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**Decolonizing Being, Knowledge, and Power:  
Youth Activism in California at the Turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

By

Samuel Bañales

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Anthropology

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California at Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Charles L. Briggs, chair  
Professor Nancy Scheper-Hughes  
Professor Nelson Maldonado-Torres

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## ABSTRACT

Decolonizing Being, Knowledge, and Power: Youth Activism in California at the Turn of the  
21<sup>st</sup> Century

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Samuel Bañales

Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology

University of California at Berkeley

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By focusing on the politics of age and (de)colonization, this dissertation underscores how the oppression of young people of color is systemic and central to society. Drawing upon decolonial thought, including U.S. Third World women of color, modernity/coloniality, decolonial feminisms, and decolonizing anthropology scholarship, this dissertation is grounded in the activism of youth of color in California at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century across race, class, gender, sexuality, and age politics. I base my research on two interrelated, sequential youth movements that I argue were decolonizing: the various walkouts organized by Chican@ youth during the 1990s and the subsequent multi-ethnic "No on 21" movement (also known as the "youth movement") in 2000. Through an interdisciplinary activist ethnography, which includes speaking to and conducting interviews with many participants and organizers of these movements, participating in local youth activism in various capacities, and evaluating hundreds of articles—from mainstream media to "alternative" sources, like activist blogs, leftist presses, and high school newspapers—I contend that the youth of color activism that is examined here worked towards ontological, epistemological, and institutional decolonization. This study, which addresses negative social understandings about youth in general and young people of color specifically, highlights how the oppression of youth is systemic and central to modernity/coloniality, and calls attention to the necessity of incorporating age, power, and their theorization into the discourses on decolonization. Along with making youth's politics and political identities essential to the research, this dissertation aims to contribute to, not only knowledge production, but also the unfinished project of decolonization—which most literature on young people or youth activism has yet to do.

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## DEDICATIONS and ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is dedicated to God-Ometeotl-Olodumare-Pachamama-Universe. I also dedicate this dissertation to those that came before me, to those in this lifetime, and to those yet to come. In particular, I dedicate this dissertation to those that participated in the decolonizing youth activism that I write about.

I especially thank my graduate adviser, Professor Charles L. Briggs, who has helped me throughout this very long and arduous project, including the many turns and twists of my graduate school career. I also thank Professor Nancy Scheper-Hughes' valuable feedback and understanding. Last but not least, this dissertation would not have been possible were it not for the continuous guidance, feedback, and support from Nelson Maldonado-Torres, the third member of my committee. I am very much honored to have had three stellar activist-scholars serve as my dissertation committee.

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## PREFACE

In the early fall of 2008, I received an email from a staff member at UC Berkeley that works on diversity issues. Since I organize with the Queer Latin@ student group on campus, she asked me if it would be okay for her to give my contact information to a newly admitted graduate student that identified as a lesbian of color and was looking to make friends. Aware of the importance of building community across race and sexuality in the university, I welcomed the request. Via email, I got in touch with the graduate student and invited her to an upcoming campus event that would showcase the documentary video about the student group.<sup>1</sup> It was an excellent idea since it highlighted why we joined the group, what we learned from being involved, and why the group was important to us in the context of the university. She said she would try and attend.

The event took place in one of the underground rooms in the Moffitt library building during the evening. Other members of the group and I got there early in order to set up the audio-visual equipment and room. We were excited to see the video, not only because it was the first public screening of it, but also because many of the members would watch it for the first time. In respect of our ancestors and (indigenous) history of struggle, the event began with a spiritual blessing from an invited cultural leader from Oakland. With conch in one hand and flame in the other, she lit the sage before the intimate audience together honored the four directions, zenith and center: the cardinal points of a compass, and the sky and earth. After, she briefly explained the significance of the blessing to the audience and thanked the group for inviting her. I followed with a quick introduction about the importance of the video in the context of colonization: how, historically, same-sex eroticism existed in many indigenous societies in the Americas at the time of conquest, and how many indigenous people did not view sexual desire in the same ways as Europeans, did not categorize people in strictly binary terms, nor ascribed moral parameters like classifying acts as sinful/non-sinful.<sup>2</sup> In other words, in contrast to how two-spirited identities across the Americas were often understood in positive terms,<sup>3</sup> I pointed to the modern context where Queer Latin@s are generally demonized and perceived as inferior or perverted. I ended the introduction by mentioning how, through spoken word performance, personal and group interviews, and scenes from the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Queer People of Color conference, the video was important for several reasons. Not only did the video document our hard work and struggles and place our existence on a map of (digital) knowledge, but also challenged the logic of colonization that has tried to convince us we are worthless.

As the documentary screened, I felt a little nervous but validated—even empowered—to hear and see our voices on a big screen. After the documentary screened and the lights came on, I thanked the audience for attending and announced: "if anyone has questions about the group or the film, please talk with me or any of us," as I pointed to other members of the group in the audience. In between the shuffling of people as they left their seats to greet friends or exit the room, an unfamiliar face approached me. She introduced herself, followed by, "We've been in touch via email; you told me about the event." Despite being caught by surprise, I greeted her

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<sup>1</sup> *So What! Young Queers United for Empowerment*, produced Xamuel Bañales, (2008), film.

<sup>2</sup> See Pete Sigal, ed., *Infamous Desire: Male Homosexuality in Colonial Latin America*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

<sup>3</sup> See Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986 [1992]).

warmly: "Nice to meet you; I'm so glad you were able to make it! There you have it, the group and what we do in a nutshell," I said with a smile as I alluded to the video. I also told her it would be great if she checked-out the group by attending a meeting; perhaps get involved? She smiled but quickly asked: "What is the age composition of the group? Are the majority undergrads? Cuz you know, I left high school a long time ago and I am not trying to go back!"

I was not surprised to hear something like this since it was not the first time that "adults" distance themselves from young people (not to mention that all young people are homogenized without recognizing variation and specificities). But I was left dumbfounded that, after an event foregrounded in decolonization, age would be the concern for someone who also embodied a multiple-marginalized experience. Perhaps I had assumed too much: that, in addition to sharing a history of marginalization across race and sexuality, we might share a politicized view of what our existence signified in the context of where we stood. I am not sure how successful I was in trying not to show my feelings of disappointment, but I did affirm that I was the only graduate student involved in the group. I encouraged her to nevertheless give the group a try since we are the only ones creating a safe space for Queer Latin@s on campus and having another graduate student as part of the student organization would be great. In a friendly manner, she told me she used to teach high school and was "over the youth thing," and, needless to say, she never attended any of the group weekly meetings thereafter.

I too had taught high school before graduate school, yet, unlike her, was not "over the youth thing." In fact, since I left high school I've been grounded in the "youth thing." What could explain the difference in postures? Reflecting, I see three interrelated reasons. First, I "grew up" in California and only attended public education throughout. I had many problems being a student in the public education system, many being due to my multi-marginalized background, and I rarely identified with teachers, the curriculum, or peers. As a result, I was eventually pushed out of high school more than once—first in 9<sup>th</sup> grade and again in 10<sup>th</sup> grade, never formally graduating thereafter. The second reason is that I saw differences in how I was treated depending on whether or not I was in school. For example, I often felt as if I was viewed as being doomed to failure for not being enrolled in school in a traditional way, and being young seemed to be one of reasons that explained the "natural" cause of my dismal future and bleak reality. Finally, I became conscious and politicized about social oppression during my "youth." I was fortunate to have found my way into my local community college when I was sixteen. There, in addition to working two jobs, I was an active member of the student group *Movimiento Estudiantil Chican@ de Aztlán (MEChA)*, had the privilege of taking several Ethnic Studies courses, and began my activist involvement in the community; I first volunteered my time with Latin@ elementary students then with a local organization that served people living with HIV/AIDS. Throughout this process, I began to wonder why being young was not generally associated with this type of reality. Thus, not only did I experience and was aware of several types of social injustices during my youth, I also realized how being young was one of the oppressions I experienced simultaneously (particularly in school settings).

When I had the privilege to transfer to UC Berkeley, I lived at Casa Joaquín Murrieta which, during the 1990s, was an independent Chican@ cooperative where a lot of student organizing took place.<sup>4</sup> When I arrived, proposition 209, which eliminated affirmative action, had recently passed, and the anti-bilingual education bill Proposition 227 was approved during 1998. Although my undergraduate time was short at UC Berkeley, I was particularly involved

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<sup>4</sup> For a history of Casa Joaquín Murrieta, see <http://www.casaucb.org/history>, (accessed August 10, 2012).



with the Queer Latin@ student group (at the time it was called *La Familia*<sup>5</sup>) as well as with a group that focused on Mexican cultural expression.

After my time at UC Berkeley, my activism continued in a variety of ways. For example, along with working for a radical activist oriented, Ethnic Studies based youth empowerment program in San Francisco, I participated in the "Youth Movement" that formed in response to Proposition 21 which further criminalized youth. Also in 2000, I organized with Queer Latin@s in San Francisco, eventually producing the experimental documentary video *Hijos del Silencio/Sons of Silence* through the *STOP AIDS Project*.<sup>6</sup> After a hiatus of a few years from the San Francisco Bay Area, I taught high school in Southern California, and also briefly worked with Youth Action Network in San Diego.

After returning to the San Francisco Bay Area again, this time for graduate school, I continued my activism in many ways, both on campus and in the community. In particular, for over six years I worked with the Jotería (Queer Latin@) group at UC Berkeley, now called *Young Queers United for Empowerment* (YQUE!), which primarily focuses on providing a safe space to dialogue about the simultaneous oppression relating to race and sexuality, on creating a social environment to build community, and on being politically active on campus and beyond. I had a leading role in organizing the first three Queer People of Color Conference at UC Berkeley (2006-2008), as well *Decolonizing the University: Fulfilling the Dream of the Third World College*, commemorating the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of UC Berkeley's Ethnic Studies Department (2010). Last but not least, I was involved with the Occupy/Decolonize Oakland and UC Berkeley movements, as well as the recent establishment of the groundbreaking *Association of Jotería Arts, Activism, and Scholarship* (2011).

Like this dissertation, I state part of my activist/academic trajectory in order build on and contribute to the activist history of California and beyond. To explain, in the U.S.—as in other parts of the globe—it is in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century when youth, particularly youth of color, mobilize in mass form. Massive youth mobilization came about as the institutional racism that polarized whites in power against disenfranchised blacks was politically and socially challenged. This was a time when the US—strongly rooted for "centuries along racial lines maintained by constitutional segregation, legal anti-miscegenation, social discrimination, police violence and vigilante terrorism—was forced into a dramatic political and cultural transformation in race relations."<sup>7</sup> Notable events include the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* of 1954 that ruled segregation in public schools as unconstitutional, the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955, and, shortly thereafter, the struggle for "integration" in Little Rock Central High School where nine African-American youth (also known as the "Little Rock Nine") had been admitted.<sup>8</sup> By 1958, 10,000 students converged on Washington in the Youth March for Integrated schools and a second Youth March was held the following year that brought about 30,000 students.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> For more on *La Familia*, see José Manuel Santillana, "La Jotería de UCLA: Queer Latina/o Chicana/o Student Activism, (MA thesis, California State University at Northridge, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> For more on this organization, see <http://www.stopaids.org/>, (accessed August 10, 2012).

<sup>7</sup> Trinity A. Ordone, "*Coming Out Together: An Ethnohistory of the Asian and Pacific Islander Queer Women's and Transgendered People's Movement of San Francisco*," (PhD diss., University of California, Santa Cruz, 2000).

<sup>8</sup> The Little Rock school crisis began when one the Black youth Elizabeth Eckford, upon arriving at the school, found herself against a mob of whites and National Guardsmen to prevent her from entering. For more on this, see Peter B. Levy, *The Civil Rights Movement*, (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1998).

<sup>9</sup> Clayborne Carson, ed., *The Student Voice 1960-1965: Periodical of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee*, (Connecticut: Meckler Corporation, 1990); Lawson and Payne; Carson, (1981), 20.

California also has rich history of activism since—but not limited to—the 1960s. For example, the United Farm Workers (UFW) mobilized some of the most economically disenfranchised agricultural workers the Central Valley that eventually launched a successful boycott of grapes.<sup>10</sup> Sparking the Chicano Movement was the week-long student strike that organizers called the "walkouts" or "blow-outs" in East Los Angeles. Capturing national attention and front-page headlines with picket signs, over ten thousand students eventually walked out of many high schools on to the streets of East Los Angeles. Disrupting the largest school district in the nation, students protested racist school policies and teachers, called for the hiring of Mexican American teachers and administrators, and insisted on having classes on Mexican American culture and history. This was the first major mass protest by Mexican Americans in the history of the US that was explicitly against racism, and this had a profound impact on the Mexican American community in Los Angeles and other parts of the country. Youth played significant leadership roles and the protests generated an interest to mobilize the community.<sup>11</sup> Last but not least, social movements of Los Angeles also include the multiracial alliance of the Third World Left which was a network of organizations that consisted of African American, Japanese American, and Chicana/o activists of established groups, such as the Black Panther Party, El Centro de Acción Social y Autónomo, and East Wind collective.<sup>12</sup>

The San Francisco Bay Area has particularly been an important center of progressive and radical social movement activity within the U.S. Its history since the 1960s includes the founding of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, the American Indian movement that included the occupation of the Alcatraz Island, Asian American community activism that included the battle of fighting tenant evictions from the International Hotel, the Gay, Lesbian, Queer, and Transgendered Movements, and countercultures that included beats and hippies.<sup>13</sup> Along with the Free Speech movement at UC Berkeley, university organizing included the multiracial alliance of the Third World Liberation Front that held the longest student strike in the history of the US, leading to the eventual establishment of the first school and departments of Ethnic

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<sup>10</sup> See Miriam Pawel, *The Union of Their Dreams: Power, Hope, and Struggle in Cesar Chavez's Farm Worker Movement*, (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2009).

<sup>11</sup> Carlos Jr. Muñoz, *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement* (New York: Verso, 2007 [1989]), 1 and 79-84.

<sup>12</sup> See Laura Pulido, *Black, Brown, Yellow, and Left: Radical Activism in Los Angeles*, (Berkeley: University of California, 2006).

<sup>13</sup> See Richard Edward DeLeon, *Left Coast City: Progressive Politics in San Francisco, 1975-1991*, (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 1992); Gary Delgado, *Beyond the Politics of Place: New Directions in Community Organizing in the 1990s*, (Berkeley: Chardon Press, 1997); James Brooks, Chris Carlsson, and Nancy J. Peters, eds., *Reclaiming San Francisco: History, Politics, Culture*, (San Francisco: City Lights, 1998); Trinity A. Ordonez, "Coming Out Together: An Ethnohistory of the Asian and Pacific Islander Queer Women's and Transgender People's Movement of San Francisco," (Ph.D. diss., University of California at Santa Cruz, 2000); Robert Cohen and Reginal E. Zelnik, eds., *The Free Speech Movement: Reflections on Berkeley in the 1960s*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Ryan Pintado-Vertner, "The West Coast Story: The Emergence of Youth Organizing in California," *The West Coast Story: The Emergence of Youth Organizing in California*, "Occasional Papers Series on Youth Organizing, no. 5, (2004); Troy R. Johnson, *The American Indian Occupation of Alcatraz Island: Red Power and Self-Determination* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008); Asian Community Center Archive Group, *Stand Up: An Archive Collection of the Bay Area Asian American Movement*, (Berkeley: Eastwind Books of Berkeley, 2009); Donna Jean Murch, *Living for the City: Migration, Education, and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Horacio N. Roque Ramirez, *Queer Latino San Francisco: An Oral History, 1960s-1990s*, (New York: Palgrave/McMillan, 2012).

Studies, and places like the Center for Third World Organizing has provided a model of community-based organizing led by communities of color.<sup>14</sup>

Following this legacy, the Xican@ and multi-ethnic walkouts and the "No on 21" movement that I write about contribute to the activist history of California. Moreover, current youth activism in the Bay Area is greatly institutionalized, and many organizations either include youth programs in their broader work or are entire dedicated to youth organizing/development. Factors that influence this include a strong activist history, liberal political climate, developed and long-standing philanthropic sector, and a strong web of agencies that have a solid infrastructure. Many of youth activist organizations multiplied through the 1990s and early 2000s, and many have their own established political practices, curricula, and institutionalized arrangements. Many incorporate and develop elements of youth cultures (such as hip-hop) and center their work around educational justice, environmental racism, juvenile justice, gentrification, immigrant rights, challenging INS raids and deportations, community development, gender and queer organizing, or a combination of these issues.<sup>15</sup> Compared to other parts of the country, California has a particularly extensive network of formalized opportunities for youth involvement in social change.

California is the most populous state in the country, and youth activism must be situated in connection to growing age disparities and racial and ethnic changes. The number of older Californians is expected to increase significantly as the Baby Boom generation ages while a large number of children will be born to the immigrant population. Even though young people in the state will outnumber people of 60 years old and above, the older population will grow at a faster pace. For example, between 2000 and 2040, the number of children under fifteen years old is expected to increase by 68% while people 60 years old or older are expected to rise by 154%. This means that there will be a disproportion of "dependent" Californians and a decreasing percentage of working-age people.<sup>16</sup>

In addition, racial and ethnic diversity is changing radically in California. Experiencing record levels of immigration since the 1980s largely from Asian and Latin American countries, whites serving as the majority has been transformed in California. Occurring rapidly within a 20-year period, no other state in the US has the level of demographic diversity like in California. Demographics will continue to be influential in political process (like elections), public policy, and in activism that is necessary to transform social injustice that many marginalized people face. Because the youth of color movements in California at the turn of the century that I write about, as I argue, were decolonizing, they provide an opportunity to understand the complexities of current activist movements and social politics taking place around the world. These movements also can serve as a catalyst to think about how decolonizing politics and youth of

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<sup>14</sup> See Asian Community Center Archive Group, *Stand Up: An Archive Collection of the Bay Area Asian American Movement 1968-1974*, (Berkeley: East Wind Books, 2009); Michael Liu, Kim Geron, and Tracy Lai, *The Snake Dance of Asian American Activism: Community, Vision, and Power*, (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008); Trinity A. Ordonez, "Coming Out Together"; David Hillard, ed., *The Black Panther Party: Service to the People Programs*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008); Troy R. Johnson, *The American Indian Occupation of Alcatraz Island: Red Power and Self-Determination* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008); Robert Cohen and Reginal E. Zelnik, eds., *The Free Speech Movement: Reflections on Berkeley in the 1960s*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); For the Center for Third World Organizing, see <http://www.ctwo.org/>, (accessed May 14, 2012).

<sup>15</sup> Jessica K. Taft, *Rebel Girls: Youth Activism and Social Change across the Americas*, (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 11-12.

<sup>16</sup> Mark Baldassare, *California in the New Millennium: The Changing Social and Political Landscape*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 6.

color generally relate to not only California and its growing demographics but to modernity/coloniality specifically.

## NOTES ON TERMS USED

There are several terms/topics I use in this dissertation that deserve some clarification upfront. One important term to this dissertation is colonization. Addressing colonization, the definition that Florencia E. Mallon provides is useful. As the term applies to indigenous peoples, colonization involves "the conquest and expropriation of territories; massive loss of life through war, forced labor, and disease; erasure or marginalizations of cultures and languages; and the redefinition of a process of violent conquest as 'inevitable' because of supposed differences in levels of 'civilization.'"<sup>17</sup> However, as I show throughout this dissertation, my understanding of colonization also includes the racial, class, gender, sexual, and age hierarchies that came about and were strengthened by European modernity as it colonized, enslaved, and disappeared populations through the globe. In particular, I focus on (de)colonization as it relates to ontology, epistemology, and power.

In addition to colonization, decolonization is another term that I use extensively in this dissertation. Because I dedicate a substantial amount of the dissertation to explaining and developing notions of decolonization, I will only provide a brief understanding of how I use the term here. In short, to decolonize is to "undo" the logic of colonization that continues to this day, despite no longer having overt colonial domination in a historical sense. Decolonizing opposes the colonizing turn in Western thought and its corresponding paradigm of discovery and newness that includes, among many things, the gradual proliferation of capitalism, racism, colonial/modern gender system, and other systems of hierarchy and power, like age-based ones that I describe in this dissertation. In addition, my perspective on decolonization is that it is not only about resisting but also about affirming, insisting, and creating from a multiplicity of spaces that challenges dominant values, relationships, attitudes, institutions and society. As much as colonization is negation, violence, hate, and about destroying, decolonization is affirmation, healing, love, and about building.

I also should explain why in this dissertation I use "Chican@," instead of Chicano, Chicana, or Chicano/a, which are more traditionally accepted terms. The reason I spell Chicano with an "@" symbol at the end is that it represents an "a" at the center of an "o," offering a coexisting presentation of both the feminine and masculine word endings. Since the Chicano movement was internally criticized of sexism, the "@" symbol aims at promoting inclusivity by highlighting the simultaneous feminine and masculine components of the movement. Moreover, Chicana@ studies scholar Chela Sandoval has discussed how the "@" symbol, understood as a representation of transdisciplinary recognition of gender and sexual difference, politicizes and re-genders the term "Chicano," "Chicana/o," and Chicano Studies.<sup>18</sup> In addition to Chican@, I use "Xicano," "Xicana," or "Xican@" throughout the dissertation. To explain why I use an "X" in the spelling of these terms, I draw upon Cherríe Moraga's description:

"An X (the Nahuatl spelling of the "ch" sound) indicate[s] a reemerging política, especially among young people, grounded in Indigenous American belief systems and

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<sup>17</sup> Florencia E. Mallon, "Introduction: Decolonizing Knowledge, Language, and Narrative," *Decolonizing Native Histories: Collaboration, Knowledge, and Language in the Americas*, ed. by the same author, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 1.

<sup>18</sup> See Karen Mary Dávalos, Eric Ávila, Rafael Pérez-Torres and Chela Sandoval, "Roundtable on the State of Chicana/o Studies," *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies*, 27.2, (2002): 139–152.

identities. I find especially resonant Roberto Rodríguez's observation in his treatise *The X in la Raza* that *X* in many ways reflects the Indian identity that has been robbed from us through colonization, akin to Malcolm X's use of the letter in place of his "slave" name (86). As many Raza may not know their specific indigenous nation of origin, the *X* links us as Native people in diaspora."<sup>19</sup>

In sum, I use "X" and "@" in the spelling of Chican@ to decolonize the terms Chicano, Chicana, or Chicano/a—which shows that the work of decolonization is always ongoing, even when dealing with terms, spaces, and movements that are already engaged with decolonizing processes.

The student group MEChA, like the name of other activist groups, will appear often in this dissertation as it had an influential role in the activism I write about. For those unfamiliar with the group, MEChA is a student organization that promotes higher education, culture, and history from the perspectives of Chican@s. MEChA was founded on the principles that self-determination, political involvement, and education are central to change in society and the decolonization of Chican@s. The Crusade for Justice organized the first National Chicano Youth Liberation Conference in March of 1969, at Denver, Colorado where the basic premises for the Chicana/Chicano Movement were drafted in the historic documents *El Plan de Aztlán*. The following month, over 100 Chican@s convened at University of California, Santa Barbara to formulate a plan for higher education that became known as *El Plan de Santa Barbara*. This led to the development of two very important contributions to the Chicano Movement: Chicano Studies and MEChA. This move brought a new level of political consciousness to Chican@ communities, which led to a more unified decolonizing movement.<sup>20</sup>

Last but not least, I do not take the term "youth" for granted. Some scholars note that policy and institutional settings treat "youth" as an age category that generally begins at thirteen and ends around twenty-five, and that this category is likely to shift in the future on both ends.<sup>21</sup> What complicates the category of youth is that it does not exist as a single group; many subcategories that define young people overlap, such as, children, juvenile, teenager, adolescent, young adults, and "tweens." Moreover, age-based categories are further complicated by crosscutting distinctions related to gender, ethnicity, and class, which that are imbued with power depending on geographic location, historical context, and culture. Academics have observed that age categories, which at one point served as a primary basis for social order and stratification, are breaking down as life expectancy increases.<sup>22</sup> That is, age categories, such as childhood, youth, and adulthood, are becoming confused. Commercial forces are also reshaping age categories. For example, Daniel Thomas Cook and Susan B. Kaiser argue that the "'tween' cannot be understood apart from its inception in, and articulation with, the market exigencies of

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<sup>19</sup> Cherríe L. Moraga, *A Xicana Codex of Changing Consciousness: Writings, 2000-2010*, (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2011), xxi, (italics in original). There are other scholars that also do not use the traditional spelling of Chicano or Chicana. One example is Ana Castillo, *Massacre of the Dreamers: Essays on Xicanisma*, (New York: Plume, 1995).

<sup>20</sup> For more on MEChA, see: Roberto Tijerina Cantú, *MEChA Leadership Manual: History, Philosophy, and Organizational Strategy*, (Riverside, CA: Coatzacoalco Publications, 2007); Carlos Jr. Muñoz, *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement*, (New York: Verso, 2007 [1989]); Movimiento Estudiantil Chican@ de Aztlán, Official National Website, <http://www.nationalmecha.org>, (accessed August 10, 2012).

<sup>21</sup> Johanna Wyn and Rob White, *Rethinking Youth*, (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1997), 1.

<sup>22</sup> See Stephen Hunt, *The Life Course: A Sociological Introduction*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 2.

childhood—specifically girlhood—as they have emerged since the Second World War."<sup>23</sup> Thus, the changing nature of age-based categories underscores how they are precisely social constructs connected to demographic, political, and economic conditions.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Daniel Thomas Cook and Susan B. Kaiser, "Betwixt and be Tween: Age Ambiguity and the Sexualization of the Female Consuming Subject," *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 4.2, (2004), 203.

<sup>24</sup> For more on this, see John R. Gillis, *Youth and History: Tradition and Change in European Age Relations, 1770-Present*, (San Diego: Academic Press, Inc., 1981 [1964]).

## Chapter one:

### The Politics of Age and the Unfinished Project of Decolonization

"I wrote these words for everyone who struggles in their youth  
Who won't accept deception in, instead of what is truth  
It seems we lose the game before we even start to play  
Who made these rules? We're so confused  
Easily led astray"

--Lauryn Hill

"New blood joins this earth  
And quickly he's subdued  
Through constant pain disgrace  
The young boy learns their rules  
With time the child draws in  
This whipping boy done wrong  
Deprived of all his thoughts  
The young man struggles on and on..."

--Metallica

"They call us problem child  
We spend our lives on trial  
We walk an endless mile  
We are the youth gone wild  
We stand and we won't fall  
We're the one and one for all  
The writing's on the wall  
We are the youth gone wild"

--Skid Row



## Introduction

Although youth play important and dynamic roles in shaping social movements since the last century, their representations are not always positive and sometimes their agency is completely ignored. In addition to this, youth are analyzed as social agents of social change through racial, gender, sexuality, or class-based perspectives but not through age-based ones. I address such conundrums in this dissertation by linking the politics of age and other categories of difference to power and colonization. I principally call attention to the relevance of age in modernity/coloniality and argue for making age, power, and their theorization central to the discourses on youth and on decolonization. Pointing to the ways that age/generational distinctions (particularly youth voices) are rendered invisible or unimportant overall, I examine the ways in which age and power intertwine with the politics of race, class, gender, sexuality, colonization, and society. What is the relevance of an age-based analysis of youth activism? How does an age-based analysis further not only youth studies and social movement literature but also anthropology and decolonial studies? How do age matters, principally anti-youth and adult-centered worldviews, relate to the conversations produced in these fields of study? Despite youth's history of positively shaping and impacting society, why were youth of color being criminalized at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the U.S., particularly in California? What was new, different, or the same about this type of youth oppression compared to the past, particularly colonial history? By addressing such questions, I contribute to literature that addresses multiple registers of power to point to the ways that the youth oppression in the modern context is not only connected to colonization but is also pervasive and naturalized.

There are significant decolonizing theories, philosophies, and concepts that inform this dissertation, including those of the modernity/coloniality group, U.S. Third World women of color thought, decolonial feminisms, and decolonizing anthropology. Indeed, the scholarship produced from these groups has been generative to decolonial thought and this dissertation in general. However, my work also addresses some of the current limitations of decolonizing scholarship as they relate to age matters, particularly how an awareness of anti-youth and adult-centered worldviews is virtually absent in the literature. As such, I have a twofold task before me in this dissertation: to stress why age and youth oppression should be central when considering the topic of colonization/coloniality and decolonization and also to delineate why they are (ir)relevant to the respective conversations about the subjects. I explicitly argue that making age integral—rather than symptomatic—to how we understand modernity/coloniality and decolonization helps us consider the complex ways that categories of difference, like race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality, combine to underscore how they have a colonial history linked to Western empire. For example, key to modernity/coloniality is how young people despite race/ethnicity are at the bottom of the hierarchy of age-groups; yet, this idea becomes complicated when one considers how European/Euro-American groups are always at the top of the racial/ethnic hierarchy, despite changes of racial understandings over time. In other words, I underscore how decolonial theorists may examine, among many things, the intertwined relationship between domains that include race, gender, labor, colonization and society but fail to take into consideration how age is crucial to our understandings about them. Moreover, by focusing on the oppression of young people in the past (colonization) and in current times (at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century), I point to the muting or naturalizing of age and power in decolonial theories to argue that this phenomena is complicit with a colonizing anti-youth attitude and adult-centered logic that is central to modern social thought.

One of my objectives in this dissertation is to decolonize some dominant intellectual frameworks by highlighting how the oppression of young people of color is systemic and central to modernity/coloniality. Placing the politics of age in the context of colonization, I offer a generative way to understand social phenomena useful to current decolonial efforts in particular and understandings of society in general. This does not mean decolonial thinkers should only produce studies about youth and their activism, but that more effort needs to be given to questions of age and power, and how working with and from activist youth spaces and perspectives is imperative to the idea of decolonization. Another objective is to make youth of color central to the analysis of decolonial thought. To do this, I specifically show how the focus on age and power can underscore how young people's experiences, understandings, and agency are birthed in relation to colonial legacies across the globe. I argue that, by not making the distinctions as to how age and other categories of difference exist—particularly adultism and the oppression of youth—in relation to imperialist logic of the world, decolonial thought runs the risk of perpetuating traditional tropes of coloniality that blindly reflect adult power—always already colonizing—rather than elucidate its centrality to modernity/coloniality.

In particular, I position myself and my research in decolonial studies, but I ground my claims in the activism of youth of color in California at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century across race, class, gender, sexuality, and age politics. I focus on two interrelated, sequential youth movements in the San Francisco Bay Area—a location with historical non-conforming traditions, progressive politics, vanguard student and community activism, and ethnic, cultural, and sexual diversity. The activism I write about includes the Xican@ walkouts of the 1990s and subsequent multi-ethnic activism interchangeably known as the "Youth Movement" or the "No on 21" movement/campaign. In addition to participating in these movements, I have researched hundreds of documents—from mainstream newspapers to "alternative" sources, including activist blogs, leftist presses, and high school newspapers—in archives throughout California and spoken to and conducted interviews with many participants and organizers of these movements, in order to examine youth of color activism in California at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century through a decolonizing perspective.

Given the appearance of recent forms of social movements across the world, many of which fail at making decolonizing politics explicit and central to their respective struggles,<sup>25</sup> the activism of Xican@ and multi-ethnic youth is therefore of much significance. Furthermore, as a native anthropologist of California who has been involved in different forms of youth activism since the 1990s, too often I experience how collective social movement memory fails as time passes. Many activists, especially those who are new to activism or the geographical activist landscape of the San Francisco Bay Area, rarely know much—if anything at all—about the various Xican@ walkouts during the 1990s and subsequent multi-ethnic youth movement and the significant impact they had on people, policy, and social thought. Thus, there are many reasons that learning about the activism of young people of color in California at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is noteworthy, one being that it provides a lens to understand the recent youth movement phenomena through a decolonizing perspective. For example, learning about the

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<sup>25</sup> One example includes the recent "Occupy Movement" in the U.S. For a critique of this movement, see Xamuel Bañales, "The Future(s) of Ethnic Studies is in its Past(s)...and in the Surrounding Possibilities," *Nineteen Sixty Nine: an Ethnic Studies Journal*, 1.1, (2012), 10-22; Alexandra Waite, "Forum examines issues sparking Occupy rallies," *Accent Advocate: The Online Student Voice of Contra Costa College*, (Dec. 6, 2011), <http://www.accentadvocate.com/campus-beat/forum-examines-issues-sparking-occupy-rallies-1.2681220>, (accessed Jun. 15, 2012). I discuss the Occupy Movement with respect to decolonizing politics in chapter three of this dissertation.

ways that activism of youth of color offered multiple and creative ways to collectively challenge oppressive, colonizing conditions, or how they organized across multi-ethnic and gender coalitions, can be generative to current movements and their analyses.

Along with making youth's politics and political identities essential to the study, one of the purposes of this dissertation is to look at the central role that age and power has in modernity/coloniality/decoloniality. By focusing on contemporary youth of color activism in California at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, I highlight the ways in which they contribute to the unfinished project of decolonization and how those working towards decolonization must seriously look at the importance of youth activism and implications of age oppression. I argue that writing about modernity/coloniality without including a basic narrative of questions of age and power—like the subordination of young people and the many adult figures (such parents, teachers, and judges) who surrounded them and perpetuated or corroborated with this type of violence—replicates a (white) adult-centered mentality. Furthermore, I contend that overlooking how adult-centeredness was central to colonization makes any possibility of completing the unfinished project of decolonization futile. Giving attention to the complex role of age/young people, not only in the colonial context but also in the present social order, can offer us a more nuanced reading of how we understand modernity/coloniality and decolonization.

In addition to what scholars call the imperial/global designs of the present as the "European/Euro-American modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world system"<sup>26</sup> or the heterosexual "modern/colonial gender system,"<sup>27</sup> I make age matters central to decolonial thought in order to argue that it is imperative that we also add the word "adult" to the aforementioned terms. Although subordination based on age is produced simultaneously with other forms of oppression that came about with the colonial encounter—the space of "colonial difference"<sup>28</sup>—I do not mean for the category of "adult" to only be added as another item to list of systems of oppressions. Instead, I approach the concept of adultism further to highlight that it is in the naturalization of adulthood that other forms of oppression are justified. In other words, I'm writing from the perspective that age oppression is a tool in which European/Euro-American modern/colonial capitalist/hetero-patriarchal gender adult system comes into place. Often explicitly but usually insidiously, the pervasiveness of adultism has been so accepted and naturalized that it dominates multiple spheres of social thought and reality.

## Adultism

Accounting for the general absence of giving age and power serious thought in youth scholarship as well as the lack of centrality in understandings of modernity/coloniality, my theoretical perspective is based on the concept of adultism, which is "the systematic

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<sup>26</sup> See Ramón Grosfoguel, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, and José David Saldívar, "Latin@s and the 'Euro-American Menace': The Decolonization of the U.S. Empire in the Twenty-First Century," *Latin@s in the World-System: Decolonization Struggles in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century U.S. Empire*, ed. by the same authors, (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2005).

<sup>27</sup> María Lugones, "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System," *Hypatia*, vol. 22.1 (2007), 186-209.

<sup>28</sup> This space is where coloniality of power is enacted. For more on this, see Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), preface.

exploitation, abuse, and mistreatment of young people by adults."<sup>29</sup> Writing about the subject, John Bell argues that, "except for prisoners and a few other institutionalized groups, young people are more controlled than any other group in society."<sup>30</sup> Claiming that adults decide what is "wrong" and "right" for young people from the time they are born, Bell contends that most young people are told "what to eat, what to wear, and when to go to bed, when they can talk, that they will go to school, which friends are okay, and when they are to be in the house," and that "the opinions of most young people are not valued; they are punished at the will or whim of adults; their emotions are considered 'immature.'"<sup>31</sup> Connecting adultism to educational settings, youth scholar Melvin Delgado highlights that "Adults in general, but particularly those in schools and community-based organizations, have historically viewed youth from two primary perspectives as *objects* that need to be controlled because youth are incapable of knowing what is best for them, and as *recipients*, as they are really 'adults in waiting' and in need of being socialized and educated accordingly."<sup>32</sup> These examples and perspectives underscore the general ways in which adults have power over young peoples' lives and how controlling young people is rendered natural. Furthermore, adultism is another way to understand the systemic oppression of young people, which means that "young people aren't taken seriously, aren't listened to when they speak, aren't consulted on issues concerning them, and aren't at the table where policy decisions are made about their lives."<sup>33</sup> Attention on adultism should be important because "the oppression of children is the wheel that keeps all other oppressions turning."<sup>34</sup>

Conversely, more egalitarian ways to approach interactions and relationships with young people exist. For instance, Melvin Delgado embraces the idea that youth could be seen as partners with adults, predicated on mutual respect. That is, that "youth are capable of making significant and lasting contributions now and only need opportunities and requisite support to do so."<sup>35</sup> Similarly, John Bell provides the following guidelines as a way of helping improve power relationships with young people:

[to] listen attentively to young people. Listen when they talk about their thoughts, experience, and feelings about being young. Ask questions. Ask what they think about everything. Lie back. Curb the inclination to take over. Support the initiatives of young people. Validate their thinking. Welcome their ideas.... Change the power relationships wherever appropriate. Consider when adults can refrain from using authority, from making the final decision, from being the 'real power' behind youth leadership.

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<sup>29</sup> Paul Kivel and Allan Creighton, *Making the Peace: A 15-Session Violence Prevention Curriculum for Young People*, (Alameda: Hunter House Inc., 1996). Also see Allan Creighton and Paul Kivel, *Helping Teens Stop Violence: A Practical Guide for Counselors, Educators, and Parents*, (Alameda: Hunter House Inc., 1992).

<sup>30</sup> John Bell, "Understanding Adultism: A Major Obstacle to Developing Positive Youth-Adult Relationships," published through *YouthBuild U.S.A.*, (Mar., 1995). Article is available online through *The Free Child Project*: [www.freechild.org/bell.htm](http://www.freechild.org/bell.htm), (accessed Jul. 31, 2011).

<sup>31</sup> Bell, "Understanding Adultism."

<sup>32</sup> Melvin Delgado, *Designs and Methods for Youth-Led Research*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2006), 4, (emphasis in original).

<sup>33</sup> Amory Starr and Mel King, *It Takes the Whole Village: Beyond the War on Youth in Urban Communities*, unpublished, (1995), <http://www.trabal.org/texts/SOUTH6.pdf>, 143.

<sup>34</sup> Aurora Levins Morales, *Medicine Stores: History, Culture and the Politics of Integrity*, (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1998), 51.

<sup>35</sup> Delgado, 4-5.

These approaches do not necessarily advocate that anything that young people want to do is permissive or that no type of authority is ever necessary. However, having anti-adultist attitudes and practices can serve to build solid relationships with young people that not only challenge power relations but also work towards positively affecting society. As Jessica K. Taft highlights, "learning about youth politics and about adultism are crucial steps for adults who want to develop supportive, equitable relationships with [youth]."<sup>36</sup>

An example that challenges adultist thinking is American child prodigy and internationally published Adora Svitak. Speaking at the Technology, Entertainment, and Design (TED) Conference in February of 2010, Svitak states:

For kids like me being called 'childish' can be a frequent occurrence. Every time we make irrational demands, exhibit irresponsible behavior, or display any other signs of being normal American citizens, we are called childish, which really bothers me. After all, take a look at these events: imperialism and colonization, world wars, George W. Bush. Ask yourself, who's responsible? Adults. Now, what have kids done? Well, Anne Frank touched millions with her powerful account of the Holocaust, Ruby Bridges helped to end segregation in the United States, and, most recently, Charley Simpson helped to raise 120,000 pounds for Haiti on his little bike. So, as you can see evidence by such examples, age has absolutely nothing to do with [being childish]. The traits the word childish addresses are seen so often in adults that we should abolish this age discriminatory word when it comes to criticizing behavior associated with irresponsibility and irrational thinking.<sup>37</sup>

Further in the talk, Svitak contends that the world needs more bold ideas, wild creativity, and optimism—traits that are also normally associated with "childish" thinking—and advocates that adults learn from children. In other words, Svitak calls attention to the arbitrariness of descriptors like childish, how age-based thinking is a social construct, and how there are other ways of being and thinking that are not adultist.

One may ask why I focus on the concept of adultism instead of ageism, which is more popular. To address this, underscoring the way that ageism has been understood is important, especially since the 1940s when federal attention was given on age discrimination. Age-related issues became a concern then, such as if there should be a place for older workers in the postwar labor market and if the voting age should be reduced from twenty-one to eighteen. Charges of discrimination against older people intensified with time, and, by the 1960s, many members of the baby boom generation who reached their teenage and young adult years also called attention to age discrimination. In the context of the unpopular war in Vietnam, many raised opposition to being forced to serve or pay taxes to support it. Since those over eighteen were deemed capable of serving in the armed forces, people questioned other age-based restrictions, like voting and legally buying and consuming alcohol. Resistance from old and young against perceived age discrimination propelled important age-related legislation but also stirred serious considerations of the effects of age grading and consciousness. Age-related meanings, such as "too old" or "old enough" became questioned, and Americans became attuned to the consequences of using age as

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<sup>36</sup> Jessica K. Taft, *Rebel Girls: Youth Activism and Social Change across the Americas*, (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 191.

<sup>37</sup> See Adora Svitak, "What adults can learn from kids," *TED: Ideas worth spreading*, (Feb. 13, 2010), [http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/en/adora\\_svitak.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/en/adora_svitak.html), (accessed July 17, 2012).

a criterion for social status and as a norm for behavioral expectations. Discrimination would manifest in different ways, like employers hiring younger workers fearing that older people would be absent from work, prone to accidents, slow, and inflexible, or in schemes that encouraged early retirement or pushed older workers out of the labor force.<sup>38</sup>

By 1965 twenty-three states had passed laws prohibiting age discrimination in employment, whereby most statues applied to people between forty and forty-five and sixty. Because of the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 included a provision which applied to employment opportunity, this directed the Secretary of Labor to make a study of the problem of age discrimination for Congress. Based on the report, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) was passed in 1967. In the mid twentieth century, ageism entered common vocabulary, signaling the recognition of widespread stereotyping of and discrimination against people because of their chronological age. However, in time, this became associated with older populations and not so much with the young. That is, although negative attitudes towards the young would qualify as ageism, the term has come to refer specifically to negative attitudes and behavior toward the elderly. One reason was because a greater number of elderly (usually affluent) were able to develop and flex political muscles. The other was that, as popular and scholarly attention showed, there was a significant "graying of America" that underscored how older Americans as the fastest-growing segment of the population in the 1960s. For instance, in the 1940s, Americans over 65 were 6.8 percent of the total population, and demographers predicted this would increase to 17 percent by 2000.<sup>39</sup> According to the 1990 U.S. Bureau of the Census, the number of people over the age of 65 is expected to double by 2030, and how the "graying" of the country represents a challenge to the social, political, medical, and economic structure society.<sup>40</sup> In any case, older Americans have been the most responsible for placing importance on age and ageing and keeping them in the public.

There is research that addresses the topic of ageism from several different perspectives and presents theoretical and empirical advances in understanding the topic. For example, recent studies shows how there are multiple, often contradictory views of older people, how age stereotypes can implicitly affect thoughts, feeling, and behaviors, how children—because of the influence of media, peers, parental attitudes, and social changes from extended family unit to a nuclear one—learn to have negative impression of older people and consequently age prejudice at a very early age, how age prejudice may be connected to fears of human mortality, and how ageist attitudes affects people in general in multiple ways.<sup>41</sup> Despite this, attention on ageism and the elderly is nevertheless underdeveloped. One explanation for the lack of attention to ageism is that age prejudice is one of the most socially/institutionally accepted.

Unlike ageism, which has received some attention, there is virtually no attention to the topic of adultism. In this dissertation, if I were to focus on ageism or a particular anti-youth or adultist act or representation, I would miss the oppressive system that perpetuates this. By concentrating on the idea of adultism, however, this dissertation is about the larger, more significant colonizing adult-centered logic that has come to define modernity/coloniality. In particular, this dissertation adds to and expands this perspective by building on decolonial

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<sup>38</sup> Howard P. Chudacoff, *How Old Are You?: Age Consciousness in American Culture*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989), 172-173.

<sup>39</sup> Chudacoff, 174-182.

<sup>40</sup> Todd D. Nelson, ed., *Ageism: Stereotyping and Prejudice against Older Persons*, (Cambridge: MIT press, 2002), x.

<sup>41</sup> See Nelson, *Ageism*.

thought—including U.S. Third World women of color, modernity/coloniality, decolonial feminisms and decolonizing anthropology scholarship. As a way to contribute to this effort, this dissertation focuses on the necessity of incorporating the theorization of age into discourses on decolonization. Because humanity has long been denied for the young, I think critically about age and youth as it relates to modernity/coloniality/decoloniality.

