other alternatives, and nobody's going to develop those alternatives. So we have to take it upon us to build this for ourselves, for our community” (“Mercado Mayapán” 2009, 0:57). García's words resonate with those of Gloria Anzaldúa in her seventh essay in *Borderlands/La Frontera*, entitled “La conciencia de la mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness”:

I want the freedom to carve and chisel my own face, to staunch the bleeding with ashes, to fashion my own gods out of my entrails. And if going home is denied me then I will have to stand and claim my space, making a new culture—una cultura mestiza—with my own lumber, my bricks and mortar and my own feminist architecture. (1984, 22)

In this respect, the women of La Mujer Obrera actively “fashion” themselves as their “own gods” in the re-scaling of the La Mujer Obrera's 40,000 square foot foundational framework, a framework built “out of [their] entrails”—the blood, sweat, tears, and economy of their labor.

It is through the reprioritization of the factory's spatial activities and production, emphasizing new feminist architectures of employment, education, health, housing, nourishment, peace, and political liberty, that LMO carves its own faces releasing the gods within. As Andrade argues:

We are able to pick up our heads from that machine and plan for the future....And that's worth defending, because as women we've never that opportunity. We were meant to be behind a machine in that building, not having a Day of the Dead celebration and learning about our culture and our history. (Paterson, 2010)

The garment factory was transformed into a site where female subjectivities would no longer be enunciated through and by coloniality. It was transformed into a space where the new mestiza would find home amid the lived epistemologies and experiences of a multiplicity of identities working to delink from the colonial matrix of power. In the words of Chela Sandoval:

La conciencia de la mestiza is born of life lived in the crossroads between races, nations, languages, genders, sexualities, and cultures: It is a developed subjectivity capable of transformation and relocation, movement guided by the learned capacity to read, renovate, and make signs on behalf of the dispossessed. (1998, 359)

Mercado Mayapán was built for and by those physically, culturally, psychically, and economically "dispossessed" in the critical crossroads of the El Paso-Ciudad Juárez border region.

LMO's praxis, however, is complicated by the need to seek financial support from the very system from which they work to emancipate themselves from and to be an alternative to. It is complicated by the organization seeking an autonomy that does not replicate, or reproduce, the very matrix that ensnares it (Santos 2007). In the drive to develop what Mignolo terms "delinking" strategies, uncoupling from the colonial power matrix and denaturalizing Western epistemologies, the organization embodies Audre Lorde's argument that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (2000 [1983], 111). However, the organization, like Lorde, also recognizes that both the tools and the house have come from profiting from the capital of colonized bodies. As La Mujer Obrera's director, Lorena Andrade, argues:

It's gets murky for what I call, "The Outside World", to understand what our struggle is about as La Mujer Obrera. Because I'm not asking for another dollar. ¿Verdad? And if I'm asking the government for a dollar, it's because we *worked* for it. And because I

want to say, how I want to use it. And they get pissed off because we're so ungrateful. (interview with Massey 2015, 32:40)

LMO's critique of the critical value of a "dollar" comes from asking "decolonial questions", a process of internal and external epistemological interrogation that seeks to unmask that which liberates and that which subjugates, that which seeks to unmask and therefore disinherit the "dollar", disinherit the processes of coloniality. As Andrade says:

If you ask me questions I'm not going to have all the answers, what I have is a bunch of questions that are leading our practice to figure out what this thing is going to look like. And we have a right to defend that as women. And that's all we're defending.... At La Mujer Obrera do we as women have a right to define who we are right now? Based on who we are, yes, on *our* culture. But we have a right to define what that culture *looks* like. How do we create community? How do we build the pieces? Who do we envision raising our children in the daycare? It's a social enterprise. It's a business. We get attacks saying, you don't know how to run a business, but for us it's how do we protect space for women so we can figure out with all our traumas too? And all our "internalized oppression", as we call it. How do we have this collective vision? And how do we help ourselves get there so we can offer the space to our babies? And we're not there yet. And that's part of the battle, because we need to be able to see the world from the point of view of our kids. And have them explore *their* world, and have them explore all of these things and not just destroy their little spirits before they even get a chance. But we're all messed up too. So it's always this constant learning from each other and battling for that space. (45:02)

In seeking to delink from both intrinsic and extrinsic drivers of coloniality, through recognizing "the battle", Andrade's questions reveal visions of the future, visions to be passed onto the next generation as epistemological "safe space" inheritance. As Mignolo argues, "[d]e-colonization (of the mind) must unveil the totalitarian complicity of the rhetoric of modernity and the logic of coloniality in order to open up space for the possibility, following the rhetoric of the World Social Forum as well as the Zapatistas, of "another world" in which many worlds will co-exist" (Mignolo 2010, 323).

NO APOLOGIES

On the night of the Librotráfico "Book Bash", over 250 community members, students, activists, and cultural workers had gathered in Mercado Mayapán. On the wall behind the stage hung a painted banner that read: "*Mujeres de la Frontera Rompiendo la Cadenas de la*

Violencia Economica—Women on the Border Breaking the Chains of Economic Violence.” In the accompanying image a triumvirate of *fronterizas* appear, both breaking and entangled in a dark heavy chain. In their fists, the figures grapple with the links of their confinement whilst holding tightly onto eight streamers of thick white fabric. Inscribed in red on the fabric, again in Spanish and in English, are the delinking processes of their freedom—“salud, paz, trabajo, vivienda, libertad, alimentacion, educación”, “health, peace, work, housing, political liberty, nutrition, education.” The banner embodies that which Tere Romo terms “a *mestiza* aesthetic” (2002, 31), for through the breaking of the chains a new consciousness is produced, a new perception of reality that denies the binaries of majoritarian border narratives. With the breaking of the binaries, space is revealed in which to develop a new path through and of the borderlands. One of the performers on the night of the *Librotraficante* speaks from this positionality—El Paso spoken word poet and essayist, self-identified Chicana-Apache, Griselda Muñoz.¹⁹⁸ Multi-award-winning novelist, Luís Alberto Urrea, five of whose books are on the MAS bibliography (see Appendix II) writes of her, “There is a bright light burning in the deepest southwest. She is a fresh embodiment of our most ancient diosas. There’s a new *hechizera* [sorceress] in town, and she has blood in her pen” (Muñoz). Muñoz had had experience with LMO prior to her appearance on the evening of March 14, 2012. She had performed at previous events, and worked as an assistant to the executive director, revealing, “We always make a joke because it’s a rite of passage for all the Chicanos to work there at some point. So everyone I know who’s an activist has cut their teeth at La Mujer Obrera” (interview with Massey 2016). For the *Librotraficante* community open-mic, Muñoz read, “Woman. No Apologies” under her then stage persona, La Rana (the frog that croaks at injustice). Muñoz’s poetics of the border, with what Urrea sees as the “blood in her pen” taken