## Decolonizing Anthropological Methods

In addition to positioning my research in decolonial studies and grounding it in the concept of adultism, I draw from several decolonizing methods, including anthropological ones. Decolonizing anthropological methods came about after World War II when Anthropology and its traditional ethnographic fieldwork methods were criticized. Unlike applied anthropology, which often assumed a capitalistic economic framework that came into being as a type of social work and community development effort for non-Western people—where anthropological findings were rendered more accessible, comprehensible, and useful to business, government, philanthropic sector, and humanitarian outreach—some scholars proposed studying power while others encouraged anthropological advocacy and responsibility instead.<sup>42</sup> The core of anthropology—the knowledge and insight—was understood as being built out of the exploitation of nonwhite and non-western peoples in colonial contexts of fieldwork. Providing information to the West, indirectly or directly, implicated the anthropologists in the process of colonization, and ethnography came to be one of anthropology's main contributions to the colonial endeavor.<sup>43</sup> As a member of a group in power, anthropologists rarely questioned the relationship of privilege and power in which they were involved, and this blinded many to the implications of their position as much as it influenced them to justify the prevailing colonial social system. As a methodological goal, the predominant "scientific objectivity" approach, that included detached observation and neutrality from an "outsider," reduced the observed to an inferior, dehumanized position. As Diane K. Lewis argued, "Colonialism structured the relationship between anthropologists and non-Western peoples in the past. Fieldworkers conducted their studies as a form of privilege, one of many they exercised through membership in the dominant group. Their world was pursued in the interest of the colonizers in terms of the concepts and theories they developed as well as the roles they played."<sup>44</sup>

Many anthropologists have proposed decolonial anthropological methodologies that address the problematic colonial nature of the discipline or are in response to the ethical concerns with traditional ethnographic methods. For example, Delmos J. Jones argued for a "native

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<sup>42</sup> See Laura Nader, "Up the Anthropologist—Perspectives Gained from Studying Up," *Reinventing Anthropology*, ed. by Dell Hymes, (New York: Random House, 1969). For examples of anthropological advocacy and responsibility, see Kathleen Gough, "New Proposals for Anthropologists," *Current Anthropology*, 9.5, (1968): 391-435; Gerald D. Berreman, "Is Anthropology Alive? Social Responsibility in Social Anthropology," *Current Anthropology*, 9.5: 391-396, (1968); Gutorm Gjessing, "The Social Responsibility of the Social Scientist," *Current Anthropology*, 9.5: 397-402, (1968). For differences between activist anthropology and applied anthropology, see Samuel Martínez, "Making Violence Visible: an Activist Anthropological Approach to Women's Rights Investigation" in *Engaging Contradictions: Theory, Politics, and Methods of Activist Scholarship*, Charles R. Hale, ed., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 187-191; Some Native American scholars find applied anthropology useful for conducting research in their communities. See Darren J. Ranco, "Toward a Native Anthropology: Hermeneutics, Hunting Stories, and Theorizing from Within," *Wicazo Sa Review*, vol. 21.2, (Fall 2006), 70-71.

<sup>43</sup> See Talal Asad, ed., *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*, (London: Ithaca Press, 1973).

<sup>44</sup> Diane K. Lewis, "Anthropology and Colonialism," *Current Anthropology*, 14.5, (1973), 590.

anthropology" that involves theories based on a set of non-Western assumptions and principles.<sup>45</sup> For Jones, the native anthropologist would look at social phenomena from a point of a view different from traditional anthropology, and the emergence of a native anthropology would be central to the decolonization of the discipline.<sup>46</sup> Likewise, Diane K. Lewis suggested that Western anthropologists turn their methods and insights to their own societies. She argued that Euro-Americans who do this "may find much-needed answers to some of the ethical and methodological questions currently discussed in the discipline," and that "the anthropologist who is forced to study his own culture will find it more difficult to objectify and dehumanize his own people."<sup>47</sup> Similar to this way of thinking, reflecting on a presentation given at an academic forum in Croatia in the late 1980s, Korean anthropologist Cho Haejoang puts forward that: "Anthropology is not a hobby to be taken up by romantics with a strong curiosity about other cultures. Anthropologists must be people who set out with the serious intention of solving the problems of their own mother country, and in this sense, finally everyone must be a native anthropologist."<sup>48</sup> In other words, such anthropologists advocate for a humanitarian problem-solving based anthropology at "home" for "home."

Yet, the outlook on native anthropology seems to have changed very little since decolonizing anthropological methodologies were first recommended. As native anthropologist Darren J. Ranco recently pointed out, the attitude that continues toward native anthropology is that it is viewed as "advocacy" rather than serious or theoretical. Moreover, Ranco claims that, despite the self-critical turn in anthropology where studying close to home is accepted, most social and cultural anthropology programs still favor and encourage dissertation fieldwork in remote locations, "where one learns the anthropological tools to bring back to locations closer to the home society."<sup>49</sup> Ranco, for example, realized in graduate school that his interest in anthropology differed from his colleagues who seemed intent on traveling the world and experiencing new things.<sup>50</sup> Fifteen years after he wrote "Towards a Native Anthropology," Delmos J. Jones reflected on the topic again. Despite that time lapse, what concerns him is that the field of anthropology essentially studies oppressed peoples, but the tools and theories used to describe the lives of these groups do not adequately deal with the realities of their oppression. Moreover, he is interested in how both anthropology and native anthropology relate to the issues of social quality and social justice—that is, how they advance these goals, or if they merely reflect traditional anthropology. He ultimately argues that the issue is not whether the anthropologist is a "native" or not. Since both mainstream and native anthropologists operate in a social and political context, Jones believes the nature of the content and descriptive discourse that aims at being a transformative anthropology is more important.<sup>51</sup> Reflective of this

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<sup>45</sup> Delmos J. Jones, "Towards a Native Anthropology," *Human Organization*, vol. 29.4, (Winter 1970).

<sup>46</sup> Jones, 257-258.

<sup>47</sup> Lewis, 589.

<sup>48</sup> Cho Haejoang and Ueno Chizuko, "Speaking at the Border/Will These Words Reach...", trans. by Teresa K-Sue Park and Miki Kaneda, *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences*, ed. Peter Skafish, vol. 18.2, (Spring/Summer 2010), 59-60.

<sup>49</sup> Ranco, 66.

<sup>50</sup> Ranco, 61. My own experiences in many of the local anthropological intellectual circles I navigated are similar to the Ranco's critiques. For example, often when I was asked about my "research project" and I explained that I was engaged in "native/urban anthropology" in the San Francisco Bay Area, looks of bewilderment and confusion generally followed. It seemed like my response was disappointing as it could not feed a curious desire for the "exotic"; it was as if culture, "foreign" language, and travel would not have a central place in my research.

<sup>51</sup> Delmos J. Jones, "Anthropology and the Oppressed: A Reflection on 'Native' Anthropology," *Napa Bulletin*, vol. 16.1, (Jan 1995): 58-70.



viewpoint, in recent times there are several activist scholars who partake in a variety of methods, such as engaged-, public-, activist- and militant anthropologies, that often align with a commitment to decolonization.<sup>52</sup>

## Documenting as Decolonizing

Along with drawing upon such theories that advocate for decolonizing anthropological methods, I approach this dissertation with the idea that documentation can be central to decolonizing. To explain, decolonial scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith argues that "decolonization is a process which engages with imperialism and colonialism at multiple levels. For researchers, one of those levels is concerned with having a more critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations and values which inform research practices."<sup>53</sup> From this perspective, to view documenting as decolonizing means to rework understandings of the impact of imperialism and colonialism in knowledge production and research. Moreover, documenting the activism of youth of color becomes a decolonizing move at the level of history. For example, when colonization did not destroy traditions and sources that could provide important information, the few documents and other historical evidence that survived offer limited insights into the lives of Native American and African American young people, especially since these texts are usually not from the colonized point of view. Even when colonizers commented on Indians and slaves, few accounts by Native and African Americans survived the colonial period.<sup>54</sup> As Aurora Levins Morales points out, one of the ways that "colonial powers seek to disrupt the sense of historical identity of the colonized is by taking over the transmission of culture to the young [of which] invading the historical identities of the subjugated is one part of the task, accomplished through the destruction of records, oral traditions and cultural forms and through interfering with the education of the young."<sup>55</sup> Although there is a shortage of

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<sup>52</sup> Examples include, Charles R. Hale, "Activist Research v. Cultural Critique: Indigenous Land Rights and the Contradictions of Politically Engaged Anthropology" *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 21.1, (Feb. 2006), 96-120; Kay B. Warren, "Perils and Promises of Engaged Anthropology," *Engaged Observer: Anthropology, Advocacy, and Activism*, Victoria Sanford and Asale Angel-Ajani, eds., (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2006); Rob Borofsky, *Why a Public Anthropology?*, (Hawaii Pacific University: Center for Public Anthropology, 2011); Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Engaging Anthropology: The Case for a Public Presence*, (New York: Berg, 2006); Pierre Bourdieu, "For a Scholarship with Commitment," *Profession*, (2000): 40-45; Nancy Scheper-Hughes, "Making Anthropology Public," *Anthropology Today*, vol. 25, no. 4, (Aug. 2009): 1-3; Nancy Scheper-Hughes, "The Primacy of the Ethical: Propositions for a Militant Anthropology," *Current Anthropology*, vol. 36, no. 3, (Jun. 1995): 409-440; Jeffrey S. Juris, *Networking Futures: the Movements Against Corporate Globalization*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 19-24; Setha M. Low, "Claiming Space for an Engaged Anthropology: Spatial Inequality and Social Exclusion," *American Anthropologist*, 113.3, (2001), 389-407; Hans A. Baer, "Engaged Anthropology in 2011: A View from the Antipodes in a Turbulent Era," *American Anthropologist: Journal of the American Anthropological Association*, 114.2, (Jun. 2012); Maxmilian C. Forte, "Beyond Public Anthropology: Approaching Zero," Keynote Address delivered by video to the 8<sup>th</sup> Anthropology Public Anthropology Conference, "(Re)Defining Paradigms of Praxis," American University, Washington, D.C., October 14-16, (available online at: <http://openanthropology.org/pacfortekeynote2.pdf>); Barrie Thorne, "Political Activist as Participant Observer: Conflicts of Commitment in a Study of the Draft Resistance Movement of the 1960s," in *Symbolic Interaction*, vol. 2, no. 1, (Spring 1979).

<sup>53</sup> Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous People*, (New York: Zed Books Ltd, 1999), 20.

<sup>54</sup> James Marten, "Introduction," *Children in Colonial America*, ed. James Marten, (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 6.

<sup>55</sup> Morales, 23.

documentation on children in the colonies and the regional variations as to how childrearing happened, scholars have fortunately begun to unearth ways to contribute to the research that reconstructs this aspect of colonial history. Therefore, a way to describe the process of documenting youth of color activism is like working through an archive of coloniality that, through many creative sources and ways of excavation, claims re-remembering as central to the process.<sup>56</sup> In particular, I found that bringing and piecing together the multiple accounts and stories of youth activism had a healing quality because it allowed me to make sense of something that remained incomplete, as fragments.

The archive of coloniality that I worked through for this dissertation has a different purpose than that of a "formal" archive. To explain, sociologist Harriet Bradley provides an account of the varying ways "the archive" is understood. For instance, one explanation, perhaps the most common, is that an archive consists of a "pre-existing documentary collection, often housed in a purpose-built site (local records office, government department or university library collections), waiting for the sharp mind of a scholar to excise its secrets: the archive as physical fact."<sup>57</sup> As Fatima El-Tayeb claims, "archives are places that house 'facts,' knowledge that has already been accepted as such and thus is deemed worthy of being incorporated into a space designed for the purpose of conserving relevant material."<sup>58</sup> Other versions of "the archive" include the data generated by a researcher, accounts of (psychoanalytic) practice, or personal collections gathered by individuals for a variety of reasons; they can become the source of a formal record. In addition, new technologies are creating innovative types of archives. Mél Hogan's research on podcasts as a tool for archiving serves as an example. Hogan writes, "New means of communication have thus afforded otherwise invisible and marginalized lesbian communities the means with which to re-present community, challenge dominant representations, highlight the importance of minority representation itself, and archive the results of their activity and activism."<sup>59</sup> Based on the variety of versions and limitations of what constitutes a traditional archive, Bradley argues that the archive is, thus, a "slippery concept," while Hogan contends that online documentation, like podcasting, puts into question "notions of archival fixity and authority."<sup>60</sup> Despite this, Bradley also points out that "the archive is the repository of memories: individual and collective, official and unofficial, licit and illicit, legitimating and subversive...and [that] we strive, however ineffectively and partially, to reconstruct, restore, recover the past, to present and re-present stories of the past within our

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<sup>56</sup> Many scholars address the importance of memory as a means to liberation and/or how the past haunts/influences the present. Examples include Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); Toni Morrison, *Beloved: A Novel*, (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1998). In many of Morrison's novels, memory is a powerful force that shapes experience, history, and culture. Because forgetting is to dismember, reconstructing memory is a deliberate act where one can recreate voices that are absent or silenced in history. Writing is one way that authors like Morrison rebuild cultural memory. For more on this, see Lisa Cade Wieland, *The Toni Morrison Encyclopedia*, ed. by Elizabeth Ann Beaulieu, (Westport, Conn: Greenwood, Press, 2003), 206-209.

<sup>57</sup> Harriet Bradley, "The seductions of the archive: voices lost and found," *History of the Human Sciences*, 12.2, (1999), 108.

<sup>58</sup> Fatima El-Tayeb, "The Archive, the Activist, and the Audience, or Black European Studies: A Comparative Interdisciplinary Study of Identities, Positionalities, and Differences," *Transit*, 1.1, (2004), 1.

<sup>59</sup> Mél Hogan, "Dykes on Mykes: Podcasting and the Activist Archive," *TOPIA: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies*, 20, (Fall 2008), 210.

<sup>60</sup> Bradley, 108; Hogan, 200.

narratives."<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, Bradley adds that the archive provides a way to recover what has been lost and retell and relive stories of the past.

How could an archive (or creating one) further the project of decolonization? Fatima El-Tayeb points out that traditional archives generally function as exclusive centers of governing knowledge and sites of exclusion. As a result, they often play a contentious role for marginalized subjects since they are often taken-for-granted or seen as irrelevant to dominant history. However, El-Tayeb also highlights how archives can have a different function, in terms of how they are described, perceived, and accessed. As part of the "alternative possibilities of archival resources that have been explored in the U.S. since the Civil Rights movement," El-Tayeb calls attention to the "history from below" approach, which aims at "both utilizing ignored materials within existing collections and at recording ignored voices through oral history projects."<sup>62</sup> Similarly, Andrew Flinn points out that, post-World War II, there was a focus "on stories of those traditionally ignored or cast to the periphery of most mainstream histories...[that] necessitated reflection on how such 'new' histories were to be written, of the sources for such histories and where those sources might be located, and the potential power of such stories in terms of a radically transformed public history."<sup>63</sup> As a result, new social histories, identity histories, and oral history disciplines emerged since the 1960s, and this approach became significant for various historically marginalized groups, including ethnic minorities, women, and queers, that had been excluded from dominant academic discourses.

In a similar way, documenting the activism of youth of color became a decolonizing move at the level of challenging knowledge production and exclusionary practices. There is very little scholarship written about the activism my research focuses on and, to my awareness, no "formal" archive of these movements exists anywhere. From the materials that do exist, the majority is written in disparate pieces or through varying sources that traditional standards of documentation would consider "unofficial" or "unscholarly." Although there are journalistic reports, activist magazines, and youth organizations that wrote about these movements, since they are not considered "academic," these sources and the activism that is written about would possibly be given little value or rendered insignificant. Furthermore, if materials produced by or relating to activism are lost or dispersed, so are the locations, memories, and histories of (local) activism. How could one or future generations-to-come build upon the knowledge, work, and energy of social change if social movements and activist materials are rendered ethereal? A way to avoid the dilemma of activism and respective materials disappearing from the radar of social thought is to have a "record" of them that serves as "evidence" that they exist. Of course, what constitutes as "proof" is debatable, especially since historical standards of evidence are not free from bias, are charged with colonizing implications, and strongly rely on written forms. Despite an increasing acceptance of a variety of forms of documentation, relying on written forms is particularly problematic because, as Aurora Levins Morales emphasizes, "the fact that something was written down does not make it true...It simply means that someone with sufficient authority to write things down recorded their version of events or transactions while someone else did not."<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Bradley, 108.

<sup>62</sup> El-Tayeb, 2.

<sup>63</sup> Andrew Flinn, "Archival Activism: Independent and Community-led Archives, Radical Public History and the Heritage Professions," *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies*, 7.2, (2011), 3.

<sup>64</sup> Morales, 29.

Aware that the written account I provide of the Xican@ walkouts of the 1990s and subsequent multi-ethnic activism of the "No on 21" movement is far from perfect, one of the purposes of this dissertation is to create a record that not only serve as "proof" that these movements actually happened, but also because it can help contribute to other types of activism. For example, Marcos, who was a 21 year-old student at UC Berkeley at the time of the walkouts, felt that he wanted to organize but did not know it was possible. He states, "I didn't know it could be done. I didn't know that you could walk out [with] 3,000 to 5,000 students. I did not know that kind of thing was remotely possible. I thought that was the [19]60s, and that was where it ended."<sup>65</sup> Although this account in and of itself does not produce other activism, telling such stories can play an instrumental role in mobilizing people and reflects a type of social movement archival activism, which Andrew Flinn identifies as having a political agenda and purpose that approaches "archiving and history-making with an activist practice."<sup>66</sup> This approach lends to the imperative of producing a "record" of activism that is not only for the sake of knowledge production, historical retrieval, or only reclamation or celebration, but also seeks to contribute to social movements as it challenges what a "record" means. In other words, documenting these moments likewise serves as an archival intervention to knowledge production by challenging what is understood as "official" knowledge. As Stuart Hall writes in the context of histories and archives that have been consistently underrepresented or often ignored in dominant collections, the "activity of 'archiving' is thus always a critical one, always a historically located one, always a contestory one."<sup>67</sup> From this perspective, decolonizing "the archive" becomes transparent in this dissertation: the activism of youth is at the forefront to trivialize what is considered "official," and, in turn, establishes a historical presence of a marginalized population. In other words, one of the reasons documenting such movements is important is not only for the sake of having a "record," but because the process itself challenges what we understand as "evidence." Since youth of color are generally not seen as subjects of history, as theorists, as knowledge-producers, documenting their collective acts of power consequently contributes to the political project that attempts to shift colonizing adult modes of knowledge and thought.

Documenting recent youth movements is also important because of its relevance and (interrupting) history. That is, documenting recent youth movements extends and expands the history of activism. In many activist spaces in the San Francisco Bay Area and elsewhere, it is common to look back to the 1960s as "the time" of great activism. Although it's great to draw upon this historical memory, many of the younger generations are often detached from this. Based on my own experiences conducting workshops around the topic, many youth are frankly disinterested in "going back to the 60s." I believe this, in part, is connected to the disconnect that is produced by material, video footage, thoughts, and events that many contemporary youth consider outdated, as existing far away from their reality. Documenting recent activism is important in that, it not only reflects contemporary aspects of youth culture in the social movements that may provide more applicable ways for current generations to connect, but also ruptures the idea that the 1960s activism is where social movements begin and end. By writing about the respective youth movements, my point is not to conflate, solidify, or produce artificial boundary makers. As I highlight further in dissertation, my point, instead, is to work towards

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<sup>65</sup> Quoted in Robert Roth and Annie Johnston, eds., "La Raza Youth Speak Out," *Breakthrough*, (summer 1995).

<sup>66</sup> Flinn, 1.

<sup>67</sup> Stuart Hall, "Constituting an archive," *Third Text*, 54, (2001), 92.

unifying youth activists efforts to highlight their varying contributions to the decolonial turn in general.

Important components to documenting youth movements are secondary sources as many scholars have written with decolonizing intentions. In fact, several of the secondary sources I rely upon for this dissertation (often because of lack of available material) work in a similarly decolonizing way. Although secondary sources are not considered "original" by Western standards of documentation, they are important to re-remembering the respective youth of color social movements I examine, especially since many of them are written from activists that participated in the social movements in one way or another.<sup>68</sup> In other words, the multiple voices carried through the various sources, secondary or not, reflect a collective voice of activism formed by what Juana María Rodríguez calls "discursive space."<sup>69</sup> From the perspective that, along with "original" material, the many secondary quotes, images, and stories produced during and about the respective activism creates an activist discursive realm, drawing from secondary sources serves as a bridge in the re-remembering process; it helps work towards bringing the activism of youth of color moment to the forefront, to life. Even though the movements I write about happened over a decade ago, the memory, experience, and effects are alive now.

While I attempt to document part of youth activism in the 1990s, I'm not claiming to be a historian nor dismiss the importance of (critical) historical methods. In fact, as a decolonizing project, this dissertation is anthropological as much as it is historical and philosophical.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, as a "decolonizing anthropologist," which by definition means I engage in interdisciplinary work and beyond, I'm more concerned with how youth of color do or do not figure in knowledge production. I do not attempt to offer a definitive history of the movements I write about, including organizations or leaders, but rather seek to make transparent the ways in which young people of color challenge their criminalization and coloniality, the diversity of the activism of young people, and the ways that oppression affects young people. Like any study, this dissertation is partial and many may not necessarily agree with the way I reconstruct the memories, experiences, and organizing of the respective movements I examine. Nevertheless, I see the dissertation as a process of documentation that serves as a necessary step towards placing local contemporary youth of color activism on a broader register of knowledge. Additionally, I seek to create "valuable history" that centers the always already partial community narratives, the complexities of a group's activist experiences, and collaborative history-making processes in a manner that is broad and as inclusive as possible.

Part of the re-remembering process often includes collectively re-living local memory. For example, I have recalled many memories with several of the former 1990s Chican@ walkouts/"Youth Movement" activists in a variety of spaces—ranging from cultural, educational, social events to current social justice protests. When the topic of the respective movements

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<sup>68</sup> Elizabeth Martínez—Chicana feminist and long-time community activist, educator, and author—is one such example of someone who writes about, as well as participated in, the 1990s Chican@ walkouts and subsequent multi-ethnic "Youth Movement."

<sup>69</sup> See Juana María Rodríguez, *Queer Latinidad: Identity Practices, Discursive Space*, (New York: New York University Press, 2003). Ideas of discursive space can be traced to contemporary conceptualizations of the public sphere. See Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: an Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991).

<sup>70</sup> For a discussion on the importance of interdisciplinarity see Johnella E. Butler, "Ethnic Studies and Interdisciplinarity," *Ethnic Studies Research: Approaches and Perspectives*, ed. by Timothy P. Fong, (New York: Altamira Press, 2008). For a critique of academic disciplines, see Lewis R. Gordon, *Disciplinary Decadence: Living Through Trying Times*, (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2006).

comes up, the conversation usually includes how that time had a significant impact in many of the lives of youth (ourselves) and how they shaped their (our) political consciousness and activist foundations. This does not mean we talk about the activism and organizing in strictly "blind," nostalgic, or romanticized manner—we also talk about the challenges and hardships involved with the movements (some which I write about in this dissertation). Nevertheless, these memories point to how these movements and our participation within them had a significant impact in our lives. Recollecting with activists in several spaces, as well as when meeting new organizers, is how activist archives are evoked, involved, and become alive. That is, in our relations with one another is where we store, enact, and perform our memory—which is what Chicana@ studies scholar Maylei Blackwell calls "knowing and telling." Drawing upon the work of Diana Taylor's notion of the "repertoire" by which embodied memory is understood as non-reproducible knowledge, Blackwell highlights the idea of living memory and embodied knowledge as a nonarchival system of transfer that depends on persons being part of the transmission. As Blackwell states, telling does not "fit easily into the realm of documentary evidence since that knowledge and way of knowing is not textual...[and] memory is also part of the repertoire of the excluded, politically marginalized, and specifically the colonized."<sup>71</sup>

### **Decolonizing Activist Methodology**

Collecting materials to document the Xicana@ walkouts and succeeding multi-ethnic "No on 21" movement included a having a creative and flexible approach. To begin with, many original materials covering the activism I write about have not been formally archived, are missing, or are spread out in various places away from general public access. Although there are certain social movement archives particular to California in some libraries, they generally relate to what are considered larger-scale movements or from earlier periods like the 1960s and 1970s. The material about the youth activism I studied I often found through organizers and participants of the movements themselves. As Jeanne Schepers' research on university labor activism highlights, activist themselves invented an archive though their dissemination and circulation of agitation/propaganda posters.<sup>72</sup> In a similar way, many of the participants either created or had their own personal archives of collected materials, often including pictures and/or newspaper clippings.

On rare occasions, some personal archives were rich and consisted of several folders that, along with newspaper articles, included copies of reports, original flyers, posters, meeting notes, and the like. In one unexpected instance, I was not aware that one of my long-known friends had a central role participating and shaping the walkouts until we made the connection by chance in a conversation in passing. Not only was she a reservoir of knowledge and history of the Xicana@ walkouts, but also had an extensive personal archive of the activism, including articles of university, community college, and high school newspapers, which turned out to be an incredibly valuable source of knowledge. I hadn't considered high school newspapers as source of knowledge; yet, it made sense that high school newspapers could serve as a productive space where youth could document their activist experiences.

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<sup>71</sup> Maylei Blackwell, "Chicana Power!: Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement," (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 10.

<sup>72</sup> See Jeanne Schepers, "Visualize Academic Labor in the 1990s: Inventing an Activist Archive in Santa Barbara," *Feminist Studies*, 31.3, (Fall 2005).

In addition, I contacted many local activist organizations and asked if they had any relevant material. Sometimes I had no luck, but other times the response was affirmative: "Oh, yeah, we have a lot of stuff from that 'No on 21' campaign in a box with folders." From some organizations, I collected appropriate documents and materials, such as video/media produced about youth organizing during the time, copies of official plans/maps of actions, youth organizing reports and assessments, and even documents that included information like personal addresses and telephone numbers of high profiled politicians like former governor Pete Wilson or of the main offices of corporations that funded Proposition 21. I communicated with a few funders who supported youth organizations: some had no records, some did not respond, and others shared what little correspondence and/or fiscal information they had of relevant organizations involved with the activism of the time. Similarly, I looked online for resources—including activist blogs, leftist journals, and underground reporting—searched in formal newspapers, and excavated my own personal archive of youth organizing material that I had collected through the years.

Last but not least, part of my methods includes "participant-observation." However, I use this term loosely as it doesn't quite apply to my research in a traditionally ethnographic way. To explain, my involvement with the movements I write about happened before I began my research project—not after, as is usually the case. My participation with youth activism began as an undergraduate before I had a research agenda, first as a community college student then as a transfer student at UC Berkeley. For example, at my local community college, at the time when the anti-immigration bill Proposition 187 was approved, I was an active member of the student group *Movimiento Estudiantil Chican@ de Aztlán (MEChA)*.<sup>73</sup> Through MEChA, I helped organize cultural events, host a student conference, and volunteered at a local community center for Latin@ youth. Also, when I transferred to UC Berkeley, I lived at Casa Joaquín Murrieta which, during the 1990s, was an independent Chican@ cooperative where a lot of student organizing took place. When I arrived, proposition 209, which eliminated affirmative action, had recently passed, and the anti-bilingual education bill Proposition 227 was approved during 1998. After my time at UC Berkeley, I participated in the "Youth Movement" that formed in response to Proposition 21 which further criminalized youth; I remained involved with local youth organizing for over year after the bill passed in 2000. Yet, the social position of being a community/student activist (or other related ones, like being a high school student or non-formally educated youth) before embarking on a formal research project would hardly qualify anyone as seriously employing methods of "participant-observation." In other words, the terms of "participant-observation" in a traditional sense do not quite apply to my research as this method is usually accompanied by planning an ethnographic study before entering "the field," which includes taking extensive and detailed field notes during the process.

This research project differs from a traditional ethnographic study in many ways, some of which I will highlight. First, as I noted, my participation with youth activism came first—the idea of conducting ethnographic research and taking field notes through the discipline of anthropology came years after, as part of activist hindsight. Second, unlike "pre-designed" ethnographic research projects that are often born out of intellectual inquiry or curiosity, my participation with activism and the life-changing impact I experienced through these movements propels me to do this project. Third, although engaging with scholarship is important to this research project, my engagement with the movements I examine is at the forefront of this study; that is, the transformative feelings and awareness I experienced through activism guides my

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<sup>73</sup> For more information on MEChA, see <http://www.nationalmecha.org/>, (accessed Jun. 18, 2012).

research—they are part my essence, part of my flesh.<sup>74</sup> Last but not least, since I am engaged in a decolonizing project, which requires that I "piece" together a story in a non-traditional and non-linear way, I go beyond traditional anthropological methods. Drawing upon interdisciplinary methods is particularly important to this study, not only because any participation of social movements is always already partial, but also because I cover a long range of activism that goes beyond my own experience, regardless. Thus, this dissertation serves as a collected "fragmented" archive that includes varying types of documents, voices, sources, and materials. By piecing together clues, slices, and sections of resources, conversations, and memories, I try to make sense of the bigger picture of what happened during the time.

Along with having countless conversations with activists/participants about the movements I write about, I conducted "formal" oral history interviews that served as glue in bringing together the many disparate pieces and memories together.<sup>75</sup> Often it was enjoyable to recollect and share with people about the generative aspects of the activism we participated in, to hear perspectives differing/similar to my own, to learn more about the activists and movements on a more personalized level, and to carry conversations into speculating about the future of current social movements.<sup>76</sup> How do these feelings, memories, and visions fit into the methodology of this study? I ask this question because feelings, memories, and visions are central to this dissertation; they are implicated everywhere in the text. Like the rest of the dissertation, this chapter is a retrospective account that is, in the words of Juana María Rodríguez, "not about truth but about representations, not about inscription but about interpretations....this text presupposes a different sort of methodology, one that 'refuses explication'...that demands that you, the reader, read against your preconceived notions of academic disciplinarity, research, language, and scholarship to reimagine the practice of knowledge production."<sup>77</sup> Because this approach is decolonizing, along with incorporating traditional methods, data, or context, this dissertation is about something deeper.

Rather than seeing this dissertation as functioning as an "alternative" archive, I see this as creating an-other type of archive: an "archival option," if you will. To explain the difference, when discussing his preference for the terminology of "decolonial options," Walter D. Mignolo points out that:

If you look for alternatives you accept a point of reference instead of a set of existing options among which the decolonial enters claiming its legitimacy to sit at the table when

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<sup>74</sup> In Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds., *This Bridge Called my Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, (New York: Kitchen Table Press, 1983 [1981]), the idea of "theory in the flesh" is introduced, "where the physical realities of our lives—our skin color, the land or concrete we grew up on, our sexual longings—all fuse to create a politic born out of necessity" (p. 23). I draw upon this idea to mean that my experience with activism is one that constitutes part of my ontology.

<sup>75</sup> There were many participants of the movements that I write about who I contacted or spoke with but did not have the chance to formally interview, including Charles Houston, Genevieve Negrón-Gonzales, Tina Bartolome, Melanie Cervantes, Jesus Barraza, Favianna Rodríguez, Kahlil Jacobs-Fantauzzi, Diana Negrín da Silva, Plinio Alberto Hernández, Gabriel Hernández, George Galvis, Catalina Garzón Sandoval, José Luis Pavón, Daniel Santillano, Leah Weitz, Pecolia Manigo, Tony Colman, Lateefah Simon, and others.

<sup>76</sup> One example was the panel "Youth Justice Roundtable at CR10" held at the Critical Resistance Conference (CR10): Strategy & Struggle to Abolish the Prison Industrial Complex, September 26-28, 2008, in Oakland, California. The program described the roundtable/panel as a "discussion reflection on the last 10 years of youth justice organizing, from the Alameda county super jail and Prop 21 to the Runner initiative" (p. 24). Speakers included George Galvis, Marlene Sánchez, Lateefah Simon, Alex Sánchez, and Jay Imani.

<sup>77</sup> Rodríguez, 2-3.



global futures are being discussed...if you argue for 'alternative modernity or modernities' or 'alternative development,' you are already accepting that there is *a* modernity and *a* development to which nothing but alternatives could exist...if you say that modernity is an option and development is an option, then decoloniality is also an option, and as 'options,' all are at the same level. By the same token, you highlight the privileging of one option (modernity or development) in its appearance as *the option*.<sup>78</sup>

Instead of seeing this dissertation as an "alternative archive" that accepts there is a formal archive by which all substandard ones are measured, viewing it as the "archive option" choice, instead, not only reminds people that there are different sources of knowledge production, but also privileges the youth of color activism that I examine: one coming from below and with a decolonizing imperative. In documenting these movements through sources that are not necessarily or generally considered as part of "official archives," this dissertation in general serves as an option that participates in the larger economy of decolonization by disrupting the circulation of adultist representations that locate "official knowledge" usually in an institutionally sanctioned place. Perhaps the purpose of this dissertation is not really about documentation or the activists I interview or underscore, as much as it is about the methods of looking: from below, sideways and through, from and next to the sides, and before and beyond the center.<sup>79</sup>

Drawing upon, and contributing to, decolonizing thought and methods, the first chapters of the dissertation are about decolonizing literature and history. In chapter two, I examine scholarship youth and social movements, decolonizing anthropology, and decolonial thought. In particular, I look at how discourses about young people in the 20<sup>th</sup> century reveal a trend of negative representations about youth, despite how young people have played vital roles in impacting and shaping the social landscape across the globe. I provide a literature review of the growing body of research on youth activism and on young people in general, including addressing their shortcomings. In addition, in this chapter I explore the relationship of age and power as it relates to decolonizing anthropology and decolonial thought. Chapter three is about history and perspective as it connects to youth activism. Moving away from the popular trope of resistance familiar to many analyses of youth and/or their activism, I advocate for decolonizing framework that places youth activism in relation to the global decolonizing turn that began in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Specifically, I argue that the activism I write about should be understood through this perspective, but I also conclude the chapter by highlighting the complexities of what the types of youth activism that could be considered as decolonizing.

In the remaining chapters, I focus on how the Xican@ and multi-ethnic walkouts and the "No on 21" campaign reconfigure the logic of colonization, including the negative interrelated notions of being, knowledge, and power. By contributing to other ways of understanding the

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<sup>78</sup> Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), xxviii-xxix, (italics in original).

<sup>79</sup> See Dina Bowman, "Studying Up, Down, Sideways and Through: Situated Research and Policy Networks," S. Lockie, et al., eds., *The Future of Sociology: Proceedings of the Annual Conference of the Australian Sociological Association*, (Canberra: Australian National University, 2009),

<http://www.tasa.org.au/conferences/conferencepapers09/papers/Bowman,%20Dina.pdf>, (accessed Jun. 18, 2012).

Also, rather than focusing on detailed background accounts of activist, I am interested in what they say and how it relates to my argument. For in-depth background explanations of activist involved in the "No on 21" movement, see Laura Rojas Galicia, "Chicana Power and Pedagogy," (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2010).

politics of identity in relations to colonization, I argue in chapter four that the activism of youth of color works towards ontological decolonization by challenging stereotypes, recreating community, building coalitions, and challenging the adultist characteristics of the modernist, liberal subject. In chapter five, I contend that epistemological decolonization was central to the youth activism as young people created new types of knowledges and epistemic spaces. In chapter six, I examine the activism of youth of color to argue that it challenged the coloniality of power in multiple ways, including facing institutional and administrative authorities, contesting neoliberalism, and building self-established forms of power from below. I conclude the dissertation by arguing that the unfinished project of decolonization requires that a collective move take place towards a transgenerational consciousness and practice. Along with making youth's politics and political identities essential to this dissertation, I aim to contribute to the unfinished project of decolonization—something that some anthropological research engages with but most literature on young people or youth activism has yet to do.

**Chapter two:**

**Expanding Representations of Youth, Anthropology, and Decolonial Thought**

## Introduction

In this chapter, I first examine discourses about young people that reveal a trend of representing youth in negative ways. Second, I look at the growing body of literature on young people and youth activism in general to address many of their shortcomings, particularly as they relate to the politics of colonization, age, and power. Because this dissertation is reflective of an anthropology that is decolonizing, I continue by exploring decolonizing anthropological work that began since at least the 1960s when the field was critiqued for its involvement in colonial and imperialist agendas. Next, since this dissertation is primarily grounded in the scholarship of decolonial thought, I describe many of significant theoretical approaches that constitute this field, including the modern/colonial group, U.S. Third World women of color, and decolonial feminism. Last but not least, I conclude by pointing to the general absence of age in decolonial thought to argue that the modern conceptions of adult/adulthood are implicated by and made through the colonial context.

## Negative Discourses and Representations Of Youth

Discourses about young people at least since the early 1900s, reveal a trend evidencing negative representations about youth. One example of negative portrayals of youth is psychologists G. Stanley Hall's well-known scholarship.<sup>80</sup> In 1904, Hall produced two influential volumes of research on adolescence in which he defined this period as a stage of delinquency, immaturity, "storm and stress," and "faults and vices." When discussing the "adolescence period," Hall states:

The momentum of heredity often seems insufficient to enable the child to achieve this great revolution and come to complete maturity, so that every step of the upward way is strewn with wreckage of body, mind, and morals. There is not only arrest, but perversion, at every stage, and hoodlumism, juvenile crime, and secret vice seem not only increasing, but develop in earlier years in every civilized land.<sup>81</sup>

Yet, Hall's examination of adolescent development through a biological perspective and inheritance of behavior did not end there. Influenced by Charles Darwin's theory of evolution and Ernst Haeckel's recapitulation theory, Hall formulated adolescence as a bio-psychological condition that intimately linked young people with non-Western "primitives."<sup>82</sup> In addition, Hall's research had a significant impact in many ways, including encouraging the expansion of "adult-sponsored organizations like the Scouts, parents' manuals to [provide] advise on bringing up troubled adolescents, and high school management systems to 'train' [youth] for adulthood, and therefore, to overcome such deviant possibilities."<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence: Its Psychology and its Relation to Psychology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion, and Education*, 2 vols., (New York: Appleton and Company, 1904).

<sup>81</sup> Hall, xiv.

<sup>82</sup> Jennifer Cole and Deborah Durham, eds., "Age, Regeneration, and the Intimate Politics of Childhood" in *Generations and Globalization: Youth, Age, and the Family in the New World Economy*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press: 2007), 7.

<sup>83</sup> Neil Campbell, ed., *The Radiant Hour: Versions of Youth in American Culture*, (Exeter: The University of Exeter Press, 2000), 4.

However, there were significant responses to Hall's work and to other negative representations about adolescence.<sup>84</sup> Two highlight a few examples, anthropologist Margaret Mead's corpus of writings, particularly her classic *Coming of Age in Samoa*, provided a cultural critique of adolescence.<sup>85</sup> Based on her research that primarily focused on adolescent girls in the Samoa Islands, Mead questioned whether the obstacles that adolescents faced were due to the nature of adolescence itself or due to civilization. Challenging negative notions of how adolescence was understood in the United States, Mead argued that the period of adolescence in Samoa was a transition not marked by psychological or emotional confusion, anxiety, or distress.<sup>86</sup> Another example is the work by social psychologist Erik K. Erikson, whose writings about childhood and society provided influential psychosocial readings on adolescence. In *Childhood and Society*, Erikson introduced the concept of eight stages of psychosocial development.<sup>87</sup> Grounded in, but departing from, Freudian theories where human development was understood as primarily complete by adolescence, Erikson believed that development continued throughout adulthood and into late life.<sup>88</sup> Both Mead and Erikson approached adolescence through the perspective that nurture and experience shaped individual development, and their scholarship was also important to understandings about youth identity and rebellion.<sup>89</sup> Last but not least, literature that portrayed youth culture and counter-cultures in more positive ways became more common after the 1960s, such as the research produced by the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham, England that pioneered cultural studies.<sup>90</sup>

Despite the generative scholarship since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century that entertained more positive views of adolescence, youth, and youth counter-cultures, negative imaginings and beliefs about young people have carried into the present, albeit with differing nuances that reflect and are defined by respective economic and demographic conditions. This is evident in the recent scholarship that pathologizes youth, premised on the notion that young people, particularly those of color, are innately dangerous and a social threat. For example, John J. Dilulio—then a Princeton professor in politics and public affairs—published an influential article in 1995 that expressed his controversial views. He wrote "The Coming of the Super-Predator"

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<sup>84</sup> Varied approaches to adolescence include the work of Sigmund and Anna Freud (psychoanalytical), Jean Piaget (cognitive), Urie Bronfenbrenner (Ecological), and Albert Bandura (Social Cognitive Learning). For more on this, see Rolf Eduard Helmut Muuss, *Theories of Adolescence*, (New York: Random House, 1988); F. Philip Rice and Kim Gale Dolgin, *The Adolescent: Development, Relationships, and Culture*, (Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 2005).

<sup>85</sup> Margaret Mead, *Coming of Age in Samoa: A Psychological Study of Primitive Youth for Western Civilisation*, (New York: Blue Ribbon Books, 1928).

<sup>86</sup> Mead's work upset many when it first appeared. For controversial aspects (of what is now seen as simplistic and reductive analysis of culture, age, and sexuality) in Mead's work, see James Clifford and George Marcus, *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); James Marcus and Michael M. J. Fischer, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 102-103 and 217.

<sup>87</sup> Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, (New York: Norton, 1963).

<sup>88</sup> For more on this, see Robert V. Kail, and John C. Cavanaugh, *Human Development: A Life-Span View*, (Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Pub., 2004).

<sup>89</sup> For examples, see Margaret Mead, "Youth Revolt: The Future is Now," *Social Education*, 38.4 (Apr. 1974): 326-330; Erik H. Erikson, *Identity, Youth, and Crisis*, (New York: Norton, 1968).

<sup>90</sup> Before being dismantled in 2002, the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies produced many key studies on youth culture. Examples include, Christine Griffin, *Representations of Youth: The Study of Youth and Adolescence in Britain and America*, (Massachusetts: Polity Press, 1993); Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson, eds., *Resistance through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain*, (London: Routledge, 1993).

that predicted a "new wave" of youth criminals that would soon terrorize the nation by 2000.<sup>91</sup> William Bennett, who was also a Princeton professor, along with John P. Walter and Dilulio continued with the super-predator thesis in 1996. Articulating the description of this term, the authors of *Body Count* write: "America is now home to thickening ranks of juvenile 'super-predators'—radically impulsive, brutally remorseless youngsters, including ever more preteenage boys, who murder, assault, rape, rob, burglarize, deal deadly drugs, join gun-toting gangs, and create serious communal disorders."<sup>92</sup> Similar views were shared by Anthony Daniels—a retired prison doctor and psychiatrist that writes under the pseudonym of Theodore Dalrymple—who in 2011 critiqued youth rioters in London by calling them barbarians, among other things.<sup>93</sup> In an opinion piece about recent London riot for the *New York Daily News*, Daniels writes that "young British people are among the most unpleasant and potentially violent young people in the world," and—because rioting is now a way of British life, according to the author—the British "are afraid of our own children; many carry knives."<sup>94</sup> Like Hall, influential intellectuals like Dilulio, Bennett, Walters and Daniels contribute to general negative understandings about youth and/or youth rebellion.

Through their activism and organizing, however, youth have played vital roles in impacting and shaping the social and political landscape across the globe prior to but most notably since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Although youth's activism certainly predates the 1960s, this decade particularly has been described as the decade of student movements where youth were "against the world."<sup>95</sup> During this period, strong waves of youth and anti-colonial protest movements occurred across the planet, in countries like France, Germany, Japan, the United States, and in various parts of Africa and Latin America, and significant changes took place, such as the passing of The Civil Rights Act of 1964. In recent times, youth activism around the globe continues as massive—often explosive—student protests recently occurred in places like Greece, Italy, and England.<sup>96</sup> In 2005 in France, due to pre-existing social tension that included high

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<sup>91</sup> John J. Dilulio, Jr., "The Coming of the Super-Predators," *Weekly Standard*, (Nov. 27, 1995); Council on Crime, "The State of Violent Crime in America," report, (Jan. 1996).

<sup>92</sup> William J. Bennett, John J. Dilulio, Jr., and John P. Walters, *Body Count: Moral Poverty ...and How to Win America's War Against Crime and Drugs* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 27. All three authors were part of the "Council on Crime" which released a conservative, pro-prison/anti-"criminal" report: "The State of Violent Crime in America," (Jan. 1996).

<sup>93</sup> Theodore Dalrymple, "The Barbarians Inside Britain's Gates," *The Wall Street Journal*, (Aug. 15, 2011).

<sup>94</sup> Anthony Daniels, "Behind England's riots, a violent and entitled generation of British young people," *The New York Daily News*, (Aug. 10, 2011).

<sup>95</sup> Marjorie Hope, *Youth Against the World*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1970). For examples of student activism in the U.S., see John and Susan Erlich, eds., *Student Power, Participation and Revolution*, (New York: Association Press 1970); Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle, SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981); Wesley C. Hogan, *Many Minds, One Heart: SNCC's Dream for a New America*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007). For examples of student activism outside the U.S., see Raymond Boudon, "Sources of Student Protests in France," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 395 (May, 1971); Michiya Shimbori, "Student Radicals in Japan," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 395 (May, 1971); William John Hanna, "Student Protest in Independent Africa," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 395 (May, 1971); Arthur Liebman, "Student Activism in Mexico," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 395 (May, 1971).

<sup>96</sup> Sarah Lyall, "London Tuition Hike Protests Turn Violent," *The New York Times*, (Nov. 10, 2010); Rachel Donadio and Gaia Pianigiani, "Italian Students Protest University Reforms," *The New York Times*, (Dec. 22, 2010); Rob Stevens, "Greece: Mass demonstrations protest assault on public education," *World Socialist Web Site*, (Jul. 5, 2006); Amtjee Carassava, "Rioting in Greece continues for third day," *The New York Times*, (Dec. 8, 2008); "Greek student protest turns violent," *The New York Times*, (Jun. 27, 2006).

unemployment and police harassment and brutality of youth, there was a series of "riots" by mostly young people of North African origins. Also in France, high school students in 2010 protested against a government plan to raise the retirement age.<sup>97</sup> In places like Tunisia, Egypt, Puerto Rico, and Chile, young people were (and continue to be) central to current social movements.<sup>98</sup> Likewise, across the United States, a resurgence of student activism has emerged in response to the privatization of public universities, and the "Occupy Movement" that began in New York City's Wall Street has spread across the country.<sup>99</sup> Last but not least, young people in Mexico have recently unleashed a movement in opposition to the country's president-elect.<sup>100</sup> Because of these movements, many pressing social issues have gained wide-spread attention, and significant changes have occurred, such as challenging institutional racism or overturning repressive regimes.

Even though important social changes have occurred due to past and present youth protests, they often represent a menace to the nation-state and frequently result in brutal/mass violence. For example, on the night of October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1968, the Mexican government orchestrated a student massacre that took place in Mexico City in which troops killed hundreds of student protesters at a peaceful march taking place at the Tlatelolco Plaza.<sup>101</sup> At Kent State University in Ohio, unarmed college students were shot by the National Guard on May 4, 1970. In over a period of thirteen seconds, guards fired over 60 rounds that killed four students and wounded nine, one of which suffered permanent paralysis.<sup>102</sup> In China, the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989 consisted of a majority student-run peaceful demonstrations that turned into a mass movement of several weeks. Eventually, military action took place in the streets of Beijing as soldiers killed hundreds of people.<sup>103</sup> Recently, social movements continue to threaten

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<sup>97</sup> See Craig S. Smith, "Riots Spread from Paris to Other French Cities," *The New York Times*, (Nov. 6, 2005); Deborah Lauter, "High school students fuel protests in France," *Los Angeles Times*, (Oct. 19, 2010).

<sup>98</sup> Maritza Stanchich, "Puerto Rico Student Strike Intensifies, Public Education and Civil Right at Stake," *The Huffington Post*, huffingtonpost.com, (Dec. 15, 2010); David D. Kirkpatrick and Michael Slackman, "Egyptian Youths Drive the Revolt Against Mubarak," *The New York Times*, (Jan. 26, 2011); Christopher Dickey, "Tunisia Riots: The Youth Revolution," *Newsweek*, (Jan. 14, 2011); Eva Vergara, "Chile Student Protests Rage On," *The Huffington Post*, huffingtonpost.com, (Oct. 19, 2011).

<sup>99</sup> See Emma Anderson, Melody NG, and Tomer Ovadia, "Crowds Flood UC Berkeley in Protest," *The Daily Cal*, (Sep. 25, 2009); Nancy Scheper-Hughes, "The Crisis of the Public University," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, (Dec. 19, 2011).

<sup>100</sup> Daniel Hernández, "Mexico student movement plans more protests against Peña Nieto," *Los Angeles Times*, latimesblogs.latimes.com, (July 20, 2012); "YoSoy132: How a Mexican Student Movement Was Born" (video), *The Huffington Post*, huffingtonpost.com, (06/30/2012).

<sup>101</sup> See Elena Poniatowska, *Massacre in Mexico*, trans. by Helen R. Lane, (New York: Viking Press, 1975); Raúl Álvarez Garín, *La Estela de Tlatelolco: Una Reconstrucción Histórica del Movimiento Estudiantil del 68*, (México, D.F.: Editorial Grijalbo, 1998); Luis González de Alba, *Los Días y los Años*, (México, D.F.: Ediciones Era, 1971); Ramón Ramírez, *El Movimiento Estudiantil de México: Julio/Diciembre de 1968*, (México, D.F.: Ediciones Era, 1969 [1998]); Arthur Liebman, "Student Activism in Mexico," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 395, (May, 1971); Michael Soldatenko, "México '68: Power to the Imagination!" *Latin American Perspectives*, vol. 32, no.4, (Jul. 2005); Cristina T. Bejarano, "October 2<sup>nd</sup> is Not Forgotten," *Sound Ethnography*, (Aug. 4, 2012), <http://soundethnography.com/2012/08/04/october-2nd-is-not-forgotten/>, (accessed Aug. 4, 2012).

<sup>102</sup> See I.F. Stone, *The Killings at Kent State: How Murder Went Unpunished*, (Random House: New York, 1970); William A. Gordon, *The Fourth of May: Killings and Cover-ups at Kent State*, (New York: Prometheus Books, 1990).

<sup>103</sup> See Jean-Philippe Béja, ed., *The Impact of China's 1989 Tiananmen Massacre*, (New York: Routledge, 2011); Zhuyuan Zheng, *Behind the Tiananmen Massacre: Social, Political, and Economic Ferment in China*, (Colorado: Westview Press, 1990).

authorities in powers, evident in the many student protests that have received significant international attention, like at UC Berkeley and UC Davis where police conduct and behavior came under scrutiny for their use of excessive violence and pepper spraying on activists.<sup>104</sup> Despite playing vital roles in impacting and shaping the social landscape across the globe and generative scholarship that promote a more positive view of youth, why are young people (and their activism) generally represented, understood, or reprimanded in negative ways?

## Scholarship on Young People and Youth Movements

Although there is a growing body of literature on youth activism and on young people in general, there are still many shortcomings. For example, studies on the activism of young people since the 1960s generally focus on university-based movements that do not address the experiences of middle and high school students. Furthermore, in studies on white student movements, variations of young people have usually been collapsed into one category of (mostly college) youth. Although studies on other movements, including the African American civil rights or Chicano activism, often acknowledge the presence of younger activists, the focus of study and analysis does not center their experiences and consciousness.<sup>105</sup> Also, there continues to be a significant amount of research about young people of color that is premised on problematic "at-risk" or negative frameworks that often victimizes or pathologizes these youth.<sup>106</sup> Along the same lines, research on young women that has been centered on self-esteem, psychology, sexuality and sexual behavior, friendships, school and peer relationships, media consumption, production and cultural practices, and on matters relating to identities in various contexts often do not make youth's political identities and politics the central focus.<sup>107</sup>

There is also a considerable and varied amount of research about youth of color that is popularly examined through topics like violence, gangs, or other urban-related problems/settings.<sup>108</sup> Although aspects of this literature have been generative, the aforementioned tropes are so common to discourses about young people of color that it often makes it difficult to see youth in other ways. However, there are recent studies on youth or youth activism that—despite sometimes dealing with the topics of violence, gangs, or other urban-related problems—make youth's politics and political identities fundamental to their research. For example, the urban anthropological study of Jennifer Tilton explores the politics of youth in Oakland at the turn of the twenty-first century by investigating how debates over the

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<sup>104</sup> For more on this, see Amy Goodman, "UC Davis Student Describes Pepper Spray Attack on Occupy Campus Protesters," *Democracy Now!*, (Nov. 21, 2011), [www.democracynow.org](http://www.democracynow.org), (accessed Jun. 15, 2012); Nancy Scheper-Hughes, "The Crisis of the Public University," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, (Dec. 19, 2011).

<sup>105</sup> See Jessica K. Taft, *Rebel Girls: Youth Activism and Social Change across the Americas*, (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 4-5.

<sup>106</sup> Examples include, Larry K. Brendtro, Martin Brokenleg, and Steve Van Bockern, *Reclaiming Youth at Risk: Our Hope for the Future*, (Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press, 2002 [1990]); Robert F. Kronick, *At-Risk Youth: Theory, Practice, Reform*, (New York: Garland publishing, Inc., 1997); Nanette J. Davis, *Youth Crisis: Growing Up in the High-Risk Society*, (Connecticut: Praeger Publishing, 1999).

<sup>107</sup> For a comprehensive list, see Taft, 4.

<sup>108</sup> Examples include Martín Sánchez-Jankowski, *Islands in the Street: Gangs and American Urban Society*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Robin D.G. Kelley, *Yo' Mama's Disfunktional!: Fighting the Culture Wars in Urban America*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997); Howard Pinderhughes, *Race in the Hood: Conflict and Violence Among Urban Youth* (University of Minnesota Press, 1997); Elijah Anderson, *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999); Víctor M. Ríos, *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys*, (New York: New York University Press, 2011).



nature and needs of young people have fundamentally reshaped politics in the contemporary United States. Exploring the complex intersections of race, class, and gender in Oakland politics, her research chronicles race and the politics of youth in Oakland and the debates among politicians, parents, community activists, policy makers, and youth activists about how to respond to deep class and racial divides in the lives of youth.<sup>109</sup> To cite another example, Shawn A. Ginwright in *Black Youth Rising: Activism and Radical Healing in Urban America* provides an alternative analysis to violence that places hope and healing central to the endeavor. Attuned to the integration of power, history, self-identity, and the possibility of collective agency, struggle, and "racial healing," the book examines how black youth can take action in their communities in ways that contribute to civic life, despite community conditions.<sup>110</sup> Additionally, Jessica K. Taft's research on young women "challenges and responds to girls' absences from scholarly and public discussions of social movements and to highly prevalent images of girls as either passive victims or empowered consumer citizens."<sup>111</sup> Through the analysis of in-depth interviews and participant observation with progressive and left-leaning activists in five different cities in the Americas, the author positions young women as political actors and agents of social change. Finally, Andreana Clay's research on youth activism in the San Francisco Bay Area examines how their organizing addresses the tenacious social disparities that affect urban young people of color. Providing an informative account of the ways youth activists organize in their local communities, Clay's scholarship contributes to understandings of youth culture, social movements, race and ethnic relations, and popular culture.<sup>112</sup>

Last but not least, there is a recent body of research that examines youth identity in relation to global culture and citizenship.<sup>113</sup> Despite more nuanced anthropological research that focuses on young people on a global scale and their relationships to globalizing processes of power,<sup>114</sup> this research is often about highlighting young people in many places of the world with intentions of by expanding representations. Unfortunately, this type of global youth research often places young people into the larger global discourse without analyzing the modern/colonial context that creates ideas of globality, why young people were ever "missing" from the "global present" in the first place, or why/how these types of absences are naturalized. In other words, much of this literature misses contesting the hegemony of Western representations and

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<sup>109</sup> Jennifer Tilton, *Dangerous or Endangered?: Race and the Politics of Youth in Urban America*, (New York: New York University Press, 2010).

<sup>110</sup> Shawn A. Ginwright, *Black Youth Rising: Activism and Radical Healing in Urban America*, (New York: Teachers College Press, 2010), 12.

<sup>111</sup> Taft, 18.

<sup>112</sup> Andreana Clay, *The Hip-Hop Generation Fights Back: Youth, Activism, and Post-Civil Rights Politics*, (New York: New York University Press, 2012).

<sup>113</sup> Examples include Tracey Skelton and Gil Velentine, eds., *Cool Places: Geographies of Youth Cultures*, (New York: Routledge, 1998); Bradford B. Brown, Reed W. Larson, and T.S. Saraswathi, eds., *The World's Youth: Adolescence in Eight Regions of the Globe*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Jennifer Gidley and Sohail Inayatullah, eds., *Youth Futures: Comparative Research and Transformative Visions*, (Connecticut: Praeger, 2002); Frank Pajares and Tim Urdan, eds., *International Perspectives on Adolescence*, (Connecticut: Information Age Publishing, Inc., 2003); Pam Nilan and Carles Feixa, eds., *Global Youth?: Hybrid Identities, Plural Worlds*, (New York: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>114</sup> Examples of this literature includes, Sharon Stephens, ed., *Children and the Politics of Culture* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995); Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Carolyn Sargent, eds., *Small Wars: The Culture Politics of Childhood* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Tobias Hecht, *At Home in the Street: Street Children of Northeast Brazil*, (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Nancy Scheper-Hughes, "Dangerous and Endangered Youth: Social Structures and Determinants of Violence," *Annals New York Academy of Science*, 1036 (2004): 13-46.

knowledge production about youth and naturalization of the globe. Relevant to my point, arguing that questions of location are most useful when they are utilized to deconstruct dominant hegemonic or hierarchical use of the term "gender," Caren Kaplan states: "Only when we utilize the notion of location to destabilize unexamined or stereotypical images that are vestiges of colonial discourse and other manifestations of modernity's structural inequalities can we recognize and work on the complex relationships among women in different parts of the world."<sup>115</sup> This critique applies to the research trend of "global youth visibility" that omits challenging the contextual power-structures of age and coloniality in place, leading one to assume that cultural visibility or global recognition, appreciation, or attention of certain young people alone will somehow improve power relations.

A good deal of social science scholarship on both youth movements and youth in general, along with overlooking the imperialist politics of location, the dynamics of age and power are not yet a substantial part of the fields.<sup>116</sup> These literatures often commonly treat youth (and other age-based categories) as natural. Along with emphasizing age-based categories as social constructs, Barrie Thorne argues that theorizing age has recently been useful for understanding categories of difference and the study of childhood, adolescents, youth, mid-life adults, and the elderly.<sup>117</sup> In a similar way, Jennifer Cole and Deborah Durham have pointed out how age is a generative lens through which to examine the kinds of social processes and social changes that lie behind many situations, including those involving the family and politics.<sup>118</sup> They argue that age and intergenerational relations shape, and are shaped by, political and economic processes, and are centrally implicated in political and economic restructuring. For Cole and Durham, age is important because of its centrality in social reproduction, as well as the ways in which age divisions mediate relationships in the family and household, social cohorts across space, and change and history. They argue that using age as an analytic "opens up new perspectives on contemporary social processes by highlighting the ways in which people experience the broader social and economic changes associated with globalization in their intimate lives."<sup>119</sup>

Research on both youth movements and youth that look at youth of color as protagonist often elude critical engagement with broader implications to social theory, especially as they relate to colonization and imperialism. While many analyses of youth and youth movements are useful, by ignoring how age and race (and other categories of difference) are inter-related social constructs, they lose sight of how youth of color activism calls attention to how power relations work across and within their identities, and how the production of categories of difference are central to modernity and subjectivity. In connecting and making central the relationship between youth of color activism in the context of colonialism and modernity, this dissertation is reflective of an anthropology that is decolonizing. As Walter D. Mignolo argues, "A critical theory *beyond* the history of Europe proper and *within* the colonial history of America (or Asia or Africa; or

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<sup>115</sup> Caren Kaplan, *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998, [1996]), 187.

<sup>116</sup> Notable exceptions include, Nancy Lesko, *Act Your Age!: A Cultural Construction of Adolescence*, (New York: Routledge Falmer, 2001); Hava Rachel Gordon, *We Fight to Win: Inequality and the Politics of Youth Activism*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010); Jessica K. Taft, *Rebel Girls: Youth Activism and Social Change across the Americas*, (New York: New York University Press, 2011).

<sup>117</sup> Barrie Thorne, "Editorial: Theorizing age and other differences," *Childhood: A Global Journal of Child Research*, 11.4, (2004), 403.

<sup>118</sup> Cole and Durham, 2.

<sup>119</sup> Cole and Durham, 2.

even from the perspective of immigrants *within* Europe and the US who have disrupted the homogeneity) becomes *decolonial theory*.<sup>120</sup>

## Decolonizing Anthropology

This dissertation also builds upon the decolonizing anthropological work that began since at least the 1960s when the field was critiqued for its involvement in colonial and imperialist agendas.<sup>121</sup> The critical reflection came after the United States gained global power (post WWII), and awareness of decolonization movements in many parts of the world became known.<sup>122</sup> It generally became clear that anthropology emerged from the colonial expansion of Europe, that colonialism structured the relationship between anthropologists and the people they studied, and that this had an effect on methodological and conceptual formulations in the discipline. Many of the critiques highlighted the failure of those in the field coming to terms with and accepting responsibility for the political implications of the discipline. Many aspects of the field were scrutinized, including the role of anthropology in the west, the colonial context of fieldwork and methods, and the relationship between the field and colonial racism.<sup>123</sup> As Nancy Scheper-Hughes points out, "Modern anthropology was built up in the face of colonial and postcolonial genocides, ethnicides, population die-outs, and other forms of mass destruction visited on the 'non-Western' peoples whose lives, suffering and deaths provide the raw material for much of our work."<sup>124</sup>

Since the 1960s, some anthropologists have increasingly given attention to the imperatives for an anthropology that is decolonizing or at least addresses the topic of the disciplines relationship to colonization. A significant example includes the work of Bernard M. Magubane and James C. Faris. Referring to anthropologists that failed to see how anthropological inquiries are historically-set discourses of the West that are complicit with capitalist reason, these authors provocatively contended that anthropology—born of the rationalist and liberal intellectual tradition—should not continue as is, and that another science of humankind based on equality and freedom should emerge.<sup>125</sup> From the standpoint that anthropologists are part of the liberal sentiment from the Age of Reason that constitutes the Other as perpetual victims, the authors claimed that, "rather than examine the oppression and

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<sup>120</sup> Walter D. Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*, (MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), xx, (italics in original).

<sup>121</sup> Some examples include, Kathleen Gough, "Anthropology: Child of Imperialism," *Monthly Review* 19:11, (1968): 12-27; Vine Deloria, Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*, (New York: Macmillan, 1969); Dell Hymes, ed., *Reinventing Anthropology* (New York: Random House, 1972); Diane K. Lewis, "Anthropology and Colonialism," *Current Anthropology*, 14:5, (1973), 582-597; Talal Asad, ed., *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*, (London: Ithaca Press, 1973); Gerrit Huizer and Bruce Mannheim, eds., *The Politics of Anthropology: From Colonialism and Sexism Toward a View from Below* (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1979); Thomas Biolsi and Larry J. Zimmerman, eds., *Indians and Anthropologists: Vine Deloria, Jr., and the Critique of Anthropology*, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997); and Vassos Argyrou, *Anthropology and the Will to Meaning: A Postcolonial Critique*, (Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 2002).

<sup>122</sup> See John D. Kelly and Martha Kaplan, "Nation and decolonization: toward a new anthropology of nationalism," *Anthropological Theory*, vol. 1.4, (2001), 419-437.

<sup>123</sup> See Diane K. Lewis, "Anthropology and Colonialism," 581-597; Renato Rosaldo, *Culture & Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989 [1993]), xvii-xviii.

<sup>124</sup> Nancy Scheper-Hughes, "Ishi's Brain, Ishi's Ashes: Anthropology and Genocide," *Violence in War and Peace: an Anthology*, ed. by same author with Philippe Bourgois, (MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 61.

<sup>125</sup> Bernard M. Magubane and James C. Faris, "On the Political Relevance of Anthropology," *Dialectical Anthropology* 9, (1983), 91-104.

oppressors, anthropology examines the oppressed."<sup>126</sup> Moreover, the authors argued that anthropology provided ideological rationalization behind the brutality of imperialism and the analyses of the consequences that masked oppression. Although the authors recognize anthropologists that have devoted their time and energy working towards social justice efforts, the authors believed that—given the historical, decolonial context where the oppressed Other gained validity and history on their own terms—anthropology may not be politically relevant anymore. That is, because the decolonization movements after World War II made the traditional anthropological project difficult, they questioned how one could continue using ahistorical concepts, ethnographic methods, and analyses that not only gained respectability and reputation on the bases of the unfortunate circumstances and existences of the oppressed but also because the field granted the culture of the oppressed a subjectivity in terms of Western rationality.

Another important decolonizing anthropological work was the anthology *Decolonizing Anthropology: Moving Further toward an Anthropology for Liberation* edited by Faye V. Harrison.<sup>127</sup> Since the world is not only ordered by European capitalism, and anthropology does not only render capitalism invisible, Harrison argued for a decolonizing anthropology that looked at capitalism in conjunction with other forms of oppression. Writing during the time when political economy, postmodernism, and the feminism had a stronghold in critically defining anthropological project, Harrison provides a decolonizing trajectory that includes: neo-Marxist political economy, interpretive and reflexive ethnographic analysis, feminism that underscores the impact of race and class on gender, and traditions of Black and (other) Third world scholarship that recognizes the relationship between race and other forms of difference.<sup>128</sup> Harrison argued that "in spite of the many attempts at revision and reform of the discipline, anthropology remains overwhelmingly a Western intellectual—and ideological—project that is embedded in relations of power which favor class sections and historical blocs belonging to or with allegiances to the world's White minority."<sup>129</sup> Furthermore, she maintained that, despite the pervasiveness of racialized structures of inequality, neither radical/critical nor mainstream anthropology has contributed a wealth of insight and knowledge to the understanding of racism and sociocultural constructions of racial difference—that is, that race and racism are relatively underdeveloped and neglected in the field. Although many in the field recognize ethnocentrism, Harrison believed this did not exonerate anthropologist from not confronting, both in intellectual and sociopolitical terms, racism/White supremacy as a major ideological and institutionalized forces in the world.<sup>130</sup>

Last but not least, the work of Fernando Coronil is also noteworthy for placing a decolonial perspective central to anthropological inquiry. In particular, one of his most notable scholarly contributions is "Beyond Occidentalism: Toward Nonimperial Geohistorical Categories."<sup>131</sup> Building on Edward Said's *Orientalism*, Coronil moves beyond epistemological critique of Western knowledge by, instead, focusing on how the West animates representations

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<sup>126</sup> Magubane and Faris, 91-104.

<sup>127</sup> Faye V. Harrison, "Anthropology as an Agent of Transformation: Introductory Comments and Queries" in *Decolonizing Anthropology: Moving Further toward an Anthropology for Liberation*, ed. by same author, (Washington D.C.: American Anthropological Association, 1991),

<sup>128</sup> Harrison, 2.

<sup>129</sup> Harrison, 1.

<sup>130</sup> Harrison, 3.

<sup>131</sup> Fernando Coronil, "Beyond Occidentalism: Toward Nonimperial Geohistorical Categories," *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 11, no. 1, (Feb. 1996): 51-87.

that are hierarchical and polarized concepts about the West and its Others. For Coronil, the term "Occidentalism" relates the power dynamic of observed and observers, products to production, and knowledge to its sites of formation. This perspective is not a reversal from Orient to Occident (or from Other to Self) but guides "our understanding toward the relational nature of representations of human collectivities, it brings out into the open their genesis in asymmetrical relations of power, including the power to obscure their genesis in inequality, to serve their historical connections, and thus to present as the internal and separate attributes of bounded entities what are in fact historical outcomes of connected peoples."<sup>132</sup> From this perspective, occidentalism is not a reverse of orientalism but its condition of possibility—that is, Occidentalism is inseparable from Western hegemony. Moreover, Occidentalism refers to an group of representational practices that have a part in producing conceptions of the world that: "(1) separate the world's component into bounded units; (2) disaggregate their relational histories; (3) turn difference into hierarchy; (4) naturalize these representations, and thus (5) intervene, however unwittingly, in the reproduction of existing asymmetrical power relations."<sup>133</sup>

By giving attention to the importance of decolonial efforts and scholarship, works such as these have allowed for a more nuanced understanding of anthropology, other disciplines, and of humanity/society in general.<sup>134</sup> Unfortunately, to date, there have been relatively few anthropological works that continue this decolonizing legacy within the field, not to mention that—although key anthropological concepts of race and culture have been central to rationalizing inequality—the discipline's contribution to the study of racism in the last several decades has been modest.<sup>135</sup> Despite notable exceptions of decolonizing efforts in the field, the discipline of anthropology in the U.S. nevertheless remains mostly on the margins of studies of racism. One reason for this is due to the repressive atmosphere of the post-World War II Cold War period targeted penalized, and stigmatized activist anthropologist that worked for racial, ethnic, gender, or economic equality.<sup>136</sup> At the same time, the Cold War redefined notions of

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<sup>132</sup> Coronil, 56.

<sup>133</sup> Coronil, 57.

<sup>134</sup> Other notable examples of decolonizing anthropology include Charles L. Briggs with Clara Mantini-Briggs, *Stories in the Time of Cholera: Racial Profiling During a Medical Nightmare*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Renato Rosaldo, *Culture & Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989 [1993]); Marisol de la Cadena, *Indigenous Mestizos: the Politics of Race and Culture in Cuzco, 1919-1991*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000); Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Global Transformations: Anthropology and the Modern*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Nishitani Osamu, "Anthropos and Humanitas: Two Western concepts of 'Human Being,'" *Translation, Biopolitics, Colonial Difference*, ed. by Naoki Sakai and Jon Solomon, (Hong Kong University Press: 2006). For work on decolonization of/in other disciplines, see Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez, Manuela Boatca, Sérgio Costa, eds., *Decolonizing European Sociology: Transdisciplinary Approaches*, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2010); Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous People*. (New York: Zed Books Ltd, 1999); Claude Alvares, *Decolonizing History: Technology and Culture in India, China and the West 1492 to the Present Day*, (New York: Apex Press, 1991); Florencia E. Mallon, ed., *Decolonizing Native Histories: Collaboration, Knowledge, and Language in the Americas*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

<sup>135</sup> Leith Mullings, "Interrogating Racism: Toward an Antiracist Anthropology," *Annu. Rev. Anthropology*, vol. 34, (2005), 669. However, there are recent significant anthropological projects that address race and racism specifically. Examples include the following projects of the American Anthropological Society: the art exhibit, "Race: Are We So Different?," Science Museum of Minnesota, [www.smm.org/race/](http://www.smm.org/race/), (accessed Jul. 24, 2012), and the recent publication of *Racism in the Academy: The New Millennium*, ed. by Audrey Smedley and Janis Faye Hutchinson, (Feb. 2012).

<sup>136</sup> See David H. Price, *Threatening Anthropology: McCarthyism and the FBI's Surveillance of Activist Anthropologists*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

public anthropology and rewarded anthropologist to act and think in "adequate" ways.<sup>137</sup> Another reason is that, unlike other disciplines like ethnic studies or history, where there is a general consensus that racism is associated with modernity, and that it is connected to European expansion and colonialism and imperialism that followed, anthropologists do not agree about the role of race and racism in society and within the discipline.<sup>138</sup>

Although most in the field reject and distance themselves from biological notions of race and racism,<sup>139</sup> they have also, regrettably, abandoned the reality of race, the study of racism, and scientific racism.<sup>140</sup> While a liberal anthropology affirmed that race does not exist, the field had little to say about racism and socially organized outcomes of race rankings. Consequently, during the 1970s, race and racism was pushed aside and "ethnicity" came central to anthropological studies, stressing the internal, expressive cultural processes of group formation and the symbols of inclusion.<sup>141</sup> Since then, many avoid or ignore the topics of race and racism, do not deem them to have much analytic value, or believe in colorblind ideologies that assume we live in a post-racial society—that we currently have a black president, or that the legislative victories of the 1960s civil rights era have ended racism are examples of this type of thinking. The critique that Ethnic Studies scholar Yen Le Espiritu makes of sociology can also apply to other social sciences like anthropology. Espiritu writes, "By treating race as a property of individuals instead of a principle of social organization, sociologists saw 'difference' but failed to 'see differently.' In other words, the inclusion of race in sociology has most often been additive, not transformative."<sup>142</sup> Based on this example, one can argue that race is seen as a variable and not central to the social sciences in general, including anthropology. In sum, white racial privilege remains largely unexamined in the field of anthropology, there is ambivalence in the field about race and racism, and these topics continue to be undertheorized in the discipline,

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<sup>137</sup> See Laura Nader, "The Phantom Factor: Impact of the Cold War on Anthropology," *The Cold War and the University: Toward an Intellectual History of the Postwar Years*, ed. by Noam Chomsky, (New York: New Press, 1997), 107-46.

<sup>138</sup> Leith Mullings, 670.

<sup>139</sup> During the mid-1990s, the American Association of Physical Anthropologists and the American Anthropological Association and adopted formal position statements regarding human biological variation (albeit, little had changed since 1950 since they hardly differed in substance from early UNESCO statements that were similar in view). Both statements shunned the notion that human races were legitimate biological divisions of modern humanity. See American Anthropological Association, "American Anthropological Association Statement on 'Race,'" (1998), Available at <http://www.aaanet.org/stmts/racepp.htm>; American Association of Physical Anthropologists, "APA Statement on Biological Aspects of Race," (1996), Available at <http://www.physanth.org/positions/race.html>.

<sup>140</sup> Eugenia Shanklin, *Anthropology and Race*, (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1994), viii. See chapter four for an examination of the eugenics movement and the impact of scientific racism as it translates into public policy. That is, post-World War II, after it was largely conceded that there was no such thing as "race" and the fallacies of biological determinism were exposed, eugenacists changed the name of the science but continued their (racist) efforts and thinking. For an in-depth examination of biological determinism and race, see Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1981 [1993])

<sup>141</sup> Steven Gregory and Roger Sanjek, eds., *Race*, (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 7-8.

<sup>142</sup> Yen Le Espiritu, "Disciplines Unbound: Notes on Sociology and Ethnic Studies," *Contemporary Sociology*, vol. 28, no. 5, (Sep. 1999), 511.

despite the range of scholarship relevant to the subject.<sup>143</sup> Moreover, there is no escape from the paradoxes and conflicts of the colonial past and present of anthropology.<sup>144</sup>

As a way of building upon the legacy of decolonizing anthropological work, this dissertation engages with a majority of thinkers outside of discipline that take the project of decolonization seriously. Crossing academic boundaries like anthropology, history, and philosophy, my project is not only interdisciplinary, but is also inspired and grounded in grass-roots activism, informed and shaped by youth-centered, queer, and feminist decolonial theories and methodologies. As a result, the kinds of questions and imperatives of this dissertation are different than a traditional anthropological text that includes being an "objective" observer, collecting data, conducting field research, and describing the "total" culture of a group of people.<sup>145</sup> My research is also different than postmodern types of anthropology that claim fluidity and relativity since I do believe oppression is real and has dire consequences.<sup>146</sup> Since racism is one of the factors that continue to alienate people of color from academia and the discipline,<sup>147</sup> by exploring the subject matters of decolonization and youth activism in depth, I

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<sup>143</sup> Leith Mullings, 679; Also see Karen Mary Dávalos, *Chicana/o Studies and Anthropology: The Dialogue That Never Was, Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies*, 23.2, (1998): 13-45.

<sup>144</sup> See Orin Starn, "Rethinking the Politics of Anthropology: the Case of the Andes," *Current Anthropology*, vol. 35, no. 1, (Feb. 1994). David Rohde, "Army Enlists Anthropology in War Zones," *The New York Times*, (Oct. 5, 2007).

<sup>145</sup> The field of anthropology emerges and became concretized in the early nineteenth century, with origins generally attributed to British, American, German, and French scholars. Significant figures like Edward B. Taylor in England (who contributed through his concept of culture, year 1871) and Lewis H. Morgan in the US (who pioneered the study of kinship, year 1870) were committed to the theoretical position of unilineal evolution (where mankind was developing progressively from primitive forms to civilized practices). This position was later replaced by a "comparative" (cultural relativism) approach, and anthropology goes through a shift in the twentieth century that places an emphasis upon fieldwork (Boas in America, Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown in England) that included the technique of participant observation and left-leaning liberal doctrine. See Edwin Eames and Judith Granich Goode, *Anthropology of the City: an Introduction to Urban Anthropology*, (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1977).

<sup>146</sup> Examples of postmodernist anthropology in the realm of the textual and theoretical, see James Clifford and George Marcus, *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); James Marcus and Michael M. J. Fischer, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988). These authors explore ethnographic writing as method—the making of texts. For a feminist critique of postmodern anthropology, see Catherine Lutz, "The Erasure of Women's Writing in Sociocultural Anthropology," *American ethnologists*, 17.4, (Nov. 2009), 611-627; For critiques of anthropology in relation to Third World Women as "Native," see Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Introduction: Cartographies of Struggle, Third World Women, and the Politics of Feminism," *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, ed. by Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 31-32; Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other*.

<sup>147</sup> For examples, see Roberto R. Álvarez, "Un Chilero en la Academia: Sifting, Shifting, and the Recruitment of Minorities in Anthropology," Steven Gregory and Roger Sanjek, eds., *Race*, (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1994); "No Surprise Here! Almost No Black Faculty Members in the Field of Anthropology," *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, (No. 16, Summer 1997), 37-39; American Anthropology Association, "1989 Survey of Departments," *Departmental Services Program Report*, (Washington, D.C.: American Anthropological Association, 1990); Karen Brodtkin, Sandra Morgen, and Janis Hutchinson, "Anthropology as White Public Space?," *American Anthropologists*, 113.4 (2011), 545-556; *Racism in the Academy: The New Millennium*, ed. by Audrey Smedley and Janis Faye Hutchinson, (Feb. 2012). Vine Deloria notes in academia that "advocates of the Indian position have found themselves rejected for National Endowment for the Humanities grants, been denied positions at colleges and universities, and seen well-documented books rejected by university presses that feared the wrath of prominent figures in anthropology." See Vine Deloria, Jr., "Conclusion: Anthros, Indians, and Planetary Reality" in *Indians & Anthropologist: Vine Deloria, Jr. and the Critique of Anthropology*, ed. by Thomas Biolsi and Larry



hope this dissertation will contribute to the field's ongoing conversations and transformations regarding the matter. As Karen Mary Dávalos argues, "unlike the postmodern concern with textual power and authority, Chicana/o scholars demand a redirection and redistribution of power both inside and outside the academy."<sup>148</sup> In this vein, at the center of this dissertation is the imperative of furthering the project of decolonization that began since the 1960s.

## Decolonial Thought

I draw upon several decolonial approaches that provide new ways of "unthinking" modernity.<sup>149</sup> Two of them includes the decolonial thinking that emerged in the late 1960s/early 1970s with differing geopolitical and intellectual conceptualizations: the modern/colonial group and U.S. Third World women of color.<sup>150</sup> In the first, although thinkers of the modernity/coloniality group have made many important contributions to decolonial thought,<sup>151</sup> one of the most influential is the idea that modernity is constituted by an "underside." Enrique Dussel argues that the "triumphs" of modernity (as told by Euro-centered perspectives) came at the cost of oppression. Unlike Eurocentric Marxist perspectives which locate modernity in the Industrial Revolution and in philosophies of the Enlightenment, Dussel finds the emergence of modern civilization in its "underside" which describes the colonial encounter of the Americas: the colonized, exploited, marginalized that are pushed or excluded to the fringes of modernity.<sup>152</sup>

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Zimmerman (Tucson: The University of Arizona, 1997), 215. At UC Berkeley, although less than half of the professors are women in the Anthropology department, there is currently 0% representation of underrepresented faculty and the majority of the students are white. For demographical statistics, see: <http://graduate-school.phds.org/university/berkeley/program/diversity/anthropology/5755>, (accessed 6/23/11). The Women in Academia reports that 75.6% of all full-time faculty are white with only 4.3% African American and 3.6 for Latinos. See WIA Report, "Racial Breakdown of Full-Time Women Faculty in the U.S.," (Jul. 07, 2011), <http://www.wiareport.com/2011/07/racial-breakdown-of-full-time-women-faculty-in-the-u-s/>, (accessed 8/03/11). Last but not least, UC Berkeley's Anthropology Department has been accused of racism for failing to return tribal bones. See Richard C. Paddock, "Berkeley accused of racism over failure to return tribal bones," *Los Angeles Times*, (Feb. 27, 2008); Nancy Scheper-Hughes, "Ishi's Brain, Ishi's Ashes: Anthropology and Genocide," in *Violence in War and Peace: an Anthology*, ed. by same author with Philippe Bourgois, (MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004).

<sup>148</sup> Dávalos, 32.

<sup>149</sup> For more on the use of the term "unthinking," see Immanuel M. Wallerstein, *Unthinking Social Science: the Limits of Nineteenth-Century Paradigms*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001).

<sup>150</sup> The Modern/Colonial group and Third World Women of Color thought both emerged in the geographical area of the Americas—the former in Latin America and the latter in the United States, respectively. I do not attempt to homogenize the various thinkers and projects to these groups but engage with theories that are useful to my analysis. I highlight key scholars known for shaping these theoretical strands and others that engage in critique, discussion, elaboration on the perspectives. Although providing a comprehensive review of this literature is beyond the scope of this introduction, I provide brief overviews of the two strands and key concepts that are relevant to my project.

<sup>151</sup> Some examples of this literature includes Enrique Dussel, *Ética de la Liberación en la Edad de la Globalización y de la Exclusion*, (Madrid: Editorial Trotta, 1998); Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000); Catherine Walsh, *Interculturalidad, Estado, Sociedad: Luchas (de)Coloniales de Nuestra Época*, (Quito, Ecuador: Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar, 2009); Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—an Argument" in *CR: The New Centennial Review*, 3.3 (2003).

<sup>152</sup> See Enrique Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of "the Other" and the Myth of Modernity*, trans. by M.D. Barber, (London: Continuum, 1995); Linda Martín Alcoff and Eduardo Mendieta, eds., *Thinking from the Underside of History: Enrique Dussel's Philosophy of Liberation*, (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield



Connected to this, Dussel's research also points to Liberation philosophy in Latin America as a critique of conquest and also offers readings of politics history of the world that is not focused on the thought of Ancient Greece and on Europe.<sup>153</sup> Commenting on Dussel's scholarly contribution, Nelson Maldonado-Torres points out that, "Enrique Dussel has been characterized by his incessant efforts to theoretically fortify, flesh out, and refine the vision of decolonization as a project, and his work represents an ensemble of provocative historical, philosophical, and theoretical interventions and contributions towards this unfinished task."<sup>154</sup>

Another significant idea is that modernity cannot be understood without its untold and unrecognized historical counterpart understood as coloniality. Locating the "dark side" of modernity in the Renaissance/West, Walter D. Mignolo highlights how the narrative of European colonial expansion and, thus, of history, is usually told from the perspective of modernity where continents and people outside of Europe were seen as objects but were absent as subjects—out of history.<sup>155</sup> For Mignolo, coloniality is constitutive of modernity and they exist simultaneously. Through this perspective, the genocide of Indians and enslavement of Africans that came with the "discovery" of the Americas are the foundations of modernity, but this perspective, history, and experiences constitute the hidden and darker face of modernity known as coloniality.<sup>156</sup> From this perspective, modernity/coloniality "are two sides of the same coin and not as two separate frames of mind: you cannot be modern without being colonial; and if you are on the colonial side of the spectrum you have to transact with modernity—you cannot ignore it."<sup>157</sup> Coloniality "points towards and intends to unveil an embedded logic that enforces control, domination, and exploitation disguised in the language of salvation, progress, modernization, and being good for every one."<sup>158</sup> In other words, "the very idea of America cannot be separated from coloniality: the entire continent emerged as such in the European consciousness as a massive extent of land to be appropriated and of people to be converted to Christianity, and whose labor could be exploited."<sup>159</sup> One distinction is that coloniality is not the same as colonialism; the former refers to long-standing models of power that continue until present day that materialized as a result of the latter.<sup>160</sup> Although "we no longer have the overt colonial domination of the Spanish or British models, the logic of coloniality remains in force in the 'idea' of the world that has been constructed through modernity/coloniality,"<sup>161</sup> despite particular moments of colonial/imperial restructuring.

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Publishers Inc., 2000). Other scholars have also expanded notions of the "underside" side of modernity in a variety of ways. One example is Nelson Maldonado-Torres, *Against War: View from the Underside of Modernity*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

<sup>153</sup> See Enrique Dussel, *The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Ricoueur, Rorty, Taylor, and the Philosophy of Liberation*, trans. and ed. by Eduardo Mendieta, (New Jersey: Humanities Press International, Inc., 1996); Enrique Dussel, *Politics of Liberation: a Critical World History*, trans. by Thia Cooper, (London: SCM Press, 2011).

<sup>154</sup> Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "Enrique Dussel's Liberation Thought in the Decolonial Turn" in *Transmodernity: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World*, 1.1, (2011), 3.

<sup>155</sup> See Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization*, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995); Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

<sup>156</sup> Walter D. Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*, (MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), x-xiii.

<sup>157</sup> Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*, 6.

<sup>158</sup> Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*, 6.

<sup>159</sup> Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*, 6-7.

<sup>160</sup> See Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "On the Coloniality of Being: Contributions to the Development of a Concept," *Cultural Studies*, vol. 21, nos. 2-3, (Mar./May 2007); Aníbal Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America," *Nepantla: Views from South*, vol. 1, no. 3, (2000), 533-80.

<sup>161</sup> Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*, xv.

Last but not least, Aníbal Quijano's theory of "the coloniality of power" has also been generative to decolonial thought.<sup>162</sup> Quijano argues that the Americas became the first identity of modernity that established two central axes of the new model of power: the idea of "race" and the constitution of a new structure of control of labor. Against the linear conceptions of history that postulates slavery and other forms of labor control as premodern or precapital, Quijano identifies how the US and Europe both came about through the subjugation of colonized workers, for example, in a non-sequential manner but constitutively. Contrary to Marxist historical materialism and by locating the genealogy of modern capitalism to the colonial encounter, Quijano claims that the modern concept of race, labor, (and to some degree gender) were co-produced and central to colonization. In other words, coloniality refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged through colonization beyond the limits of colonial control that came to define economy (labor exploitation, land appropriation, control of natural resources), authority (army, institutions, administration), culture (family, control of gender and sexuality), and knowledge and inter-subjective relations (epistemology, education and formation of identity).<sup>163</sup> Quijano demonstrates how the coloniality of power continues in the present and how the project of colonizing the Americas became a model of power that would be inseparable from systems of domination (like capitalism) structured around the idea of race.

My research project also draws upon decolonial approaches of U.S. Third World women of color thought. One of them is the ideological contribution of the concept of the simultaneity of oppressions that stressed the importance of looking at the many hierarchies that came with colonization, including the relationship between imperialism, race, class, gender, and sexuality.<sup>164</sup> For example, the Combahee river collective—named in commemoration of a slave-freeing guerrilla action planned and led by Harriet Tubman in 1863, South Carolina—was a group of Black feminists in Boston that produced a statement saying they were "actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression" and saw as their particular task "the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking."<sup>165</sup> Moreover, women and queers of color contributed to decolonial thought by pioneering methods that include, along with scholarship, poetry, prose, political analysis, fiction, storytelling, autobiography, and other forms of creative

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<sup>162</sup> See Quijano, 533-80.

<sup>163</sup> See Walter D. Mignolo, "Introduction: Coloniality of Power and De-Colonial Thinking," *Cultural Studies*, vol. 21.2-3, (Mar./May 2007), 155-167; Maldonado-Torres, (2007), 243-249.

<sup>164</sup> Some examples of this work are: Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds., *This Bridge Called my Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, (New York: Kitchen Table Press, 1983 [1981]); Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, Barbara Smith, eds., *All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, but Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies*, (New York: The Feminist Press, 1982); Barbara Smith, ed., *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*, (New York: Kitchen Table Press, 1983); Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches by Audre Lorde*, (New York: Crossing Press, 1984); Alma M. García, ed., *Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings*, (New York: Routledge, 1997). Along with the concept of simultaneity of oppressions, we are also indebted to the activism of queer women of color methods that includes multi-issued approach to politics and organizing, particularly coalition building and linking struggles. For relevant literature, see María Lugones, *Peregrinajes/Pilgrimages: Theorizing Coalition Against Multiple Oppressions*, (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Press, 2003).

<sup>165</sup> "A Black Feminist Statement: The Combahee River Collective," *All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, but Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies*, ed. by Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith, (New York: The Feminist Press, 1982).

writing, often examining one's own life.<sup>166</sup> Rejecting the criticism that disclosing the personal reinforces the feminizing of dominant intellectual standards that turns it into something substandard, Laura E. Pérez argues that "Women of color's autobiographical writing and locating of self within scholarly texts has often staked a claim to theory and philosophizing itself, but through a consciously different protocol than that imposed by academia or literary canons yet knowingly positioning these as alternative archives of knowing and being."<sup>167</sup> Decolonial thoughts is also indebted to the activism of women of color methods that includes multi-issued approach to politics and organizing, particularly coalition building. In particular, U.S. Women of color—recognizing the similarities of their racialized, economic, gendered, and sexualized oppression among themselves and with women in the Third World—also worked to create linking struggles across colonial borders.<sup>168</sup> Since women of color have historically been excluded from intellectual spaces, many of them—often by working in coalition—had to speak for themselves and their communities about the distinct and similar ways that they experience oppression in the US.<sup>169</sup>

Last but not least, "decolonial feminism"—which is an emerging academic strand that attempts to bridge the gaps between modernity/coloniality and U.S. Third World women conversations through intellectual solidarity—is also useful to my analysis.<sup>170</sup> One of the primary critiques from decolonial feminist scholars of decolonial thinkers of modernity/coloniality is the narrow treatment of gender in their analysis and lack of serious engagement with U.S (queer) women of color theories of intersectionality.<sup>171</sup> For example, Laura E. Pérez argues that gender and sexuality critique is central to decolonizing politics, and that seriously engaging with racialized gender and sexuality should be undertaken collectively in solidarity and along with the critique of subject formation—that refusing to acutely engage with this reproduces inequality.<sup>172</sup> Drawing upon U.S. queer, Native, Asian, and black theories of sexuality, and pointing to pre-colonial nongendered cosmologies and gynocratic egalitarianism,

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<sup>166</sup> Some examples of scholarly work that is creative include Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2007 [1987]; Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other*; Norma Alarcón, Ana Castillo, Cherríe Moraga, eds. *The Sexuality of Latinas*, (Berkeley: Third Woman Press, 1993).

<sup>167</sup> Laura E. Pérez, "Enrique Dussel's *Ética de la liberación*, U.S. Women of Color Decolonizing Practices, and Coalitionary Politics amidst Difference," *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences*, ed. Peter Skafish, vol. 18.2, (Spring/Summer 2010), 127. Juana María Rodríguez in *Queer Latinidad: Identity Practices, Discursive Space*, (New York: New York University Press, 2003), makes a similar claim, arguing that texts like *This Bridge Called My Back* "rejected established academic and literary precepts by combining personal essays, poetry, multilingual writing, history, and artwork that theorized the texts of lived experience," (p. 30).

<sup>168</sup> See Pérez, 134; Lugones, *Peregrinajes/Pilgrimages*; Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); Paola Bacchetta, "Decolonial Praxis: Enabling Intranational and Queer Coalition Building," *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences*, ed. Peter Skafish, vol. 18.2, (Spring/Summer 2010); Maylei Blackwell, *¡Chicana Power!: Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011).

<sup>169</sup> Pérez, 134 and 141.

<sup>170</sup> For more on this topic, see Marcelle Maese-Cohen, "Introduction: Toward Planetary Decolonial Feminism," *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences*, ed. Peter Skafish, vol. 18.2, (Spring/Summer 2010); María Lugones, "Methodological Notes toward a Decolonial Feminism," *Decolonizing Epistemologies: Latina/o Theology and Philosophy*, ed. by Ada María Isasi-Díaz and Eduardo Mendieta, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 68-86.

<sup>171</sup> There are other decolonial scholars that explore subjectivity and coloniality as it relates to gender issues. Some examples include Freya Schiwy, "Decolonization and the Question of Subjectivity: Gender, Race, and Binary thinking" in *Cultural Studies*, Vol. 21 (2-3), Mar./May (2007), 271-294;

<sup>172</sup> Pérez, 122 and 125.