¹⁹⁸ For a video of Muñoz’s reading see, “La RaNa reads at the *Librotraficante* Banned Book Bash in El Paso, TX.” uploaded by Bryan Parras, *You Tube*, 24 Mar. 2012, www.youtube.com/watch?v=EWSf60XCFWY.

from the open wound of *fronteriza* life, speaks to the experiences and multiple subjectivities of borderlands women creating spaces for their self-articulated freedoms. As Ramón Saldívar suggests, the work of Chicana narrative “confront[s] the political consequence of particular social relations and representations” and in doing so “illuminates the gaps and silences” (1991, 18). In interview, the poet reveals that she had “dedicated [“Woman. No Apologies”] to the women [of *La Mujer Obrera*]” (interview with Massey 2016, 27:09). For Muñoz had recognized her place, had recognized her “tendency to always be apologizing. And we’re taught that as Chicano women, to not be so loud, and tone it down. And you can’t make too much of yourself ... I am the youngest [with three brothers] and I was constantly being silenced. I got the smallest dinner” (Interview with Massey 2016, 34:00). Arguing, “it’s a cultural thing” (34:34), Muñoz, speaks of the exclusion of women from authority, from knowledge production, from their sexed bodies, from control of their labor, whilst they are included as revered vessels for the proliferation of community and the proliferation of life:

We kill the ills and we make the beans
 Now I see you understand
 Why I stand here in chains
 With an urge to break free (lines 25-28)

The poet articulates the agency of women like those of *La Mujer Obrera*, mainly migrant workers, who seek to “break free,” to become their own gods. Committing Mignolian “epistemic disobedience” by “go[ing] to the reservoir of the ways of life and modes of thinking that have been disqualified” (2013, 133). It is to the disqualified that Muñoz writes as she proclaims:

I am a woman of natural means
 These feathers in my hair
 The emeralds that I fly
 Warrior woman
 Dancing daughter (lines 8-12)

As “warrior wom[e]n” *La Mujer Obrera* draw from the traditions of their foremothers, developing an embodied consciousness that gives access to shared knowledge to deploy new

survival strategies in the face of multiple oppressions. Muñoz’s poem celebrates the “dancing daughter[s]” and “warrior wom[e]n” whose labor once built the El Paso garment industry, at its height the 3rd largest in the US. The poem recognizes the women across the region who struggle to feed their families and to find voice and place in the development of a free-trade transnational monolith. It is to and of this inheritance of collective trauma and the knowledges within that the poet speaks:

I know what meaningless means
Because I’ve lived it
Lived under my means
Been disrespected and teased (lines 55-58)

Many of the women of La Mujer Obrera live under socioeconomic bridges, with their families and communities bearing the weight of a transnational economy fat from maquiladoras and the displacement of life, work, and culture across the Americas. Moreover, As Lorena Andrade, LMO’s director argues:

We are Indigenous women not peasants.... We have a right not to leave. We have a right to stay in our communities. Fight for our land. Defend our culture. Have an economy based on our ways, our customs. Because when we lost our jobs because of the NAFTA, when we would say we need jobs, they’d say, “Well what is your role? Your role is you’re a factory worker, then you follow the factories.” (interview with Massey 2015).

El Paso’s poorest communities live under the means by which the logic and logistics of NAFTA transports goods and profit through poisoned air and patrolled land. Many of the women of La Mujer Obrera live without the means to access jobs in a border space heavy with public sector employment in border security; yet security is not something afforded *fronterizas*, afforded migrant women, and the displaced workers of América as they make. As Cemelli de Aztlán reveals, LMO board member and founder of El Paso’s *Librotraficante Underground Library*, “One of the rites-of-passage for women crossing the border is sexual assault, rape, abuse” (interview with Massey 2015).¹⁹⁹ In the face of personal, economic, social, and cultural

¹⁹⁹ Seeking “to raise awareness and engage community members to re-interpret Mexican-American literature through the lens of censorship and discrimination”, de Aztlán established the library at the YWCA El Paso del

annihilation, Muñoz declares the strategies of these border women:

I walk these cracking streets
 Aah!
 A pauper laced with royal ease
 Shape-shifting and playing (lines 1-4)

This shape shifting and playing with societal expectations amid the attempted disintegration of their ways of life are tactics the women use to evade the colonial matrix of power, are strategies of female empowerment, which build bridges to cross the shifting sands of globalization and the myths of border security. In drawing from their “royal” selves, the women reign autonomously through the reclamation of their subjectivities, through “developing a women-driven model on how women defend themselves in the midst of a system of profound discrimination and violence, on the U.S Mexico border” (La Mujer Obrera 2010). Muñoz’s declaration of this defense produces what Moraga calls “theory in the flesh” (2015, 23), an embodied theory of self-naming and oppositional narratives, driven by the material reality of multiple oppressions:

I’m a woman
 No apologies
 It feels so good to say
 Because women
 We carry the pains of society
 Of our ancestry
 Of the nature of our means (lines 18-24)

Muñoz here writes not only against Anglo hegemonic “society” and against the lack of resources available to women of the borderlands, she also writes again against the embodied imposition of cultural “ancestry”. In this respect, the poet emphasizes the subjection of Latinas to patriarchal narratives of place and history:

I’ve been minimized all my life
 Because good Mexican daughters don’t ignite revolutions
 They ignite stoves
 Where they salt and pepper away their dreams and illusions (lines 59-62)

Norte Region. She argues this was one of her “proudest endeavors as Racial Justice Program Manager.” 19 Aug. 2013, www.pbs.org/latino-americans/en/blog/2013/08/19/homeless-to-harvard/

To counter this minimization, Muñoz reclaims Indigenous female power. She declares the presence within of the Aztec goddess of creation and destruction, Coatlicue, revered as the mother of all things, portrayed as wearing a skirt of serpents, and a necklace of human hearts:

I'm a powerful woman
 no apologies
 alive and dangerous
 I coil
 extend
 unbend
 and hiss
 at the straight uneasiness
 of straight-laced strangers (lines 34-42)

Coatlicue was first split from her darker attributes by the male-dominated Azteca-Mexica culture to become deity Tonantzin; post-Conquest she was split even further, de-sexed to become La Virgen de Guadalupe, the Mexican Virgin Mary. In reclaiming the power of Coatlicue, Muñoz expresses what Sandoval terms, “differential consciousness ... a lack of loyalty to dominant ideological signification” (2000, 179). Muñoz’s critical treachery infiltrates and castigates the “straight uneasiness” of the heteropatriachal matrix of coloniality freeing the Indigenous female power within, releasing the “serpent nailed to the fence” (Anzaldúa 2012 [1987], 89). In *Borderlands/La Frontera* Anzaldúa writes of what she terms “The Coatlicue State”:

I see the heat of anger or rebellion or hope split open that rock, releasing *la Coatlicue*. And someone in me takes matters into our own hands, and eventually, takes dominion over serpents - over my own body, my sexual activity, my soul, my mind, my weaknesses and strengths. Mine. Ours. Not the heterosexual white man’s or the colored man’s or the state’s or the culture’s or the religion’s or the parents—just ours, mine. (51)

La Mujer Obrera Organization has, in the founding of an autonomous female site of production and resistance, like Anzaldúa, “split open that rock” (51). As Aida Hurtado argues, “Chicana feminists were born out of acts of disruption ... to create spaces of resistance to patriarchy in general and patriarchy in their own ethnic/ racial groups” (1998, 135). In “Woman, No Apologies”, Muñoz celebrates “disruptive” women, women she proclaims, “With social

change lined into [their] seams” (line 64); displaced garment factory workers now producing and designing the fabric of new personal, spatial, and societal narratives:

I'm a woman
 Wild ways and all
 I'm writing my own fairytales
 This princess Chicana can scale a wall with ease (lines 65-71)

Speaking in interview Lorena Andrade argues, “As women we have to be really clear about what we’re fighting for and it’s not to reach the American Dream. But in the little work that we do, that’s what we’re trying to say” (2015). The closing lines of “Woman. No Apologies” speak to the clarity of LMO’s undertaking:

I don't kiss the frogs
 I am the frog
 The princes kiss me
 I'm just a woman who lives by her dreams
 I'm a woman (lines 72-76)

The women of La Mujer Obrera refuse to “kiss the frogs”, to succumb to a fairytale that tells them that the prince, in Moraga’s words, “the white male is always the agent of superior intellect and moral rectitude”, instead they seek to build their own dream destiny in which “their second class status is not a natural-born fact” (2011, 39). La Mujer Obrera, acknowledging that the American Dream is more myth than reality, focus on the tending to of displacement trauma of El Pasoan female garment workers, migrant laborers, and marginalized women from the borderlands, and of marginalized peoples from across *América*. To relieve the wounds of “fence rods in ... flesh” (Anzaldúa 2012 [1987], 24), LMO’s operational practice becomes what I term a “cultural poultice”, a tending to wounds through the utilization of borderlands epistemological wealth. The application of the poultice facilitates survival and nurtures resistance to neocolonial infection—NAFTA, narratives of illegality, gendered violence, border militarization, economic displacement. This strategy bridges the neoliberal abyss, and shows a profound understanding of that which Liliana V. Blum writes in her essay, “The Widest Borders”, “we cannot ignore that the common border unites us, for better or for

worse: we are Siamese twins, we share vital organs” (2013, 21). For many low income Latinas in El Paso these vital organs are family living in the Americas, family dying in the Americas, and family falling foul of the regulatory fences and being deported back. For the women of La Mujer Obrera understand how the border operates, how it is not secure, how it will not be secured, how it is policed and movement is regulated, for they are witnesses to and victims of US “full service” empire building—political, social, psychological, physical, sexual, pedagogic, corporate, agrarian, and cinematic. The women understand that the imagined border feeds the need for cheap labor, while the imperial media machine perpetuates the myths that suffocate the very paths of those upon whose backs the empire is built; suffocate migrant struggle with stories of invasion, Ebola, the Zika virus, and, according to Fox News, ISIS insurgents just eight miles from El Paso (2014). The women experience how their communities have been wounded by the marking of brown bodies as illegal, how their families are consumed by rhetoric to feed a political need, or are commodified to suit a global market. Moreover, the women of La Mujer Obrera possess what Anzaldúa terms, *La facultad*,

the capacity to see in surface phenomena the meaning of deeper realities. It is an instant ‘sensing’, a quick perception arrived at without conscious meaning.... Those who are pounced upon have it the strongest—the females, the homosexuals of all races, the dark skinned, the outcast, the persecuted, the marginalized, the foreign. It is a kind of survival technique that people, caught between the worlds unknowingly cultivate. It is latent for all of us. (2012, 60-61)

From this “capacity to see” La Mujer Obrera has cultivated an autonomous transnational female site of resistance, where, in the words of Chela Sandoval, the women

recogniz[e] their places and bodies as narrativized by and through the social body, and who are self-consciously committed to un-precedented forms of language, to remaking their own kinds of social position utilizing all media at their disposal...their aimis chiseling out a new social body—one capable of acting justly on behalf of equality. (2000, 78.7-8)

This newly-chiseled body then becomes one which confronts that which Gaspar de Alba articulates as, a “universal patriarchal tradition of destroying culturally powerful and socially defiant women” (2010, 16). A tradition into which NAFTA’s economic order fits.

PLAN MAYACHÉN

On December 21, 2012, nine months after the Librotraficantes had rolled into town and into the market to an event attended by over 250 members of the local and greater community, Mercado Mayapán opened its doors for the last time. As Andrade explains:

Because [city officials] walked in there, and they said, they're not using this space properly. Look, nothing is happening here. Verdad? *We* can make it productive. That's what they say about our lands everywhere. Look at the native people there, this land isn't productive. Nobody's doing anything. (emphasis interviewee 2015, 56:06)

The perceived “inactivity” of LMO by the state embodies Henry Giroux’s argument that, “Central to neoliberal philosophy is the claim that the development of all aspects of society should be left to the wisdom of the market,” and that “[w]ithin this market-driven perspective, the exchange of capital takes precedence over social justice, the making of socially responsible citizens, and the building of democratic communities” (2006, 156). In the three intervening years before its closure, the women had transformed the factory into a traditional Mexican market, hosting independent booths selling fair-trade artisanal products, and fresh produce from the near-region and across the border. Due to the economic demographic of the neighborhood, the Chamizal had no large supermarket, so Mercado Mayapán provided a grocery store selling Mexican products. In the words of Hilda García, “We are trying to bring it out, our culture. To bring it in a positive way, to bring economy, you know? We have a tortillería, we have a carnicería, we have a panadería” (interview with Massey 2015, 52:00). In 2001, LMO had opened its first social enterprise, a Mexican food restaurant, Café Mayapán, at an earlier, smaller site. This was now housed in Mercado, and helped build the foundation for programming focusing on healthy, culturally based and Meso-American nutrition and food preparation for border communities whose rate of diabetes is 50% above the national average, and whose access to preventive healthcare is minimal to non-existent.²⁰⁰ LMO argue:

²⁰⁰ See: Rodríguez-Saldaña, J. “Challenges and Opportunities in Border Health” *Preventing Chronic Disease: Public Health Research, Practice, and Policy*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2005. www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2005/jan/04009

We have a right to shift the course of our own destinies and defend our communities from deaths due to chronic diseases. We also have a right to healthful (sic) foods that are based in our culture, history, and traditions. The traditional Mesoamerican diet is a stark contrast to what people associate with Mexican food today. We have a right to know and utilize ingredients like amaranth and chia, which were outlawed during the Spanish conquest as part of a military strategy. (LMO 2011)

Cultural programming had also been introduced, including heritage food festivals, Dia de los Muertos celebrations, and Danza Azteca performances and classes. Museo Mayachén was opened, a people's museum to celebrate the hi/stories of the region; in the words of Maria López, the project's coordinator, "We will collaborate with the community by creating a dialog with the elders, the leaders, and the workers in order to create a genuine people's history, from the Indigenous roots to their hallmark on today's society" ("Mercado Mayapán: Museo Mayachén" 2009, 00:23). The drive by the organization to reclaim narratives of the borderlands in the rescaling of the garment factory was a powerful transformation of the narratives of the past. This led the way for the manufacture of new critically conscious social fabrics that drew from the lived experiences and needs of LMO communities. As Mary Pat Brady posits,

the production of space involves not simply buildings, transportation and communications networks, as well as social and cultural groups and institutions..., but it also involves the processes that shape how these places are understood, envisioned, defined, and variously experienced (2002, 7).

Moreover, for these women of the borderlands, Cindy Cruz articulates, "Reclamation [then], for the Chicana social agent, is not only a strategy to make visible Chicana voices and histories, it is also the struggle to develop a critical practice that can propel the brown body from a neocolonial past into the embodiments of radical subjectivities" (2006, 61). In 2007 in the face of increasing dispossession at the border, and two years before Mercado Mayapán opened its doors, LMO had begun to envision a radical strategic space through the implementation of Plan Mayachén:

A development plan rooted in building on the traditional assets of the women, their

9.htm. Also, Kamel, W.W. "Health in Border Areas" *Global Perspectives in Health Vol III*, edited by Boutros Pierre Mansourian. EOLSS Publishers/Unesco, 2009, pp. 326-343.

families and the community (their cultural heritage, work ethic, work experience and strong sense of family) to create sustainable economies and communities. Plan Mayachén integrates the strengths and assets of the women workers and the community to build a bottoms up development plan for the low-income rural *colonias* and urban *barrios* of El Paso County and Southern New Mexico. (“Plan Mayachén” 2010)

Envisioned as an “Oasis in the Desert”, Plan Mayachén was to provide a large-scale alternative economic development model for local and regional Latinx communities —Mercado Mayapán was to be the only part of the plan that came to fruition. An artist’s rendering of the project’s operational space, Plaza Mayachén, shows a pyramidal structure rising above the proposed development’s six-block site. A large, green, palm-tree lined open public space sits at the foot of the pyramid. A reclaimed garment district warehouse is linked to the pyramid by a footbridge, and is situated next to a community garden/farm. The complex was designed to “become a powerful engine for economic opportunity in South Central El Paso and an exciting location of bilingual/bicultural experiences and dialogues for the entire region” (2010). It was envisaged to include all that Mercado Mayapán would host, but on a much larger scale. As Cemelli de Aztlán, explains: “It was created by the women. They would meet on a weekly basis, for this curriculum of envisioning the future for the community of what they want” (interview with Massey 2016). In order to bring the plan to fruition LMO submitted funding proposals to a number of foundations and government bodies at local, state and federal level, receiving \$300,000 from Wells Fargo Community Bank and, on April 17, 2007, \$100,000 from the City of El Paso to conduct a feasibility study (City of El Paso 2007, 347). In return for the monies, the City outlined the scope of services it expected to receive from La Mujer Obrera’s plan, the first agreement item reads, “Definition of US Mexican Cultural Heritage as an Economic Motor: Why an Economic Development Initiative Rooted **In It** Makes Good Business Sense” (emphasis in the original, 2007). The City’s requirement for LMO to prove their economic viability as *fronterizas* speaks to what Derrick Bell terms “special pleading” (2005, 300), where members of the black communities when speaking of matters of race are denied legal legitimacy due to their very raced identities. Here, LMO’s *fronteriza* “definition”

of “US Mexican Cultural Heritage” has to be proven as viable for the development of El Paso’s downtown—for it is the City’s definition of *its* border heritage, its perception belief as revealed in the 2006 Glass Beach branding study that stands as the marker of business common sense. One business sought out LMO to gain insight into their operational activities was supermarket chain, Whole Foods. A small delegation from the company flew to El Paso to meet with Lorena Andrade who, laughing, explained, “And we’re so nice, we’re like, yeah, I’ll pick you up at the airport” (interview with Massey 2016, 42:01); for Georgina Cecilia Pérez, it was an opportunity “to see if the farmers had the chance to sell their stuff there” (interview with Massey 2016, 48:52) Andrade had consultation meetings on a couple of occasions with Whole Foods whilst they were in the city, but once they left she says “they didn’t call me back” (59:58). In October 2016, however, Whole Foods opened its first store in El Paso in a new shopping complex on the city’s Westside called, La Villita. The Whole Foods store has a taqueria, run by Isabella Foods of El Paso. The company’s mission statement on its website reads, “To create value for our customers by providing exceptional service and manufacturing the most authentic and premium Mexican food possible” (Isabella Foods 2016). Their manufacturing plant is based in an industrial park on the outskirts of the city.

Whilst Whole Foods has been built, Plan Mayachén has not. It still exists, however, as a dream project for border women pursuing subjectivity and survival in a globalized world, whilst being pursued by those whose border narrative appropriates culture for the “economic motor” of corporate branded “authentic” US Mexican heritage. In an interview with *El Paso Inc.*, Mayor John Cook, whose office gave the go-ahead to the Paso Del Norte Group’s plans for the “revitalization” of the Chamizal and the city’s downtown, argued LMOs refusal to bring in outside consultants stymied their chances of winning full-backing for their plans, and expressed his belief that, “[t]hey just want the money.” For Irma Montoya, then director of LMO, the reality of the situation was very different, “I don’t think we are getting the credibility we deserve because we are an organization made up of women” (Poulos 2007). The Mayor’s

criticism, and Montoya's response, speaks to La Mujer Obrera's ongoing battle for legitimacy and autonomy in a city whose vision of development does not include them; for whom the request for financial backing remains a "special pleading", whilst construction and the monies for the city's \$64,000,000 baseball stadium is agreed without a public vote. As of September 2016, this stadium has yet to pay off its development debt.