María Lugones introduces a new understanding of gender constituted through modernity/coloniality by arguing that colonization imposed a new gender system.<sup>173</sup> Grounded in the literature and experiences of U.S. Third World (queer) women of color thought and social movements, these decolonial feminist scholars point, for example, to the ways in which violence, elitism, or heteronormative patriarchy are naturalized in the scholarship, and how feminist and queer of color critical thought is not taken seriously as central to the work of decolonization and critiques of Eurocentrism. Other scholars that do not necessarily engage with scholars of the modernity/coloniality group can nevertheless be considered as part of decolonial feminism as they provide other ways to understand colonization. For example, Andrea Smith's work highlights that "gender violence is not simply a tool of patriarchal control, but also serves as a tool of racism and colonialism,"<sup>174</sup> and her recent research aims at decolonizing the normalizing logics of settler colonialism principally within the U.S. context by bridging queer theory and native studies.<sup>175</sup>

Although the theories and concepts produced by the modernity/coloniality group, U.S. Third World women of color, and critiques and bridge-building efforts by decolonial feminisms have been generative to decolonial thought, how do age matters, particularly anti-youth and adult-centered worldviews, relate to these conversations? In light of the critiques of the narrow understandings and various limitations on gender ideologies of the modernity/coloniality group, there was enough understanding at least (however minimum it was) that gender should be considered somehow when thinking about colonization. However, with matters relating to age—specifically youth—and how they should relate to decolonial thought, I have a twofold process before me: to not only stress the importance as to why it should be considered when considering the topic of colonization/coloniality but also to delineate why this is (ir)relevant to the conversation. I argue that making age integral—rather than symptomatic—to how we understand modernity/coloniality helps us consider the complex ways that categories of difference, like race, ethnicity, and gender combine to underscore how they have a colonial history linked to Western empire. For example, key to modernity/coloniality is how young people across race/ethnicity share the bottom of the hierarchy of age-groups, yet this idea becomes complicated when one considers how European/Euro-American groups are always at the top of the racial/ethnic hierarchy, despite changes of racial understandings over time. Although there are various ways that decolonial thought informs this dissertation, my work also addresses some of the limitations.

### **Absence of Age in Decolonial Thought**

Recent scholarly attention has been given to the topic concerning aging, adults, and/or adulthood. For example, Anthropologist Stanley Brandes wrote about the age 40 as symbol and signifier of a culturally produced tumultuous transitional age and stage in American society. He

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<sup>173</sup> See María Lugones, "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System," *Hypatia*, vol. 22.1 (2007): 186-209.

<sup>174</sup> Andrea Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*, (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2005), 1.

<sup>175</sup> Andrea Smith, "Queer Theory and Native Studies: the Heteronormativity of Settler Colonialism," in *Queer Indigenous Studies: Critical Interventions in Theory, Politics, and Literature*, ed. by Qwo-Li Driskill, Chris Finley, Brian Joseph Gilley, and Scott Lauria Morgensen, (Tucson: The University of Arizona, 2011). Also see Chris Finley's "Decolonizing the Queer Native Body (and Recovering the Native Bull-Dyke): Bringing 'Sexy Back' and Out of Native Studies' Closet" in the same anthology.

contends that this age has been important to Western civilization for centuries, but that its symbolic meaning has changed in different historical periods. He argues that culture including psychological theories, rather than biological procedures, give special meaning to the age of forty.<sup>176</sup> Also, in an investigation of old age in India, Lawrence Cohen explores senility as it relates not only to the aging body but also to cultural anxieties. He calls attention to how old age comes to have significance in society and in narratives of identity and history in India as well as North America.<sup>177</sup> Others scholars have examined how the temporal category of "adult" is not produced in isolation but is defined relationally with other age-based categories. For instance, sociologist James E. Côté contends that: "[T]he idea of adulthood requires the idea of adolescence to make sense, for 'maturity' implies a previous 'immaturity,' and being 'grown up' implies having previously been childish or juvenile. It was only after the concept of adolescence took hold in the public mind that the notion of adulthood achieved any currency."<sup>178</sup> Likewise highlighting how youth is a concept that exists and takes meaning in relation to adulthood, Johanna Wyn and Rob White argue that, "If youth is a state of 'becoming', adulthood is the 'arrival'. At the same time, youth is also 'not adult', a deficit of the adult state."<sup>179</sup>

The recent attention on, and understandings of, aging and adulthood as social constructions, especially in relation to other age-based categories, has been generative. However, many of these scholars do not consider how notions of aging and adult/adulthood are made possible in and through the colonial context. That is, these analyses are often disconnected from the context of modernity/coloniality, particularly as it relates to the politics of other categories of difference, including race, class, gender, and sexuality. Because childhood, adolescence, and adulthood are modern/colonial social constructs,<sup>180</sup> why have scholars been so willing to (perhaps unintentionally) brush over the colonial context or subsume the colonialism by which adulthood and other age-based categories are created? The treatment of age-based constructs as being absent from the fact of colonization erases the racialized counterpoint: that the colonized, understood as "savage," "backwards," and "primitive," served as a point of difference in the creation of adulthood. Although the aforementioned literature on adult/adulthood age are not intended to be about how they relate to race and racism, these discourses communicate and extend a modernist logic, typical of building empire, that erases its underside in its production. As Ann Laura Stoler points out, when examining Dutch colonization of the East Indies and its implications to Europe, European concepts and discourses were mobile

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<sup>176</sup> Stanley Brandes, *Forty: the Age and the Symbol*, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1985), 15.

<sup>177</sup> Lawrence Cohen, *No Aging in India: Alzheimer's, the Bad Family, and Other Modern Things*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

<sup>178</sup> James E. Côté, *Arrested Adulthood: The Changing Nature of Maturity and Identity*, (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 2.

<sup>179</sup> Johanna Wyn and Rob White, *Rethinking Youth*, (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1997), 11.

<sup>180</sup> See Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1962). Etymologically speaking, although the word "adult" was used in the English language in the mid-1400s, the word first appeared in the Oxford English Dictionary in 1656. See Côté, 13; Cheryl Merseur, *"Grown-ups": A Generation in Search of Adulthood*, (New York: G.P. Putnam's, 1987), 56. Also, Winthrop D. Jordan argues that, although "adults" existed in the colonial era, the idea of adulthood did not; people's social roles were understood as being a "fixed" phenomenon. As modernity evolved, the idea of the "human" signified the process of "becoming"; in other words, people were seen as changing and capable of recreating themselves. Jordan states, "[w]e have moved, over the years, from condition to process. In our culture, adulthood as a condition used to be simply assumed; as a process, it now seems to demand explanation." See Winthrop D. Jordan, "Searching for Adulthood in America," *Adulthood: Essays*, ed. by Erik H. Erikson, (New York: Norton & Company, 1976), 198.

and circularly transportable between the colonies and metropole. As such, age-based understandings, categories, and identity constructs also traveled through a "circuitous imperial route," for "becoming adult and bourgeois meant distinguishing oneself from that which was uncivilized, lower-class, and non-European."<sup>181</sup> From this perspective, age-based prescriptions were not only transported through imperialism but are also reflective of a power that was structured and constitutive of the colonial context; they were made and reinforced through understandings of what Albert Memmi calls the colonizer and colonized.<sup>182</sup>

Conversely, at least since the late 1970s, scholarly literature, particularly by women of color, drew attention to the way in which race, class, gender, and sexuality shapes identities and society. Although there are examples of women of color's research that directly address questions that concern young people or generational distinctions,<sup>183</sup> there is also research that deals with race, gender, sexuality, or class, which presupposes that these categories and theoretical premises apply to most across age in blanket form. To highlight my point, the anthology *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Future* edited by M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty is one example. Through a politics of decolonization that considers a complex transnational and intersectional framework, Alexander and Mohanty state that the "experiences, histories, and self-reflections of feminist of color and Third-World feminist remain at the center of the anthology."<sup>184</sup> These authors contend that since the 1980s, questions of racism, gender, and heterosexism have been naturalized through the experience and history of "middle class, urban, Euro-American women" and are reproduced in gender and Women's Studies programs in academia. They argue that these Women's Studies programs often end up reinforcing the inherited regimes of Eurocentrism and race by not challenging the hegemony of whiteness and capitalism, for example. Moreover, the authors underscore that the anthology aims at providing a relational, comparative, and historically based conception of feminism, one that differs from the traditional, liberal understandings.<sup>185</sup>

Unfortunately, the absence of generational distinctions in their analysis renders young women of color's experiences invisible—or at the very least, silently displaces them. One could contend that treating "age" as a distinct and important category of analysis was not part of their research project to begin with and therefore does not merit the type of critique I make. Yet, as an important scholarly work that asks us to rethink feminist practices and theories in light of questions of imperialism and colonization, I precisely draw attention to their work as a prime

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<sup>181</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things*, (London: Duke University Press, 1995), 151.

<sup>182</sup> See Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997 [1965]).

<sup>183</sup> Examples literature that is grounded in intersectional analysis but distinctly examines age groups and generational differences includes, Diane Yen-Mei Wong, *Dear Diane: Letters from our Daughters*, (Oakland, California: Asian Women United of California, 1983) and Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference" in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches by Audre Lorde*, (New York: Crossing Press, 1984). Although the following examples do not focus on youth or incorporate age analysis directly, and are written from adult-perspectives, some consider aspects of generational distinctions by including accounts of childhood or relationships with family members, like mothers or grandmothers, for instance. For examples, see Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds., *This Bridge Called my Back; All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, but Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies*, (New York: The Feminist Press, 1982); Barbara Smith, ed., *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*, (New York: Kitchen Table Press, 1983); Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).

<sup>184</sup> M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, eds. *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, (Routledge: New York, 1997), xv.

<sup>185</sup> Alexander and Mohanty, xvi.

example of how the politics of age are not seen as central to the account. Generational differences are assumed to not have importance in the larger scheme of things, and, consequently, the absence of this distinction works to naturalize the boundaries of adulthood. Indeed, one could also argue that the interrogation of age does not have to be explicit since it is already embedded within the larger discourse and theoretical framework of intersectionality. If one believes this, this position would not only contradict Mohanty's argument of calling attention to the "historical specificities" of identity politics that she once argued,<sup>186</sup> but also reinforce the power of adults as always being the reference point of analysis and the only age group worthy of merit and documentation. As sociologist James E. Côté states: "like most people I had taken for granted the notion of adulthood as a reference point from which other life stages are judged, viewing it as a static time of security, at least from the point of view of human development."<sup>187</sup> In similar way, Jessica K. Taft points out that "Many adults are not cognizant of the dynamics of age as an axis of inequality, and therefore they fail to interrogate their own age-based privilege or think critically about their treatment and perception of [youth]."<sup>188</sup> Thus, what Mohanty and Alexander have in common with the programs and legacy they critique is an naturalized adulthood—in this way, by not calling attention to this type of hegemony—they inadvertently corroborate with an aspect of Eurocentric, traditional, liberal understanding that goes undetected and is overlooked. A way to change this would be to consider what Barrie Thorne suggests, which is that age should be included in the "complex terrain of intersectional analysis" as a "constitutive and central dimension."<sup>189</sup> Having said this, how could decolonial thought benefit from making age central to the conversation?

Many decolonial thinkers of the modernity/coloniality group challenge the concept of labor rooted in a Euro-Marxist understanding of materiality by examining the intertwined relationship between labor and race in the colonial context (often eclipsing gender), but they do so without taking into consideration how age matters are also central to our understanding about them.<sup>190</sup> One of the ways that young people were historically targeted in developing the colonial project was through the exploitation of their labor. Young people have historically been used as productive source of labor in many part of the globe, and the willingness to use child labor during colonial times is not particular to the Americas. In the context of slavery to peasant farming, from agricultural industry to urban informal sector, historical records suggest children's labor has been indispensable to the respective economies.<sup>191</sup> Before industrialization, it was not

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<sup>186</sup> See Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, eds. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991).

<sup>187</sup> Côté, 1.

<sup>188</sup> Taft, 191.

<sup>189</sup> Thorne, 405.

<sup>190</sup> For example, Walter D. Mignolo states that "the appropriation of labor went hand in hand with the exploitation of labor (Indians and African slaves) and the control of finance (the accumulation of capital as a consequence of the appropriation of land and the exploitation of labor). Capital concentrated in Europe, in the imperial states, and not in the colonies. You can follow this pattern through the nineteenth century when England and France displaced Spain and Portugal as leading imperial countries. The logic of coloniality was then reproduced, and, of course, modified, in the next step of imperial expansion into Africa and Asia." See Walter D. Mignolo, (2005), 12.

<sup>191</sup> Tobias Hecht, "Introduction," *Minor Omissions: Children in Latin American History and Society*, ed. by same author (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), 8; Also see Audra Abbe Diptee, "Imperial Ideas, Colonial Realities: Enslaved Children in Jamaica, 1775-1834," *Children in Colonial America*, ed. James Marten, (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 49.

uncommon to have children work in agrarian societies since they were seen as contributing to the social order. Depending on class variations in the United States and Europe, children worked on farms, in artisan's shops, and in homes. Labor from the very poor or to the orphaned was often used as a means to teach industry. During the eighteenth and nineteenth century, at the onset of the Industrial Revolution, children formed an important source of labor in Britain even though working class children were treated with little sympathy.<sup>192</sup> Although children continued to work during industrialization, what changed was the nature of the work. Children worked long hours in factories in which their growing limbs resulted in physical deformities due to the constant repetitive motion generated by industrial machinery.<sup>193</sup> Specific to Britain, "child laborers lived in 'an age accustomed to brutality.' As a result, they were quite often victims of the 'unrestrained vent' of 'brutal and sadistic overseers.' Children could be beaten for tardiness, for unsatisfactory performance, or because they were too exhausted to continue working."<sup>194</sup> But not all British child labor is rooted in the experiences of children in factories since there were also children laboring under other harsh conditions, such as in mines and in agricultural areas.<sup>195</sup>

Although child labor in Europe had a long tradition that ideologically extended to the Americas, this did not parallel but took new forms in the colonial context. In the Americas labor came in a context that included murder, enslavement, and constant breaking up of families. This involved not only racial and gendered bloodshed, but also inter-generational violence which included using young people in various ways as targeted tools of conquest.<sup>196</sup> Subsequent, alongside, and ongoing to the genocide of the natives, the enslavement of Africans exemplifies the development of the colonial project through colonized young people. For instance, research on the Transatlantic Slavery Database has revealed that by the late nineteenth century, nearly half of all slaves leaving Africa were children.<sup>197</sup> Since children accounted for a significant proportion of the slave population that was transported in the late eighteenth century across the Atlantic, practical and economic concerns shaped the standard method of categorizing slaves according to age-based categories. There was no concrete way to determine the exact age of the enslaved since age records were not standard, but height was usually the measure to gauge who was considered a child, adolescent, or adult. Many planters had a clear preference for adult African males, but there is evidence that young people of both genders were also prioritized and sold in sizeable proportions. For example, in one ship of captives sold in Jamaica, 30 percent were boys and girls, many not more than eight or nine years of age.<sup>198</sup> Although some planters specifically requested young slaves, they were hesitant of those that they deemed too young. Nevertheless, if the price was low enough, young African slaves were purchased despite wariness. Often in plantations, when they did not contribute to the alarming mortality rates, slave children began working at the age of five or six, and served as full hands in the fields by

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<sup>192</sup> Diptee, 52.

<sup>193</sup> See Pricilla Ferguson Clement, *Growing Pains: Children in the Industrial Age, 1850-1890*, (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1997).

<sup>194</sup> Diptee, 52.

<sup>195</sup> See Hugh Cunningham, "The employment and unemployment of children in England c. 1680-1851," *Past & Present*, no. 126 (1990): 115-150.

<sup>196</sup> Chronicling the first decades of colonization in the Americas, Spanish friar Bartolomé de las Casas documents the brutality of this time. See Bartolomé de las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, ed. and trans. by Nigel Griffin, (New York: Penguin Putnam Inc., 1992 [1542]).

<sup>197</sup> Anna Mae Duane, *Suffering Childhood in Early America: Violence, Race, and the Making of the Child Victim*, (London: The University of Georgia Press, 2010), 14. Not to mention that European boys constituted 40 percent on crews as pages, cabin boys, and apprentices. See Hecht, *Minor Omissions*, 9.

<sup>198</sup> Diptee, 50-51.



the age of twelve.<sup>199</sup> Although many enslaved children were made to perform agricultural tasks on plantations, some were also geared towards domestic or skilled labor.<sup>200</sup>

The idea of children working—in factories, mines, and agricultural areas in Europe or as slaves in the Americas—was possible because young people were seen as a cheap and easily exploitable source of labor.<sup>201</sup> However, despite imperial-colonial connections, such as colonial attitudes about exploitation of child (enslaved) labor that reflected a long-standing British tradition that utilized children for their labor, there were of course fundamental differences. One major difference is that the majority of child laborers in the Americas were enslaved/colonized, while those in Europe generally were not. That is, children in Europe, despite harsh labor conditions, such as in Britain, were generally regarded as subjects of the crown, while enslaved children were considered property of the crown, like their colonized adult counterparts. Both enslaved children and adults had no legal protection or rights to wages, and enslaved families were legally under the control of white plantation owners and their social and economic interests.<sup>202</sup> Colonized children rarely had access to education or literacy. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, many slave children experienced similar levels of unhygienic surroundings, poverty, and material deprivation like other poor free (non-slave) children. In contrast to free children, however, slave children, like their parents, had little control of their lives. For example, in Brazil the infancy of a slave child depended on whether the owner wished to use, rent, or sell the mother as a wet nurse to a third party.<sup>203</sup> Slavery's continuous violence threatened the integrity of families, challenging the relationship between mothers and their children in particular.

When colonizing did not happen in such explicitly violent manner, the project of conquest happened *through* young people in other ways. That is, young people were epistemologically targeted in developing the colonial project, which is another way that the coloniality of power was enacted. Since civilizing indigenous youth meant lessening the constant threat of warfare, colonists would come to see cultivating the Indian child as necessary for conquering the New World.<sup>204</sup> In New Spain, for example, where religion and warfare were principal activities, young people were used for colonizing purposes. For example, unlike the Spanish settlers that were considered violent, immoral, and unjust, early missionaries had the objective of converting Indians to the Catholic faith and to transmit knowledge and useful skills. One of the ways they accomplished this was by employing specially taught native children. Following King Charles' recommendation of converting the children of the Aztec nobility so as to provide examples for the rest of the population, the Franciscans taught religion, music, reading, and writing in Spanish and Náhuatl to the sons of the nobility. In turn, indigenous youth served as translators of sermons, serving as teachers and preachers to parents, elders, and to others in the region. At the college of the Holy Cross in Mexico City, for example, seventy Indian boarding students, from twelve to seventeen years of age, received instruction in Latin grammar, logic, rhetoric, and aspects of philosophy and theology, music, and herbal and

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<sup>199</sup> James Marten, "Introduction," *Children in Colonial America*, ed. James Marten, (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 3.

<sup>200</sup> Diptee, 53.

<sup>201</sup> Diptee and Cunningham.

<sup>202</sup> Diptee, 53-54.

<sup>203</sup> Elizabeth Anne Kuznesof, "Slavery and Childhood in Brazil (1550-1888)" in *Raising an Empire: Children in Early Modern Iberia and Colonial Latin America*, eds. Ondina E. González and Bianca Premo, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007), 189 and 199.

<sup>204</sup> Pocahontas provides one example of this. See Duane, 22-27.

therapeutic medicine.<sup>205</sup> By colonizing indigenous young people, these youth served as a tool of colonization in converting other natives.

In the seventeenth century, colonial officials and the elite, allowed Indian children and youth to live with Spanish families in the city of Lima as a way to control the indigenous population and ensure dependence. Breaking up family links, migrant indigenous young people became members of their masters' extended families which facilitated the colonial projects by ensuring that they would learn the necessary cultural and economic skills to better serve Spaniards and the kingdom. Being exposed to the colonizers culture and religion, Indian youth would become familiar with colonial principles of obedience, acceptance of their subordinate status, and recognition of authority. Spanish authorities believed that acculturated Indians would help maintain order and control within indigenous populations in general.<sup>206</sup> Living with Spanish masters, however, did not necessarily create docile and dependent indigenous youth; many young Indians would sometimes go beyond the limits imposed on them. Also, this type of cultural integration was not only the result of an imposition from above but also from the bottom up. As a way to elevate socially, some Indian parents put their children in Spanish households so future generations could master language, trades, and culture of the colonizers. Through their children was one way that natives could benefit, given the context.<sup>207</sup>

By highlighting the examples of the ways young people were central to the European colonizing project, the point I make is that almost all of the scholars of decolonial thought do not give much—if any—importance to how age and power are connected to modernity/coloniality and/or decolonization as a project. This absence is not reflective of lack of material as much as of the concerns of those writing and theorizing on decolonization. To be fair, it is not just decolonial scholars for which the topic of age is a "blind" spot. Scholars that focus on youth—a category clearly demarcated by age—fail to critically examine the implications (or theorization) of age in their analysis too.<sup>208</sup> Those that do consider age as having importance in daily life, like psychologists, family therapists, educationalists, and to some degree sociologists and political scientists, not only take the implications of age for granted but also tend to see it detached from colonizing processes. By examining the role that young people had in the colonial experience throughout the Americas can underscore how they were central in shaping understandings of labor, race, and gender in the New World. Furthermore, placing attention to particular understandings of age and generation during colonization can elucidate how these interrelated groupings relate to empire as well as modern subjectivity. The patterns that emerged in understandings of racialization, connected to religious and political beliefs and experiences that were rooted in how colonial childhood and generations followed, points to how central they were to imperialism.

## Conclusion:

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<sup>205</sup> Dorothy Tanck de Estrada, "Indian Children in Early Mexico" in *Children in Colonial America*, ed. James Marten, (New York: New York University Press, 2007), see 18-21.

<sup>206</sup> Teresa C. Vergara, "Growing up Indian: Migration, Labor, and Life in Lima (1570-1640)" in *Raising an Empire: Children in Early Modern Iberia and Colonial Latin America*, eds. Ondina E. González and Bianca Premo, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007), 76.

<sup>207</sup> Vergara, 96.

<sup>208</sup> Examples include, Howard Pinderhughes, *Race in the Hood Conflict & Violence Among Urban Youth*. (University of Minnesota Press, 1997); Mark S. Fleisher, *Dead End Kids: Gang Girls and the Boys they Know*, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998); Nanette J. Davis, *Youth Crisis: Growing Up in the High-Risk Society*, (Connecticut: Praeger Publishing, 1999).

In this chapter, I examined negative discourses that were produced about young people since the early 1900s as well as significant responses that aimed at representing adolescence in positive ways. Along with addressing the shortcomings of the growing body of literature on young people and youth activism that fails to relate to the politics of colonization, age, and power, I explored decolonizing anthropological work that began since at least the 1960s when the field was critiqued for its involvement in colonial and imperialist agendas. Because this dissertation is predominantly grounded in the scholarship of decolonial thought, I also described many of significant theoretical approaches that constitute this field, including the modern/colonial group, U.S. Third World women of color, and decolonial feminism. Finally, I concluded by pointing to the general absence of age in decolonial thought. In particular, I argued that the modern conceptions of adult/adulthood are implicated by and made through the colonial context, and that writing about modernity/coloniality without including in its basic narrative questions of age and power argue replicates a (white) adult-centered mentality. Furthermore, I contended that giving attention to the complex role of age/young people in the colonial context also in the present social order offers a more nuanced reading of how we understand modernity/coloniality and decolonization.

**Chapter three:**

**Youth Activism and the Decolonial Turn**

## Introduction

In this chapter, I begin by examining the trope of resistance that is familiar to many analyses of social movements. Although resistance frameworks may be useful to understanding social movements in some instances, I advocate for a model that places youth activism in relation to decolonization. Next, I support this claim by focusing on how youth activism relates to the global "decolonial turn" that was activated in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. In response to growing frustrations related to neoliberal racist politics and the global decline of the leftist movements, I also highlight the resurgence of decolonizing activism of people of color in California that began in the 1990s. In particular, I focus on two examples of this type of decolonizing activism, represented in the Chicano@ and multi-ethnic walkouts and in the subsequent "No on 21" campaign, also known as the "Youth Movement." I underscore how movements such as these contribute to California's activist history and legacy of decolonizing activism. Last but not least, I write about current activist movements in the U.S. and their complex relationship to decolonizing politics.

## Beyond Resistance Models

There is a substantial research on the social movements of young people of color that often contributes to a decolonial perspective, although sometimes the relationship is often not explicit.<sup>209</sup> Much of the literature relating to activism, however, the trope of resistance generally comes immediately to the forefront.<sup>210</sup> To take a recent example, the special 2011 issue entitled "Youth Resistance Revisited" of the *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* is dedicated to presenting new and expanded theories of youth resistance in educational research, particularly youth responses to injustices in schooling. Challenging readers to confront common dichotomous reproductions of resistance, the authors provide analysis that portray youth resistance as something that goes beyond practices, as something that is not indebted to necessarily lead to structural transformation and/or to educational mobility (although some forms of resistance may do so). After over thirty years of research that uses the lens of resistance by which to understand social contexts of schools and communities, youth experiences in schooling, and in education beyond schooling, the objective of the special issue is to build upon existing

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<sup>209</sup> Examples include, Carlos Jr. Muñoz, *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement* (New York: Verso, 2007 [1989]); Robin D.G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002); Laura Pulido, *Black, Brown, Yellow, & Left: Radical Activism in Los Angeles*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); David Hillard, ed., *The Black Panther Party: Service to the People Programs*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008); Stephan L. Cohen, *The Gay Liberation Youth Movement in New York: An Army of Lovers Cannot Fail*, (New York: Routledge, 2008); Asian Community Center Archive Group, *Stand Up: An Archive Collection of the Bay Area Asian American Movement*, (Berkeley: Eastwind Books of Berkeley, 2009); David Montejano, *Quixote's Soldiers: A Local History of the Chicano Movement, 1966-1981*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010); Maylei Blackwell, *¡Chicana Power!: Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011).

<sup>210</sup> The following are some examples: Stephen Duncombe, ed., *Cultural Resistance Reader*, (London: Verso, 2002); James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); Shawn Ginwright, Pedro Noguera, Julio Cammarota, eds., *Beyond Resistance! Youth Activism and Community Change*, (New York: Routledge, 2006); and Daniel G. Solorzano and Dolores Delgado Bernal, "Examining Transformational Resistance through a Critical Race and Latcrit Theory Framework: Chicana and Chicano Students in an Urban Context," *Urban Education*, 36.3, (2001), 308-42.

theories of youth resistance and to provide "on-the-ground" examples of reclaimed or new theories of the like. The authors of this special issue allegedly draw upon a range of discourses that includes—but is not limited to—critical theory, political economy, decolonizing theory, queer theory, critical race theory, and educational discourses that borrow from sociology, criminal justice, and health. Featuring an array of articles that combine theory and practice of qualitative research as they articulate "new" or "reclaimed" framing of youth resistance, Tuck and Yang hope the special issue will offer "compelling, innovative, or often-overlooked ways of understanding the contexts and conditions within which youth negotiate, resist, and sometimes reject schooling."<sup>211</sup>

Building on previous reformulations of resistance, I am not necessarily against the discourses, themes, or perspectives found in or coming from "resistance" thinking, even though it may be understood in this way because I do not entirely agree with this type of framework. However, I do have many problems with the resistance framework some of which I wish to explain. One is that "resistance" implies an always already defensive position that, despite many fruitful ways of conceiving it, relies and affirms a hierarchical binary relation of abstract power that often isolates its constitutive and relational nature. To further explain this, I borrow from French Psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan who argues that, "The signifier plays an active role in determining the effects in which the signifiable appears to succumb to its mark, becoming through that passion, the signified."<sup>212</sup> The "I" and the Other constitute each other where the former determines the latter. That is, you can talk about the "I" without naming the Other since we understand what it means through the dominant subject. When speaking of the "I" the Other is embedded in the meaning and vice-versa. From this perspective, resistance evokes the dominant subject constituting the subservient other. The youth movement of 2000 in California, which responded to the criminalization of young of color advanced by Proposition 21, provides an example of this dynamic. If I were to base my perspective on resistance, then I would most likely focus on the capacity of youth's ability to defend itself against the law by withstanding its harmful effects. In other words, the law would hold a significant place in my inquiry to the detriment of my ability to consider a youth activist perspective, which, for instance, may not prioritize the centrality of the law in the same way when creating a method of analysis. Another problem is that, although resistance frameworks have a historical significance and is still useful in some instances, it may not be the most relevant as complex notions of power require other ways of understanding its workings.<sup>213</sup> Last but not least, even though resistance frameworks are often contextualized and historicized at the micro level, they are generally ambiguous or volatile as they are not placed at a macro level that considers broader questions of the colonization of space and time.

My research on youth activism which relates (but is not limited) to hierarchies of race-class-gender-sexuality-age dynamics—aspects of which have been analyzed through resistance frameworks—begs for another theoretical model altogether. Through the standpoint of

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<sup>211</sup> Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Youth Resistance Revisited: New Theories of Youth Negotiations of Educational Injustices," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, vol. 24, no. 5, (Sep.-Oct. 2011), 529.

<sup>212</sup> Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: A Selection*, Trans. by Bruce Fink, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2002 [1966]), 274.

<sup>213</sup> Two examples that highlight examine power and expand notions of resistance include, Lila Abu-Lughod, "The Romance of Resistance: Tracing Transformations of Power Through Bedoin Women," *American Ethnologist*, vol. 17, no. 1 (Feb., 1990), 41-55; Martha Kaplan and John D. Kelly, "Rethinking Resistance: Dialogics of 'Disaffection' in Colonial Fiji," *American Ethnologist*, vol. 21, no. 1, (Oct. 2009), 123-151.

insistence, I focus on how it is that youth produce, create, or demand something else. Although one could argue that social forces, such as the law, come into the conversation this way too, the difference is that I place youth's activism at the center and not in the background. Rather than reproducing Enlightenment ideals that follows nicely the logic of linearity/modernity or including decolonizing theory as one of the strands that makes up the "resistance" framework, I see youth activism as not only resistance of oppressive forces but also as insistence to creating options to decolonizing ways of living that are part of a larger decolonial movement. Instead of following traditional resistance models, I underscore the ways in which youth of color movements are constitutive of a larger decolonial project that began in the 20th century understood as the "decolonial turn."

## The Decolonial Turn

Another way to understand youth activism in relation to hierarchies of race-class-gender-sexuality dynamics is through a decolonial lens which, among many things, includes seriously engaging with decolonial/decolonizing theory. While *Youth Resistance Revisited* claims that scholars of the special issue draw upon a range of discourses that includes "decolonizing theory," I find a lack of serious engagement with decolonial thought in general, and, more specifically, do not see decolonial theory as something additive or to be included into a resistance framework. Instead, I see decolonial thought as a matrix in which to understand youth activism that reconfigures how we understand resistance. In particular, I see youth activism as part of what Nelson Maldonado-Torres has called the decolonial turn.<sup>214</sup> Existing since long ago and in varying ways, the decolonial turn opposes the colonizing turn in Western thought and its corresponding paradigm of discovery and newness that includes, among many things, the gradual proliferation of capitalism, racism, colonial/modern gender system, and the naturalization of the death ethics of war. Different from the linguistic or pragmatic turns, the decolonial turn can be understood as skepticism towards Western thought and refers to "the decisive recognition and propagation of decolonization as an ethical, political, and epistemic project in the twentieth century. This project reflects changes in historical consciousness, agency, and knowledge, and it also involves a method or series of methods that facilitate the task of decolonization at the material and epistemic levels."<sup>215</sup> Distinguishing youth activism from resistance frameworks by arguing for its constitutive role in the decolonial turn allows for the necessary experimentations and explorations that transcend Eurocentric ways of thinking.

The idea of decolonization was birthed with colonization itself but did not become a project until the twentieth century. Although opposition to colonization existed before, it is in the 20<sup>th</sup> century that the decolonial turn is substantiated. Announced by the groundbreaking scholarship of W.E.B Du Bois in the early 1900s, the decolonial turn was concretized through interrelated (particularly post World War II) global articulations reflected by intellectuals like Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon and manifested through social and political transformations like

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<sup>214</sup> Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "Thinking through the Decolonial Turn: Post-continental Interventions in Theory, Philosophy, and Critique—an Introduction," *Transmodernity*, (Fall 2011).

<sup>215</sup> Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "Césaire's Gift and the Decolonial Turn," *Radical Philosophy Review*, vol. 9, no. 2, (2006), 114; Also see Nelson Maldonado-Torres, *Against War: View from the Underside of Modernity*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), introduction; For more on the linguistic turn of philosophy, see Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "The Topology of Being and the Geopolitics of Knowledge: Modernity, Empire, Coloniality," *City*, vol. 8, no. 1, (Apr. 2004).

the Cuban revolution.<sup>216</sup> The collapse of the European Age in the first two World Wars, along with the second wave of decolonization in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and other territories, led to critical reflection of oppressed people across the globe.<sup>217</sup> While anti-colonial and decolonial politics, intellectual thought, and artistic expression existed before, it is in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century that the amount of self-awareness and coalitional efforts that challenge colonization and imperialism intensifies, such that it impacted traditional epistemic fields like anthropology.<sup>218</sup> As Sylvia Wynter suggests, the 1960s social movements could be understood as the possible beginning of a new opening of the epochal shift that began the process of resignifying symbolic representations and reordering episteme.<sup>219</sup> The decolonizing turn, although having roots in the 18<sup>th</sup> century independence movements, and solidified during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, does not mean the goal is to "go back" in space and time, or that colonization exists now in the same way as before. In contrast to Habermas' conception of the unfinished project of the Enlightenment, another way to understand decolonization is as an unfinished project.<sup>220</sup> The relevance of this project is evident from mid-twentieth century to now, as many are engaged in decolonial thought and politics, articulated by intellectuals that range from Sylvia Wynter, Enrique Dussel, Gloria Anzaldúa, among others, and is expressed in many places like Mexico, Brazil, Bolivia, New Zealand, and the US.

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<sup>216</sup> See Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "On the Coloniality of Being: Contributions to the Development of a Concept," in *Cultural Studies*, vol. 21, nos. 2-3, Maldonado-Torres, "Thinking through the Decolonial Turn"; Maldonado-Torres, "Césaire's Gift"; See Enrique Dussel, *Politics of Liberation: a Critical World History*, Thia Cooper trans., (London: SCM Press, 2011), 520-548.

<sup>217</sup> The meaning of decolonization gained popularity on a broad scale after the Bandung Conference in 1955 where twenty-nine Asian and African countries participated. Another significant moment was the 1961 Conference of the Non-Aligned Countries that took place in Belgrade where the idea of the "Third World" was incited. See Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), xxiii. For a difference between the postcolonial and decolonial, see Walter D. Mignolo and Madina Tlostanova, "The Logic of Coloniality and the Limits of Postcoloniality," *The Post-colonial and the Global*, ed. by Revathi Krishnaswamy and John C. Hawley, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 109-24; for explications, debates, and critiques of postcoloniality, see Mabel Moraña, Enrique Dussel, and Carlos A. Jáuregui, eds., *Coloniality at Large: Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); also noteworthy is Boaventura de Sousa Santos, "From the Postmodern to the Postcolonial—and Beyond Both," *Decolonizing European Sociology: Transdisciplinary Approaches*, ed. by Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez, Manuela Boatca, Sérgio Costa, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2010).

<sup>218</sup> Examples include, Kathleen Gough, "Anthropology: Child of Imperialism," *Monthly Review*, 19.11, (1968), 12-27; Vine Deloria Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*, (New York: Macmillan, 1969); Dell Hymes, ed., *Reinventing Anthropology*, (New York: Random House, 1972); Diane K. Lewis, "Anthropology and Colonialism," *Current Anthropology*, 14.5, (1973), 582-597; Talal Asad, ed., *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*, (London: Ithaca Press, 1973); Gerrit Huizer and Bruce Mannheim, eds., *The Politics of Anthropology: From Colonialism and Sexism Toward a View from Below*, (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1979); Thomas Biolsi and Larry J. Zimmerman, eds., *Indians and Anthropologists: Vine Deloria, Jr., and the Critique of Anthropology*, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997); and Darren J. Ranco, "Toward a Native Anthropology: Hermeneutics, Hunting Stories, and Theorizing from Within," *Wicazo Sa Review*, 21.2, (Fall 2006).

<sup>219</sup> Sylvia Wynter, "1492: A New World View," *Race, Discourse, and the Origin of the Americas*, ed. by Vera L. Hyatt and Rex Nettleford, (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 50.

<sup>220</sup> For more on this see Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "Enrique Dussel's Liberation Thought in the Decolonial Turn," *Transmodernity: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World*, 1.1, (2011), 1-30; Ramón Grosfoguel, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, and José David Saldívar, "Latin@s and the 'Euro-American Menace': The Decolonization of the U.S. Empire in the Twenty-First Century," *Latin@s in the World-System: Decolonization Struggles in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century U.S. Empire*, ed. by the same authors, (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2005).



Although many groups and ways of thinking may not necessarily self-identify as being decolonial, they often could be considered as such as they replace scientific and reductive rationalism of seventeenth-century Western philosophy with more indigenous and women centered values of healing and caring.<sup>221</sup> One way to think about decolonization is what Raquel Jacquez states: "The term decolonial is a description, a declaration, and most importantly a call to action; that by denying what we are not, we are also proclaiming what we are. By denying the colonized knowledge's of those who have destroyed our communities, we are simultaneously declaring the value of new knowledges, particularly those from the lived experiences of our ancestors, ours families, communities and ourselves. It is an affirmation of our lived history, shared stories, healing processes and our continued struggles."<sup>222</sup> Thus, decolonization is not only about resisting but about affirming, insisting, and creating from a multiplicity of spaces that challenges values, relationships, attitudes, institutions and society; this is not just a perspective or technique but a way of life. As much as colonization is negation, violence, hate, and about destroying, decolonization is affirmation, healing, love, and about building.

Some may argue that decolonization, like resistance frameworks, comes from or contributes to defensive positions that rely and affirm a hierarchical dichotomous relation of power between the colonizer/colonized.<sup>223</sup> Although in some instances this may be true, decolonization is about transcending this binary. Because colonization dehumanizes everyone, including those in power—going beyond the duality is crucial. As Albert Memmi argues, "colonization distorts relationships, destroys or petrifies institutions, and corrupts [people], both colonizers and colonized."<sup>224</sup> To see decolonization as a duality is reductive, and the "1492" event is one example of this. Many post-colonial/race theory scholars point to the "1492 event" as the break into the beginning of modernity, which is debated between the perspectives of the celebrants or dissidents. That is, the former perceives the event as a glorious achievement and the latter as the beginning of monumental crimes and brutal invasion and conquest. Rising above the binary perspective, however, Wynter asks if a third perspective is possible, one that goes beyond the aforementioned partial perspectives where another can emerge as a "new and ecumenically human view that places the event of 1492 within a new frame of meaning, not only of *natural* history, but also of a newly conceived *cultural* history specific to and unique to our species, because the history of those 'forms of life' gives expressions to a third level of hybridly organic...linguaging existence."<sup>225</sup> By taking the ecosystemic and global sociosystemic interrelatedness of our contemporary situation as a point of departure, Wynter believes we can "put forward a new world view of 1492 from the perspective of the species, and with reference to the interests of *its* well-being."<sup>226</sup> Thus, the idea of modernity and its implications must be looked at through many complex angles.

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<sup>221</sup> Grace Lee Boggs, for example, considers how self-healing civic groups are creating one of the largest global movements. See, Grace Lee Boggs, *The Next American Revolution: Sustainable Activism for the Twenty-First Century*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 41-45.

<sup>222</sup> Raquel Jacquez, *Decolonizing the University: Fulfilling the Dream of the Third World College*, Mattie Harper (producer) and John Hamilton (video camera and post-production), (2010), <http://vimeo.com/15729523>, (accessed Mar. 21, 2012), video.

<sup>223</sup> For example, in several of the Occupy Oakland's general assembly meetings where it was proposed to change the name from "occupy" to "decolonize," similar critiques surfaced often. I discuss the Occupy Oakland movement later in this chapter.

<sup>224</sup> Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997 [1965]), 151.

<sup>225</sup> Wynter, *1492*, 7.

<sup>226</sup> Wynter, *1492*, 8.

The decolonial turn is not about reproducing dichotomies or usurping hierarchical relations only to replace them. Instead, decolonization has the goal of what decolonial scholars like Dussel have called transmodernity which is about transgressing and transcending modernity and its colonizing institution, ideas, and practices that "invites critical and creative appropriations of selected modern ideas, along with multiple other conceptual frameworks that can contribute to forge a less oppressive future."<sup>227</sup> In this light, modernity is examined critically from different epistemic positions and involves radical dialogical ethics between humans and those considered subhumans.<sup>228</sup> A way to describe decolonization is that "only by abolishing the situation of oppression is it possible to restore the love which the situation made impossible."<sup>229</sup> Unlike the special issue of *Youth Resistance Revisited* that, along with having implications for teaching, learning, educational policy, and qualitative research that hopes to improve educational research, practice, and policy, the decolonizing framework for youth activism that I am proposing has the goal of furthering the unfinished project of decolonization.

### Youth Activism and the Decolonial Turn

How does youth activism relate to the decolonial turn? One principal way that they relate is that, along with others, young people—particularly those at the bottom of racial-class-gender-sexuality hierarchies—had an irreplaceable impact in soldering the decolonial turn of the mid-twentieth century. In the U.S. and in other parts of the globe, many young people have been central to decolonization since the beginning, however, it is in the middle of the 1900s when youth, particularly youth of color, mobilize in mass form. On February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1960, four Black College students challenged the racist Jim Crow system head-on by sitting at the lunch counter designated for whites only at the Woolworth's in Greensboro, North Carolina. This daring act of direct action began what would later be known as the "sit-ins." In an oral history of one of the four college students of the Greensboro sit-in, Joe McNeil recollects: "I was particularly inspired by the people in Little Rock....I was really impressed by the courage that those kids had and the leadership that they displayed."<sup>230</sup> 25-year-old journalist David Halberstam recollects the impact the "sit-in kids" had upon him: "I was impressed by these young people from the start, by their courage and their dignity and their awesome inner strength, and in an odd way, by their relentless *innocence*—for they had set out what older, wiser, more experienced people told them they could

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<sup>227</sup> Maldonado-Torres, "Thinking through the Decolonial Turn," 7.

<sup>228</sup> For more on the concept of transmodernity, See Enrique Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of the Other and the Myth of Modernity*, (New York: Continuum, 1995); Enrique Dussel "Modernity, Eurocentrism, and Trans-Modernity: In Dialogue with Charles Taylor," *The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, Taylor, and the Philosophy of Liberation*, ed. Eduardo Mendieta, (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities, 1996), 129-59; Enrique Dussel, "World System and 'Trans'-Modernity," trans. by Alessandro Fornazzari, *Nepantla, Views from South*, 3.2, (2002), 221-44; Nelson Maldonado-Torres, for example, argues that "Dussel's disenchantment with modernity and its oppressive forms of rationalization, as well as the inspiration he draws from those developing forms of creative action by the oppressed subjects of Latin America and other parts of the world, let him to articulate an ethic of liberation and a utopian ideal that he calls 'transmodernity,' both of which should be understood as explicit efforts to confer a definition and specific character to decolonization as a project." See Maldonado-Torres, "Enrique Dussel's Liberation Thought in the Decolonial Turn," 3.

<sup>229</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos, (New York: Continuum, 1997 [1970]), 71.

<sup>230</sup> Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, *Voices of Freedom: an Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s*, (New York: Bantam Books, 1990), 56.

never do."<sup>231</sup> What is important about these college students' impressive "acts of resistance" is that it led to one of the most remarkable turning points within the Civil Rights movement that would mark the activism that lay ahead: young black people were on the front lines of activism and their example inspired their entire generation. As Ethnic Studies scholar Carlos Muñoz, Jr. highlights, the decade of the 1960s was unique because: "it marked the first time that youth *as* youth played a central role in the shaping of oppositional movements aimed at those in power....Young people had never before taken to the streets by the thousand to dramatically challenge those institutions responsible for the perpetuation of racial inequality at home and military intervention abroad."<sup>232</sup>

The first sit-in at the Woolworth's in Greensboro was significant because it sparked a wave of sit-ins and similar protest in many other places. By mid-April of 1960, "seventy-eight cities and towns in southern and border states had become part of the sit-in phenomena. Fifty thousand black students and white sympathizers had participated. Two thousand had been arrested."<sup>233</sup> By the fall of 1960 over seventy thousand individuals had participated in sit-ins in over one hundred communities.<sup>234</sup> Steven F. Lawson observes that, "The Little Rock Nine highlighted the important role played by students in challenging segregation, but the wave of sit-ins hurled high school—and college—age youngsters into the vanguard of the movement."<sup>235</sup> Clayborne Carson argues that this incident initiated one of the largest of all Afro-American movements of protest.<sup>236</sup> Peter B. Levy notes that "[t]he sit-ins displayed the birth of a new militancy, especially among young blacks."<sup>237</sup> Charles Payne underscores that the sit-ins "were the definite break with the past, the beginning of a period of sustained mass activism that eventually came to encompass a much broader range of issues than race."<sup>238</sup> Young Black people unleashed a mass wave of activism that would have a pivotal role in transforming race-relations in the US and beyond.

It was also in April of 1960 when executive director of the Southern Christian Leadership Council Ella Baker organized a conference in Raleigh, North Carolina in which over 175 students attended.<sup>239</sup> It was at this conference in which the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was founded. Throughout their existence, SNCC was the force behind the frontline activism, such as the sit-ins and other protests. For example, SNCC assisted the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) whom organized the "Freedom Rides" that aimed at desegregating transportation facilities in the upper South.<sup>240</sup> SNCC was also known for spearheading the "Freedom Summer" campaign of 1964 in Mississippi known as the "Summer

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<sup>231</sup> David Halberstam, *The Children*, (New York: Random House, 1998), 725. By "innocence," the author means that "they knew nothing of the city and its politics; they had no comprehension of the seemingly overwhelming might of the forces arrayed against them in the beginning...."

<sup>232</sup> Muñoz, 1.

<sup>233</sup> Hampton and Fayer, 61.

<sup>234</sup> See Peter B. Levy, *The Civil Rights Movement*, (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1998).

<sup>235</sup> Steven F. Lawson and Charles Payne, *Debating the Civil Rights Movement, 1945-1968*, (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publisher, Inc., 1998), 18.

<sup>236</sup> Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle, SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s*, (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981).

<sup>237</sup> Levy, 14.

<sup>238</sup> Lawson and Payne, 113.

<sup>239</sup> Sources of numbers vary. See Levy, *The Civil Rights Movement*; Emily Stoper, *The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee: The Growth of Radicalism in a Civil Rights Organization*, (New York: Carlson, Publishing, Inc., 1989).

<sup>240</sup> Levy, 16.

Project" in which over 1,000 Northern college volunteer students registered Black voters and taught in the so-called "Freedom Schools."<sup>241</sup> SNCC attracted hundreds of young people from across the country, and they often undertook going to risky places into the rural regions of the deep South where other established civil rights organization would fear. As a result, SNCC was seen as the most radical, militant, cutting edge organization of the movement.<sup>242</sup> Commenting on SNCC's radicalness, photographic historian Steven Kasher writes, "To enlist the poorest, most remote, most endangered of America's citizens as participants in democracy—this was the goal from which SNCC would evolve, and America along with it. SNCC became the most revolutionary of the civil rights organizations, eventually calling . . . for a complete realignment of power in America. As a result, SNCC also became the most feared of the civil rights groups."<sup>243</sup> One time member of SNCC's Executive board, as well as participant and chronicler of their activism, Howard Zinn writes:

All Americans owe them a debt for—if nothing else—releasing the idealism locked so long inside a nation that has not recently tasted the drama of a social upheaval. And for making us look on the young people of the country with a new respect. Theirs was a silent generation until they spoke, the complacent generation until they marched and sang, the money-seeking generation until they renounced comfort and security to fight for justice.<sup>244</sup>

The activism of groups like SNCC eventually paved the way, strengthened, influenced, or transformed other movements including The New Left, the Anti-War, Feminist, Homophile movements, and the various "power" movements of Blacks, Chicanos, Asian and Native Americans.<sup>245</sup> Segments of this type of activism had lasting institutional impacts, such as spearheading the creation of decolonizing fields of study like Ethnic Studies and Women/Gender Studies.

What often gets eclipsed is that young people in many of these movements were the primary agents of social change and in the frontlines of activism. Lawson notes that "[w]hereas adults had initiated and controlled the legal battles over school desegregation, the younger generation moved to the forefront in confronting Jim Crow directly along a broad front."<sup>246</sup> Supporting the argument that the frontline activist were young, one of the members who was involved in SNCC's activist "sit-ins," Leo Lillard observes that: "Most of the people who were on the line were young—nineteen, twenty, twenty-one. Some high school students were there. It was clear that we had little to lose, we had no jobs to lose, we had no houses to lose, we had no cars to lose.... We knew that the adults were not going to get that much involved, so we had to do

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<sup>241</sup> The majority of these students were Northern white, which reflects the "white politics phase" of SNCC. See Stoper, 13-15; Doug McAdam, *Freedom Summer*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

<sup>242</sup> See Levy, *The Civil Rights Movement*; Clayborne Carson, ed., *The Student Voice 1960-1965: Periodical of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee*, (Connecticut: Meckler Corporation, 1990); Lawson and Payne; Carson, (1981).

<sup>243</sup> Steven Kasher, *The Civil Rights Movement: A Photographic History, 1954-68*, (New York: Abbeville Press, 1996).

<sup>244</sup> Howard Zinn, *SNCC: The New Abolitionist*, (Massachusetts: Sound End Press, [1964] 2002), 2.

<sup>245</sup> Trinity A. Ordon, "Coming Out Together: An Ethnohistory of the Asian and Pacific Islander Queer Women's and Transgendered People's Movement of San Francisco," (PhD diss., University of California, Santa Cruz, 2000).

<sup>246</sup> Lawson and Payne, 18.

things and escalate the whole conflict to the point where they had no choice."<sup>247</sup> Because of their "minimal" responsibilities and material-less constraint, many of the youth in SNCC were the ones risking their lives in the name of social change.<sup>248</sup> Beyond being on the frontlines, through their activism youth were also at the forefront of transforming society and the legacy of colonization, impacting the larger culture through practices of non-violence and conviviality that helped to break down institutional racial barriers.<sup>249</sup> What is important to note is that it was the activism of a young people majority that worked towards solidifying decolonial turn then, as much as current activism does now.

### **Rise of Neoliberalism, Resurgence of Decolonizing Activism**

During the 1990s, leftist movements were in decline as China turned towards capitalism and the Soviet Union had come apart.<sup>250</sup> As capitalism "triumphed" in the Cold War and by way of neoliberalism—the move towards free trade, deregulations of markets, privatization of state-owned enterprises, and promotion of the private sector's role in society<sup>251</sup>—it undermined the legitimacy of the leftist movements around the world. Lacking in international support, many leftist movements against imperialist forces found themselves isolated and disoriented as corporations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund took more control. Particular to the US, many of the gains from the 1960s and 1970s social movements—including the Civil Rights-, the Black Power-, Feminist movements—saw a downturn in the 1980s as conservative forces took control of major political arenas in general. Furthermore, many of the large, national radical organizations by the 1990s had fallen apart or significantly diminished. Conservative politicians began using ballot initiatives as a way to implement conservative/racist policies. Although organizations like ACT-UP, Women's Action Coalition, or International Action Center could involve many people in militant direct action or organize massive demonstrations in the San Francisco Bay Area, these organizations were majority white and middle class.<sup>252</sup>

In response to growing frustrations related to neoliberal racist politics, as well as the global decline of the leftist movements, there was a resurgence in the activism of people of color in California at the turn of the century. A group that had a significant impact in shaping the activism in the San Francisco Bay Area in the early 1990s was Roots Against War (RAW) which was made up of majority young people of color with radical leadership.<sup>253</sup> They formed in response to the Gulf War and had an influential role in laying an activist foundation by combining innovative cultural work with sharp politics and militant direct action. Breaking with the authority of white leftist movements of San Francisco's street actions, RAW was

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<sup>247</sup> Hampton and Fayer, 61.

<sup>248</sup> Many could argue that this was due to their "better" economic place in society since they were seen as part of the post-WWII "Baby Boomer" generation. However, although some people of color indeed benefited from the country's "economic gains," it is necessary to consider how the position of the majority of people of color was nonetheless rooted in a larger, socio-economic disadvantage.

<sup>249</sup> See McAdam, *Freedom Summer*; Wesley C. Hogan, *Many Minds, One Heart: SNCC's Dream for a New America*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Trinity A. Ordonez, "Coming Out Together."

<sup>250</sup> STORM, 1-3.

<sup>251</sup> For more on neoliberalism, see David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>252</sup> STORM, 1-3.

<sup>253</sup> STORM, 5.

distinguished for making young people of color central in its massive, direct action efforts that, in addition to responding to the Gulf War (1990-91), included Women's Clinic Defense (1991-93), Rodney King uprisings (1992 and 1993), and the 500 years of colonization resistance protests (1992). RAW was also noted for their militant and confrontational marches that often challenged police commands or broke through police lines and barricades.<sup>254</sup> The group prioritized reaching out to low-income/people of color communities that the Left tended to ignore, and RAW's marches included passionate public speakers with well-crafted written material that provided educational information. In addition to sharp and radical leadership, RAW created an exciting, dynamic, and relevant organizing culture. This attracted many cultural leaders and artists—like poets, DJs, drummers, and graffiti artists—to create a movement culture that promoted radical politics and grew out of and reflected the experiences of many youth of color.<sup>255</sup> After experiencing challenges—including fluctuating membership, disorganization, discontinuity, and intra political tension—the group dissolved by the spring of 1992.<sup>256</sup>

However, while RAW's activism was short lived, there were many significant activist events happening locally and internationally that connected to Latino/a issues and concerns during the 1990s. For instance, 1992 was the anti-Quincentennial celebrations of indigenous people's day and the passing of César Chávez in 1993—founder of the United Farm Workers of America. UC Berkeley Latino students occupied the Chancellor's office in 1993 to protest a policy that would subvert Ethnic Studies, students at UCLA launched a hunger strike to push for departmental status of Chicano studies program, and four Chicanas at Stanford University held a hunger strike in May of 1994 for the firing of Chicana associate dean after 20 years of service. Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico led an indigenous uprising on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1994, youth in California marched in protest against Proposition 184—the "Three Strikes You're Out" law—and students were arrested for protesting the construction of another prison at Soledad on May 18, 1994.

Latino student actions over issues that ranged from the removal of racist murals to racist advertising by a campus radio station took place at universities like Michigan State University, the University of Colorado-boulder, Harvard, Cornell, and the University of New Mexico.<sup>257</sup> 1998 was the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Spanish-American War which gave the US colonial control over the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Guam. This was also the year that marked the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of which half of Mexico was succeeded to the US. 1998 was also the year when the effects of the dismantling of affirmative action (post-proposition 209) in California were visible. In 1997, the last year that affirmative action was used in university enrollment, at the University of California at Berkeley (UCB), the total number of students (undergraduate and graduate combined) for American Indians was 314, for African American it was 1,584, for Chican@s was 2,237. In 1998, the total number of students (undergraduate and graduate combined) at UCB for American Indians was 263, for

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<sup>254</sup> STORM, 5.

<sup>255</sup> STORM, 5.

<sup>256</sup> Other activism during the 1990s that is particular to the San Francisco Bay area includes Californians for Justice which prepared hundreds of young people in electoral work, many youth worked to fight blocking a city curfew, and others worked in the campaign to free former journalist and Black Panther member Mumia Abu-Jamal.

<sup>257</sup> Elizabeth Martínez, "Be Down With the Brown: Thousands of Raza Youth Blowout of School to Protest Racism," *Z Magazine*, (Nov. 1994), 42.

African Americans was 1,440, for Chican@s was 2,063.<sup>258</sup> At a campus where the total enrolled student population was 31,011 in 1998, the enrollment of underrepresented minority students was stark.

### **Decolonizing Activism with Chican@ and Multi-Ethnic Blowouts**

Similar to the 1968 Los Angeles Chicano blowouts,<sup>259</sup> majority Xican@ students staged mass protests during the 1990s across California, the majority taking place in the San Francisco Bay Area. Because public schools lose money for each unexcused absence per day, the economic loss caused by the walkouts was used as a strategy to call attention at the administrative level. Some common problems that sparked these protests were that many youth of color were ending up in prisons, the overcrowding of schools, and Raza students routine experience with administrative racism. In addition, there were overwhelmingly disproportionate anti-youth representations and narratives produced by media, academia, and laws that depicted young people to be of a second class or devoid of political consciousness and critical thinking to say the least. Particular to Chican@ youth, many were upset that they were perceived to as gang-bangers or as being inherently violent and dissatisfied with how the rhetoric around immigrant scapegoating implied a dehumanizing attitude that depicted Latin@s as inferior. Furthermore, students were frustrated with adult authorities, like teachers and principals, who attempted to control them in various ways, such as regulating their behavior on campus and choices in clothing.<sup>260</sup> Along with highlighting the educational system that oppressed many of them, activism provided Xican@ youth a space to challenge mainstream defeatist attitudes, negative representations, and the steady stream of humiliation and struggles that many of them faced. Since youth generally do not have institutional power, young people challenged youth oppression through their collective activism.

Gabriel Hernández was one of the key leaders that played an important role in organizing the walkouts. Hernández, who was an organizer for the *UniteHere! Local 2850*, serving the East and North Bay's union for hotel, foodservice, and gaming workers,<sup>261</sup> started convening participants of MEChA from various part of the San Francisco Bay Area and beyond, including San Francisco, Oakland, Berkeley, San Jose, Watsonville, and Sacramento, to talk about social

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<sup>258</sup> University of California, "Statistical Summary of Students and Staff," [www.ucop.edu/ucophome/uwnews/stat](http://www.ucop.edu/ucophome/uwnews/stat), (accessed Apr. 12, 2012). In 2011, the numbers of minority students at UCB are similar to 1998: the total of American Indians was 258, for African American was 1,241, and for Chican@s was 2,615; the total enrolled student population was 36,142.

<sup>259</sup> In March of 1968, one key event that helped spark the Chicano Movement was the week-long student strike that organizers called the "walkouts" or "blow-outs." Capturing national attention and front-page headlines with picket signs, over ten thousand students eventually walked out of many high schools on to the streets of East Los Angeles. Disrupting the largest school district in the nation, students protested racist school policies and teachers, called for the hiring of Mexican American teachers and administrators, and insisted on having classes on Mexican American culture and history. This was the first major mass protest by Mexican Americans in the history of the US that was explicitly against racism, and this had a profound impact on the Mexican American community in Los Angeles and other parts of the country. Youth played significant leadership roles and the protests generated an interest to mobilize the community. See Muñoz, 1 and 79-84.

<sup>260</sup> Stacey Pederson, "Chicano students walk out in protest," *The Dispatch*, (Sep. 17, 1993). For an example of a public opinion on uniforms, see Maureen Dowd, "Opinion: Will uniforms really make a difference?" *Santa Cruz County Sentinel*, (Jan. 30, 1996). Implementing school uniforms was a controversial topic of discussion, especially after incidents like in 1996 when 17-year-old student Charles Lewis Marsh jr. was shot by a stray bullet in a Maryland suburb that was aimed at robbing a student with a fancy jacket.

<sup>261</sup> For more information, see <http://www.unitehere2850.org/>.

change and organizing. One of these participants was Luis Sánchez, who was a freshman at UC Berkeley during the 1992-1993 academic school year. Luis remembers attending a weekend retreat that was held at Grass Valley, California where series of workshops were conducted on topics like power and community organizing. At this retreat, of which about twenty leaders attended, they talked about many issues, like the growing prison system, the dismal state of public education, indigenous roots and land rights. Eventually, the topic of education was given priority since it could serve as a base to organize high school students in the respective locations of the participants. Areas of organizing were identified at the retreat, and participants returned to their respective locations and began with a door-to-door campaign. Serving as one of the leaders of the campaign in San Francisco, Luis recalls:

It was actually myself and Juanita Chávez, who is Dolores Huerta's daughter...and we were working the campaign in the Mission [neighborhood]. She was one of the core people at the retreat and we were doing door-to-door [campaigning]. Around that time we were working on [the campaign] is when [talks about Proposition] 187 stuff started emerging...[it] was going to be put on the [upcoming California] ballot...we used that as a spring board [for organizing].<sup>262</sup>

As result from many organizing efforts, including the retreat and subsequent campaign that Luis discusses, and in response to Governor Pete Wilson's upcoming anti-immigrant Proposition 187, a wave of Chican@ protests emerged throughout California, particularly in the San Francisco Bay Area. Demanding a better education, a series of Chican@ walkouts served as a "wake-up" call to adults in the Latin@ community and the rest of state.

Beginning on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1993, 1,000 majority Xican@/Latin@ junior and high school students initiated a wave of activism when they walked out of a dozen Oakland schools and confronted school officials.<sup>263</sup> This wave of youth activism included the conviction and determination of a group of students that initiated a hunger strike at UCLA on May 25, in protest of the underdeveloped interdepartmental Chicano studies program. After a two-week hunger strike, students and administrators reached a compromise that would develop the program towards an academic department.<sup>264</sup> On September 16, Mexican Independence day, over 4,000 walked out in various Bay Area locations like Oakland, Berkeley, San Francisco, San Jose, and Gilroy in protest against immigrant attacks launched by Wilson and Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein.<sup>265</sup> On the same day at UC Berkeley 500 marched in favor of various Latino causes that included increasing funding for bilingual education, immigrant rights, Chican@/Latin@ faculty, and for the creation of a Chicano studies department.<sup>266</sup> Another wave of student protests came in November and December of 1993. On November 10, freshman Pedro González, who was born in California and is bilingual, declined to lead the Pledge of Allegiance during English class at the small Central Valley town of Exeter. González claimed

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<sup>262</sup> Luis Sánchez, personal interview, (fall 2011, Oakland, California).

<sup>263</sup> Elizabeth Martínez, "Be Down With the Brown," 40.

<sup>264</sup> Jorge R. Mancillas, "At UCLA, the Power of the Individual," *Los Angeles Times*, (Jun. 11, 1993); "U.C.L.A Hunger Strike Ends," *The New York Times*, (Jun. 08, 1993); Grace Cha, "Raza students organize to save their education," *News for a People's World: Reporting for Social Change in Northern California*, 2.3, (Mar. 1994).

<sup>265</sup> Elizabeth Martínez, "Be Down With the Brown," 40.

<sup>266</sup> Mónica Valencia, "More than 500 Mar. at UC for Latino causes," *The Daily Californian*, vol. CXXIII, no. 18, (Sep. 17, 1993).



that instructor Joseph Conley told him: "if you don't want to do it, go back to Mexico."<sup>267</sup> As a result of the racist remark, 500 high school students, displaying Mexican flags and holding signs that read "Stop the Racistas" and "Alto Racism" (stop racism) boycotted classes. Students protested with a list of demands that included having cultural awareness training for teachers, administrators, and students, and their action eventually led to subsequent meetings with principals and administrators. On December 15, 1993, after administration fired Eddie Alicea—a popular security guard who also served as the advisor of the Latino club at Mission High in San Francisco—students staged a walkout and organized an assembly (with the help of community-based organizers) as his "suspension" came to symbolize a host of student complaints.<sup>268</sup>

Xican@ youth activism continued the following year. On the anniversary of the signing of the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo that annexed half of Mexico to the US, Over 1,000 high school students and supporters from various districts protested at the state capitol on February 2, 1994. Despite facing threats of suspension from school administrators, this march involved youth that walked out of 14 high schools from four counties.<sup>269</sup> On the birthday of the late César Chávez, about 400 Latino students from different schools protested at district offices in Richmond and, with parental support, 324 elementary students (almost half the total amount of the school's pupil population) boycotted classes in Pittsburg on April 18 because a Spanish speaking principal had been demoted.<sup>270</sup> On April 22, protesting for a better education and honoring César Chávez, simultaneous walkouts took place in the San Francisco Bay Area. In one, close to 600 middle and high school students marched from Dolores Park in San Francisco to rally at the Civic Center.<sup>271</sup> At the other, calling for Ethnic Studies and bilingual education, up to 1,000 students—some making political "brown-pride" fashion statements that included using brown bandanas and T-shirts which slogans like, "We're not a gang," and "Don't mess with Mexicans"—from high schools in Fremont, Oakland, and Hayward rallied at Hayward's public library.<sup>272</sup> There were more blow-outs for the Cinco de Mayo holiday (which celebrates victory over French occupation in Mexico) and there was a Jun. gathering in Los Angeles with 900 students.<sup>273</sup> In November of 1994, The *Los Angeles Times* reported that 10,000 students

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<sup>267</sup> Quoted in Michelle Martin, "Exeter students protest teacher's remarks," *Visalia Times-Delta*, (Nov. 17, 1993).

<sup>268</sup> Kathy Emery, *The Business Roundtable and Systemic Reform: How Corporate-Engineered High-Stakes Testing Has Eliminated Community Participation in Developing Educational Goals and Policies*, (Ph.D. dissertation, UC Davis, 2002), 254; Marta Sánchez, "Latino Students Walk Out," *Third Force*, vol. 2.1, (Apr. 30 1994), 4; Nanette Asimov, "Mission High Rallies for Suspended Guard," *The San Francisco Chronicle*, (Dec. 16, 1993). The San Francisco Examiner reported that on this day a march of 150 of students demanded a better and more culturally diversified education. See Marsha Ginsburg, "Students march for ethnic education," *San Francisco Examiner*, (Dec., 16, 1993).

<sup>269</sup> Verónica Sánchez and Robin Templeton, "Fund out Youth!," *Crossroads*, (May 1994), 23-24.

<sup>270</sup> Martínez, "Be Down With the Brown," 40; "Student Walkout at Richmond High," *West County Times*, vol. 19, no. 91, (Apr. 1, 1994); M.E. Sprengelmeyer, "One-day boycott of Pittsburg school could cost district more than \$5,500," *Contra Costa Times*, (Apr. 20, 1994).

<sup>271</sup> "Hispanic students rally in protest," *The Times: San Mateo's County's Daily Newspaper*, 94.97, (Apr. 23-34, 1994). For example, at Washington High school in San Francisco, about 40 students staged a peaceful walkout to attend the rally at Mission Dolores Park, and presented a list to the principal of fourteen demands from the school's Latino population and a petition that included 70 names. See A. Kent, "Students walk for Latino demands," *The Washington Eagle: The Voice of Washington High Since 1936*, vol. 96.4, (Apr., 1994).

<sup>272</sup> "Hispanic students rally in protest"; Yasmin Anwar, Karen Holzmeister, and Daniel Vasquez, "Death of a warrior: Latinos rally for 'brown pride,'" *The Daily Review*, (Apr. 23, 1994).

<sup>273</sup> Martínez, "Be Down With the Brown," 40. In the city of Martínez, Contra Costa County, Latino and African-American students had planned a walkout for the day but decided to cancel it after they met with

protested proposition 187.<sup>274</sup> Statements such as "Whose land? Our Land," "Schools, Not Jails," and "Raza Sí!, 187 no!" were chanted in downtown San Francisco as almost 1,000 students marched for six hours—despite torrential rain—through the streets the day after 187 passed in November.<sup>275</sup>

Although subsequent walkouts were dormant in years that followed, activism and ethnic related controversies in California nevertheless continued in 1995 and beyond. Protests took place in community and university settings, and many were centered on Latin@ issues while other actions involved broader themes. For example, on February 20, 1995, a coalition of religious groups, educators, health care workers and students organized a demonstration to protest Proposition 187 that attracted about 800 people.<sup>276</sup> In the fall of 1996 in Sonoma, California, more than 200 people protested the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the "Bear Flag" rebellion that initiated California's break from Mexico.<sup>277</sup> They held a non-violent march thorough the city that disrupted the official program which included the presence of Governor Pete Wilson.<sup>278</sup> Also in the fall of 1996, after it was confirmed that the anti-affirmative action bill was going to pass, over 60 diverse student organizers and leaders crowded into Casa Joaquin Murrieta—at the time an independent Chican@ co-op housing facility near the UC Berkeley campus—to brainstorm and plan a rally on the campus following day. After protesting on Sproul Plaza, students continued by marching on to the streets and stopping traffic, and the demonstration culminated at the campus' emblematic Campanile clock tower where four Xicanas chained themselves at the top of the building.<sup>279</sup> Last but not least, in 1997 about 75 high school students in Fremont protested to demand recognition of Cinco de Mayo as an official holiday.<sup>280</sup>

The initial walkouts of the early 1990s began with Chican@ youth. However, the subsequent attacks on multiculturalism and affirmative action, along with the growing awareness that the state was spending more on the prison industry than on public education, changed the nature of the actions. Rafael Solórzano, who was heavily involved with community and student activism before and during his undergraduate years at UC Berkeley (1996-2000), primarily through MEChA and the Chicana Moratoriums, elucidates the shift in organizing strategies: "The multiracial alliance building is something I learned more as I was a senior at Berkeley or when I was outside of Berkeley. But, when I was a freshman or sophomore, [organizing] was so much centered around my Chicano/Latino community. [Before,] there wasn't strong or long conversations about multiracial alliance building when there should have been."<sup>281</sup> At UC Berkeley, multi-racial organizing included the "Third World College" week-long protest in front of Sproul Hall in 1998. For this action, a series of teach-ins and workshops were conducted, people camped out overnight in sleeping bags, an informational table was available, and hand-painted banners decorated Sproul Plaza with slogans and images that were in favor of Ethnic

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superintendents to "give due process a chance." See Jeanie R. Wakeland, "Martínez high school students halt walkout," *Contra Costa Times*, (May 5, 1994).

<sup>274</sup> Amy Pyle and Beth Shuster, "10,000 Students Protest Prop. 187," *Los Angeles Times*, (Nov. 03, 1994).

<sup>275</sup> Robert Roth and Annie Johnston, eds., "La Raza Youth Speak Out," *Breakthrough*, (Summer 1995).

<sup>276</sup> Teresa Moore, "Hundreds of S.F. Marcher Protest Prop. 187," *San Francisco Chronicle*, (Feb. 21, 1995).

<sup>277</sup> Joan Morris and Abby Colins-Sears, "Flap over Bear Flag saga," *Contra Costa Times*, (Sep. 15, 1996).

<sup>278</sup> Elizabeth Martínez, "High School Students in the Lead: Massive walkouts in California have important lessons for all organizers," *Z Magazine*, (Mar. 1998).

<sup>279</sup> Jennie Marie Luna, "Occupation of the Campanile," *La Voz de Berkeley*, vol. 6, no. 4, (Apr. 1997); unknown author, "Students Fight for Real Equality," *Revolutionary Worker*, no. 882, (Nov. 17, 1996).

<sup>280</sup> Dennis Rockstroh, "Students raise cultural ruckus," *San Jose Mercury News*, (May 6, 1997).

<sup>281</sup> Rafael Solórzano, personal interview, (spring 2011, Berkeley, California).

Studies or raised awareness of social issues around the world.<sup>282</sup> Another example of multi-racial organizing at UC Berkeley was the hunger strike that took place in front of California Hall in 1999. This protest formed as a response to the growing tensions between students of color and university administration, particularly with Chancellor Robert M. Berdahl, and because of the significant budget cuts that the Ethnic Studies Department faced.<sup>283</sup>

In addition, although community youth organizing was primarily spearheaded by the predominantly Chican@ community youth group Ollin (which means movement in Nahuatl), the actions also moved away from being centered on Latin@ issues to ones that were multi-ethnic. Examples of multi-ethnic organizing include two significant massive walkouts that took place in 1998. The first was on April 22 when over 2,000 multi-ethnic middle and high school students from at least 15 campuses walked out of classes. In mass they jumped onto the San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) subway without paying and headed towards the suburb city of Concord. Along with Mexican flags, home-made signs and spray painted banners at the rally included, "Lucha por Justicia!," "Teach My Roots So I Can Grow," "Educate Don't Separate," "Resist 187 184," and "No on Prop 227."<sup>284</sup> Students went to Concord to protest a series of issues that included the upcoming Proposition 227—which attacked bilingual education—dreary school conditions, and prison spending since the city had recently acquired a new \$20 million police station. Student Sergio Rodríguez commented at the protest about the contradiction between his dismal school conditions at Skyline High in Oakland and the new police station in Concord: "At my school...the bathrooms have no stalls, no toilet paper, no paper towels, and they stink....Tiles are falling on people in class because of water leaking from the room. But there's money to build jails and a police station with carpets, TV, all the hi-tech stuff."<sup>285</sup> Many were angry that the state was spending more money on jails than schools and that resources were going towards police instead of teachers.

The other significant massive multi-ethnic walkout involved over 3,000 people and took place on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1998 in the suburb city of San Leandro. Ollin was fundamental in organizing this protest, but members of other multi-ethnic organizations, such as the Third Eye Movement, also had a central role. On this day, a variety of young people from dozens of campuses dodged principals and hopped fences as morning bells rang. They met on the BART, and rode free (after quick negotiations with nervous transit officials) to the Bay Fair station in San Leandro.<sup>286</sup> Groups of 10 to 100 youth poured off the trains around 9am and marched to the nearby Bay Fair mall.<sup>287</sup> Beginning the march at 10am, a flatbed truck with drummers and youth organizers, like Jasmin Smith and Marcel Diallo, led the crowd of protesters along East 14<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>288</sup> Recognized leaders, like Angela Y. Davis, were also present at the rally showing support.<sup>289</sup> The majority of the organizers wore white T-shirts with "defending land and life" written above and below an image of a closed fist, and many students carried book-filled

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<sup>282</sup> Jennie Luna, personal archive.

<sup>283</sup> Rafael Solórzano, personal archive. For more on the 1999 hunger strike at UC Berkeley, see *On Strike! Ethnic Studies, 1969-1999*, produced by Irum Shiekh, (California: Center for Asian American Media, 1999).

<sup>284</sup> "High School Students Walk out for Bilingual Ed," *Revolutionary Worker*, no. 956, (May 3, 1998).

<sup>285</sup> Martínez, "High School Students in the Lead."

<sup>286</sup> Robin Templeton, "Lockdown Walkout," *The Nation*, (Nov. 16, 1998).

<sup>287</sup> Erin Allday and Jeff Chorney, "Students urge better schools, fewer jails," *The Oakland Tribune*, (Oct. 2, 1998).

<sup>288</sup> Michael Peña, "Students protest priorities of state," *The Times*, (Oct. 2, 1998).

<sup>289</sup> Henry K. Lee and Manny Fernandez, "Rally in San Leandro," *San Francisco Chronicle*, (Oct. 2, 1998).

backpacks and giant banners demanding for better schools.<sup>290</sup> "Education not incarceration" and "schools, not jails" chants were common, and many displayed handwritten signs that read, "Ghetto Revolution," "We want our history in the schools," "Danger: Educated Chicanas," and "Raza Studies Now."<sup>291</sup> They rallied at the mall parking lot (of which the security bolted the mall doors under police advice) before marching to the nearby local police headquarters next to a juvenile detention facility.<sup>292</sup> California Highway Patrol (CHP) officers, sheriff's deputies and San Leandro police blocked streets and an Interstate 580 off-ramp, and a CHP helicopter monitored the crowd from the air.<sup>293</sup>

## Decolonial Turn Continues with the "No on 21" Campaign

Connected to the walkouts of the 1990s, the decolonial turn continued with subsequent "No on 21" campaign also known as the "Youth Movement." Endorsed by former California (Republican) governor Pete Wilson, Proposition 21—which derived from the Gang Violence and Juvenile Crime Prevention Act of 1998—was known as the "Juvenile Crime Initiative" on the March 2000 ballot. According to the 2000 California Primary Election Ballot Measure Summary, Proposition 21 would increase "punishment for gang-related felonies, home-invasion robbery, carjacking, witness intimidation and drive-by shooting, and [would create] crime of gang recruitment activities."<sup>294</sup> Despite the fact that data had shown that anti-gang measures, such as the 1988 "Street Terrorism Enforcement And Prevention Act" (known as STEP Act) had little to no real effect in reducing violence,<sup>295</sup> and that juvenile crime statistics had recently dropped at the state and national levels, Proposition 21 passed by 62 percent majority. Like other ballot measures in California orchestrated by patterns of serious racial implications and racist agendas, it was understood that Proposition 21 would disproportionately affect low-income minority youth.

The rise of negative public discourse surrounding juvenile crime<sup>296</sup> along with the increase of the prison industry led many activists to strongly believe that the objective of Proposition 21 was "another attack" that further criminalized disenfranchised youth of color.<sup>297</sup> With the culmination of the previous racist propositions and the resistance demonstrations that emerged in response to them, Proposition 21 sparked a unique decolonizing social movement before the state's political landscape that came to be called as "the new youth movement."<sup>298</sup> Part of this movement included a statewide coalition of majority youth groups that came together and launched a grass-roots, militant street-protest campaign all over California against the proposition. In particular, this coalition was unique as it recognized the importance of many

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<sup>290</sup> Allday and Chorney, "Students urge better schools, fewer jails."

<sup>291</sup> Alaric Dirmeyer, "Youth in California Demand 'Education Not Incarceration,'" *The Militant*, vol. 62, no. 38, (Oct. 26, 1998).

<sup>292</sup> Templeton, "Lockdown Walkout."

<sup>293</sup> Lee and Fernandez, "Rally in San Leandro."

<sup>294</sup> See California Secretary of State, "2000 California Primary Election Ballot Measure Summary," [http://primary2000.ss.ca.gov/VoterGuide/summary\\_21\\_22.htm](http://primary2000.ss.ca.gov/VoterGuide/summary_21_22.htm), (accessed on Oct. 29, 2010).

<sup>295</sup> See Malcolm W. Klein, *The American Street Gang: its Nature, Prevalence, and Control*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>296</sup> See William J. Bennett, John J. Dilulio, Jr., and John P. Walters, *Body Count: Moral Poverty...and How to Win America's War Against Crime and Drug*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

<sup>297</sup> Carlos Montes and David González, "Jobs Not Jails! No on Proposition 21," *Fight Back! News: News and Views from the People's Struggle*, [fightbacknews.org](http://fightbacknews.org), (Winter 2000).

<sup>298</sup> Elizabeth Martínez, "The New Youth Movement in California," *Z Magazine*, (May 2000).

intersecting categories of difference—such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, and religion—strategically linked under the umbrella of age. Young people from various communities and backgrounds took part in creating integrated identity politics by forming a racially and culturally heterogeneous political movement against Proposition 21 organized strategically under the category of "youth."

Building a campaign by and for youth and beyond was not easy. Facing the tough job of challenging the traditional popularity of crime initiatives in California, and virtually powerless and at the mercy of an older, conservative (white) electorate, the proposition nevertheless galvanized many young people—primarily of color—all over the state (and beyond) into organizing a youth movement that included many street rallies and educational events. Unlike traditional campaigns which, among many things, requires a lot of money for things like advertising and sophisticated public relations, the "No on 21" campaign had no financial backing. Unable to rely on liberal electoral politics and tactics, the campaign became a movement in a grass-roots way that involved organizing, community outreach, mass actions—like rallies and marches that had a critical perspective of the law and social conditions—that linked the proposition to other oppressive conditions that people of color face in the country.<sup>299</sup> Thus, while the pro-Proposition 21 campaign had fundraisers to pay for mailers and advertising, opponents counted heavily on free media, staging press conferences, and conferences and protests around the state, as they tried to reach anti-Wilson voters by bringing up his name often.<sup>300</sup>

The movement united youth and poor/working class people who looked for a fundamental change of society through a diversity of activist efforts. For example, hanging banners on freeway overpasses, hosting community forums, and organizing cultural events and protest rallies (that were accompanied by education) were used as a way to influence the public vote.<sup>301</sup> Protests—many primarily organized by high school students—were also used as a way to educate the public about the message and demands of the movement, which included spending money on schools instead of prisons, prevention instead of incarceration, books instead of handcuffs, having higher pay for teachers instead of prison guards.<sup>302</sup> As freshman David Váldez commented about one of the protests, "I hope we get a lot of media so people become educated on Prop 21."<sup>303</sup> Also, many youth organizations focused their work to focus on youth movement. For instance, Norma Martínez of Californians for Justice of Los Angeles worked with high school gang-prevention programs to recruit youth in handling door-to-door and telephone awareness-raising part of the campaign.<sup>304</sup> Youth Organizing Communities (YOC)—a grassroots network of youth organizers in Southern California—centered their work on introducing young people to issues that affected them locally and in a larger context, such as the

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<sup>299</sup> Carlos Montes, "Youth Fight Back & Build Movement for Justice!," *Fight Back! News: News and Views from the People's Struggle*, fightbacknews.org, vol. 3, no. 2, (Spring 2000).

<sup>300</sup> Jake Henshaw, "Will Voters 'Hammer' Youthful Offenders?," *Youth Today*, (Feb. 1, 2000).

<sup>301</sup> Anthony Montoya, "Taking on Proposition 21," *LatinoLA*, (Feb. 18, 2000); The Ella Baker Center, "Birth of a Movement," *Ella's Voice: Newsletter of the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights*, (1999-2000).

<sup>302</sup> The Ella Baker Center, "Birth of a Movement."

<sup>303</sup> Quoted in Crystal Fambrini, "Students protest Prop 21," *The Daily Aztec: The Independent Student Newspaper Serving SDSU and the College Community*, vol. 83, no. 79, (Feb. 24, 2000). In order to excuse students from missing class, organizers of the protest handed out permission slips for participants' parents to sign.

<sup>304</sup> Vince Beiser and Karla Solheim, "Juvenile Injustice: Proposition 21 aims to send thousands of California teenagers to adult prisons," *LA Weekly*, (Feb. 11-17, 2000).

growing trend of privatization of prisons and schools.<sup>305</sup> In addition to establishing regional alliances between different organizations, the movement included a collaboration between northern and southern California youth groups that proved to be productive on many levels, such as for strategizing on protest tactics. As YOC member Luis Sánchez explained, "Weeks of Rage [actions] was a proposal that had come from southern California and [the northern Californian organizations] took it on, and [the idea of] Storming the Funders [action] had come from northern California, and we took it on."<sup>306</sup>

At least since June of 1999, organization like YOC had been giving workshops and trainings.<sup>307</sup> Third Eye Movement in San Francisco organized cultural events in the fall of 1999, including "Under Siege" which included hip-hop, poetry, and politics that educated the public about Prop 21 and the prison industrial complex.<sup>308</sup> As part of the anti-Prop 21 campaign, Southern Californians for Youth produced a training manual on October of 1999 that summarized of the initiative, current legislation, and articles about the criminal justice system. The large manual of over 80 pages provided facts, figures, information, and general talking points. It explained what the juvenile "injustice initiative" was about, myths and facts surrounding juvenile crime, the juvenile "justice" system, what one could do to get involved, and the "big picture," which included the prison industrial complex, war on drugs, three strikes law, gang injunctions, gang databases, and people of color and women.<sup>309</sup> At the "Southern California Initiative meeting" on October 30, 1999, there were area report-backs about the campaign from areas like San Diego, the Inland Empire, and Los Angeles and from representatives of groups like the Asian Left, MEChA, and the New Raza Left. Updates included that Elizabeth "Betita" Martinez had given several talks at schools in southern California, that Prop 21 material was being translated into other languages besides English, and that future actions, events, and target areas for outreach were discussed.<sup>310</sup> One of the anti-Prop 21 materials distributed in the movement included an 8.5" x 11" educational flyers with a heading title that stated "The Juvenile Injustice Initiative." The front side explained four main points of the initiative: it puts youth into the adult system, threatens privacy and civil liberties, creates punishment that does not fit the crime, and has no provisions for prevention or intervention, only incarceration. The back side of the flyer, in addition to providing facts, also included information on how one could learn more about the initiative or to help.<sup>311</sup>

Organizing required a lot of educating and work. For example, Pecolia Manigo, who was 17 and lived in the Tenderloin area of San Francisco, presented various workshops throughout the San Francisco Bay Area, including one at Potrero Hill Middle School where she spoke about facts and figures on the prison population and the proposition.<sup>312</sup> Erin Huges, at the time a third-year UC Santa Cruz student, was one of the leaders of the movement against Prop 21 in Santa Cruz. After learning about the Proposition during the summer of 1999, she had a meeting with

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<sup>305</sup> Colin Turner, "Upset the Setup: The Fight Continues," *City on a Hill Press at UC Santa Cruz*, vol. 34, no. 27, (May 11, 2000).

<sup>306</sup> Turner, "Upset the Setup: The Fight Continues."

<sup>307</sup> Cynthia Cuza, "Youth Tell Wilson No on Proposition 21," *L.A. Watts Times*, vol. XXVIII, no. 662, (Feb. 3, 2000).

<sup>308</sup> The Ella Baker Center, "Birth of a Movement."

<sup>309</sup> Southern Californians for Youth, "Background Materials: Prop 21 March 2000 Juvenile Crime Initiative," (Oct. 1999).

<sup>310</sup> Copy of minutes with author.

<sup>311</sup> Copy of flyer with author.

<sup>312</sup> Venise Wagner, "Teens Mobilize to Fight Youth Crime Initiative," *SFGate*, (Feb. 16, 2000).

four women at a local taquería to talk about building a coalition. Eventually the weekly meetings moved from local restaurants to the campus student center at the height of the campaign when 40 to 50 people attended. Huges dedicated the winter quarter to working full-time on building the coalition and spreading the word about the proposition. She worked eight hours a day talking to people and making phone calls, copies, announcements in classes, and traveling to many places. One of the highlights during the height of the campaign included having a cultural event on campus that "changed the whole scene." This included having Aztec dancers, musicians, Bay Area poets, as well as invited high school students who spoke on stage about their feelings towards the Proposition, which followed with some of them break-dancing.<sup>313</sup>

Several groups—which often had overlapping or connected members—took part in contributing to the activist foundation of the "No on 21" movement in the San Francisco Bay Area. For example, School Of Unity and Liberation (SOUL), which provided Revolutionary Sunday Schools to study the history of Third World revolutions, also provided political education and workshops on other relevant issues. Organizations like Bay Area PoliceWatch—where Third Eye Movement had its roots—expanded to become the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, where staff provided extensive support to the youth movement by providing trainings and organizational development that included helping write press releases, planning direct actions, and writing materials that explained the investment of prisons and not schools.<sup>314</sup> Underground Railroad (a local organizations of cultural leaders), TransAction (an organization that challenged police abuse of transgender people in San Francisco), and the Center for Young Women's Development (an organization for disenfranchised young women of color in San Francisco), and People Organized to Win Employment Rights (an organization that build strategic alliances with low-wage people of color) also contributed to the campaign. Some activist had attended the Venceremos Brigade in Cuba during the summer of 1999 or the World Trade Organization Seattle Protest in November of the same year, while some worked at places like St. Peter's Housing Committee or the Coalition on Homelessness, and others taught in public school system in the San Francisco Bay Area.<sup>315</sup> In addition, other countless organizations and individuals were instrumental in establishing radical youth of color organizing trend in the San Francisco Bay Area in particular that had a lasting influence in California and beyond.

## The Entangled Decolonial Turn

Not all forms of youth activism would be considered decolonizing as many, wittingly or unwittingly, fail to transgress Western thought and its corresponding oppressive paradigm but reproduce them in other forms.<sup>316</sup> In saying this, my point is not to set up a binary that distinguishes what is considered decolonizing and what is not. That is, I do not want to take the

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<sup>313</sup> Turner, "Upset the Setup: The Fight Continues."

<sup>314</sup> The Ella Baker Center, "Birth of a Movement."

<sup>315</sup> STORM, 21, 23, and 35-36; Elizabeth Martínez, "Where Was the Color in Seattle?: Looking for Reasons Why the Great Battle was so White," *COLORLINES: News for Action*, colorlines.com, (Spring 2000).

<sup>316</sup> A way to understand this point is through Nelson Maldonado-Torres' critiques of various Continental philosophers that, despite criticizing modernity, have a desire to root themselves in the West (Europe/Israel, etc). See Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "Secularism and Religion in the Modern/Colonial World-System: From Secular Postcoloniality to Postsecular Transmodernity," *Coloniality at Large: Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate*, ed. by Mabel Moraña, Enrique Dussel, and Carlos A. Jáuregui, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); Maldonado-Torres, "The Topology of Being and the Geopolitics of Knowledge."

conversation to either "pro" or "con" positions where the complexity of multiples sides are reduced to oppositional. However, because there are many differentiations between both perspectives, I will focus on my recent participation with student and community activism at UC Berkeley and in Oakland to highlight some of them.<sup>317</sup> In the following, I highlight how the social movements of "Save the University" and the various "Occupy" movements throughout the U.S., although they critique aspects of modernity, such as capitalism, do not move beyond it but reproduce it's colonizing logic in other forms.

In response to the many layoffs, university fee hikes, budget cuts and overall de-investment of public education across California colleges, a movement at UC Berkeley (UCB) known as the "Save the University" (SU) was launched in the fall of 2009. On September 24 there was a University of California (UC) system-wide walkout which not only drew thousands of students, but also many faculty and staff. The estimated 5,000 people who gathered at UC Berkeley's Sproul Plaza was one of the largest groups to protest on campus in recent history, which arguably set the beginnings of a social movement concerned with public universities in current times. Although major newspapers brought attention to this movement, and diverse perspectives were considered, critiques from "below" were nevertheless overlooked.<sup>318</sup> These included critiques of the SU movement by marginalized, racialized, and underrepresented students, internal tensions that derived as a result of dismissals of their critiques, and colonizing internal hierarchies of power that operated within the activist spaces. In other words, SU movement has a dark side that often went unnoticed by the larger mainstream. Unlike common perspectives on youth movements that tend to be homogenizing, the following accounts depicts the colonizing internal hierarchies of power operating within the respective movements I participated in in order to highlight the importance of understanding the intricacies of youth activism.

Based on my initial participation in the SU movement, I and others publicly spoke about countless frustrating moments of opposition we experienced as we pushed for a racial/race-conscious politics to be central to the organizing. Many of us advocated for creating a movement around public education that would have people of color and a decolonizing politic central to the organizing. In particular, many critiqued the SU movement for being comprised of a majority white middle-class folks that, whether consciously or unconsciously, embodied colonizing politics in their organizing efforts. At one event, I gave a controversial speech where I claimed that the colonizing politics of the SU movement revealed themselves in many ways through the organizing.<sup>319</sup> My examples included the general dismissal/erasure of current and past movements/activist efforts of people of color at UCB and beyond, the refusal to address questions of race/racism within current organizing efforts, the problematic appropriation of certain spaces, and the overwhelming wave of problematic discourse that was produced around the movement that, among many things, bled with racial and class privilege. Several people from the SU movement disagreed with my critiques while the concerns of others—particularly students of color that were part of long-term/sustained organizing efforts at UCB—were validated as my speech reflected a growing frustration that many campus activists felt. As a

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<sup>317</sup> My point is not to attempt to distinguish the details of what makes one movement decolonizing versus another, especially when there are disparate, overlapping politics taking place in various movements. I'm more interested in the type of overall logic that shapes the movements.

<sup>318</sup> Mary O'Hara, "University of California campuses erupt into protest," *The Guardian*, (Sep. 24, 2009).

<sup>319</sup> See Xamuel Bañales, "The Coloniality of Organizing: Nov. 2<sup>nd</sup> Speech," *La Voz de Berkeley*, (Spring 2010).



result, SU movement's inability to sustain or incorporate a progressive, decolonial critique in their organizing created ripple effects that eventually became divisions.

What followed after November 2<sup>nd</sup> until the end of the spring of 2010 was a series of SU protests and decolonizing forms of activism that generally happened simultaneously but separately, with some people participating in both. In the former, the primary concerns were with defending/saving the university and with "the crisis" of the university. One example of activism from the SU movement includes the "Occupation of Wheeler Hall"—which was in protest of the UC Regents vote to increase student fees by 32 percent (from \$7,788 to \$10,302 the following fall). The "occupation" happened on November 20, 2009, was around 11 hours long, and resulted in 40 protesters in being arrested.<sup>320</sup> Another example of SU activism was the March 4, 2010 "strike and day of action to defend public education." At UCB, this day included a noon rally with a march that ended in downtown Oakland where a series of speeches and spoken word performances followed. In turn, the activism based on decolonizing politics focused on transforming/decolonizing the university and on the problem(s) of colonization/modernity itself. From this perspective, burning questions were asked: why should we "save" the university when it has always been, among many things, a racist institution that historically was not made for marginalized people? "Crisis" for whom and since when? One example of decolonizing activism at UCB included the February 27-28, 2010 conference commemorating the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the campus' Ethnic Studies Department entitled "Decolonizing the University: Fulfilling the Dream of the Third World College."<sup>321</sup> For this conference, hundreds of people across California and beyond—including former TWLF activists and current students of color from UC San Diego that had recently experienced "racial terror" at their campus<sup>322</sup>—gathered at UCB to participate in cross-generational, multi-ethnic/gender/sexuality dialogues, panels, and workshops that related to art, activism, spirituality, and/or scholarship. Another example of decolonizing activism was the hunger strike in May, 2011 at UCB that was initiated by primarily Xican@/Latin@ students.<sup>323</sup> The ten day strike of over two dozen students resulted in many gains, including the chancellor publicly

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<sup>320</sup> Justin Berton, Joe Garofoli, Nanette Asimov, "Occupation of Wheeler Hall nears an end," *SFGate*, (Nov. 21, 2009).