CONCLUSION

You don't have anything if you don't have the stories.

Leslie Marmon Silko

Through dynamic community engagement and the development of new critical praxis, Librotraficante activism offers a creative antidote to the suffocating dynamics of power in the US Mexico Borderlands. For a mobile assemblage of counternarratives and critical storytelling can provide cultural sustenance in the face of majoritarian politicking that seeks to build walls and restrict access to civil rights and social justice. The Librotraficante Caravan was founded on an understanding, developed through the work of Nuestra Palabra, that stories are tools that can liberate the individual and the community from the effects of historical and contemporary oppressions. Moreover, that these stories build connections and pathways to community. From Houston, to San Antonio, to El Paso, to Tucson, the Librotraficante Caravan mapped sites where myriad voices share stories of trauma, survival, celebration, and resilience. At each site, the struggle is clear, yet the gatherings to welcome the caravan illuminate the strength and tenacity of the community. Also illuminated is that far from over is the struggle for justice. The Southwest Workers Union continues to develop tactics to fight marginalization in a city plagued by generational poverty. La Mujer Obrera, recognizing that their struggle in El Paso is transnational, frequently host delegations of women from similar organizations across the Americas. In this respect, the mobile praxis of the Librotraficantes reflects the realities of life in the Borderlands, for stasis threatens survival.

In January 2013, the Librotraficante Movement received the Robert B. Downs Intellectual Freedom Award from the School of Information Sciences of the University of Illinois. The award is “given annually to acknowledge individuals or groups who have furthered the cause of intellectual freedom, particularly as it affects libraries and information centers and the dissemination of ideas” (U of Illinois). That same year the Librotraficantes protested in Austin against HB 1938 and SB 1128, two education bills that, if implemented,

would have disqualified Ethnic and Women's Studies programs at state universities from eligibility as core history requirements for graduation. In 2014, the Librotraficante Movement joined a statewide coalition supporting Texas State Board of Education (TxSBOE) member Ruben Cortez's (D-Brownsville) proposition calling for a Mexican American History elective in the state's schools. With the 2014 Texas Education Agency schools report showing an over fifty percent student Latinx demographic, the urgency to represent these students has never been stronger. Cortez's proposition was only partially successful, with the majority Anglo Republican board voting only to allow local school districts to choose whether to implement Mexican American history classes into their curriculum. The TxSBOE ruling opened the door to the production of materials and curriculum that would be more fully representative of the student body. With Texas being the nation's biggest market for textbooks, and with schools required to purchase only books pre-approved by the board, the drive to introduce critically conscious pedagogy would require further determined pedagogical and grassroots organizing.

In 2016, the Librotraficantes, as part of a coalition of Chicanx and Latinx academics, civil liberties and community organizations, took part in a statewide campaign that successfully prevented the implementation in Texas schools of *Mexican American Heritage*, a Social Studies textbook, "fraught with errors" (Zamora 2016). The volume, produced by a small press in Virginia, contains multiple fractious narratives critically whitewashing Mexican American history. One part of the text reads "Chicanos adopted a revolutionary narrative and wanted to destroy this society", another argues that Chicanx' claims to land and heritage were based on "cultural and political solidarity, not legal or historical grounds" (Angle and Riddle 2016, 415). The textbook was rejected. With an anti-immigrant Trump presidency rolling back civil rights, and a Texas governor vowing to cut funding to any state universities or cities that offer sanctuary to the undocumented, the production of textbooks may prove to be another assault on Ethnic Studies.

The MAS program has not been reinstated, despite Federal Judge A. Wallace Tashima

ruling in 2017 that the bill that brought about the end of MAS was in “both enactment and enforcement ... motivated by racial animus” (qtd. in Depenbrock 2017).²⁰¹ With more than 70,000 migrant children impacted by US border detention, and numbers yet to be confirmed adopted out by the state, the need for culturally representative pedagogy has never been more urgent. The *Librotráfico*, however, remain on alert. The caravan is now part of a critical toolkit. In the event of further debilitating directives aimed at silencing the voices of the Borderlands, what I term Houston’s, “cultural emergency response team” is primed to react.

²⁰¹ See, truthout.org/articles/tucson-skirts-international-law-in-refusing-to-reinstate-mexican-american-studies/, and tucson.com/news/local/tusd-board-majority-sidesteps-effort-to-resurrect-aspects-of-mexican/article_620f0e1b-6b09-57c3-ae4c-342130d3b612.html

Appendix I

The Librotraficante Manifesto

The Librotraficante Movement

From Banned to boom.
Experience the Latino Literary Renaissance.
The Librotraficante Manifesto

The 2012 Librotraficante Caravan to Tucson was intended to smuggle books back into the hands of our youth, after they were boxed up and carted out of class rooms during class time, in order to comply with Arizona House Bill 2281. This law was created to prohibit courses in high schools in all of Arizona. However, the only course, for now, that the administration saw fit to prohibit was the innovative and brilliant K through 12th grade Mexican American Studies program in place at the Tucson Unified School District.

This led to the prohibition of all the courses that fell under this curriculum and the confiscation and boxing up of all the books, over 80, that were taught in those courses.

I had time to re-read some of these important texts on the bus during our caravan. Yes, books help me step into the mind of our greatest thinkers and help me see history differently, in three dimensions-in 6 even 7 even more dimensions. As we convened with our brothers and sisters in the southwest, from Houston, to San Antonio, to El Paso, Texas; then Mesilla, New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico, then Tucson; as we convened with the Madrinos and Padrinos of our literature-Sandra Cisneros, Carmen Tafolla, and Lorna Dee Cervantes, Denise Chávez, Rudolfo Anaya, and Dagoberto Gilb it became clear that our magic bus of mind-altering prose was marking the launch of the new Latino Renaissance.

As we walked hand and hand with our brothers and sisters across the South West, after having marched with our brothers and sisters in New York, after speaking with allies in Canada, England Italy, as our extended family fed us, loved us, gave us books to take to our people, helped us to start Under Ground Libraries, it was clear that we were walking in a special moment in history.

We need only to re-read some of the now sacred texts confiscated from classrooms in Tucson, we need only re-read the texts of our deepest and greatest thinkers to see that we are reliving the Civil Rights movement archived in the book CHICANO by Arturo Rosales. We are all like the members of the Raza Unida party, and thus, we must like they did in Crystal City, begin to win elections.

The Aztecs, creators of the Sun Stone, the greatest work of art in North America, believed that every 50 or 60 years the world must be recreated. Well, here we are, 50 or 60 years later-reliving the Civil Rights Movement. This is the beginning of the new world that the Maya were predicting.

It is now the duty of our people to unite and to struggle on behalf of all Americans to preserve the most essential of American values-Freedom of Speech. We must defy censorship.

It now falls on us, the Children of The American Dream, to defend the Civil Rights of all

Americans because that is what is on the line.

And thus with this great mission, I urge all of us to assume our full power and vision and step boldly into this historical charge, and for this I offer up as did my predecessor Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzalez (sic) with the writings in his confiscated book MESSAGE TO AZTLAN, I, Tony Díaz, El Librotraficante, offer to history, the Librotraficante Manifesto.

The Librotraficante Manifesto

1. Arizona House Bill 2281, created to prohibit courses in Arizona high schools, must be repealed. The powers that be would like to make it seem as if it was designed to target only Mexican American Studies. However, as with the anti-immigrant legislation that Arizona created, this template will spread to other states and be used to eliminate all other Ethnic Studies programs.

2. The brilliant and innovative Kindergarten to 12th grade Mexican American Studies program, which the Tucson Unified School District prohibited to comply with AZ HB 2281, must be reinstated.

3. Sean Arce, former director of MAS in the Tucson Unified School District must be reinstated.

4. We must laud as heroes and we must support all the students leading Teach-ins, protests, and championing our culture in Tucson; the Tucson 11, the teachers who lead the MAS courses, and the 3 the young students who are locked in legal battle, suing the state of Arizona to defend their Freedom of Speech and thus all our first amendment rights.

5. We profess Quantum Demographics which embraces deep links between cultures that seem disparate at first glance. We want and need to study our own history so that we can then study other histories more fully. We do not strive to exclude others from our history or to deny others their history. We strive for the day when we all know our own stories to such an extent that we can see the links and bridges to the stories of others.

6. Every state of the Union must incorporate Ethnic Studies programs that not only provide a global perspective but that value and archive the local history of their own people, so that scholars and writers and artists can be inspired to archive the many facets of American history, the many local stories that add up to our national story.

7. We must organize to elect in every city school board members with great minds and big hearts, who truly care about our youth, who will answer to the people of a community. Under quantum demographics, it should be obvious that we do not suggest that we would vote for only Mexican American candidates. In fact, there are some Latinos that we must vote out of office.

8. The architects of AZ HB 2281 have been qtd. as having their sites (sic) set on prohibiting Mexican American studies at the University level as well. We must never tolerate impositions on Freedom of Speech at our schools of higher learning, ever.

9. We must create and maintain Librotraficante Under (sic) Ground Libraries throughout the nation, so that our histories, our cultures are never at the whim of an administration ever again.

10. We owe it to future generations to create networks and leave in our wake community resources that will last for decades and beyond. As such, we must recognize that we, like our best fields of study, must be multi-disciplinary, as must our institutions, as must be the make up (sic) of all our groups and alliances. We must employ Quantum Demographics in our activism as well, thus, writers must advocate justice and must also be entrepreneurs, only then will businessmen and women become poets. We all must respect and become teachers. We must proceed with the knowledge that we are not simply paving the way for our youth, but we are teaching them how lead.

Tony Díaz, El Librotráfico
www.librotráfico.com
www.nuestrapalabra.org
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Appendix II

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Appendix III

**Resistance Literature Read in Xikano Literature/Raza Studies Classes
Tuscon Unified School District, Mexican American Studies Program.**

FIGURE 1. Resistance Literature Read in Xikano Literature/Raza Studies Classes

Literature	Genre	Themes in Focus	Writing Assignment
<i>Always Running: Gang Days in LA</i> by Luis J. Rodriguez	Memoir	Alienation Marginalization	Personal narrative— borders and barriers
“Woman Hollering Creek” and “Never Marry a Mexican” by Sandra Cisneros <i>La Llorona: Our Lady of Deformities</i> by Ramon García	Short Stories	Feminism Machismo Sexuality Gender roles	Literary analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oppression of women • Feminism • Sexuality
Selections from <i>Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools</i> by Jonathan Kozol	Nonfiction	Inequality in education	Social justice research paper
<i>Zoot Suit</i> by Luis Valdez	Play	Resistance to hegemony	Character analysis
<i>So Far from God</i> by Ana Castillo	Novel	Chicanisma	Literary analysis
<i>The Devil's Highway: A True Story</i> by Luis Alberto Urrea	Nonfiction	Immigration Dehumanization Discrimination	Counternarratives— narratives that confront the status quo
Selections from <i>Drown</i> by Junot Díaz <i>Ten Little Indians</i> by Sherman Alexie <i>Woodcuts of Women</i> by Dagoberto Gilb <i>Loverboys: Stories</i> by Ana Castillo	Short Stories	Stereotypes of minorities Complexities of love	Literary analysis
Speeches by César Chávez, Malcolm X, Angela Davis, Martin Luther King Jr., and Dolores Huerta	Rhetoric	Resistance to status quo	Speeches Rhetorical analysis

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GERMAN SUMMARY

Im Januar 2012 wurde ein wegweisendes k-12 Mexican-American Studies (MAS) Programm in Texas von der amerikanischen Regierung eingestellt. Das Programm war in den späten 1990er Jahren im Versuch, negative Bildungs- und sozialökonomische Entwicklungen innerhalb der örtlichen Chicanc- Gemeinden aufzuhalten, gestartet worden. Der MAS-Lehrplan hinterfragte den dominanten nationalen Identitätsdiskurs und wirkte den vorherrschenden Mythen der Gründung und der Verfassung der Vereinigten Staaten entgegen. Trotz validierter Beweise des erfolgreichen Erreichens der Lernziele des Programmes wurde es von einer politisch rechts-orientierten konservativen Legislative als anti-amerikanisch und aufwieglerisch abgewählt, und, daraus folgend, als das Staatsrecht unterlaufend deklariert. Die Bücher der Leseliste des Programms wurden aus den Klassenzimmern entfernt, darunter Texte, die einen Großteil des Kanons der Chicanc-, Afrikanisch-Amerikanischen und Indigen-Amerikanischen Literatur bilden. Die Nachricht, dass die Regierung das MAS-Programm einstellen würde, fand Widerhall bei den Chicanc- Bevölkerungsgruppen im ganzen Südwesten, da diese Gruppen schon lange die Folgen der vorherrschenden Politik sowie der daraus resultierenden Definition von Gerechtigkeit zu ertragen hatten. Eine dieser Gruppen, die in Houston-basierte Gruppe Nuestra Palabra: Latino Writers Having Their Say [NP], entschied sich zu handeln. Ihre Strategie war es, den Studierenden die Bücher zurückzubringen, die von der Leseliste entfernt worden waren. Um dies zu bewerkstelligen wendete die Gruppe ein kritisches Verständnis der radikalen Kriminalisierung ihrer Gemeinden auf bis dato vierzehn Jahre des organisierten Gegen-Narratives an. Die Librotráfico- Bewegung war geboren. In der Praxis brachte eine Gruppe von achtunddreißig „Bücherschmugglern“ über einen Zeitraum von fünf Tagen im März 2012 einen Wohnwagen mit Texten nach Tucson und setzte sich unterwegs auch mit Gemeinden in Texas, New Mexico und Arizona auseinander. Mein Projekt verwendet die Reiseroute des Wohnwagens als Rahmen, um den Chicanc-Widerstand in den umkämpften US-Mexikanischen Grenzgebieten zu untersuchen. Ich schenke dabei Texas besondere Beachtung. Texas wurde 1845 von Suprematisten- Gruppen im Glauben an Manifest Destiny annektiert und 1848 wurden neue Grenzen gezogen, als Mexiko durch das Abkommen von Guadalupe Hidalgo fünfzig Prozent seines Gebietes verlor²⁰², sodass Texas schon lange eine erste Front im Werden der Vereinigten Staaten war.