<sup>321</sup> See *Decolonizing the University: Fulfilling the Dream of the Third World College*, Mattie Harper (producer) and John Hamilton (video camera and post-production), (2010), <http://vimeo.com/15729523>, (accessed Mar. 21, 2012), video.

<sup>322</sup> Racially charged incidents at the University of California at San Diego escalated during Feb. 2010. These included the party described as a "Compton Cookout" that was held off-campus by a fraternity that relied upon and promoted racist/misogynist stereotypes and the hanging of a rope noose from a campus library bookcase that served as a symbol of lynching for African Americans. For more on this, see Larry Gordon, "Noose ignites more protests at UC San Diego," *The Los Angeles Times*, (Feb. 27, 2010). UCSD's Ethnic Studies Professor Yen L. Espiritu wrote an open letter asking the chancellor to declare a state of emergency and close down the campus. To see this letter and videos of student activism in response to the racism, see <http://stopracismucsd.wordpress.com/2010/02/26/racial-intimidation-at-ucsd-escalates-noose-found-at-geisel-library/>, (accessed May 15, 2012). Other hate crimes included homophobic and other racially charged incidents at other campuses, including the University of California at Davis. See David Greenwald, "Swastika Carved into Jewish Student's Door Among Two Incidents Investigated as Hate Crimes," *The People's Vanguard of Davis*, (Feb. 28, 2010).

<sup>323</sup> No author, "Cal Hunger Strike Ends After Ten Days," *ktvu.com*, (May 12, 2012), <http://www.ktvu.com/videos/news/berkeley-activists-end-ten-day-hunger-strike-meet/vC3bm/>, (accessed August 8, 2012).

denouncing the state of Arizona's racist, anti-immigrant "SB1070" bill and eventually granting the Center for Latino Policy Research a quarter of a million dollars.<sup>324</sup>

Because of my experience with "Save the University" movement, when I heard about the "Occupy Wall Street" (OWS) protest movement that began on September 17, 2011 in Zuccotti Park (located in New York City's Wall Street financial district), I had my doubts. Given the current context of "the War on Terror" and the several US violent and militaristic occupations abroad, like in Iraq, from the beginning of OWS (and since the "Occupation of Wheeler Hall"), I found the use of the word "occupy" problematic. Based on news articles (including alternative press), and livestream videos that circulated on the internet, and speaking with contacts I had in the area, OWS seemed to operate on an organizing logic with colonizing undertones similar to what I experienced in the SU movement. Although OWS was generative for protesting against social and economic inequality, political corruption, and corporate greed, it seemed that the movement had a narrow view of capitalism as it did not address other forms of colonizing power. Moreover, while the slogan "we are the 99%" was strategic as it addressed the growing income inequality and wealth distribution between the 1% and the rest of the population, I was suspicious that the motto was more of a homogenizing and colonizing move from a majority white middle class that, deliberately or unknowingly, erased/dismissed those from below rather than build meaningful solidarity with them. When "Occupy Oakland" (OO) was initiated at the Frank H. Ogawa plaza on October 10, 2011—along with the many other demonstrations and occupations that started all over the country—my doubts and suspicions were confirmed.

After OO began, I was amazed by the potential of community organizing that I witnessed at the Ogawa plaza.<sup>325</sup> A protest encampment was created that included, among many things, feeding, housing, and providing other resources to the community, such as many homeless folks. It was great to see people come together and have people engage in important conversations on a large scale, such as discussing the problems of capitalism and the political system of the US. On October 25, the encampment was cleared out by several law enforcement agencies and the night eventually resulted in various injuries and around 100 people being arrested.<sup>326</sup> This happened because protesters tried to reclaim the encampment site, and I was present when police tear-gassed the public multiple times. Despite this, I was participating in the OO because—like many in the movement—I was tired of the many oppressive conditions produced by capitalism. However, because the general analysis and understanding of oppression in OO focused on the problems of capitalism in a narrow way—as disconnected from other systems of power, like racism and hetero-patriarchy—I knew that my participation in the movement would be partial.

## **To Occupy or Decolonize?**

Colonizing politics was not particular to OWS or OO but to the Occupy movement in general. This was evident in the critiques from members of marginalized communities that emerged after several occupy encampments sprouted across the country, including Seattle,

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<sup>324</sup> The center had received no funding the year before. For more on the hunger strike, see "Chancellor Birgeneau denounces Arizona immigration bill," *UC Berkeley News Center*, (May 7, 2010).

<sup>325</sup> This was renamed by the OO as the Oscar Grant plaza in memory of the young African-American male from the San Francisco Bay Area that was unarmed and shot in the back by a Bay Area Rapid Transit police officer in 2009. For more on the shooting, see Matthew B. Stannard and Demian Bulwa, "BART shooting captured on video," *SFGate*, (January 7, 2009).

<sup>326</sup> Ali Winston, "The Police Raid on Occupy Oakland Was Nothing New For This City," *COLORLINES: News for Action*, colorlines.com (Oct. 28, 2011).

Albuquerque, Portland, and Sedona.<sup>327</sup> Critiques of heteronormative male privilege surfaced, formal anti-racist statements were made, and proposals to change the name from "occupy" to "de-occupy" or "decolonize" materialized.<sup>328</sup> Particular to OO, one example was the Queer/People of Color affinity group that was immediately formed when a Transgendered African-American publicly disclosed the lack of safety in the encampment—this person had been threatened with a knife and called racial slurs by an aggressive (intoxicated) white male the night before. Another example is the collaboration of indigenous and local activist-scholars that drafted a memorandum of solidarity with indigenous people and presented it to the GA of OO on October 28.<sup>329</sup> Among many things, this memorandum proposed that those participating in OO would seek the genuine and respectful involvement of indigenous peoples in the rebuilding of a new society on their ancestral lands, and to declare (in light of colonialist language of occupation) that OO "aspires to 'Decolonize Oakland'—to 'Decolonize Wall Street.'" The concept of "decolonize" raised concerns as some expressed apprehension to the term, especially when some mistakenly understood the memorandum as a proposal to change the name from OO to "Decolonize Oakland," but the memorandum eventually passed after several clarifications and conversations.

There were some efforts to work through the tensions that haunted the organizing and ideological foundations of OO. However, the majority in the movement, including those in leadership position—even though the movement claimed to not have any—were generally dismissive of the concerns coming from below instead of seriously addressing the issues. Like in the SU movement, many in OO expressed indifference, impatience, and frustration with proposals and discussions that attempted to work through the problems that were important to members of marginalized communities. Eventually the tensions culminated on the chilly evening of December 4 at the Frank H. Ogawa plaza when the proposal was brought to the GA to formally change the name from Occupy to Decolonize. In the many hours of the heated debate, I heard a range of perspectives—from those wanting to use "decolonize" as a way to open the movement to greater participation of marginalized people to those wishing to keep "occupy" as this would "prevent divisiveness" in the movement. In the end, over 300 people were present and the proposal only received 68 per cent of approval and not the 90 per cent that it needed to pass.<sup>330</sup> Like the November 2<sup>nd</sup> event and speech that marked the formal "decolonizing" separation from the SU movement at UCB, the refusal of the OO's GA to pass the name change served as a similar catalyst for those that were in favor of a decolonizing politic

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<sup>327</sup> See Queena Kim, "Campaign to Decolonize Oakland: Native Americans Say 'Occupy' Terminology is Offensive," *Truthout*, truth-out.org, (Dec. 28, 2011), (accessed May 21, 2012). As recent as Apr. 2, 2012, a statement and principles on decolonization passes at the general assembly of "Occupy Toronto." See <http://occupyto.org/2012/04/statement-and-principles-on-decolonization-passes-at-new-ga/>, (accessed Apr. 6<sup>th</sup>, 2012).

<sup>328</sup> For a Feminist Queer of color critique of Occupy Oakland, see Andreana Clay, "Solidarity, White (Male) Privilege and Occupation," *queerblackfeminist.blogspot.com*, (Nov. 29, 2011), <http://queerblackfeminist.blogspot.com/2011/11/solidarity-white-male-privilege-and.html>, (accessed May 21, 2012).

<sup>329</sup> For a copy of the memorandum, see Joanne Barker, "The memorandum of Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples," *indybay.com*, (Oct. 29, 2011), <http://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2011/10/29/18695950.php>, (accessed Mar. 22, 2012).

<sup>330</sup> See Davey D., "To Occupy or Decolonize? That is the Question...Is there an Easy Answer?," *Davey D's Hip Hop Corner*, (Dec. 8<sup>th</sup>, 2011), [www.hiphopandpolitics.com](http://www.hiphopandpolitics.com), (accessed Mar. 22, 2012); Also see "Open Letter to The 'Occupy' Movement: The Decolonization Proposal," (video) [http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=r\\_s3X0uW9Ec](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=r_s3X0uW9Ec), (accessed Mar. 22, 2012).

and perspective. As a result, Decolonize Oakland now functions as its own entity and separately from OO.<sup>331</sup>

The colonizing politics not only surfaced in OO but also resurfaced at UCB when "Occupy UCB" (OU) took place on November 9, 2011. Allied with OWS and OO, OU brought attention to many issues concerning students, including recent and continuing exaggerated fee increases and budget cuts. Community members, students, staff, and professors at UCB participated in a series of "teach-outs" on campus that followed with a rally and march at noon. Over 1,000 demonstrators attended the days' events and tents were eventually set-up in front of Sproul Hall. By late afternoon, law enforcement officials, including UCB Police and Alameda County Sheriffs, arrived in riot gear to remove the tents. Protestors formed a human chain in front of the tents as a way to prevent officers from undoing the encampment, but police used violent force as they jabbed many with their riot batons and dragged some by the hair before being arrested.<sup>332</sup> A week later on November 18, Occupy UC Davis (OD) gained international attention after a video on YouTube showed university police pepper-spraying a group of demonstrators as they were seated on a paved path in the campus quad.<sup>333</sup> Both OU and OD caused much scandal at the respective universities and beyond as many could not believe that police would be "so violent" with "innocent," "non-threatening," "peaceful" students. Soon thereafter, race-class-gendered critiques and analysis emerged, such as pointing to how police violence is something historical and common to communities of color that are systemically criminalized, how the concern for police violence at the protest was connected to how the majority in the movement were of white and middle class backgrounds, and how these movements privileged class at the expense of eclipsing other, interrelated set of social problems.<sup>334</sup> In other words, like with the SU movement, many from underrepresented backgrounds—although they did not diminish the overall importance of the movement—saw how colonizing politics, wittingly or unwittingly, played out in the OU and OD movements. The harder task is to see how honest, self-reflective, and transformative visions can emerge from these movements that do not reproduce the colonizing powers that they seek to challenge.

## Conclusion

Moving away from resistance frameworks to one that is decolonizing, I focused on the "decolonial turn" of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. I argued that the activism of youth of color should be understood as not only contributing to the decolonial turn but central to continuing the unfinished project of decolonization. In addition, in response to growing frustrations related to neoliberal racist politics as well as the global decline of the leftist movements, I highlighted the resurgence of activism of people of color in California at the turn of the century. In particular, I focused on two examples of decolonizing activism, represented in the Chican@ and multi-ethnic walkouts and in the subsequent "No on 21" campaign, also known as the "Youth Movement." I underscored how movements such as these contribute to California's activist history and legacy of decolonizing activism, providing an opportunity to understand the state's growing

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<sup>331</sup> See <http://decolonizeoakland.org>, (accessed Mar. 22, 2012).

<sup>332</sup> For more on this, see Nancy Scheper-Hughes, "The Crisis of the Public University," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, (Dec. 19, 2011).

<sup>333</sup> For more on this, see Amy Goodman, "UC Davis Student Describes Pepper Spray Attack on Occupy Campus Protesters," *Democracy Now!*, (Nov. 21, 2011).

<sup>334</sup> See Breeze Harper, "UC Davis and Racialized Politics of Sentimentality," (video), [http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=x0qTJH55y1o](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=x0qTJH55y1o), (accessed Mar. 22, 2010).

demographics and politics of modernity/coloniality. I concluded by pointing to the complex relationship that current activist movements in the U.S. have with decolonizing politics.

**Chapter four:**

**Youth Activism Decolonizing Being**

## **Introduction**

It was a Monday evening a little before 6pm. I was seventeen and working two jobs. A bit nervous, I entered my first Ethnic Studies course at my local community college. As soon as I walked into the classroom—before I even found a place to sit—the professor told me to stop. Raising his large body from behind the front table, he requested to see my schedule. "I need to check and make sure you are in the right class," he reported. Suspended somewhere between surprise and disbelief, I wondered why he needed to do this. Giving him the benefit of the doubt, I figured that checking students' class schedules was his standard procedure and that he was merely trying to be helpful. Shuffling through the books and binders in my backpack, I found the piece of paper that validated what I already knew: that I indeed was in the right place. Proving that I was officially enrolled in the class, I showed him my formal academic schedule. After peeling his gaze away from the paper, he warned me: "You know, this is not an easy class; you should really think about taking this course." Since I was the third person in the classroom, I thought (t)his procedure of policing, questioning, and counseling applied to every student that entered the classroom. After observing how he treated the rest of the students that walked in, my senses froze—I was wrong. After being interrogated and trivialized, I felt like I had mistakenly trespassed into academic territory and could only conditionally remain after I had proper documentation to prove my right to be there. I felt insecure, stupid, and powerless.

Needless to say, I did not complete his course. I am not sure what triggered this professor of color to single me out, but it was difficult to understand how a professor teaching in a field about race could act this way towards me. Although he may have acted this way toward me for a combination of reasons, wittingly or unwittingly, being young had something to do with it; if not for him, it certainly did for me. Several questions flooded my mind. What about me made the professor think that I was looking for an "easy" course? What made him assume that I hadn't "really" thought about taking the course beforehand? In other words, what made him think that I was not capable of handling his course—that I did not want to use my brain and be challenged? What kind of power could a young person of color actually (ever) have, anyway? Questions such as these brought to light the systemic, negative ontological perceptions about young people in general: that they are not fully human in modern thought.

In this chapter, I address ontological considerations as they relate to youth of color. I first examine the notion of the coloniality of being, followed by a discussion as to how it particularly relates to the oppression of young people via discourse and media representations. In order to explain the differences between the oppression of young people in general and youth of color specifically, I continue by historicizing the difference between children in Europe and colonized youth in the Americas. After, I focus on the coloniality of youth in the context of California. Through a combination of interviews and discourse analysis of participants of the movements I write about, I conclude by pointing to the ways that youth activism in California at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century worked towards ontological decolonization, which included challenging stereotypes, recreating community, building coalitions, and defying the adultist characteristics of the modernist, liberal subject.

## **The Coloniality of Being**

Unlike Martin Heidegger's philosophy of Being or Emmanuel Lévinas work on ontology, the notion of the coloniality of being takes phenomenological accounts and their impact on

identity and subjectivity as it relates on three dimensions: at the level of the body (new biological/social categories that were created), existence (lived experience of colonization), and the historical (the spatio-temporality of the Americas where colonization emerges).<sup>335</sup> Walter D. Mignolo describes a way to understand the coloniality of being as: "nothing else than producing the idea that certain people do not belong to history—that they are non-beings. Thus, lurking beneath the European story of discovery are the histories, experiences, and silenced conceptual narratives of those who were disqualified as human beings, as historical actors, and as capable of thinking and understanding."<sup>336</sup> Sylvia Wynter argues that the invention of Man was made possible through a parallel invention:

In consequence, where the Other to the *True Christian Self* of medieval Europe had been the *Untrue Christian Self*...with the invention of *Man* in two forms (one during the Renaissance in the context of the intellectual revolution of civic humanism, the other in the context of the intellectual revolution of economic humanism which took place at the end of the eighteenth and during the nineteenth century), Europe was to invent the Other to *Man* in two parallel forms. And, because *Man* was now posited as a supracultural universal, its Other had logically to be defined as the Human Other.<sup>337</sup>

In the first form, it was the indigenous peoples of the Americas, and in the second, it was the people of African hereditary descent as the discursively constructed, as the physical referent of the conception of Man's human Other. The coloniality of being, then, highlights not the recognition but the overrepresentation of "Man" as it is pitted against colonized populations as the referent to move away from.<sup>338</sup>

Frantz Fanon provides an account of the ontogenic racial negation and nonbeing of the colonized, particularly of "the black man [that] must experience himself as the defect of the white man."<sup>339</sup> For Fanon, (in the context of French colonialism) the idea of ontology does not allow for an understanding of the black man: "for not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man....The black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man."<sup>340</sup> Thus, Fanon's socio-racialization as a subject is both French and colonial native, and/or Negro, both Man and Man's other, where for the black man, "every ontology is made unattainable in a colonized and civilized society."<sup>341</sup> Unlike the conception of modern man that is understood as being different than animal, for Fanon the ontological impossibility for the black man reduces him to where "the Negro is an animal, the Negro is bad, the Negro is mean,

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<sup>335</sup> For more on this, see Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "On the Coloniality of Being: Contributions to the Development of a Concept" in *Cultural Studies*, vol. 21. 2-3, (Mar./May 2007), 240-243 and 249-251. Denise Ferreira de Silva similarly argues that the conquest of the American continent by Europe has been first and foremost a spatial (global) event. See Denise Ferreira da Silva, *Towards a Global Idea of Race*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 2.

<sup>336</sup> Walter D. Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*, (MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 4.

<sup>337</sup> Sylvia Wynter, "Towards the Sociogenic Principle: Fanon, Identity, the Puzzle of Conscious Experience, and What it is like to be Black," *National Identities and Sociopolitical Change in Latin America*, ed. by Mercedes F. Duran-Cogan and Antonio Gomez-Moriana, (New York: Routledge, 2001), 43, (italics in original).

<sup>338</sup> Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—an Argument" in *CR: The New Centennial Review*, 3.3, (2003), (italics in original).

<sup>339</sup> Sylvia Wynter, "Towards the Sociogenic Principle," 40.

<sup>340</sup> Fanon, Frantz, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. by Charles Lam Markmann, (New York: Grove Press, 1967 [1952]), 110.

<sup>341</sup> Fanon, 109.



the Negro is ugly...."<sup>342</sup> From this perspective, the coloniality of being is one that refers to the sub-ontological status of (the Euro-centric) Being that consists of invisibility and dehumanization (of people of color/the colonized) as its primary expressions. Because "current understanding of the human is largely based on a partial and provincial perspective based on European humanity," social and epistemic models and institutions are highly determined by this perspective.<sup>343</sup> Pointing to the dehumanization that comes about with colonization, Nelson Maldonado-Torres states that the coloniality of Being refers to the "violation of the meaning of human alterity to the point where the alter-ego becomes a sub-alter."<sup>344</sup> If the coloniality of Being points to the dehumanization of those considered non-being in the current context, how does this relate to youth specifically? Historicizing the complex role that the oppression of young people had in the modern/colonial context provides nuanced ways to address such a question.

### **Children and Childhood in Europe**

Before modernity/coloniality, European ideas about child-rearing and childhood generally have their origin in the "classical" inheritance (from Greek and Roman thought) and in Christianity. This inheritance includes—along with child-rearing, language, and educational practices—legal structures that were ruled by the theory of "patria potesta" which described the patriarchal overriding ruling power of the father. This granted the father of the Roman family the right to dispose of the life of his slaves and children since, just as he had given life to them, he could take it away.<sup>345</sup> Roman law theory also considered the oldest living male in the family to have far-reaching powers over all his descendants despite their age and where they were living. Children were generally not considered individual human beings, but understood in terms of their services they could render parents (as in continuing the bloodline) and as support in old age (such as carrying out essential rituals at the time of parents' death). In classical thought, there is a relative neglect of younger children, and they are seen in terms of the deficiencies of adult qualities that they lack. Greeks regarded children as physically weak, morally incompetent, and mentally incapable, and Romans valued children when they acquired adult characteristics like gravity, seriousness, and studiousness.<sup>346</sup>

Through Christian belief, where every human need to be brought into the family of God as early as possible, a higher status was implied for young children. Children were commanded to obey and honor their parents and were thought to have special guardian angels. Attitudes that children were born with a clean slate were challenged by St. Augustine who popularized his belief that humans are born with original sin inherited from Adam. Although baptism removed the original sin, St. Augustine endorsed corporal punishment because he believed an individual still remained with tendencies towards evil.<sup>347</sup> By the Renaissance, children held a more elevated place in culture, and were thought to hold the key to the future of the state. A "proper"

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<sup>342</sup> Fanon, 113.

<sup>343</sup> Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "Lewis Gordon, Philosopher of the Human," *The CLR James Journal: A Publication of the Caribbean Philosophical Association*, vol. 14, 1, (2008), 104.

<sup>344</sup> Maldonado-Torres, "On the Coloniality of Being," 257.

<sup>345</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Vol. 1*, trans. Robert Hurley, (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 135.

<sup>346</sup> Hugh Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society Since 1500*, (United Kingdom: Pearson Education Limited, 2005 [1995]), 18-25.

<sup>347</sup> Cunningham, 25-26.

upbringing was crucial to this future which (breaking with medieval thought and practice), included elevating the responsibility of the father within the household as well as early learning for the child. New humanist approaches included Dutchman Desiderius Erasmus theories—which influenced Catholics and Protestants—that placed emphasis on early education and manners.<sup>348</sup> He believed children were shapeless lumps, as pliable material that could be molded. Looking to the Bible and drawing on Erasmus's authority, Protestants became diligent about rearing children in temporal and spiritual affairs since they believed that that family was a microcosm of the church and the state. Unlike Protestants, which did not see infant baptism as a means of salvation, Catholics were relieved by the obsession with original sin. Moreover, family life was not as intense and self-scrutinizing than Protestant, and, since the removal of the authority of the priest as intermediary between God and man did not happen for Catholics, there was most likely less of a need for family devotion and a sense of the family acting as a mini-church in itself. In spite of subsequent reformations, Catholic and Protestants shared the aim of placing an importance on early childhood in the making of a Christian.<sup>349</sup>

It was in the latter 18<sup>th</sup> century when children were characterized with sentimentalism and humanitarianism, ideas influenced by key philosopher of the time Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Rousseau argued that the child should not be rushed or developed fast but developed at a "proper speed" in "proper stages"; Rousseau believed that children were born innocent and pure, and he argued for a "stage" in which the child should be honored.<sup>350</sup> Declaring that we know nothing about childhood and asking us to consider the "child as a child," Rousseau argued that "childhood has its own way of seeing, thinking, and feeling," and that the child should be allowed to "discover the secret of true happiness...."<sup>351</sup> For Rousseau, a child is to be happy in "childhood," a period bonded with nature and looked back on with nostalgia. As historian Anne Higonnet observes, Rousseau "advocated raising children as 'naturally' as possible, by which he meant gently, with toys and play, in simple, light, loose clothing, outdoors whenever possible."<sup>352</sup> "Childhood began to replace 'savagery' as the location and repository of virtue. Life could be seen, not as an ascent to maturity, but as a decline from the freshness of childhood."<sup>353</sup> The child was understood as being dependent, lacking reason, and needing protection: they were passive observers but not active participants that could shape surrounding systems of power.

Rousseau's ideologies had a significant impact on the western notion of childhood as a separate and special stage of innocence.<sup>354</sup> The evidence of this impact could be seen in the special genre of literature for children,<sup>355</sup> as well as the great movement in visual history of (Romantic) childhood innocence.<sup>356</sup> In marking a separate stage of childhood, Rousseau also contributed to a new sensibility around motherhood and to altering the role of the father as a key

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<sup>348</sup> See William Harrison Woodward, *Desiderius Erasmus Concerning the Aim and Method of Education*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1904).

<sup>349</sup> Cunningham, 42-58.

<sup>350</sup> See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile: or On Education*, trans. by Allan Bloom, (New York: BasicBooks, 1979 [1762]).

<sup>351</sup> Quoted in Cunningham, 66.

<sup>352</sup> Anne Higonnet, *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998), 26-27.

<sup>353</sup> Cunningham, 68.

<sup>354</sup> Cunningham, 61.

<sup>355</sup> Cunningham, 69.

<sup>356</sup> See Higonnet, *Pictures of Innocence*.

person who was responsible for the moral teaching of the child (although, the tutor nevertheless remained a male).<sup>357</sup> In sum, the Enlightenment served as a fresh ground that allowed for an invention of a particular kind of innocence connected to childhood, one that served to separate childhood from the adult world. Arguing that Rousseau outlined a complex relation between memory and childhood, Larry Wolff highlights how this offers a "significant approach to the eighteenth-century ideas of childhood in the context of the evolving modern sense of self."<sup>358</sup> As a result, a traditional notion of Western childhood was carved out that included understanding children through the lens of play, non-labor, or in school settings.

Because understandings and experiences of European children in the Americas differed than those of the colonized young, the traditional Western concept of childhood and children served as a means to further conquest. Children were familiar and malleable enough to place new meaning on them in the colonial context to make sense of the latter. When colonials in early America sought to make sense of intercultural contact and conflict, they turned to the child to help them articulate their feelings of vulnerability, while also displacing that vulnerability away from white adults that did not want to reveal their sense of loss of control. The child, like the slave, wife, and servant, was understood in Europe as a symbol of servitude. Children, however, particularly the very young, represented the most dependent on those with more power. For their purposes of control, power, and insecurity, colonists were able to call and conceive those they deemed inferior as "children" since this associated them with dependence, subservience, and inferiority in being.<sup>359</sup> As the research of Robin Bernstein highlights, the idea of childhood played a major role in many of the major racial projects in the U.S., such as, "slavery and abolition, post-Emancipation enfranchisement and disenfranchisements of African Americans, and, by the turn of the twentieth century, antiblack violence, New Negro racial uplift, and the early civil rights movement."<sup>360</sup>

## Colonized Youth

By depending on old meanings of childhood, colonists utilized infantilizing metaphors. Alongside considerations of gender, infantilization is similar to feminization of adults but not identical. Since colonizers commonly compared the conquered as children, infantilization through racial understandings became a strategy to disempower the colonized and assert power over them. The infantilizing metaphor permeated social thought in a variety of ways. For example, the viceroyalty of Peru and other authorities normally characterized native Andeans as childish and childlike.<sup>361</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel believed that Native Americans were "like unenlightened children, living from one day to the next, and untouched by higher thoughts

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<sup>357</sup> Cunningham, 69; also see Steven Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe*, (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983).

<sup>358</sup> Larry Wolff, "When I Imagine a Child: the Idea of Childhood and the Philosophy of Memory in the Enlightenment," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 31.4, (1993), 378.

<sup>359</sup> For more on this point, see Anna Mae Duane, "Suffering Childhood in Early America: Violence, Race, and the Making of the Child Victim," (London: The University of Georgia Press, 2010), introduction.

<sup>360</sup> See Robin Bernstein, *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights*, (New York: New York University Press, 2011).

<sup>361</sup> Carolyn Dean, "Sketches of Childhood: Children in Colonial Andean Art and Society," *Minor Omissions: Children in Latin American History and Society*, ed. by Tobias Hecht, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), 21.

or aspirations."<sup>362</sup> In the American colonies, Natives were associated with rebellion and chaos against the "divinely" ordained authority of Puritans. In particular, Indians were demonized in white captivity narratives, often represented as stoic and threatening. Notions such as these contributed to the cultural conceptions—evident in several Supreme Court cases—that natives, like childlike wards of the state, could never achieve the "proper" subservient permanent role that they were expected to assume. Indians were seen as politically insignificant children who justified the idea that colonials, in paternal-like fashion, must maintain control and sovereignty over their land.<sup>363</sup>

The colonized perpetually have been "compared and equated with children, a representation that conveniently provided a moral justification of imperial policies of tutelage, discipline and specific paternalistic and materialistic strategies of custodial control."<sup>364</sup> Likewise, the infantilization metaphor would also later be used to portray women as well as the enslaved. For instance, regarding Africans in the New World, "Colonial whites maintained that the enslaved were an inherently lazy, dishonest, and immoral racial group and that they could only be productive if guided by whites who would have the power of the law and the whip."<sup>365</sup> Many whites viewed slaves as children regardless of age, and furthermore viewed adult slaves as children that needed to be clothed, nursed, fed, and looked after.<sup>366</sup> Proslavery writings similarly portrayed all enslaved as children in need of care, and popular culture at times also kept women out of political spheres by aligning them with children too.<sup>367</sup> The notions that Indians were better off under European tutelage and that Negroes were naturally of a childlike character prevailed into the twentieth century. Depicting the colonized (and sometimes including white women) as child-like or in need of paternal guidance contributed to the infantilizing metaphor.

However, the infantilizing metaphor was not a one-way process. Since white children and native (and later African) understandings were shaped in relation to one another, the meaning of (white male) children could not remain the same in light of the colonial context. If one looks at childcare manuals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, "Children, are invariably othered in way that compare them to lower-ordered beings, they are animal-like, lack civility, discipline and sexual restraint; their instincts are base, they are too close to nature, they are, like racialized others, not fully human beings."<sup>368</sup> Metaphors of childhood (like other European conceptions) were shaped by several changes taking place in the context of the New World. For example, colonial children grew simultaneously in economic and symbolic importance. The demands of the environment increased the child's value as a physical and cultural laborer, as well as the literal embodiment of the colony's future. Children, to some degree, emerged as a form of wealth and an emblem for success of the colony, and subsequent nation.<sup>369</sup> But in the metaphor that compared colonized subjects to white children, the latter's

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<sup>362</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, "Lectures on the Philosophy of World History; Introduction: Reason in History," trans. H.B. Nisbet, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 165.

<sup>363</sup> Duane, 6-7.

<sup>364</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things*, (London: Duke University Press, 1995), 150-151.

<sup>365</sup> Audra Abbe Diptee, "Imperial Ideas, Colonial Realities: Enslaved Children in Jamaica, 1775-1834," in *Children in Colonial America*, ed. James Marten, (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 59.

<sup>366</sup> Wilma King, *Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), xvii.

<sup>367</sup> Duane, 5.

<sup>368</sup> Stoler, 150-151.

<sup>369</sup> Duane, 13-14.

meaning had to undergo a major change. In using the child metaphor to define Indians, slaves, and women, understandings of what a child was had to be stretched in ways that changed the meaning of childhood itself.<sup>370</sup> Whereby before conquest, white children were deemed inferior to white adults, the meaning of the white child's inferiority became associated with the colonized afterwards. For example, when speaking of the Indian's relationship to God, it was not uncommon to draw on the image of a rebellious child. Rebellious children could be tamed, and Indians would be forgiven by God if they would submit to the authority of Puritan ministers. The logic was that "if Indians are outcast because they are rebellious children, then *any* rebellious child bears a perilous resemblance to the outcast and dangerous Indian."<sup>371</sup> The unruly child in the context of colonization became equated with the "primitive," the "savage," the colonized—thus, the white child became understood in racialized terms.

The infantilizing metaphor was simultaneously produced alongside the new framework of the racialization of white children and childhood. Contributing to this was the idea that the child was a "tabula rasa"—a blank slate—with respect to ideas but not temperament or abilities.<sup>372</sup> Although the idea of tabula rasa was not new, John Locke popularized the term unparalleled by his predecessors.<sup>373</sup> This happened, in part, because this term operated in a context post-"discovery" of the Americas, where the geography was a tabula rasa for Europeans—the land and its people were there to be colonized—and especially slavery since this was on the rise during the time. Neutralizing the idea that the (European) child was either good or bad, child as tabula rasa contributed to moving the concept away from the understanding that the child was born out of sin, believing in the innate depravity of children, and of breaking the will by enforcing strict rules as the method of passing on moral and religious values.<sup>374</sup> Tabula rasa, however, for the colonized, signified the secularization that justified the violence—the brutality against the colonized did not matter since they did not have souls.<sup>375</sup>

Complex contacts between natives and colonizers, along with the environment, shaped colonial representations of childhood and children. Whether inspired by fear or desire, the New World forced colonialists to reassess their attitudes toward their own children, even if it meant reverting to Puritan pedagogy and ideologies (sometimes with additional rigor) that were based in excluding "impure" influences like malleability. What the European child meant became reformulated in colonial space and time as racialization and infantilization were juxtaposed in relation to one another. Powerful narratives of infantilization and racialization depended on circularity between the general understandings of the groups it represented and were supported by political philosophies of the time. Placing age as central to the understandings of modernity/coloniality reveals a line of colonizing logic in which vulnerability and dependence was used to disempower colonized subjects and undermine those not yet adult. Through the infantilizing of the colonized, and the racialization of childhood, a solidification of whiteness in

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<sup>370</sup> Duane, 11.

<sup>371</sup> Duane, 37, (*italics in original*).

<sup>372</sup> See John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. by Peter H. Nidditch, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 85, 95, 106-7, and 116-17.

<sup>373</sup> Cunningham, 60.

<sup>374</sup> Colin Heywood, *A History of Childhood: Children and Childhood in the West from Medieval to Modern Times*, (MA: Blackwell Publishing Inc., 2003), 23 and 99.

<sup>375</sup> For a discussion on how secularism contributed to modernity/coloniality, see Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "Secularism and Religion in the Modern/Colonial World-System: From Secular Postcoloniality to Postsecular Transmodernity," *Coloniality at Large: Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate*, ed. by Mabel Moraña, Enrique Dussel, and Carlos A. Jáuregui, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 360-384.

the United States found its meanings through a particular adulthood. This would be grounded on a Puritan hierarchy which, after an arsenal of science, politics, and socio-economic and cultural ideologies, would produce a transparent, universal subject on the top: the white, Christian, hetero-patriarch adult. Thus, although young people are oppressed despite advantages of race or class, the difference is that white youth are ontologically understood as the soon-to-be empowered subject while minority youth as the perpetually dependent noncitizen.

Although the hierarchy existing between adult and child that is older than conquest, when combined with the historical infantilization of people of color brings a new set of ways to understand this relation of power, specifically the coloniality of youth. For example, in captivity narratives, based on the context of violence and warfare, Indians were depicted as cruel, godless savages in contradiction to other ways they have been described as, such as love their children too much.<sup>376</sup> Despite the contradiction, Indians were depicted in excess to whiteness which was the standard in delineating the boundaries of a "proper" adult.<sup>377</sup> Those who survived genocide and slavery and grew older, in many ways, could never "grow up" since they did not have the luxury of enjoying the same rights as white adults. So long as white children moved away from "savagery," the puritan concept and its disciplinarian ways became normalized: the patriarchal order of colonial authority was reaffirmed. What was revealed was a racialized childhood of which whites could emerge as potential adults and the infantilization of the colonized which represents perpetual servitude and primitiveness. This type of logic is evident in the coloniality of youth.

### The Coloniality of Youth

One of the ways that the coloniality of being relates to youth is evident in the numerous negative understandings and constructions about young people of color that were reflected in national discourses—by both conservatives and liberals—about gang and juvenile crime. For example, John Dilulio—then a Princeton professor in politics and public affairs—published an influential article in 1995 that expressed his conservative views in "The Coming of the Super-Predator." This article predicted a "new wave" of youth criminals that would soon terrorize the nation by 2000.<sup>378</sup> The drastic increase in urban youth populations, particularly Black and Latino youth, was the cause, and these "super-predators" would soon brutalize, rape, and murder fellow citizens for no apparent reason. This theory gained popular attention at the time when, in the name of "protecting" Western interests in ensuring the constant "flow of oil," the U.S. was engaging in one of the largest military operations since the post-World War II era against Iraq known as the Gulf War.<sup>379</sup> In his State of the Union Address given on January 23, 1996, President Clinton stated his plan to "take our streets back from crime and gangs and drugs" by considering forming community partnerships with local police forces known as "community policing." He made reference to The Crime Bill of 1994, which provided funds for 100,000

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<sup>376</sup> See Duane, 37-42.

<sup>377</sup> As I previously noted, although the word "adult" was used in the English language in the mid-1400s, the word first appeared in the Oxford English Dictionary in 1656. See James E. Côté, *Arrested Adulthood: The Changing Nature of Maturity and Identity*, (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 13; Cheryl Merser, *Grown-ups: A Generation in Search of Adulthood*, (New York: G.P. Putnam's, 1987), 56.

<sup>378</sup> John Dilulio Jr., "The Coming of the Super-Predators," *Weekly Standard*, (Nov. 27, 1995).

<sup>379</sup> For an in-depth discussion of "Military Multiculturalism" in the Gulf War, see Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945-2000*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 235-265.

more police in communities, and stated that he was "directing the FBI and other investigative agencies to target gangs that involve juveniles in violent crime, and to seek authority to prosecute as adults teenagers who maim and kill like adults."<sup>380</sup>

Another Princeton professor and former director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy under President Bush Sr. and President Reagan's former Secretary of Education William Bennett (along with Dilulio) continued with the super-predator thesis in 1996. This was an election year in which these influential political commentators developed further the popular theory in which youth (of color) served as the scapegoat that alleviated the nation's racial and economic anxieties both nationally and abroad, during the presidential reign of Bill Clinton. Articulating the description of this term, the authors of *Body Count* write:

America is now home to thickening ranks of juvenile 'super-predators'—radically impulsive, brutally remorseless youngsters, including ever more preteenage boys, who murder, assault, rape, rob, burglarize, deal deadly drugs, join gun-toting gangs, and create serious communal disorders. They do not fear the stigma of arrest, the pains of imprisonments, or the pangs of conscience. They perceive hardly any relationship between doing right (or wrong) now and being rewarded (or punished) for it later. To these mean-street youngster, the word 'right' and 'wrong' have no fixed moral meaning.<sup>381</sup>

The "super-predator" term encoded youth (of color) as "different" to the law-abiding (middle-class white) adults, and the theory behind this term identified young people (of color) as fearless, dangerous, and violently out of control to say the least. According to the authors, the surge of youth violence was a result of "moral poverty," not economic poverty, social injustice, or racism. For them "moral poverty" included the failure of parents and the local community—since they were deviant, delinquent, and criminal adults—to provide youth appropriate training to become hard working, law abiding, moral citizens. This theory spoke nothing of the crisis of adulthood in which displaced (social, political, and economic) anxieties were placed upon youth of color.

Mike A. Males argues that the super-predators are in reality white adults who displace their racial and ethnic discomfort on young people (of color). Basing his research on the 1997 U.S. Census Bureau data, one explanation for the development of the super-predator theory that Males provides is that it was due to the racial demographic transition taking place in which the younger (or color) populations (35 percent were under 18) did not reflect the 80 percent of America's adults over 40 years old who were whites of European origin. As Male highlighted, in California, "two-thirds of the elders are Euro-white; three-fifths of the youths are [of color]."<sup>382</sup> Raul Damacio Tovares similarly argues that the "super-predator" term was due to the high births in communities of color during the late 1970s and early 1980s that the US was experiencing. Thus, the logic that would follow is that "the country could expect a dramatic increase in crime in the next ten years, when those poor, inner-city children entered their teen

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<sup>380</sup> William Jefferson Clinton, "State of the Union Address," U.S. Capitol, (Jan. 23, 1996), available at: [www.clinton2.nara.gov/WH/New/other/sotu.html](http://www.clinton2.nara.gov/WH/New/other/sotu.html), (accessed, Feb. 15, 2012).

<sup>381</sup> William J. Bennett, John J. Dilulio, Jr., and John P. Walters, *Body Count: Moral Poverty ...and How to Win America's War Against Crime and Drugs*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 27.

<sup>382</sup> Mike A. Males, *Framing Youth: 10 Myths about the Next Generation* (Maine: Common Courage Press, 1999), 8.

years."<sup>383</sup> As these scholars point out, racial demographics were crucial to the neoconservative and neoliberal discourses that emerged in the 1980s.

During the 1980s global recession, the U.S. government declared a "War on Drugs" where repressive policies and neoliberal racist politics targeted marginalized communities in the US. There were many political and economic "social predicaments" happening in US during this time. During this period, Reagan-Bush waged a "war against (Middle Eastern) terrorism" due to the threat of national stability produced by the oil embargo,<sup>384</sup> and, furthermore, this is also the time that television took a conservative "right turn" due to corporate control and because capitalist interest of media significantly increased.<sup>385</sup> As Herman Gray note, blackness induced multiple meanings in producing the cultural and political shifts of the Reagan era.<sup>386</sup> The 1980s was also when, in addition to the aging of baby boomers (post-WWII, white and middle class), there was a "darkening" of the population and a widening of the income gap that created a heavy burden for urban youth of color.<sup>387</sup> Reagan's conservative claim on "American national identity" precisely was constituted on "the production and circulation of specific representation of blackness (e.g., welfare cheats, unwed mothers, violent gang members) that could function as the centerpiece of manufactured resentments, moral panic, and fears."<sup>388</sup> Moreover, many of these racialized notions were associated with previous (intellectual) pathological understandings of the Black, Puerto Rican, and Mexican family that had introduced the concept of "culture of poverty" to the social sciences and society at large.<sup>389</sup>

But there was also a concerted attack on youth—specifically youth of color—during the 1980s. As several media scholars have noted, attacks on racialized and/or youth populations were notorious during the 1980s conservative presidential reign of Reagan and Bush Sr. For example, looking at race and class inequalities and how they interface with how the category of youth is constructed in society across various historical conjunctures, critical pedagogy scholar Henry A. Giroux contends that after racially coded issues, such as multiculturalism, welfare reform, and immigration, "youth" (in the late 1980s, early 1990s) follows this trajectory of being perceived as a social problem.<sup>390</sup> Noting that the generation that came into its youth during the Reagan culture were blamed for social problems, such as crime, poverty, and welfare, Giroux argues that this is not necessarily reflective of changing ideologies but is located in the contemporary urban landscape that is subject to complex national and global forces that involves: "a downward-spiraling economy, a resurgent racism, a diminishing allocation of funds

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<sup>383</sup> Raúl Damacio Tovares, *Manufacturing the Gang: Mexican American Youth Gangs on Local Television News*, (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2002), 68.

<sup>384</sup> For a detailed discussion on this subject, see McAlister, 198- 234.

<sup>385</sup> See Douglass Kellner, *Television and the Crisis of Democracy*, (Colorado: Westview Press, 1990).

<sup>386</sup> Herman Gray, *Watching Race: Television and the Struggle for Blackness*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004 [1995]).

<sup>387</sup> Raúl Damacio Tovares, *Manufacturing the Gang: Mexican American Youth Gangs on Local Television News*, (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2002), 58.

<sup>388</sup> Gray, xvii. For a detailed discussion of Reaganism, Blackness, and the politics of media (television), see chapter 2, pp. 15-34.

<sup>389</sup> See Oscar Lewis' *The Children of Sanchez*, (New York: Random House, 1961) and *La Vida: A Puerto Rican Family in the Culture of Poverty, San Juan and New York*, (New York: Random House, 1966); Daniel P. Moynihan's "The Negro American Family," *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*, (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1965) and *On Understanding Poverty; Perspectives from the Social Sciences*, (New York: Basic Books, 1969).

<sup>390</sup> Henry A. Giroux, *Channel Surfing: Race Talk and the Destruction of Today's Youth*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 1-3.



for crucial public services, the creation of Tipper Gore's Parents' Music Resource Center, and the hostile public response from many white adults to rap and urban contemporary music as it entered the mainstream."<sup>391</sup> Also highlighting how youth came under scrutiny during the context of neoliberalism, Charles R. Acland writes that "[w]hether it was *The Oprah Winfrey Show* on 'Teens in Crisis,' Tipper Gore's book *Raising PG Kids in an X-rated Society* (1987), an NBC prime-time news special entitled 'Bad Girls,' or a Cinemax documentary called *Why Did Johnny Kill?*, there was definitely a vociferous public debate concerning the nature of contemporary youth."<sup>392</sup>

The popular misconception during the 1980s that characterized youth as social problems in and of themselves carried into the following decade. One way this was evident was through media representations that characterized the 1990s generation in a negative manner, such as being apathetic, apolitical, and ignorant on the one hand, and deviant, violent, or criminal on the other. For example, during the 1990s, Hollywood film productions demonize both urban white and black youth. Referring to films such as *Rivers Edge* (1987), *My Own Private Idaho* (1991), and *Natural Born Killers* (1995), Henry A. Giroux argues that white youth are presented and framed "through the degrading textural registers of pathological violence, a deadening moral vacuum, and a paralyzing indifference to the present and future."<sup>393</sup> He contrast these negative depictions against Hollywood blockbusters, such as, *Wayne's World* (1992), *Dazed and Confused* (1993), and *Dumb and Dumber* (1995) that depict white youth through the lens of stupidity and amusement.

However, what connects these two types of representations of white youth is that they are apart from the other 1990s Hollywood representations of black youth that are not only shaped largely by a dynamic of class prejudice but by a strong resurgence of racism. Pointing to films produced by black filmmakers, such as *Boyz N the Hood* (1991), *Menace II Society* (1993), and *Clockers* (1995), Giroux argues that these film's narrow representations of black male youth reinforced the dominant neoconservative understanding of blackness as the "other" and a social problem. Clarifying this point, Giroux writes, "Within these films, violence resonates with the popular perception that everyday black urban culture and the culture of criminality mutually define each other. If white working-class youth are seen as a problem to be contained, black youth are seen as a dangerous threat to be eliminated."<sup>394</sup> As these examples show, despite race and class dynamics, youth can be negatively represented. In turn, they also demonstrate how racial and class markers make possible different types of negative representations of youth.

### **The California Context of Coloniality**

The 1990s were one of the gloomiest economic times in California's history. The end of the Cold War had left a hole in the job base of the defense industry that other businesses appeared incapable of filling. Consumer confidence was low, the value of homes had decreased dramatically, and the savings and loan crisis had resulted in a loss of jobs in the real estate and

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<sup>391</sup> Giroux, 44.