²⁰² Siehe Richard Griswold del Castillo, *The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo: A Legacy of Conflict*, Norman, UO Press, 1990; Sonia Hernández, “The legacy of the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo on Tejanos’ land” *Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 35, No. 2, 2001, 101-109; Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr. und Richard Valencia “From the

Dieses „Werden“ zeitigte nicht nur einen Großteil des geopolitischen Raums der Nation, sondern auch die Radikalisierung derer, die sich jetzt, in den Worten des mexikanischen Generals José Mariano Salas im Jahre 1856, als „Fremde in ihrem eigenen Land“ wiederfanden (zit. aus Griswold del Castillo 1990, 3). Nach Hidalgo waren diese „Fremden“ durch den Siedler-Kolonialismus entrechtet. Sie wurden von den Texas Rangers überwacht und misshandelt sowie ab 1924 vom amerikanischen Grenzschutz, dessen Methodik zu dieser Zeit, wie Kelly Lytle Hernández aufzeigt, „eine Sache von Gemeinschaft, Männlichkeit, Weißsein, Autorität, sozialer Schicht, Respekt, Zugehörigkeit, Verbrüderung und Gewalt im Großraum der texanisch-mexikanischen Grenzgebiete“ (2010, 41) war. Seitdem hat sich wenig verändert. Trotzdem kämpfen und gedeihen mexikanisch-stämmige Gemeinden in diesem oft aus tief emotionalen Beweggründen umkämpften Gebiet. Die Reise des Librotráfico-Wohnwagens zeichnet den mannigfaltigen Widerstand gegen historisches und gegenwärtiges Trauma nach, während er, in Ofelia Garcias und Camila Leivas Worten, „innerhalb eines dynamischen Netzwerks kultureller Transformation operiert“ (2014, 203). Diese Dissertation bringt das Vermächtnis der kulturellen Widerstandsfähigkeit der Chicanx ans Licht, welches die US-zentrierte narrative Konstruktion von Identität und Zugehörigkeit stört. Meine Arbeit situiert sich am Überschneidungspunkt der Cultural, Chicanx- und Borderlands-Studies, der Amerikanistik, Literaturwissenschaft und Ethnologie sowie der Politik- und Sozialwissenschaft. Es sind gerade diese Schnittpunkte, an denen Orte in meinen vier Fallstudien-Städten (Tucson, Houston, San Antonio und El Paso) in Antwort auf und gerade trotz des gegenwärtigen und historischen Traumas der epistemologischen Kolonialisierung, NAFTA, Gentrifizierung, rechts-orientierter Politik, Grenz militarisierung, Anti-Einwanderungsdiskursen und der hartnäckigen Kategorisierung brauner Körper als „illegal“ agieren. Mein Ziel ist es, das historische, kulturelle, politische und literarische Bewusstsein hervorzuheben, das durch die Widerstandsorganisationen dieser Orte entsteht; ein Bewusstsein, das sich aus den gemeinsamen Erfahrungen der Gemeinden erwächst.

Seit der Einführung von Operation Gatekeeper im Jahr 1984 führte die zunehmende Militarisierung der US-mexikanischen Grenze unter sowohl demokratischen als auch republikanischen Regierungen zum Tod Tausender, die versuchten die Grenze zu überwinden. In der Ära Trump, in welcher Anti-Einwanderungsgesetzgebung einen starken Zuwachs in der Zahl der in Internierungslagern festgehaltenen MigrantInnen, welche in der Mehrzahl in Texas

Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo to Hopwood: The Educational Plight and Struggle of Mexican Americans in the Southwest, *Harvard Educational Review*, Vol. 68, No. 3, 1998, pp. 353-413.

festgehalten werden und von beiden Kontinenten kommen²⁰³, beförderte, besteht eine dringende Notwendigkeit, die Geschichten des Widerstands der Chicanx und Latinx Gemeinden festzuhalten. Beim Untersuchen der Konstruktion radikalierter Identitäten stütze ich mich insbesondere auf Natalie Molina, besonders auf ihr Konzept der „rassischen Skripte“. Um historische und gegenwärtige Gewalt in den Grenzgebieten auszuheben folge ich dem Leitgedanken des Refusing to Forget- Projekts, welches von Sonia Hernández, Trinidad Gonzales, John Morán González, Benjamin Johnson, and Monica Muñoz Martinez betrieben wird²⁰⁴. In meiner Auseinandersetzung mit der Vorgehensweise der Betreiber des Librotráfico-Wohnwagens stütze ich mich auf die Arbeit von Roberto Cintli Rodríguez, einem Wissenschaftler aus Tucson, welcher sich im Kampf gegen die Terminierung des MAS Programms engagierte. Im Jahr 2009, in welchem der erste Versuch von Gesetzgeberseite gestartet wurde, das MAS Programm einzustellen, organisierten Studenten einen zeremoniellen Staffellauf über eine Strecke von hundertundsechzehn Meilen von Tucson zum Rathaus in Phoenix. Dieser wurde angeführt von Mitgliedern des Calpolli Teoxicalli-Volkes²⁰⁵ und es nahmen Studierende, Lehrende und Gemeindemitglieder teil. Der Lauf war eine Erweiterung der jährlichen barrio-Läufe. Rodríguez erklärt deren Bedeutung:

Mit jedem Schritt, den wir gehen, hinterlassen wir nicht einfach nur Fußabdrücke; wir kreieren auch unsere eigenen Geschichten, unsere eigenen Narrative. Was noch wichtiger ist, wir schaffen mit unseren Körpern ein gemeinsames Narrativ und tragen eine gemeinsame Erinnerung in uns. Durch das gemeinsame Laufen teilen wir Erfahrungen, Absichten und Verständnis, und wir schärfen sogar das Bewusstsein für unsere eigene (belagerte) Gemeinde, und gehen noch den Schritt weiter, da wir die Teilnehmer bitten, uns zu sagen, warum sie/wir laufen, da dies lehrreich und erleuchtend ist. Wenn diese Aussagen geteilt werden, werden sie unschätzbare Teil der Gemeinde (2012,80).