<sup>392</sup> Charles R. Acland. *Youth, Murder, Spectacle: The Cultural Politics of "Youth in Crisis,"* (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1995), 5.

<sup>393</sup> Giroux, 44.

<sup>394</sup> Giroux, 45.

construction industries.<sup>395</sup> Popular throughout the 1990s were further cuts to social programs, such as welfare, and increasing anti-immigrant sentiment and police presence in urban.<sup>396</sup> There was also a growing awareness that not only were immigrants and people of color/working class being scapegoated and criminalized but young people too.<sup>397</sup> What contributed to the idea of their criminalization was that several ballot measures passed that were orchestrated with serious racial and economic implications, and polarized agendas, such as Propositions 184, 187, 209, 227, and 21.<sup>398</sup> These types of aggressive politics when combined with the expansion of prisons, the nationwide-decade-long reduction of youth services and public resources, and the severe underfunding of public education, came to be understood as the "War on Youth."<sup>399</sup> At a time when the population of young people of color/immigrants was increasing, the war on youth revealed a simultaneous process that included media's intense focus on violent juvenile crime, public fear in response to the perceived threat, and politicians capitalizing on (and often contributing to) these fears to retain popularity or win elections.<sup>400</sup>

As a result, the youth generation of the 1990s was immersed in a racially intensified institutional atmosphere established by Presidents Reagan and Bush Sr., and by the subsequent fierce attacks on multiculturalism, bilingualism, and affirmative action that came under President Clinton's reign. The decade included inter-ethnic tensions that exploded when the beating of Rodney King took place in Long Beach.<sup>401</sup> Reflected in urban public schools, like at Alhambra High in the San Gabriel Valley, flaring racial tensions between Latino and Asian students included fistfights and stabbings. At Jordan High school in Los Angeles—which was once predominantly African American but increasingly became Latino—black students walked out of a Cinco de Mayo assembly.<sup>402</sup> The 1990s was also when high school drop-out rates and prison expansion were high and when representations of Chican@ in curriculum and staff were very low.<sup>403</sup> Also, Latin@s were identified as causing economic and social problems during this time, and institutional and social racism was exposed in 1993 when California Governor Pete Wilson announced the anti-immigrant proposal that eventually became proposition 187 on the 1994

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<sup>395</sup> Mark Baldassare, *California in the New Millennium: The Changing Social and Political Landscape*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 7-8.

<sup>396</sup> For a discussion on this, see the introduction of Kamran Afary, *Performance and Activism: Grassroots Discourse after the Los Angeles Rebellion of 1992*, (Boulder: Lexington Books, 2009).

<sup>397</sup> Alaric Dirmeyer, "Youth in California Demand 'Education Not Incarceration,'" *The Militant*, vol. 62.38, (Oct. 26, 1998).

<sup>398</sup> Prop. 184, known as "the three strikes and you're out law," and Prop. 187—which prohibited "illegal" immigrants from using health care, public education, and other social services in California—were both passed on the Nov. 8, 1994 election. Prop 209, known as "the elimination of affirmative action program" was passed in Nov. of 1997; Prop 227, the "English for the Children Initiative," ending bilingual education programs in the state, passed in Jun. of 1998; Proposition 21, the "Juvenile Justice Initiative," which made it easier to try youth as adults, passed in March 2000.

<sup>399</sup> Ryan Pintado-Vertner, "The War on Youth," *COLORLINES: News for Action*, (Dec. 10, 1999).

<sup>400</sup> Elizabeth Scott and Laurence Steinberg, *Rethinking Juvenile Justice*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2008), 102.

<sup>401</sup> For more on various components of the Rodney King beating and trial, see Kamran Afary, *Performance and Activism*.

<sup>402</sup> Carlos M. Jiménez, "Community Essay: Multiethnic Studies Are Needed for All," *Los Angeles Times*, (Feb., 21, 1994).

<sup>403</sup> Verónica Sánchez and Robin Templeton, "Fund Our Youth!," *Crossroads*, (May 1994), 24.

Ballot.<sup>404</sup> Last but not least, there was uproar about the social threat that hip-hop lyrics allegedly posed.<sup>405</sup>

Latin@ demographics were increasing in the state of California but their numbers were dropping in educational spaces.<sup>406</sup> Based on a 1985 study, Latinos had the lowest high school graduation rate of any population group. In addition, for every 100 Latin@s who entered kindergarten, only two finished graduate school. In 1989, 16 percent of all Latinos were in college, and over half of them in 2-year colleges.<sup>407</sup> Since poverty and racism were some of the factors that reflected these numbers, it was not unusual to have districts with teachers and administrators that did not reflect the demographics of the pupils. For example, in the Sacramento City Unified School District, while over 20 percent of the students were Latino, high school teachers were only nine percent.<sup>408</sup> Alhambra, Martinez district's only high school, with a student population of 1,011 was approximately 25 percent minority with 21 being Latino. Out of the 50 teachers, three were Latino and one librarian was black. At this school, African-American students complained about increasing racial slurs and epithets, including an anti-black slogan that was painted at the school's parking lot. A folder taken from one of the school's students had the Confederate flag, swastikas, and "white power" slogan.<sup>409</sup> At Jefferson High School in Daly City, out of 82 teachers, four of them were bilingual while 90 percent of the student body consisted of minority backgrounds.<sup>410</sup> Furthermore, Exeter Union had 1,200 students of which about 40 percent were of Latin-American background as well as only six of the school's 59 teachers.<sup>411</sup>

In addition, urban public schools were (and continue to be) generally in bad conditions, such as in San Francisco where the school board favored overhaul of schools at three sites in 1994.<sup>412</sup> Some of the dire situations that schools were in included: having textbooks that were either scarce or outdated, bathrooms that smelled, or security guards that harassed students.<sup>413</sup> Some schools installed video cameras to conduct surveillance on school grounds and even build a watchtower for school guards.<sup>414</sup> What upset many was that while the need for funding of public education (including higher education) was urgent, a lot of money was being spent on

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<sup>404</sup> Elizabeth Martínez, "Be Down With the Brown: Thousands of Raza Youth Blowout of School to Protest Racism," *Z Magazine*, (Nov. 1994), 40.

<sup>405</sup> For more on this see George Lipsitz, *Footsteps in the Dark: The Hidden Histories of Popular Music*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), chapter 7.

<sup>406</sup> In 1990, with the total California population being 29.9 million people, the white population was no longer the majority in the state. The white population had decreased to 57 percent of the total population while the Asian population had grown to 10 percent and Latino population to 26 percent. See Mark Baldassare, *California in the New Millennium: The Changing Social and Political Landscape*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 1-5.

<sup>407</sup> Elizabeth Martínez, "Be Down With the Brown," 41.

<sup>408</sup> Sánchez and Templeton, 24.

<sup>409</sup> Jeanie R. Wakeland, "Martinez high school students halt walkout," *Contra Costa Times*, (May 5, 1994).

<sup>410</sup> Michael Martin, "Students Call for Diversity," *Independent: The Neighborhood Newspaper*, (May 4, 1994). The schools superintendent said that hiring minority teachers was difficult because there was a lack of qualified applicants and that larger districts have money—like bonuses—to offer prospective teachers.

<sup>411</sup> Letisia Márquez, "Exeter students seek fair treatment," *Visalia Times-Delta*, (Nov. 17, 1993).

<sup>412</sup> Marsha Ginsburg, "S.F. school board favors overhaul at 3 sites," *San Francisco Examiner*, (May 11, 1994).

<sup>413</sup> For example, at the Oct. 1, 1998 rally in San Leandro, frustrated high school freshman Jennifer Boswell pulled out a stapled notebook of photocopied pages that served as her math textbook. See Erin Allday and Jeff Chorney, "Students urge better schools, fewer jails," *The Oakland Tribune*, (Oct. 2, 1998).

<sup>414</sup> See Robin Templeton, "Lockdown Walkout," *The Nation*, (Nov. 16, 1998).

expanding the machinery of prisons. For example, correctional officer's salaries doubled from being \$21,000 in the early 1980s to \$46,200 in 1998.<sup>415</sup> Next to Berkeley High, a new \$13 million jail was under construction in 1998, at a time when California ranked thirty-seventh nationally in per-pupil spending and above only Louisiana and Mississippi in fourth grade reading proficiency. In addition, the number of minority representation in schools and prisons was disproportionate. For every African-American man enrolled in a state university, there were five incarcerated in a state correctional facility; for Latino men, there were almost twice as many incarcerated as they were in the universities. From 1987 to 1995, state spending on prisons increased 30 percent but declined 18 percent on universities.<sup>416</sup> Twenty-three new prisons and only two universities were built in California between 1982 and 2000.<sup>417</sup> Many students attributed the root of many of the problems in schools and communities to the overall lack of understanding for individual and cultural differences, and they believed that predominantly white teaching staff did not understand the prejudices that Mexican, Salvadoran, and Nicaraguan youth faced daily.<sup>418</sup> Cristina Martínez, a junior at Jefferson High School in Daly City, and others believed that schools with a large percentage of ethnic minorities needed more bilingual teachers and curriculums that went beyond teaching European or (US) North American culture.<sup>419</sup>

Throughout the 1980s Reagan era, politicians argued that "tough on crime" stances that included certain imprisonment and longer sentences would keep communities "safer."<sup>420</sup> The prison system expansion that began in the early 1980s continued until the turn of the century despite years of falling crime rates, and this has resulted in the highest rate of incarceration in the planet.<sup>421</sup> Since the 1980s, California has built twenty-three massive prisons that hold from 4,000 to 6,000 people each. Although some are scattered across the state's agricultural, timber, and mining lands, the majority of the new prisons are clustered in the southern San Joaquin area.<sup>422</sup> The prison boom of the last two and a half decades in California has been what some have called the biggest prison building program in the history of the world, and other US states and other parts of the world are also building prison at a similar pace.<sup>423</sup> In fact, the portion of the population held in custody for crimes has gone beyond historic norms, and, at the end of the twentieth century, more people were confined in prisons, jails, detention centers, and in detention spaces in schools than ever before in the US.<sup>424</sup>

There are many explanations of the phenomenon of massive prison expansion. For example, Franklin E. Zimring and Gordon Hawkins point out that the principal cause of the imprisonment boom in California was the shift towards more severe sanctions which were much greater for crimes of lesser seriousness that included a substantial increase in arrest, conviction,

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<sup>415</sup> See Khaled Taqi-Eddin, Dan Macallair, and Vincent Schiraldi, "Class Dismissed: Higher Education vs. Correction During the Wilson Years," *Justice Policy Institute*, (Sep. 1998).

<sup>416</sup> Templeton, "Lockdown Walkout."

<sup>417</sup> Cal State University San Marcos was built in 1988 and Cal State University of Monterey Bay in 1994 (Cal State University Channel Islands was built until 2002 and University of California at Merced in 2005).

<sup>418</sup> Michelle García, "Latino Students Blow Out of Schools," *Third Force*, vol. 3.1, (Apr. 30, 1995), 17.

<sup>419</sup> Martin, "Students Call for Diversity."

<sup>420</sup> Angela Y. Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?*, (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003), 11-12.

<sup>421</sup> Lorna A. Rhodes, "Toward an Anthropology of Prisons," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 30, (2002), 65.

<sup>422</sup> Ruth Wilson Gilmore and Craig Gilmore, "The Other California," *Globalize Liberation: How to Uproot the System and Build a Better World*, ed. by David Solnit, (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2004), 381.

<sup>423</sup> Gilmore and Gilmore, 384.

<sup>424</sup> Jonathan Simon, *Governing Through Crime: How the War on Crime Transformed American Democracy and Created a Culture of Fear*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 6.

and imprisonment for drug offences.<sup>425</sup> Another example is the work of Ruth Wilson Gilmore where she argues that California's biggest building project in the history of the world is due to a partial geographical solution to political economic crises, organized by the state that is in crisis within itself.<sup>426</sup> Loic Wacquant, instead, contends that the expansion is just reflective of the entanglement of the ghetto-prison kindred institutions of forced confinement, and that they are a continuum of other social institutions that have operated to define, confine, and control African-Americans in the US, such as chattel slavery and the Jim Crow system.<sup>427</sup> Many youth understood prison expansion as being connected to the "War on Youth" that attacked marginalized communities—that they not only reflected a racist culture<sup>428</sup> but also one that was anti-youth.

### **Decolonizing Negative Ontological Constructions of Youth**

In what follows, I examine how youth activists of these movements challenged the colonality of Being. In particular, I argue that, through their activism during the 1990s, youth of color worked towards decolonizing their collective sub-ontological status on multiple registers. One register included challenging the systematic oppression of Chicano youth. Exemplifying this, Cesar Ávila from the Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA) student group commented at a 1994 march in Sacramento: "The government is talking about more prisons and more police, instead of talking about more schools and more teachers. Racists politicians like Wilson are constantly attacking immigrants. But the problem is not at the bottom, it's at the top. We blame the government and the school boards for the educational and economic crisis in the state. We demand that Chicano youth get respected, not scapegoated."<sup>429</sup> In the movement to defeat Proposition 21, Jesse Osorio explained that the youth movement was:

Trying to send a voice, there was no [positive] representation of youth. Anything you would hear [about] youth on media or newspaper or whatever, it was always something negative: youth killing youth, or gang violence, or youth cutting class, or drop-out rates and all this other stuff. There was never really something positive spread out for youth at our time. [No on 21 movement] gave us the ability to have a voice as one and say, 'you know what, we are not just killer makers and all that, but you know, we are standing in solidarity together and we are not gonna be misrepresented by government.'<sup>430</sup>

As Jesse highlights, activism provided youth a way to respond to their ontological oppression by collectively challenging negative stereotypes about them.

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<sup>425</sup> Franklin E. Zimring and Gordon Hawkins, "The Growth of Imprisonment in California," *British Journal of Criminology*, vol. 34, (Special Issue 1994), 83 and 88.

<sup>426</sup> Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *The Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 26.

<sup>427</sup> See Loic Wacquant, "The New 'Peculiar Institution': On the Prison as a Surrogate Ghetto," *Theoretical Criminology*, vol. 4.3, (2000), 377-389; Loic Wacquant, "Deadly Symbiosis: When Ghetto and Prison Meet and Mesh," *Punishment Society*, 3.1, (2001), 95-133.

<sup>428</sup> See David Theo Goldberg, *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning*, (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1993).

<sup>429</sup> Quoted in Sánchez and Templeton, 24.

<sup>430</sup> Jesse Osorio, personal interview, (spring 2007, San Francisco, California).

Along with addressing common stereotypes, including that young people of color are ignorant, youth challenged the idea they are inherently violent. At a rally, one youth told the crowd via a microphone that, "They want to see us fight each other—they want us to kill each other. We've got to stand together so we can show them we're not just a bunch of stupid brown and red people."<sup>431</sup> At another rally, attention was placed on unity across racial/national lines and against gang warfare. One leader told the crowd, "Don't let the lies of the United States divide us!...It's not just about Latinos or Blacks or Asians, this is about the whole world!... We've got to forget these colors!"<sup>432</sup> These statements reveal the violence of modernity and its effects on the subaltern, and how working together in non-violent ways is important to move forward. As such, activism provided youth the space to challenge what Nelson Maldonado-Torres calls the "paradigm of war" that describes that "naturalization of the death ethic of war through colonialism, race, and particular modalities of gender differentiation" that is central to modernity.<sup>433</sup>

The activism of youth of color worked towards building positive inter-subjective relations and peaceful modes of coexistence. That is, coming together to form a collective voice to express many of their frustrations that were often systematically ignored or rendered invisible allowed youth of color to create spaces where non-violence could be practiced. For instance, on April 22, 1994, long-feuding Sureños and Norteño (largest Latino California gangs) took a step against gang violence: "Some 300 demonstrators turned in their red or blue gang rags for brown bandannas—brown for Brown power and unity. Later some of them set up a meeting to help stop the violence."<sup>434</sup> Mission High sophomore Luis Pavón stated, "This rally was powerful enough to bring peace. As soon as it ended, Sureños walked over to Norteños and set up a meeting to help stop the violence. We didn't expect that but it's really great that it did happen."<sup>435</sup> In addition, at the April 22, 1998 protest in Concord, gang members—who handled much of the security—shook hands and agreed to neutrality for the day. No colors, except for brown, were part of what contributed to the unity of the protest.<sup>436</sup> Rather than promoting competition, domination, or abuse of power, activism provided youth an opportunity to be neutral and work in mutually respectful and cooperative ways. In reference to gang truce negotiations that took place in Los Angeles after the Rodney King beating, Kamran Afary points out that, "the liminal experience of the truce parties had offered a rare opportunity for self-reflexivity and self-creation and led to personal changes in the lives of some individuals who moved away from gangbanging."<sup>437</sup> Although it's difficult to know exactly the impact of the gang truces that were enabled by the activism of youth of color in the San Francisco Bay Area, the movement worked towards mending inter-subjective divides between many youth.

Of course, there were youth that failed to challenge ontological coloniality; instead, many reified the typical stereotypes of young people, such as being immature. For example, after youth were screaming and jumping up and down and getting "a little out of hand" at a rally, high

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<sup>431</sup> Osorio, personal interview.

<sup>432</sup> Quoted in Elizabeth Martínez, "Be Down With the Brown," 40.

<sup>433</sup> Nelson Maldonado-Torres, *Against War: View from the Underside of Modernity*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 4.

<sup>434</sup> Martínez, "Be Down With the Brown," 40.

<sup>435</sup> Quoted in Yasmin Anwar, Karen Holzmeister, and Daniel Vasquez, "Death of a warrior: Latinos rally for 'brown pride,'" *The Daily Review*, (Apr. 23, 1994).

<sup>436</sup> Elizabeth Martínez, "High School Students in the Lead: Massive walkouts in California have important lessons for all organizers," *Z Magazine*, (March 1998).

<sup>437</sup> Afary, 96.

school student named Viviana spoke to them: "Look, this is what they say about high school students, that we're young, we can't organize, we're just here to have fun. What you should be doing is chanting, not making trouble for other people, because we have to get them on our side!"<sup>438</sup> At the same protest, 15 year-old organizer Jackie Arroyo noted that it was easy to get about 250-300 students to walk out at her school because initially they "just wanted to cut." Highlighting how some Chicana@ youth are not only immature but also internalize racialized negative stereotypes about themselves, 17-year old Monica Manríquez of San Leandro High stated that: "The guys in my high school are really still in junior high, they don't take things seriously. They are wannabe gangsters. I've been called a sellout for organizing. If you're Mexican and not a gangster, you've sold out. At first, I wondered what I was doing wrong, but I kind of understand. They are afraid to pick up a book, they'll let down their friends. Everybody wants to fit it."<sup>439</sup>

Youth fitting the "immature" stereotype was evident at the San Leandro protest on October 1, 1998: someone set off a fire extinguisher twice which scattered youth who thought it was tear gas, members of rival gangs exchanged words that came close to engaging in violence, and some youth threw plastic water bottles at each other at the BART station.<sup>440</sup> Jennie Luna, who participated in many of the walkouts during the 1990s, mentioned how difficult it was for her to witness these types of contradictions manifest in the actions. Jennie recalls, "There were a lot of kids doing stupid things, like getting into fights. I remember feeling conflicted. It felt like a contradiction, like we hadn't done our job right since we had been preparing....There were fights and kids that just wanted to skip school."<sup>441</sup> Jennie remembered speaking with an organizer at the San Leandro protest about how upset she was to see re-enactments of typical youth stereotypes, despite the larger call to action that aimed at challenging the oppression of youth. These complex renderings in the work of decolonization highlights how it is not simplistic nor can it solely be considered through a celebratory perspective. That is, the process of decolonization is not only partial and varied but also uneven and complex. The organizer responded by highlighting how undoing colonialist logic does not happen overnight and how planting seeds of knowledge sometimes takes a lot of time.

My point in arguing that youth's activism worked towards decolonizing Being is not to say that stereotypes were eradicated; undoing colonialist logic does not happens overnight. However, despite the problems found in organizing youth, people's consciousness and awareness changed in ways that was self-affirming to young people's identities. One example of this is when young people insisted they not be called "Hispanic" in a protest in Sacramento.<sup>442</sup> By challenging the "Hispanic" category—which was first adopted by the US government in the early 1970s during the administration of Richard Nixon, then used in the US Census since the 1980s during Ronald Regan's presidential reign—Latina@ youth claimed the importance of self-affirming representations and ways of naming oneself through other politicized categories like Chicana@/Latina@. Another example is 15 year-old Karen whose identity and politics changed because of her activism: "I think differently towards everything now. There are a lot of stores and restaurants that supported Proposition 187—like Lucky's, Mervyn's, McDonald's....I started

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<sup>438</sup> Elizabeth Martínez, "High School Students in the Lead."

<sup>439</sup> Quoted in Martínez, "Be Down With the Brown," 42.

<sup>440</sup> Henry K. Lee and Manny Fernandez, "Rally in San Leandro," *San Francisco Chronicle*, (Oct. 2, 1998).

<sup>441</sup> Jennie Luna, personal interview, (spring 2012, San Jose, California).

<sup>442</sup> Carlos Alcalá, "Chicanos march on capitol," *The Sacramento Bee*, (Feb. 3, 1994).

coming to meetings...and [now] I'm like, "No! [I] can't go there anymore."<sup>443</sup> Last but not least, high school student Juan Zepeda exemplifies the importance of activism in transforming identity and perspective. The September 16, 1993 walkout in Gilroy changed Juan Zepeda's life and also turned him into an activist that eventually got him elected to the school's Associated Student Body's highest office, also serving as vice president and leader of campus groups that taught culture and history and dealt with tensions that divided students. Zepeda states,

The walkouts, that's what influenced me and motivated me to take part in school, to make school better for me and other students...Now that I take part in school, I feel better about school and myself. Now school's important to me—it's an important part of my life. I have to get involved now. I don't know why, it's kind of like my job...I've proved society wrong in what they think about Chicanos by becoming ASB president.<sup>444</sup>

These examples show how activism challenged the coloniality of Being by generating the idea that youth could be politicized subjects, thereby changing the way they interacted with the world around them. As Nelson Maldonado-Torres affirms, "decolonization is about generating a different subject so as to be able to form a different kind of society."<sup>445</sup> Understanding youth as a politicized subject contributed to forming a society that could also politicize youth.

By challenging stereotypes and self-affirming their voices and identities, youth decolonized their sub-ontological status to be one that was about empowerment. When recalling the "No on 21" youth movement, young adult participant Tyger Walsh stated:

Folks were young! I was blown away by seeing hella 15-year-olds, 13-year-olds in the streets, with big ol' banners and chanting, marching, and making demands and getting some of them...I feel like that courage for me was really inspirational. This fearlessness that we inspired in each other, of just like, 'yeah, we can do it, we can do anything now, you know, we can go anywhere, why not? There's 500 of us here in the street, where should we go next?' I feel like that's somewhat rare. I hadn't seen that happen before, I hadn't been part of that before. For me that was definitely unique.<sup>446</sup>

As Tyger highlights, it was unusual to see young people as subjects having and being empowered. From a sub-ontological status that depicted young people of color in negative ways, like being apathetic, apolitical, or to be feared, youth activism provided a radical understanding of what youth of color ontology could mean instead: as being fearless, revolutionary, and/or critical thinking leader.

There are several activist images from the movements I write about that call attention to redefinitions of negative understandings of youth ontology. For example, in one photo of youth in a rally, a diverse group of young people of color—many of them wearing white T-shirts that state "Defending Land and Life"—stand in an inverted "V" formation with their heads high and

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<sup>443</sup> Quoted in Robert Roth and Annie Johnston, eds., "La Raza Youth Speak Out," *Breakthrough* (summer 1995).

<sup>444</sup> Quoted in Mike de Give, "Walkout drove ASB president to get involved," *The Dispatch*, (Apr. 19, 1994).

<sup>445</sup> Nelson Maldonado-Torres, *Decolonizing the University: Fulfilling the Dream of the Third World College*, Mattie Harper (producer) and John Hamilton (video camera and post-production), (2010), <http://vimeo.com/15729523>, (accessed Mar. 21, 2012), video.

<sup>446</sup> Tyger Walsh, personal interview, (summer 2004, Oakland, California).



fists in the air. In another photo, there is a group of over 20 youth of color who are standing, sitting, and kneeling in front of the Mission Police Station holding fists and "No on 21" campaign signs. Last but not least, in another picture there is a group of majority multi-ethnic/gender young people also standing, sitting, and kneeling in front of city hall with fists in the air, some with smiles and others looking serious.<sup>447</sup> In these images, youth do not fit the stereotype that they are passive, weak, or violent, but conscious, empowered, dedicated to a cause, politicized, united, strong, heterogeneous, and not afraid of challenging institutional power.

By challenging stereotypes and self-affirming their voices, identities, and power, youth revealed that they were aware of how they were being perceived by mainstream media and politics. This is similar to what W.E.B. Du Bois called "double consciousness" which explains how "the Negro" sees himself through the revelation of the Other world. Du Bois explains that double consciousness is "the sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body...."<sup>448</sup> Youth's double consciousness, however, was not only across racial perceptions but combined with age: how adults perceived young people in negative ways. Challenging the stereotype that youth are apathetic or ignorant, 15 year-old freshman at Mission High in San Francisco José Luis Pavón highlights this when he stated at a rally, "Students are organizing. We're not just a bunch of stupid teen-agers."<sup>449</sup> Challenging the stereotype that youth are delinquent or self-centered, 17 year-old Sergio Díaz of Union City affirmed at the Hayward Main Library on April 22, 1994 that, "We didn't just come here to have fun or to cut school...Being here and speaking up means a lot for our culture."<sup>450</sup> For José Luis, organizing had a positive value that stood in opposition to being stupid or empty. For Sergio, not only did he consider participating in civic engagement and speaking up as important, but he understood them in relation to something larger than himself.

Other scholars perhaps would approach the youth activism I analyze in other ways. To take one example, Homi K. Bhabha argues that the process of challenging ontology may be explained in the experiences within the public and private that co-constitute personal identity. Discussing national discourses and allegiances of the individual, Homi K. Bhabha points to identity markers expressed in "official" discourses of state apparatuses that he calls "pedagogical narratives" and to the ways in which official discourses are negotiated in daily life that he names "performative narratives."<sup>451</sup> For Bhabha, the former draws on historical events to create an "official" story of a people that is meant to mirror a homogenous understanding of the nation's essential qualities. The latter represents diverse negotiations within a community as processes of identity constructions that interrupt pedagogical narratives that are asserted normative attributes. Arguing that individual's identity performances draw on and disturbs the nation's pedagogical narratives' reference points, identity construction consists of identification with official narratives and personal positions of reference.

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<sup>447</sup> These images are printed in "The Power of the Youth Don't Stop: 10 Years After Prop 21," commemoration event that took place in Oakland, (Apr. 22, 2010). Program with author.

<sup>448</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, ed. by Brent Hayes Edwards, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007[1903]), 8.

<sup>449</sup> Quoted in "Hispanic students rally in protest," *The Times: San Mateo's County's Daily Newspaper*, vol. 94.97, (Apr. 23-34, 1994).

<sup>450</sup> Quoted in Anwar, Holzmeister, and Vasquez, "Death of a warrior."

<sup>451</sup> Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (London: Routledge, 1994), chapter 8.

However, in challenging anti-youth oppression, I want to argue that youth activism of the 1990s was not only a response to the nation's narrative—even though it may indeed be understood in this way—but it was also about challenging the logic of imperialism that has always already co-constituted colonized youth in relation. That is, youth activism of the time did not only draw upon or disrupt the nation's pedagogical narrative reference point as much as it highlighted the faulty foundations of modernity/coloniality. Through this perspective, the activism of youth of color was decolonizing: "the energy that does not allow the operation of the logic of coloniality nor believes the fairy tales of the rhetoric of modernity."<sup>452</sup> In other words, youth of color in their activism were not only confronting narratives located within the nation-state but the hidden complicity and sustainment of anti-youth logic found in modernity/coloniality and the foundation of what decolonial scholars call "Imperial Being."<sup>453</sup>

In addition, through the perspective of resistance literature, particularly through the social justice framework that I discussed previously in the dissertation, one could argue that the youth represent civic agents that are engaged in transformational resistance. Although I do not necessarily disagree with this, from a decolonial perspective, civic inclusion, critique of oppression, and desire for social justice are not end goals but part of the larger project of challenging the logic of colonization that depends on and naturalizes youth of color's sub-ontological status. By self-affirming their identities through their activism, youth were not just seeking recognition and inclusion into society but challenging Western colonizing logic by representing themselves as subjects instead of sub-ontological objects. As Paula M.L. Moya argues, subordinated identities are "key to the production of a more accurate and less partial knowledge about our shared world. They are central to our collective ability to create collation across difference."<sup>454</sup> By affirming their subordinated identities through activism, young people engaged in the practice of collective ontological disobedience: youth are not the listening, apolitical, passive objects of those in power but they instead challenge the legacy of a colonizing logic that constructs them as inferior. The activism of youth of color reveals the fundamental narrative character of their ontological oppression: that youth are seen as sub-human. The point affirmed by Lucrecia Montez, "We're making history,"<sup>455</sup> does not signal a move towards civic participation as much as it reveals the act of consciously inhabiting a subject position that shapes the world. Thus, youth activism is not only about inclusion or critiquing oppression but also about emancipation from the forces, discourses, and rationalities which dehumanizes them; that subjects cannot exist in relation of domination but on a horizon of possibilities.

## Derailing "Man"

Wynter argues that the struggle of the new millennium will be one with the ongoing imperative of securing the well-being of the Western bourgeois ethnoclass' conception of the

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<sup>452</sup> Walter. D. Mignolo, "Epistemic Disobedience and the Decolonial Option: A Manifesto," *Transmodernity: A Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World*, vol.1.2, (2011), 44-66.

<sup>453</sup> For more on imperial subjectivity and attitude, see Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "Decolonization and the New Identitarian Logics After Sep. 11: Eurocentrism and Americanism Against the New Barbarian Threats," *Radical Philosophy Review*, vol. 8, number 1, (2005). In addition to Nelson Maldonado-Torres, Ramón Grosfoguel also uses the term. See "The Epistemic Decolonial Turn: Beyond Political-Economy Paradigms," *Cultural Studies*, vol. 21, nos. 2-3, (Mar./May 2007), 215.

<sup>454</sup> Paula M.L. Moya, "Who We Are and From Where We Speak," *Transmodernity: A Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World*, vol.1.2, (2011), 79-94.

<sup>455</sup> Quoted in Martínez, "Be Down With the Brown," 40.

Man which overrepresents itself as if it were the human itself, and that of securing the well-being and full cognitive and behavioral autonomy of the human species. According to Wynter, the central facet of the ethnoclass is Man (erected by the "coloniality of power") vs. Human struggle (with respects to struggles of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, etc). Unlike Hegel who claims that the struggle between the symmetrical beings is about recognition, Wynter contends that where blackness serves as the referent that Man moves away from, the struggle is against Man's overrepresentation as if it were the human itself.<sup>456</sup>

Nelson Maldonado-Torres expands on Wynter's concept of Man by historicizing its beginning with the Renaissance when the perception of human beings was not only understood as creatures but also as creators. For Maldonado-Torres, the Renaissance initiates a shift from a God-centered perspective to one that is centered on Man. Although this continues in line with Christian thought, the new epistemological figure is a European male that eventually combines with racial differentiation after 1492 when the "discovery" of the Americas reconceptualized geopolitical space as awareness of a "new" period of time. Awareness of a break with the past and of a new future helped to strengthen Man as the principal protagonist, not God. The idea of human transformation to be compared to gods or as godlike led to hierarchies of superiority and inferiority in the chain of being between God and animals. However, Maldonado-Torres also highlights that it is during the Enlightenment that the solidification of the autonomy of Man takes place. At this time, Man replaces God as the foundation for the understanding of human beings, their institutions and creations, as maturity—principally in the use of reason and will—, and as the primary features of humanity. Like in the Renaissance, solidifying the autonomy of Man during the Enlightenment went along with the strengthening hierarchical divisions between some humans and others in the "New World" context. Replacing the idea of "chain of being," the "system of nature" places Man as the subject with powers of empirical observation and perception while Nature (and others at the bottom of the hierarchy) serves as the object of investigation. As such, Man triumphs over God as there is a formal separation between secular Man and the divine, traditional, or mythical.<sup>457</sup>

For Sylvia Wynter, part of ontological decolonization involves the project of derailing Man. In doing so, henceforth, the Negro as the boundary marker of a normal being would also be challenged. As a way to derail Man, Wynter posits creating a new science and new epistemologies. This would involve the study of words that link the study of (Fanon's) sociogenic principle as a transculturally applicable constant able to serve as the common reality of the world's varied cultural modes of being, experiences of humanness, which will set man "free."<sup>458</sup> When taking language into consideration then, one would have to get rid of teleological concepts like "development" which necessarily hinders the potential for Black Africa to reinvent itself as a dynamic twenty-first century civilization.<sup>459</sup> Just like the epochal shift that began during the Renaissance (where instead of subordinating the lay activity of learning to the authority of theology, theology was submitted to the authority of the lay activity of textual and philological scrutiny in the name of historical accuracy that eventually led to the first non-religious definition of the human and later the Copernican revolution), Wynter argues that we

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<sup>456</sup> Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom," 260-262.

<sup>457</sup> See Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "Lewis Gordon, Philosopher of the Human," 103-37.

<sup>458</sup> Sylvia Wynter, "Towards the Sociogenic Principle," 60.

<sup>459</sup> Sylvia Wynter, "Is 'Development' a Purely Empirical Concept or also Teleological?: A Perspective from 'We the Underdeveloped,'" *Prospects for Recovery and Sustainable Development in Africa*, ed. by Abuibou Y. Yansane, (London: Greenwood Press, 1996), 299.

must reinvent new mechanisms of human knowledge that incorporates ideology, practice, and material together. This reinvention would provide an "outer view" that takes the human as subject, and knowledge would be reformulated as a science of human systems that uses multiple frames of reference.<sup>460</sup>

However, how can one derail Man (and epistemologies) when its age is taken for granted? That is, beyond Man's ethnoclass and gendered conceptions, what about his age? Does not Man become one only after maturing from boy? To take an example that highlights these questions from one of the most influential Enlightenment thinkers, John Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* was one of the most widely-circulated texts that found many readers and ardent followers throughout the New World. Referring to the repressing of desire and deferring/denying gratification of the child, Hugh Cunningham suggests that Locke in *Some Thoughts* seems to lay out a "blueprint for the production of capitalist man."<sup>461</sup> Indeed, becoming a modern citizen was a privilege available to a particular kind of child—one that is not only affluent but also male. This is evident in how the education Locke is concerned about is in producing men out of boys and one that can afford to travel and have a home tutor.<sup>462</sup> But, this blueprint is also for the heterosexual adult for the boy "must be back [home, by the age of twenty one, after traveling] to marry, and propagate."<sup>463</sup> Through Locke's discourse on child rearing, it is the adult bourgeois European heteronormative male that forms the base in the making of a modern citizen and of standard subjectivity. Locke's ideas not only contribute to shaping the parameters of the universal modern subject but also highlight how age is central to making Man.

By forming a collective voice through community organizing that incorporated a youth-centered ideology, practice, and materiality, youth activism served as the science that worked toward derailing not only the gendered ethnoclass aspect of Man but also his (adult) age. Through activism, youth were able to incorporate aspects of urban youth culture into the organizing, such as hip-hop. This was important as hip-hop is an art form that emerged from people of color and gave a voice to urban experiences.<sup>464</sup> Reflecting on the use of hip-hop in the "No on 21" youth organizing, Kaira Espinoza explains that:

Most adults or most other organizations, [were not using Hip Hop]. They were trying to outreach to young people, but they weren't using music, or they weren't using hip hop

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<sup>460</sup> Sylvia Wynter, "The Ceremony Must be Found: After Humanism," *boundary 2*, vol. 12.3, On Humanism and the University 1: The Discourse of Humanism, (Spring – Autumn, 1984), 28 and 56.

<sup>461</sup> Hugh Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society since 1500*, (United Kingdom: Pearson Education Limited, 2005 [1995]), 60.

<sup>462</sup> He makes the gendered distinctions early in the book: "the principal aim of my Discourse is, how a young Gentleman should be brought up from his Infancy, which, in all things, will not so perfectly suit the Education of *Daughters*," (p. 86), (emphasis in original). This does not necessarily make Locke sexist by current standards. As Ruth W. Grant notes, the status of women in society was not a central concern to Locke as much as challenging "contemporary authoritarian doctrines of Divine Right and patriarchalism that legitimized subjection to absolute monarchical power." See Ruth W. Grant, "John Locke on Women and the Family," *Two Treatises of Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. by Ian Shapiro, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 286.

<sup>463</sup> John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, John W. and Jean S. Yolton, eds., (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989 [1693]), 265.

<sup>464</sup> For more on hip-hop culture, see William Shaw, *West Side: Young Men and Hip Hop Culture*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000); H. Samy Alim, *Roc the Mic Right: The Language of Hip Hop Culture*, (New York: Routledge, 2006); Gwendolyn D. Pough, Elaine Richardson, Aisha Durham, Rachel Raimist, eds., *Home Girls Make Some Noise*, (California: Parker Publishing, LLC, 2007); Tricia Rose, *Hip-Hop Wars: What We Talk about When We Talk about Hip-Hop—and Why it Matters*, (New York: Basic Civitas, 2008).

music. All the organizing that happened around Prop 21 we were using hip hop and that definitely attracted a lot of young people...I feel a lot of adults who were involved during the 60s and had started all these other community organizations were doing really good work but they forgot about this whole population of young people. When Prop 21 happened, a lot of the young adults...the focus was on us, you know. It was on how young people are involved in their communities. It wasn't these adults coming in saying, 'oh, you guys need to organize.'"<sup>465</sup>

Kaira elucidates that along with highlighting how cultural components related to specific age dynamics were often left unnoticed in organizations and outreach efforts, ontological decolonization through activism included youth using music relevant to their community and having young people be the focus on the "No on 21" movement. By placing youth and aspects of urban culture central to the organizing, young people of color demonstrated that traits like creativity, community involvement, and political action could constitute the meaning of being young.

Through their decolonizing activism, youth as youth proved they were a force to be reckoned with, and that they could do what adults traditionally said they could not do. In San Francisco, for example, the Third Eye Movement liaison with the police was a 15-year old who was mentored by young Chicana, and media relations were handled by a 17 year-old. Media for one of the major demonstrations was handled by 14-year old Sommer Garza of Youth Organizing Communities.<sup>466</sup> In Sacramento, Kahlil Jacobs-Fantauzzi was high school class president and organized many multi-cultural historically-based activities. In Hayward, Elsa Quiroga began her activism in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade when she, along with other students, made a video that was presented to the School Board which helped keep Latino counselors at her school. At 16, Quiroga had attended various leadership conferences, worked in a summer youth program, served as a peer counselor, and became president of the La Raza club at her school. She spent two months organizing for the Apr. 22, 1994 blowout, which included setting up committees, making flyers, and working on outreach.<sup>467</sup> By demonstrating that youth could have a central role in the re-shaping of their identity and society, these examples highlight how the adult parameters of Man were challenged: it is not only the adult, and during adulthood, that standard subjectivity and "citizenry" is constituted.

Although youth provided a way to come under a diverse range of identity backgrounds, having a movement based on youth-centered politics proved to be limiting in other ways. Malachi Larrabee-Garza underscores that "We built the Prop 21 fight like if the youth movement [was] gonna save the planet, youth are the leaders, youth are the future. We created a bunch of little monsters. Sometimes they didn't want to organize with adults or, if it wasn't a youth only issue, they weren't interested: we are youth! [sic]"<sup>468</sup> I remember my own attitudes at the time reflected in Malachi's comments. As a young Xicano activist working for a youth of color activist organization, I was only interested in issues that were related to urban youth. I, along with other youth from the organization, often carried a militant youth-centered attitude in the activist spaces we frequented. I recall being invited to a social justice event that we eventually disrupted since it was not youth-centered. We interrupted the discussion to ask why there were

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<sup>465</sup> Kaira Espinoza, personal interview, (summer 2004, San Francisco, California).

<sup>466</sup> Elizabeth Martínez, "The New Youth Movement in California," *Z Magazine*, (May 2000).

<sup>467</sup> Elizabeth Martínez, "Be Down With the Brown," 43.

<sup>468</sup> Malachi Larrabee-Garza, personal interview, (spring 2012, San Francisco, California).

no youth present (besides our group) and pointed to their limiting approach to social justice that reflected adultist practices. Despite the limiting—perhaps selfish ways of approaching the matter—it felt good at the time to be able to (finally) assert our voices, to seem like we called the shots, and to make adults feel nervous around our presence. My philosophy at the time was based on the idea of "youth schooling youth schooling youth" that was central to the movement.

As I highlighted before, part of the reason the youth movement became so youth-centered has to do with the fact that there was a neoliberal coloniality attack on youth of color that was inaugurated during the 1980s. As a result, it made sense that many of the organizers were young themselves. As Malachi highlights:

We did not humble ourselves to go to political elders and ask them their opinion. I think back, wow, what if we had got [local activist elders] and brought them to youth force meeting meetings just to say, 'what's your advice to us,' or, 'this is what we are trying build, what do you see?' I bet you they would have clocked the red districts in the state, or they may have clocked the missing soldiers that we could have been engaging....Organizing is so busy...almost counter intuitive to pause, listen, invite people who've done it before.<sup>469</sup>

In addition to ego-youth politics or the fast-paced environment of activism, elders were also not reaching out. Of course, there were exceptions to the rule, such as Elizabeth Martínez who played an important role within the Xican@ walkouts and youth movement. However, more often than not, it was common to have adults distance themselves from youth as they, wittingly or unwittingly, embodied adult-centered practices. This often included adults taking over, appropriating, or altering the dynamics of youth activism that in part lead to the lack of youth voice in organizing.

Nevertheless, the activism of youth of color brought the racial dynamics of age oppression to the forefront. Moreover, by decolonizing Being, the activism of young people of color questioned what it meant to be human on accounts of age: how adulthood is an invisible referent point in modern thought. From this perspective, human emancipation, thus, would require that we reconfigure what Man means—not only on racial, class, or gendered accounts, but also with age—in order to change human reality at the level of subjectivity, society and its institutions. Youth's decolonizing activism highlighted that in order to derail Man and related colonizing projects, young people and their long-denied perspectives, theories, and ideologies would have to be central. In bringing new conceptions of how to understand the human, youth activism therefore challenged the political, epistemological, and institutional frameworks of modernity.

## **Recreating Community**

If colonization involved the dehumanization and destruction of people and culture, then decolonization would include building identity and recreating community. By decolonizing the Eurocentric notion of the "I" or "Man," youth activism made the link that ontology is made possible with sociality: one's voice being part of a collective process, a larger family,

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<sup>469</sup> Malachi Larrabee-Garza, personal interview, (spring 2012, San Francisco, California).

sociogenesis.<sup>470</sup> In this light, the walkouts were decolonizing as they served as one of the components of (re)building a larger unified Latin@ movement that included a network of students, parents, and teachers throughout Northern California. Since at least 1993, this movement included door-to-door campaigns, involvement programs, community meetings, workshops, rallies, protests, teach-ins, and walkouts. In the areas of San Jose, Gilroy, Oakland, and San Francisco, students went door-to-door for three months to build awareness around the "Fund Our Youth Project" which listed to the school districts the needs and demands of the community.<sup>471</sup> At meetings between high school and university students that happened often, many workshops were conducted, such as on organizing MEChA clubs on local campuses and the importance of learning culture and identity. In addition, networking between high school and college students helped unite the movement and make it work more effectively.<sup>472</sup>

Building community through activism also contributed to the decolonizing of Being—or in derailing Man—as youth challenged binary racial thinking. Making inter-related connections between oppressed groups, the activism of young people confronted the liberal narrative that individuals and groups function in isolation or in self-interested ways by practicing what decolonial scholars call pluriversality or trans-pluri-versal. These terms reject the idea of a worldview based on a totalizing logic but, instead, as one that "transcends and transgresses the impositions of abstract universals while it opens up the path for dialogue among different epistemes."<sup>473</sup> One of the ways that trans-pluri-versality was reflected in the activism of youth that I write about involved having an awareness of racial politics that went beyond their respective ethnicity. Exemplifying this, at the Sacramento protest of February 1994, high school student Francene Castillo stated, "I'm not just for Mexicans but for other races as well. When Chicanos get our own communities together, we can unify with other people."<sup>474</sup> At an April 1994 protest that gathered at a park in the Mission neighborhood in San Francisco, students emphasized that it was not just for Latinos but "all youth." One young high school woman stated that what they needed was to have "Raza" teachers in schools that also included those of other nationalities.<sup>475</sup> At the San Francisco walkout that was organized by the Mission High school Latinos Unidos club which, among other things, protested the firing of a popular security guard that the youth admired, leaders invited all nationalities to join in, and they said they were interested in improving conditions for all of San Francisco's school students not just the Latino ones.<sup>476</sup> Youth that did not identify as Chicano also understood the interrelatedness of marginalized communities in struggle. Student Ken Davis at the Sacramento protest made this clear: "I'm here because people of African descent face the same problems as Chicanos. As an African, I need to be learning about my culture, so I support the same kind of education that's being demanded here today. When we get that—education that teaches about where we're from,

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<sup>470</sup> For writings on sociogeny, see Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. by Charles Lam Markmann, (New York: Grove Press, 1967 [1952]); Sylvia Wynter, "Towards the Sociogenic Principle."

<sup>471</sup> Luis Antonio Sánchez, *La Voz de Berkeley*, vol. 4.3, (Dec. 1993), 1 and 4.

<sup>472</sup> Sánchez, *La Voz de Berkeley*, 4.

<sup>473</sup> Nelson Maldonado-Torres, *Against War: View from the Underside of Modernity*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 12. Displacing conceptual structure, pluriversality (or diversity that does not replicate dichotomy) rejects the idea of universality that is understood as abstract universal grounded in mono-logic. For more on this, see Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*, (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2011), 234-35.

<sup>474</sup> Quoted in Sánchez and Templeton, 24.

<sup>475</sup> "San Francisco Bay Area: High School Students Strike for Chicano Studies," *Revolutionary Worker*, no. 756, (May 15, 1994).