Ich argumentiere, dass der Librotráfico-Wohnwagen in der Tradition des zeremoniellen Laufs verortet werden kann. Seine Route folgte den Spuren der Widerstandserzählungen, die er transportierte. An jedem Halt wurden bei Open Mic Poetry-Lesungen Erfahrungsberichte und Spenden der entfernten Bücher gesammelt. An jedem Halt schlossen sich neue Caravanistas der Bewegung an, um dann ihre Erfahrungen am nächsten Ort auf der Strecke wiederzugeben. Wenn ich argumentiere, dass Literatur als Erfahrungsbericht der Schlüssel

²⁰³ Im Jahr 2018 wurden 15.852 Personen in Einwanderungsinternierungslagern in Texas festgehalten. Der Bundesstaat mit der zweithöchsten Häftlingszahl ist mit 6.527 inhaftierten Personen Kalifornien.

²⁰⁴ Siehe refusingtoforget.org/

²⁰⁵ einer Gruppe in Nahua angesiedelter Familien, die sich selbst als Tlamanalca aus Tucson identifizieren. Sie leben nach dem geheimhin so genannten Azteken-Kalender und verehren diesen zeremoniell.

zum Widerstand einer Gruppe ist, beziehe ich mich auf Randy J. Ontiveros, der annimmt, dass es notwendig sei, deren Bedeutung für soziale Umstürzbewegungen anzuerkennen, da eine Aussage getroffen werden kann, dass der kulturelle Einflussbereich der ist, in welchem die Chicano- Bewegung den offensichtlichsten Erfolg genossen hat“ (2013, 35). In meinem Projekt verwende ich die Methodologie des Gegennarratives um Kanonbildung zu hinterfragen, wobei ich mich auf die Arbeit von Richard Delgado und Tara J. Yosso stütze. Durch *Nuestra Palabra* greift die *Librotraficante*-Bewegung Hand in Hand mit dem literarischen Erfolg der Chicano- Bewegung wenn es darum geht, deren hartnäckige Marginalisierung repräsentativ darzustellen. NP hat Verbindungen aufgebaut zu Chicano-Gründungsschriftstellern wie zum Beispiel Rodolfo Anaya, Carmen Tafolla, Lorna Dee Cervantes, Lucha Corpi, Rolando Hinojosa und Luis Valdez. Die nächste Schriftstellergeneration ist auch Teil der NP-Gruppierung, namentlich Ana Castillo, Dagoberto Gilb, Sandra Cisneros und Monica Palacios. Neuere Stimmen sind José Olivarez, Gwendolyn Zepeda, Tim Z. Hernandez, Griselda Muñoz, Laurie-Ann Guerrero und Carolina Hinojosa²⁰⁶. In diesem Sinne repräsentieren NP und die *Librotraficante*-Bewegung zugleich eine Fortführung des Darstellungsdrangs der Bürgerrechtszeit und ein kritisches Narrativ, welches aufzeigt, wie die Versprechen dieser Zeit unerfüllt blieben.

Dementsprechend ist mein Projekt in Gloria Anzaldúas Interpretation der Grenzgebiete als *“es una herida abierta”* (1984, 25) verwurzelt, insbesondere im Betrachten der Heilungsprozesse, die an den Orten begannen, wo *Librotraficantes* anhielten. Denn die Gemeinden der San Antonio’s Southwest Workers Union [SWU] und El Paso’s La Mujer Obrera [LMO] waren beide lange rechtspolitisch-motivierten Versuchen, sie sozial, politisch, pädagogisch, juristisch und kulturell handlungsunfähig zu machen, ausgesetzt. Um Überlebensstrategien in diesem umkämpften Gebiet zu untersuchen, verwende ich Tara J. Yossos Diskussion von kulturellem Kapital. Zudem bietet Yossos gemeinschaftliches kulturelles Wohlstandsmodell einen Rahmen um zu verstehen wie SWU, LMO und NP ihre Gemeinschaften bereichern, indem sie sich des individuellen und kollektiven kulturellen Wissens der besagten Gemeinschaften bedienen. Mein Projekt beginnt mit einer Untersuchung von Tucsons MAS-Programms, das sich ähnlich auf kollektives Wissen bezog, spezifisch auf das *“Critically Compassionate Intellectualism Model of Transformative Education”* (CCI), oder *“The Pedagogy of Barriorganic*

²⁰⁶ Die *Nuestra Palabra* Archive befinden sich im Houston Metropolitan Research Center (HMRC) und sind Teil der Sondersammlungen der Houston Public Library.

Intellectualism” (Romero 214)²⁰⁷. Dieses Modell erkennt das enorme Potenzial der soziokulturellen Hintergründe der Studenten an. In der Bürgerrechtsbewegungszeit brachte das Verlangen, dieses Potenzial zu nutzen, anstelle es von suboptimaler Schulbildung zerstört zu sehen, tiefgreifende Veränderungen für die Bildung der Chicanx-Jugend. Angelehnt an Chandra Talpade Mohantys Frage „Was bedeutet es in diesem Kontext für Lehrpersonal einen demokratischen öffentlichen Raum zu schaffen?“ (2003, 189) versuche ich den drängenden Bedarf nach repräsentativer Bildung in einer neuen Ära der suprematistischen narrativen Kontrolle abzubilden.

²⁰⁷ Siehe: Cammarota, Julio & Augustine Romero “A Critically Compassionate Intellectualism for Latina/o Students: Raising Voices Above the Silencing in Our Schools”. *Multicultural Education* Winter 2006, pp. 16-23. Außerdem: Romero, Augustine. ““Critically Compassion Intellectualism: The Pedagogy of Barriorganic Intellectualism” *Raza Studies: The Public Option for Educational Revolution*, Hrsg. Julio Cammarota & Augustine Romero Tucson: UA Press, 2014, pp.14-39. Für eine detaillierte Anwendung von CCI im MAS-Unterricht, siehe Arce, Martín Sean, Julio Cammarota und Augustine Romero, “A Barrio pedagogy: Identity, intellectualism, activism, and academic achievement through the evolution of critically compassionate intellectualism” *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2009, 217-333.