<sup>476</sup> Marta Sánchez, "Latino Students Walk Out," *Third Force*, vol. 2.1, (Apr. 30 1994), 5.

who our people are, who we are—then we can all move to a higher level."<sup>477</sup> As Ken pointed out, the decolonization of being—which in this example highlights the relationship between the individual, one's ethnic group, and how it relates to other ethnicities—overlaps with the decolonization of knowledge. As such, it is imperative to reconfigure ontology in order to refigure new objects of knowledge.

Central to building identity and community meant having collective dialogues. College student and organizer José López explained that after the walkouts, participant would "hold a rally and teach for the day. When they first walk out, students may not fully know why they're doing it. By the end of the day they will—that's assured. There are no adults, just high school students speaking to each other."<sup>478</sup> Many were surprised with the unity the protests produced and at how activism provided youth an opportunity to engage in meaningful conversation. The activist space of building community and engaging in meaningful dialogues also provided Chicana@ youth an opportunity to exercise a "we" consciousness that served as a way to humanize them and their struggles. For example, Margie Berta, at the Sacramento protest in February of 1994 made this clear: "Chicano students are underestimated, undermined and denied the opportunities and the tools they need to get into higher education. This march is an opportunity for youth to come together and see their ability to regain the respect they deserve."<sup>479</sup> Challenging the systemic forces that affect Chicana@ youth, the march helped to facilitate the process of youth gaining respect as they simultaneously recognized their collective pride and oppression. During the same march, a high school student spoke: "My teacher kicked me out of class for speaking Spanish," and continued to criticize the criminalization of Chicano youth by school officials for the way they dressed, spoke, and acted.<sup>480</sup> Initially she choked on her words as she approached the microphone to speak to the crowd of 1,000, but shouts from the crowd gave her courage and encouragement to continue. In general, the activist space provided a large familial-like community environment where gaining self-esteem and collective belonging could take place. The activism of youth that contributed to the decolonization of their sub-ontology thus challenged the idea of individualism—the narrative of liberalism where individual moral worth is privileged.

Having respectful dialogue and conversations central to activism was an important decolonial move that contributed to the goal of creating a reality where one is free to engage in receptive generosity and mutuality. As Nelson Maldonado-Torres underscores, decolonization "is a gift itself, an invitation to engage in dialogue. For decolonization, concepts need to be conceived as invitations to dialogue and not as impositions. They are expressions of the availability of the subject to engage in dialogue and the desire for exchange. Decolonization in this respect aspires to break with monologic modernity."<sup>481</sup> This is important since, as Walter D. Mignolo argues, "dialogue today is a *utopia*...a critical take on the past in order to imagine and construct future possible worlds."<sup>482</sup> Having youth speak at protests and to one another was important as this is part of the process of reclaiming and naming the world. Paulo Freire writes, "Those who have been denied their primordial right to speak their word must first reclaim this right and prevent the continuation of this dehumanizing aggression. If it is in speaking their

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<sup>477</sup> Quoted Sánchez and Templeton, 24.

<sup>478</sup> Quoted in, Michelle García, "Latino Students Blow Out of Schools," *Third Force*, vol. 3.1, (Apr. 30, 1995), 17.

<sup>479</sup> Quoted in Sánchez and Templeton, 24.

<sup>480</sup> Quoted in Sánchez and Templeton, 24.

<sup>481</sup> Maldonado-Torres, "On the Coloniality of Being," 261.

<sup>482</sup> Walter D. Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*, (MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), xix.



word that people, by naming the world, transform it, dialogue imposes itself as the way by which they achieve significance as human beings. Dialogue is thus an existential necessity."<sup>483</sup> As youth—particularly of color—do not have the institutional means to speak and have power, the Chican@ activism by and for youth was not a situation of some speaking on behalf of others as much as they were acts of co-creation that worked towards their unity and humanization.

Recreating community through activism also meant engaging in receptive generosity and dialogues that involve breaking from racial dynamics and gender and sexuality (pre)conceptions birthed through imperialism that inhibit interaction among subjects. Simultaneously working towards reconfiguring youth of color's sub-ontological status, the 1990s Chican@ activism provided a decolonial space of humanization and possibility that challenged patriarchy. For example, a "50-50" rule to account for male/female gender representation in leadership was implemented and made central to the organizing of the Chican@ walkouts from the beginning. Although far from perfect, this rule allowed a lot of young women to have the space to develop their leadership. Kaira Espinoza believed it was a good thing that there was representation of young women of color. She reflects, "A lot of young women were able to step up and take leadership. That was a good thing. In the organizations there was the conscious effort of balancing the leadership—not just male but female."<sup>484</sup> Having a space for the leadership young women of color was important as some underestimated their roles as organizers in the movement. When speaking about her experience with gender dynamics in organizing during the mid-1990s, fifteen year old Karen provides an example of this: "People are like, 'Oh, you're a girl. What are you trying to do?' When I was passing out flyers for the last walkout, I gave them to some guys that I don't even know and they were like, 'you really think people are going to listen to you?'"<sup>485</sup> One of the ways Karen (mentioned earlier) encouraged more young women's participation in meeting was to speak to them about overcoming their shyness, about getting more involved, and the importance of being heard. In addition, when organizing the walkouts, activists took time to talk with parent about their concerns and possible worries, some that concerned gender related matters since many protesters were young women;<sup>486</sup> and workshops were provided for parents that explained the aim of giving back to the community.<sup>487</sup>

Although the "50-50" rule provided the space for many young women to take leadership, to value and promoted it, the rule did not necessary address the issues of sexism as it often surfaced in organizing. Sometimes the issue was ignored, and other times organizers worked through them. As Gabriel Hernández explains:

The leadership of each of our committees is supposed to be 50-50 men and women. Well, some of the women felt that I was always calling on the men to run the committee meetings. And they called me on that. We have a big problem around how the young women are treated within their families. Many parents will let their sons go out to meetings, but never their daughters. And we've had to really confront parents about who their daughters are. "This is a leader. When you keep her home, you're not just hurting her, you're hurting 40 other people."<sup>488</sup>

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<sup>483</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos, (New York: Continuum, 1997 [1970]), 71.

<sup>484</sup> Espinoza, personal interview.

<sup>485</sup> Quoted in Roth and Johnston, "La Raza Youth Speak Out."

<sup>486</sup> Robin Templeton, "Lockdown Walkout," *The Nation*, (Nov. 16, 1998).

<sup>487</sup> Martínez, "Be Down With the Brown," 43.

<sup>488</sup> Quoted in Roth and Johnston, "La Raza Youth Speak Out."

Participant and organizer of the Chican@ walkouts and the Youth Movement, Nancy Hernández recalls that there was a tendency to allow males, particularly those who are loud, to dominate in activist spaces. Hernández states:

Even though I was in an organization that makes it part of their mission statement and everyday practice to challenge [sexism], it was a challenge to fight [it]. I do think there was a conscious challenge of this. Like, ok, if you are gonna have a guy MC you also have to have a girl MC. If you are going to give the mic to somebody, give it to her. If you are gonna give somebody press passes and it's their job to do the media, you have to have a 2 to 1 ratio of girls to guys cuz we have to balance out [how the media] is going to prioritize the speech of the young man over the young woman, then we gotta put 2 young women so we can get equal representation.<sup>489</sup>

Although sexism was difficult to challenge within the movement, as Hernández highlights, there were efforts and strategies that aimed at egalitarian gender representations.

In addition to sexism, homophobia and heterosexism also surfaced in the organizing spaces. Even though there were queer youth organizing in the community, sexuality, particular queer identity and politics, were often left out. Reflecting on workshops related to the "No on Prop 21" campaign, Kaira states, "I think that in the workshops that happened, sexuality could have been emphasized more. Cuz in the workshops they linked how class, gender, and all these things intersect, but I don't think they talked about sexuality as much."<sup>490</sup> Reflecting on both gender and sexuality dynamic in the movement, Harmony Goldberg states, "I don't think we talk about gender in our work, or work our issues of gender oppression. It's mostly, from what I see, young women of color working on issues of racial justice. In terms of sexuality, you have a lot of queer people who are in leadership in the movement who were kinda out, kinda not. You just didn't talk about sexuality at all. Probably most of the leadership of that stuff was queer."<sup>491</sup> Although far from perfect, having a "50/50" rule made gender consciousness a part of organizing that helped break from racial dynamics and gender and sexuality hierarchy conceptions that came about with colonization. However, as the youth activism of at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century reveals, decolonizing of Eurocentric conceptions of Man, with regards to age, gender, and sexuality dynamics, require a lot of work. Although there was a strong presence of youth, women, and some queers in leadership position, the social politics of their identities were not explicitly addressed in depth in the organizing.

## Conclusion

During the decade of the 1990s, youth of color were often portrayed in negative ways, including as being apathetic, apolitical, dangerous, or violent. Along with demanding an educational system and society that would value their talent, history, and humanity, the Chican@ walkouts and multi-ethnic "No on 21" Youth Movement served as a direct response to the nation's narrative that criminalized youth of color. Beyond this, however, these youth movements worked towards decolonizing the logic of imperialism that always already co-

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<sup>489</sup> Nancy Hernández, personal interview, (spring 2009, San Francisco, California).

<sup>490</sup> Espinoza, personal interview.

<sup>491</sup> Harmony Goldberg, personal interview, (summer 2004, Oakland, California).

constituted colonized youth in relation. In particular, these movements challenged the sub-ontological status of (the Euro-centric) Being that consists of and perpetuates the invisibility and dehumanization of colonized subjects. Moreover, the activism of youth of color in California of the 1990s sought to reconfigure the colonality of youth ontology. By disrupting the colonality of Being, youth activism created a space where marginalized members could intervene at the level of inter-subjective relations. This intervention included challenging stereotypes about youth, building community within and across youth communities, networking, participating in dialogue—despite colonizing hierarchies based on race, class, gender, and sexuality. These forms of affirming inter-subjective relations provided ways of decolonizing anti-youth narratives, conditions, and realities. In challenging the colonality of Being, the activism of young people of color demonstrated a paradigm shift in how we would understand their ontology: as one that is decolonizing, fearless, and powerful. As such, youth transformed previous social hierarchies based on age by revealing how anti-youth attitudes and the adult-centered logic of U.S. society are naturalized and taken for granted. Through activism, youth's collective empowerment trivialized adulthood and many adults figures, like parents, teachers, judges, and police, who never could imagine youth of color as fearless, powerful, politicized critical thinkers and leaders—in other words, as complex humans.

**Chapter five:**

**Youth Activism Decolonizing Knowledge**

## Introduction

On March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2000, the day after Proposition 21 had passed, over 300 people gathered at Powell and Market streets in downtown San Francisco as the evening set in a light drizzle. At the time, I was 22 and served as an interim director of a non-profit youth of color empowerment program that paid youth interns to work in public schools. On this same evening, minutes before the rally on Powell and Market streets, we had a weekly program meeting scheduled with the youth interns. When we began the meeting, several of the interns requested that I cancel it so that we could attend the protest instead. I was not sure what to do as I found myself in a difficult position. On the one hand, the program was not only aimed at empowering youth but was also grounded in Ethnic Studies perspectives and theories by which attending an activist demonstration would seem essential. On the other, I was responsible for their supervision and liabilities and attending rallies was not part of my job description. Since the program advocated youth empowerment and activism, not cancelling the meeting would have betrayed the relationship between theory and practice, as well as my own decolonizing values. Thus, I cancelled the meeting and we rushed to catch the "30 Stockton" bus towards the rally in downtown. Standing shoulder to shoulder, we held on firmly to the overhead rails as the bus slowly worked its way out of Chinatown en route for our destination.

Once there, amidst umbrellas and hoodies and beanies, hundreds of youth of color were already gathered. Some held banners while others expressed their disdain towards the passing of the proposition through a bullhorn. It was amazing to see youth of color—the ones that were stereotypically seen as violent, criminal, gangsters, pathological, apolitical and apathetic—exert a raw power that came from below, from within, and by being together. Some of the youth I worked with exhibited fearlessness as they spoke with wisdom and passion through a bullhorn that I had never seen in the context of work. I experienced a collective power that I had never felt before—a kind of power the program I worked for could never provide the youth...the kind that no Ethnic Studies course had ever provided me. In the whirlwind of chants, anger, and collectivity, I recollected my college education experience in a flash. I wondered why I had never experienced this type of power through my learning and why, despite the fact that I had taken several Ethnic Studies courses that provided me with significant racial theories, I never had any courses dedicated to activism—particularly the role of youth—not only in Ethnic Studies but at the university at large. Since the activism of youth had a significant impact in systematically challenging institutional and social racism during the 1960s, I also questioned why a course on the activism of youth of color had not been offered. Considering that young people of color played a major role in social change, why had my college courses—including fields that produce research about race, gender, class, and sexuality—and my education in general fail to make central the examination of age as a social construct particularly as it related to the oppression of youth? How would I think, feel, and see of myself if I had learned about the revolutionary youth earlier in my life? Immersed in the rally with these questions in mind, "suddenly I [felt] everything rushing to a center, a nucleus. All the lost pieces of myself [came] flying from the deserts and the mountains and the valleys [and the oceans], magnetized toward [the] center."<sup>492</sup> In between my thoughts and collective youth power, I felt an invisible lightning bolt run through my body, "my vigilance, my thousand sleepless serpent eyes blinking in the night, forever

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<sup>492</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2007 [1987]), 73.

open,"<sup>493</sup> making everything clear: epistemological oppression of young people of color was systemic and the activism of youth, among many things, was challenging this.

Through a combination of discourse analysis of participants, interviews, and reflection on participant observation, in this chapter I argue that youth's activism worked towards epistemological decolonization. In order to develop my argument, first, I examine the concept of coloniality as it relates to knowledge. In particular, I focus on the varied ways that scholarship on youth of color has contributed to the coloniality of knowledge. Second, I concentrate on the ways in which youth's activism worked towards decolonizing knowledge by focusing on youth's relationship to Ethnic Studies in the context of their activism. I continue by placing emphasis on the concrete ways in which young people of color worked towards decolonizing knowledge, which includes the praxis of youth's activism. Last but not least, I highlight how youth decolonized epistemic spaces by creating new types of knowledges.

### **Epistemic Colonization of Youth**

Ethnic Studies, particularly Mexican-American studies, is currently under attack in Arizona public high schools.<sup>494</sup> However, attacking curriculum that is seen as existing outside the parameters of the Western canon is not new. During the 1990s, "multiculturalism"—which included curriculum—was also under attack. For instance, in New Mexico two teachers were ordered to stop using Chicano-oriented materials in their classrooms.<sup>495</sup> Many see Ethnic Studies or multiculturalism as threatening or "divisive" to the traditional school curriculum. Instead of learning about marginalized or diverse histories, students are generally expected to know information that is considered "standard," like the number of wives that Henry VII had, that Shakespeare was a famous playwright, or that Augustus Caesar was the emperor of the Roman Empire. Yet, as school counselor Diana Martínez notes, "Many teachers who went through the system and received their credentials don't know [basic figures of Chicano History]."<sup>496</sup> Few, for example, examine or understand how Mexican culture has influenced the growth and expansion of California in general, how this is particularly important as the state's demographics continue to shift, or how Chicano studies is not only of interest to Chicanos wanting to become familiar with their own culture but can benefit other people and fields. As journalist Karen Grigsby Bates points out, "Dead white guys have their place in any serious curriculum, but their works should be complemented with other, equally important perspectives....If we fully integrate the study of the lives and work of racial and ethnic minorities and women into the daily curricula of American's universities, there would be less need for separate departments."<sup>497</sup> In other words, the need for diverse perspectives points to how standard curriculum is Eurocentric and hegemonic. Renato Rosaldo writes, "In the humanities, social sciences and legal studies,

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<sup>493</sup> Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 73.

<sup>494</sup> Nicole Santa Cruz, "Arizona bill targeting ethnic studies signed into law," *Los Angeles Times*, (May 12, 2010); also see *Precious Knowledge*, Dos Vatos Productions, (2011), film.

<sup>495</sup> Vaerie Santillanes, "Chicano Studies Out in Vaughn," *The Albuquerque Journal*, (Feb. 15, 1997).

<sup>496</sup> Quoted in Daniel Santillano, "Who was Cuauhtemoc...?" *The Prospector* [C.K. McClatchy High School newspaper], (Mar. 4, 1994), 11.

<sup>497</sup> Karen Grigsby Bates, "Chicano studies controversy replicates black studies issue," *The Oakland Tribune*, (Jun. 4, 1993).

canonical lists of classics pose problems not because of what they include (the books are good), but because of what they exclude (other good books)."<sup>498</sup>

The attacks on Ethnic Studies or multiculturalism are not only reflective of racism in the contemporary context but also of a colonizing epistemic strategy that came with European/Euro-American imperial domination and expansion. In the U.S. and elsewhere, people of European origin have long dominated scholarship and higher education. Subjects such as history, literature, art, and society "were formerly always 'white only' (and usually 'male only'), with other groups included only as problems, enemies, or outsiders."<sup>499</sup> A way to understand this dynamic is through the idea of coloniality of knowledge which describes Western's hegemonic intellectual practice of marginalizing other cultures and knowledges by rewriting them through the lens of imperialist rationality. By hiding the location of the subject of enunciation, colonization constructed a "hierarchy of superior and inferior knowledge and, thus, of superior and inferior people around the world."<sup>500</sup> With the expansion of Christianity into nation-states and their colonies, European civilization expanded on a global scale that included colonizing epistemological developments that placed them in a privileged center from which to achieve "truth" and "universality." Santiago Castro-Gomez calls the non-situated, universal, God-eyed view of knowledge attributed to the foundation of Man and Western Knowledge as "point-zero."<sup>501</sup> For Castro-Gomez, the god-eye view that hides its particular and local perspective under abstract universalism is central to Western knowledge.<sup>502</sup> This process describes the impact of colonization on diverse areas of knowledge production where—though discursive enactment of colonial understanding and relations—the "knowing" subject was one put in place by modern epistemology. As Sousa Santos argues, a massive epistemicide has been under way for the past five centuries that reflects modern Western abysmal thinking.<sup>503</sup>

By the Enlightenment, the European paradigm of knowledge—a product of a subject-object relation—was done through the concept of rationality. As a result, epistemological violence became part of colonial/imperial expansion strategies, and is evident in the current post-Kantian-Humboltian corporate model of the university. Lewis R. Gordon points out that the unification of knowledge was a function of various stages of imperial realignment where "those varieties of knowledge coalesced into knowledge of the center, and successive collapses of centers under the weight of other centers led, over time, to the global situation of *the center* and its concomitant organization of knowledges into knowledge."<sup>504</sup> A way to understand this in the current context is through the concept of the coloniality of knowledge which includes a racism

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<sup>498</sup> Renato Rosaldo, *Culture & Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989 [1993]), xviii.

<sup>499</sup> See Jack D. Forbes, "Ethnic or World Studies: A Historian's Path of Discovery," *Ethnic Studies Research: Approaches and Perspectives*, ed. by Timothy P. Fong, (New York: Altamira Press, 2008),

<sup>500</sup> Ramón Grosfoguel, "The Epistemic Decolonial Turn: Beyond Political-Economy Paradigms," *Cultural Studies*, vol. 21.2-3, (Mar./May 2007), 214.

<sup>501</sup> Santiago Castro-Gomez, "The Missing Chapter of Empire: Postmodern Reorganization of Coloniality and Post-Fordist Capitalism," *Cultural Studies*, vol. 21.2-3, (Mar./May 2007),

<sup>502</sup> See Walter D. Mignolo, "Globalization and the Geopolitics of Knowledge: the Role of the Humanities in the Corporate University," *Nepantla: Views from South*, 4.1, (2003), 97-119.

<sup>503</sup> Boaventura de Sousa Santos, "Beyond Abyssal Thinking: From Global Lines to Ecologies of Knowledges," *Review*, xxx.1, (2007), 37.

<sup>504</sup> Lewis R. Gordon, "Sifting the Geography of Reason in an Age of Disciplinary Decadence," *Transmodernity: A Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World*, vol.1.2, (2011), 95, (italics in original).

that is not biological, cultural, but epistemic, and is linked to the disregard of the epistemic capacity of certain groups of people.<sup>505</sup>

How does the coloniality of knowledge relate to youth? I will focus on three types of recent scholarly literature that, wittingly or unwittingly, contributes to the coloniality of knowledge of youth of color. The first type pertains to research that is usually sociologically driven and involves researching youth of color through problematic "at-risk" or urban conflict frameworks. I will provide three examples to highlight this. First is the scholarship of Howard Pinderhughes who examines the factors that produce ethnic and racial conflict and violence among youth in New York City. Pinderhughes argues that many youth grow up with "with hatred, distrust, and fear of people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds," and he seeks to understand "why there has been an increase in racial conflict among youth in the last ten years."<sup>506</sup> Although Pinderhughes provides many theoretical insights and advocates listening to young people, he concludes by advocating that "young people need to know that if they are convicted of serious violent bias crimes, they will do time. However, it is possible to get to many of these youths before their crimes reach a lethal or even dangerous level."<sup>507</sup> Another example is Mark S. Fleisher's paternalistic account in *Dead End Kids* where he attempts to humanize female gang members' and their struggles. The author writes: "Cara and her male and female companions are called kids. Had they attended school, they'd have walked through locker-room doors labeled 'boys' and 'girls.' Let's not lose sight of that as I take you into the dark world of a youth gang, where these kids are pursued, arrested, and labeled as gang members, juvenile delinquents, drug dealers, drug addicts, burglars, thieves, and, in some cases, killers. Indeed, these labels fit the Fremont Hustlers, but I'll show you that these kids are much more than those labels."<sup>508</sup> Finally, the work by Nanette J. Davis who premises her theoretical perspective on the familiar and problematic "risk model" which points to structural arrangements that ascribe negative "risk behaviors" to adolescence, such as being dangerous, a hazard, or in need of help. Davis argues that youth tribulations are constructed, and that their problems have their origin in social, political, legal, and economic institutions. Despite the fact that she recognizes the limits of a "risk analysis" and that her study could be "accused of perpetuating the youth problem," her argument depends on "rescuing" and "saving" the "at risk" youth from social catastrophe in order to "strengthen social institutions and rethink the American Dream if we are to develop creative solutions to the youth crisis."<sup>509</sup>

This type of scholarly work reflects the coloniality of knowledge by often victimizing or pathologizing youth of color and our understandings about them. By framing solutions that attempt to "save" them from failure implies that, if they are not saved, they are doomed to their hopeless realities. I do not dismiss that youth are involved in gangs, that there are ethnic and racial conflicts among youth, or that notions of "at risk" cannot be easily explained away and simply abandoned. However, these studies "base their arguments on the accumulation of negative statistics and indicator of 'risk behaviours' or social ills that in a paradoxical way serve

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<sup>505</sup> See Sarah Lucia Hoagland, *Giving Testimony and the Coloniality of Knowledge*, (2009), <http://www.cavehill.uwi.edu/fhe/histphil/philosophy/chips/2009/papers/hoagland2009.pdf>

<sup>506</sup> Howard Pinderhughes, *Race in the Hood Conflict & Violence Among Urban Youth*, (University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 6.

<sup>507</sup> *Ibid*, 160.

<sup>508</sup> Mark S. Fleisher, *Dead End Kids: Gang Girls and the Boys they Know*, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 4.

<sup>509</sup> Nanette J. Davis, *Youth Crisis: Growing Up in the High-Risk Society*, (Connecticut: Praeger Publishing, 1999), 16 and xiii.



to reinforce the alarmist stereotypes and moralistic judgments about the threat that young people pose to social stability."<sup>510</sup> As Peter Dwyer and Johanna Wyn argue, much of the "youth problem" results from "pre-set" and "adult-driven" agendas that are often used and reinforced by governments, policy-makers, community leaders, teachers, and academics:

[T]he insistence on positivistic methodology and a particular type of research instrument become ends in themselves, with the result that the subjects of the research actually become the objects of study. Young people are no longer active participants in the research but passive recipients of it. The complex realities of their lives fall into the background, and the dictates of text instruments become paramount.<sup>511</sup>

Thus, even though many research projects intend to underscore specific problems that affect youth (of color), these studies often begin with a problematic premise implicated in adult-centeredness.

The second type of literature that reflects the coloniality of knowledge of youth of color is the growing body of research that examines youth identity in relation to culture and globalization that, for lack of a better word, I will call "global youth research." Despite nuanced anthropological research that focuses on young people on a global scale and their relationships to globalizing processes of power,<sup>512</sup> global youth research is a recent trend that is often about highlighting young people in many places of the world with aims of "filling a void" by expanding representations.<sup>513</sup> One example is *Cool Places: Geographies of Youth Cultures* edited by Tracey Skelton and Gill Valentine which explores "the diversity in young people's lives in order to place youth on the geographical map and to demonstrate youth's relevance to a range of geographical debates."<sup>514</sup> Another is *Youth Futures: Comparative Research and Transformative Visions* of which the editors believe that "too little attention" is given to the "hopes, dreams, fears, and anticipations of young people," and later disclose that the book attempts to "demonstrate the plurality and diversity of voices of many youth from around the world, on their own terms."<sup>515</sup> It is clear that youth are "missing" from the larger field and that representation is important, especially when a significant amount of this literature explores and analyzes cultural formations of young people in different countries and contexts in the West.<sup>516</sup> As historian Paula S. Fass points out, "what is happening to children in other parts of the globe today is refracted through a Western lens."<sup>517</sup>

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<sup>510</sup> Peter Dwyer and Johanna Wyn, *Youth, Education and Risk*, (New York: Routledge Falmer, 2001), 150.

<sup>511</sup> Dwyer and Wyn, 148.

<sup>512</sup> Examples of this literature includes, Sharon Stephens, ed., *Children and the Politics of Culture* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995); Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Carolyn Sargent, eds., *Small Wars: The Culture Politics of Childhood* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Tobias Hecht, *At Home in the Street: Street Children of Northeast Brazil*, (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1998)

<sup>513</sup> Examples include Bradford B. Brown, Reed W. Larson, and T.S. Saraswathi, eds., *The World's Youth: Adolescence in Eight Regions of the Globe*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Frank Pajares and Tim Urdan, eds., *International Perspectives on Adolescence*, (Connecticut: Information Age Publishing, 2003).

<sup>514</sup> Tracey Skelton and Gil Valentine, *Cool Places: Geographies of Youth Cultures*, (New York: Routledge, 1998), 1.

<sup>515</sup> Jennifer Gidley and Sohail Inayatullah, eds. *Youth Futures: Comparative Research and Transformative Visions*, (Connecticut: Praeger, 2002), ix and 13.

<sup>516</sup> One examples is Göran Bolin and Johan Fornäs, *Youth Culture in Late Modernity*, (London: Sage Publications, 1995).

<sup>517</sup> Paula S. Fass, "Children in Global Migrations," *Journal of Social History*, 38.4, (summer 2005), 937.

However, taking for granted that the globe and modern age-based categories are tied to an imperial "global present," this literature misses contesting western hegemony of representations and knowledge production about youth. As Aníbal Quijano underscores, "globalization is the culmination of a process that began with the constitution of America and colonial/modern Eurocentered capitalism as a new global power."<sup>518</sup> In other words, global youth research places young people into the larger global discourse without analyzing the modern/colonial context that creates ideas of globality, why young people were ever "missing" from "global present" in the first place, or why these types of absences are naturalized. Relevant to my point, arguing that questions of location are most useful when they are utilized to deconstruct dominant hegemonic or hierarchical use of the term "gender," Karen Kaplan states: "Only when we utilize the notion of location to destabilize unexamined or stereotypical images that are vestiges of colonial discourse and other manifestations of modernity's structural inequalities can we recognize and work on the complex relationships among women in different parts of the world."<sup>519</sup> This critique applies to the research trend of "global youth visibility" that omits challenging the contextual power-structures of age and coloniality already in place. Thus, global youth research may lead one to assume that cultural visibility or global recognition, appreciation, or attention of certain young people alone will somehow improve power relations.

Finally, the third type of scholarship that contributes to the coloniality of knowledge of youth of color is the recent literature that treats age-based categories as natural, a problem that could also be found in the aforementioned examples. Although there are several examples of literature that fails to problematize age-based categories,<sup>520</sup> I focus on Deborah L. Tolman's *Dilemmas of Desire* which claims to examine the intersections of gender, sexuality, race and class through an ethnographic study of young women in public secondary schools. On the surface level, one could argue that Tolman works through these categories of difference in a way that is inclusive and transformative. Unfortunately, Tolman privileges gender by erasing other divisions, such as race and class, and omits taking into account the ways in which age is a social construct imbued with power. If she had denaturalized age, perhaps she would think twice about using the terms "young woman" and "girl" interchangeably, or consider implicating herself and adulthood in the study in a more critical way, rather than, focus on young women's sexuality by mapping it onto a specific ideal of adult women's sexuality. To prove this point, Tolman suggests that young women should emulate a model of sexuality most consistent with liberal feminism. She writes: "It is *our* job to make it possible for girls to gain such a [critical] perspective on their sexuality. We need to carve out safe places in which girls will be able to talk with each other and with adult women about their experiences with, and their questions, thoughts, fears . . . about their own sexuality. We need to take responsibility for joining girls in making their sexual revolution."<sup>521</sup> Said in another way, because adulthood is the natural reference point, Tolman positions the young women of her study as "requiring guidance and

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<sup>518</sup> Aníbal Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America," *Nepantla: Views from South*, vol. 1.3, (2000), 533.

<sup>519</sup> Caren Kaplan, *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998, [1996]), 187.

<sup>520</sup> Some examples include Maureen T. Hallinan and Ruy A. Teixeira, "Students' Interracial Friendships: Individual Characteristics, Structural Effects, and Racial Differences," *American Journal of Education*, 95.5 (1987); Kathleen W. Jones, *Taming the Troublesome Child, American Families, Child Guidance, and the Limits of Psychiatric Authority*, (Harvard University Press, 1999).

<sup>521</sup> Deborah L. Tolman, *Dilemmas of Desire: Teenage Girls Talk About Sexuality*, (Harvard University Press, 2002), 190 (my emphasis).

expert attention (from professionals) to ensure that the process of becoming [read: sexually] adult is conducted correctly."<sup>522</sup>

As Barrie Thorne observes, many scholars take the dynamics of age for granted.<sup>523</sup> While many might approach the study of young people by working at the intersections of multiple lines of difference, they may miss the unique, temporal ingredient that "age" brings to analysis, including biological growth and aging, and the continuing constitution and reconstitution of persons as they move through the life course. In addition, although many of the authors who study youth of color are genuinely concerned about the lives of young people, they often misleadingly reinforce negative perceptions to the racialized/gendered/sexualized bodies and strengthen the conundrum of victimized young people who are doomed by all powerful institutions. Arguing that this very concern gives rise to an "at risk paradox," Peter Dwyer and Johanna Wyn write: "The intention appears to be one of re-engagement of those categorised and targeted, but the tendency to identify the problems as youth problems...has the effect of further alienating and stigmatising them as outsiders. They become defined as a potential underclass, and are then treated as an underclass."<sup>524</sup> Instead of calling attention to wider, social dimensions, their types of arguments are reduced to a focus on the individual level of "bad" of color youth. In other words, rather than shedding light to young people, experiences that make up their culture, and social forces that oppress them, the at-risk perspective obscures this. Consequently, these examples of youth research rely on circular arguments that further aggravate the problem they try to resolve, paradoxically they reinforce the dominant ideologies and social structures that they claim to challenge. The coloniality of youth of color is evident in how adults serve as the "knowing" subjects with the God-eye view of knowledge that places youth outside the realm of epistemological capacity.

### **Decolonizing Knowledge with Youth Activism**

What is epistemological decolonization? For Marcos—a UC Berkeley Junior from Guatemala who participated in walkouts—it meant to "raise our consciousness of who we are. Dispel, get rid of those myths that we were given that we were just a bunch of savages before our Spanish side came over and civilized us. I think that fundamental change will lead us to rethink who we are, and once we rethink who we are and take pride in who we truly are, we can stand on firmer ground."<sup>525</sup> Dispelling colonizing myths is what Gloria Anzaldúa calls "la curación": the cure from the misinformation perpetuated on women or people of color. Anzaldúa explains this process:

[the cure] may consist of removing something (disindoctrination), of extracting the old dead metaphors. Or it may consist of adding what is lacking—restoring the balance and strengthening the physical, mental, and emotional states of the person. This 'cure' leads to a change in our belief system, en lo que creemos. No longer feeling ourselves 'sick,' we snap out of the paralyzing states of confusion, depression, anxiety, and powerlessness

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<sup>522</sup> Johanna Wyn and Rob White, *Rethinking Youth*, (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1997), 11.

<sup>523</sup> Barrie Thorne, "Editorial: Theorizing age and other differences," *Childhood: A Global Journal of Child Research*, 11.4, (2004).

<sup>524</sup> Dwyer and Wyn, 145.

<sup>525</sup> Quoted in Robert Roth and Annie Johnston, eds., "La Raza Youth Speak Out," *Breakthrough*, (summer 1995).

and we are catapulted into enabling states of confidence and inner strength."<sup>526</sup>

In other words, one of the ways to heal from colonial understandings is by changing the metaphors that dehumanize. One of ways these debilitating representations can be changed is through epistemic decolonization.

Offering three imperatives for epistemic decolonization, Ramón Grosfoguel discusses that, first, a broader canon of thought is required than solely knowledge from the West. Second, a decolonial perspective cannot be based on an abstract universal but would be the result of the critical dialogue between diverse critical epistemic/ethical/political projects. Finally, decolonizing knowledge requires that one take the epistemic perspective, cosmologies, and/or insights of marginalized thinkers that think from and with others that are marginalized or coming from marginalized spaces.<sup>527</sup> Said in another way, decolonizing knowledge signals an epistemic shift that challenges the universal pretension of an epistemology founded during the sixteenth century in Eurocentric thought and experience, in the practice of imperialism, and to the continuing implementation in the twenty-first century.<sup>528</sup> Example of decolonizing knowledge includes Black feminist literature. Barbara Smith explains that "The use of Black women's language and culture experience in books *by* Black women *about* Black women results in a miraculously rich coalescing of form and content and also takes their writing far beyond the confines of white/male literary structures."<sup>529</sup> Other examples are the people of color activist and art movements of the 1960s of which Black/Ethnic Studies, Women Studies, and Feminist Literary Movements came about and grew thereafter. As Barbara Christian points out, they "came *not* from the declarations of the New Western Philosophers but from these groups' reflections on their own lives."<sup>530</sup> Finally, another example of decolonizing knowledge is the growing scholarship that places Latino/as at the center of knowledge where White Europeans and US society can be studied and not the other way around.<sup>531</sup>

Another way to understand the decolonization of knowledge is that it is not about an inversion of previous forms of abuse of power, but a vision that seeks to transform the current conditions so that there are multiple conceptions of the world. This includes having new modes of studying and writing history that doesn't focus on the details as much as the whole vision, the new periodification, and the framing of themes not studied or discarded by traditional Eurocentric political philosophy and thought to serve as critical counter-story that contains many hypotheses.<sup>532</sup> In particular, Sylvia Wynter argues that decolonizing epistemology requires that new objects of knowledge go beyond the ontology of the figure of Man and the normalizing

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<sup>526</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa, *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, ed. by AnaLouise Keating, (London: Duke University Press, 2009), 122.

<sup>527</sup> Grosfoguel, 212.

<sup>528</sup> See Walter D. Mignolo, "Introduction: Coloniality of Power and De-colonial Thinking," *Cultural Studies*, Vol. 21, Nos. 2-3, (Mar./May 2007).

<sup>529</sup> Barbara Smith, "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism" in *All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, but Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies*, ed. by Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith, (New York: The Feminist Press, 1982), 164.

<sup>530</sup> Barbara Christian, "The Race for Theory," *The Black Feminist Reader*, Joy James and T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, eds., (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 14.

<sup>531</sup> One example is José D. Saldívar, "Unsettling Race, Coloniality, and Caste: Anzaldúa's Borderlands/La Frontera, Martinez's Parrot in the Oven, and Roy's The God of Small Things," *Cultural Studies*, vol. 21.2-3, (Mar./May 2007).

<sup>532</sup> Enrique Dussel, *Politics of Liberation: a Critical World History*, Thia Cooper trans., (London: SCM Press, 2011), 529.

discourse that the globally dominant Western-European bourgeoisie still constitutes. A way to do this, she suggests, is through a minority discourse whose project is to strategically and necessarily decenter the figure of Man and to bring closure to the present order of discourse.<sup>533</sup> Disenchanting the dominant discourse and desacrilizing "cultures" and their systems of rationality by setting up literary and cultural heritages and orders of discourse from below, rather than continuing to adapt to the generating premises and non-conscious systems of inference, Wynter suggests that a proposal for decolonization is one of creating/waking up(!) instead of adjusting or mimicking. This proposal is one that redefines the dynamics of desire by enchanting those in power into desiring the new mode of being, even at the cost of not affirming their own.<sup>534</sup> Additionally, Wynter proposes that a new epistemological order is needed where knowledge is rewritten in a way that goes beyond what is available now. She suggests for an epistemological revolution and epochal second emergence by which the "underdeveloped" will seek to complete the partial truth of the West's science by means of a third "true victory."<sup>535</sup>

How did youth's activism work towards decolonizing knowledge? Instead of—perhaps tired from—having adjusted or mimicked Man and its colonizing discourse for so long, youth of color decolonized knowledge through their activism by working to change their educational system to be one that valued diversity in language, culture, history, and curriculum by their terms and from below. With their activism and demands, youth worked towards decolonizing knowledge by calling attention to epistemological racism in schools and curriculum at the institutional level. For example, a delegation of seven students met with superintendent in San Francisco after the April 22, 1994 march and asked for Ethnic Studies on all campus, and end to police harassment, and to have classes no larger than 25 students.<sup>536</sup> At Alhambra high school in the city of Martinez, where anti-black racial slurs were increasing and several Latino students were told by white students and school staff not to speak Spanish during class breaks or in school offices, more than 20 students, majority Latino and African-American, met with the superintendent and principal to press for changes in the school. These included calling for more curriculum on the history of nonwhites and for separate cultural festivals for the major ethnic groups on campus, and for campus-wide workshops for staff and students on ethnic and cultural sensitivity.<sup>537</sup> Among the many changes they wanted to see in their education, students demanded to have Spanish speaking counselors at their school so their parents could have people to communicate with, teachers of varying ethnicities, history courses to teach more diverse cultures that went beyond Eurocentric perspectives, more books by Latino/a and black authors added to the school library, and valuing or implementing Ethnic Studies courses in high schools. Because contributions from people of color were (and still are) rarely valued in schools, students exhibited a hunger for history with curricula that embraced diversity and a sense of community. There seemed to be no place in history for Mexican/Latinos and their culture, and many Latino/a students were aware of this. For example, high school junior Joe García expressed at the Gilroy walkout on Mexican Independence day: "Everyone can celebrate Fourth of Jul. and everyone can

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<sup>533</sup> Sylvia Wynter, "On Disenchanting Discourse: 'Minority' Literary Criticism and Beyond," *Cultural Critique*, No. 7, The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse II, (Autumn, 1987), 208-209.

<sup>534</sup> Wynter, "On Disenchanting Discourse," 242-243.

<sup>535</sup> Sylvia Wynter, "Is 'Development' a Purely Empirical Concept or also Teleological?: A Perspective from 'We the Underdeveloped,'" *Prospects for Recovery and Sustainable Development in Africa*, ed. by Abuibou Y. Yansane, (London: Greenwood Press, 1996), 312.

<sup>536</sup> Catherine Bowman and Maitland Zane, "1,500 High School Students Protest," *The San Francisco Chronicle*, (Apr. 23, 1994).

<sup>537</sup> Jeanie R. Wakeland, "Martinez high school students halt walkout," *Contra Costa Times*, (May 5, 1994).

celebrate Martin Luther King's birthday—we should get to celebrate Mexican Independence Day."<sup>538</sup> Beyond celebration, this statement points to how having a formal recognition of the holiday decolonizes epistemology: for Xican@s also exist in time (history) and space (world).

Ethnic Studies was important for decolonizing knowledge as it represents the epistemic pluriversality that opens connections between different epistemes and histories. For example, Fabiola Gonzales voiced that, "In elementary school we were never taught to be proud of our heritage. My parents didn't speak English and it embarrassed me—I didn't know any better. All we saw was the way the dominant culture saw things. In high school I got more involved, learned about Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata. I still want to learn more, not just about Chicanos but about African Americans and Asian Americans too."<sup>539</sup> Rather than contributing to cultural awareness, standard education made Fabiola feel ashamed of her ethnic background. Moreover, it was through organizing where she learned about significant historical leaders of diverse backgrounds. Not only did organizing motivate Fabiola to learn more about her history, but also to transgress binary thinking and learn about other racialized groups. Beyond wanting to learn about one's own history, including that of other marginalized groups, others saw Ethnic Studies as a catalyst to the "common good."<sup>540</sup> For instance, Solaria Pérez, 16-year-old student body president of her high school, declared at a protest: "We demand more ethnic studies for la Raza, for African-America [sic] students, for Asians – for everybody!"<sup>541</sup> Also, believing that Ethnic Studies should be available to all students—including whites—Ollin members lobbied school boards, developed curriculums and established "Raza" studies in four San Francisco Bay Area high schools.<sup>542</sup> In other words, youth were not necessarily rejecting Western knowledge but constituted a reversal of and to epistemological colonization as they understood that Ethnic Studies—although it is conceived and grounded in the perspectives of marginalized people—is not for them only. This is what Walter D. Mignolo would call the epistemic potential of "border thinking" where, from the perspective of subaltern knowledges, all knowledge and understanding is possibly generative and sustainable.<sup>543</sup>

One reason why having Ethnic Studies in high schools was particularly important was because it reflected literary and cultural heritages and orders of discourse from below. For example, Ethnic Studies' origins are in the San Francisco Bay Area where majority students from African American, Chicano, Asian American, Native American backgrounds organized campus coalitions known as the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) in 1968-69.<sup>544</sup> Also, since the field emerged as an academic discipline during an intensified socio-political context that included urban violence, anti-Vietnam War protests, Civil Rights activism, and the radical black, brown, red, yellow, feminist, and gay power movements, it directly challenged the coloniality of

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<sup>538</sup> Quoted in Stacey Pederson, "Chicano students walk out in protest," *The Dispatch*, (Sep. 17, 1993).

<sup>539</sup> Quoted in Michelle García, "Latino Students Blow Out of Schools," *Third Force*, vol. 3.1, (Apr. 30, 1995), 17.

<sup>540</sup> See Johnella E. Butler's, "Ethnic Studies as a Matrix for the Humanities, the Social Sciences, and the Common Good," in *Color-Line to Borderlands: The Matrix of American Ethnic Studies*, ed. by same author, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001).

<sup>541</sup> Quoted in "Hispanic students rally in protest," *The Times: San Mateo's County's Daily Newspaper*, vol. 94.97, (Apr. 23-34, 1994).

<sup>542</sup> Robin Templeton, "Lockdown Walkout," *The Nation*, (November 16, 1998).

<sup>543</sup> For more on this see Walter D. Mignolo, "Globalization and the Geopolitics of Knowledge: The Role of the Humanities in the Corporate University," *Nepantla: Views from the South*, 4.1, (2003), 111-112.

<sup>544</sup> See Asian Community Center Archive Group, *Stand Up: An Archive Collection of the Bay Area Asian American Movement 1968-1974*, (Berkeley: East Wind Books, 2009), 43-45.

knowledge that many youth of color were facing in their schools and education.<sup>545</sup> As Ethnic Studies scholar Otis L. Scott points out, the "protest dynamic was the context and the catalyst for the formation of ethnic studies programs....These programs were carved out of the dreams and aspirations of countless activists influenced by the spirit of social change emanating from the people movements of the 1960s."<sup>546</sup> Finally, having Ethnic Studies in high schools was important as it is the field that places importance on identity, history, and culture through a marginalized perspective. Revealing this, José Luis Pavón at a rally in San Francisco declared that, "People don't have the pride to do better in school because we're only learning about other people—people in Europe. We should be learning about people here." Pavón continued, "Right now at Mission High they have ethnic studies classes before and after school and on Saturday. That's an insult to us, that we're not important enough to be a part of the curriculum."<sup>547</sup> Pavón's statement exposes the connection between ontological and epistemological oppression both for people like Pavón and the field of Ethnic Studies itself. By declaring unification with the subject of Ethnic Studies, Pavón reveals how the field's sub-epistemological treatment is connected to people of color's sub-ontological treatment too. As student Robin Gómez stated at a protest, "How can we learn about other people when we don't even know who we are?"<sup>548</sup>

Many activists in the youth organizing drew upon the Civil Rights and local activist history. Nancy Hernández explains:

I think people drew a lot [from] the strike at SF State for history. Definitely, I think people paid respect to Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, jr. You know, [respecting] direct action and civil disobedience that were taken back in that date. I think a little closer to home and to our time frame, people drew a lot [from] and still draw a lot [from] the 1968 TWLF strike because it was a movement for people of color as a collaborative community, not just for one ethnic group. [It was] a little different from the Chicano movement, a little different from the UFW strike, which was specifically about an issue like farm workers strike or segregation. [The TWLF Strike] was specifically about people of color gaining access to their own history and information within the college system. That's how SF state got the college of Ethnic Studies. I think a lot of people look at that as Bay Area movement history and the legacy we have to uphold.<sup>549</sup>

Nancy points out how pulling from the Civil Rights movement as well as from local history was significant for activists, particularly the TWLF movement and its influential role in creating Ethnic Studies. As Andreana Clay's research on youth activism in the San Francisco Bay Area underscores, youth integrate the history of social movement activism of the 1960s as a strategy to mobilize young people.<sup>550</sup>

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<sup>545</sup> For a detailed account of the separations of these movements, see Trinity A. Ordonez, *Coming Out Together: An Ethnohistory of the Asian and Pacific Islander Queer Women's and Transgendered People's Movement of San Francisco*, (PhD diss., University of California, Santa Cruz, 2000).

<sup>546</sup> Otis L. Scott, "Ethnic Studies: Preparing for the Future," in *Ethnic Studies Research: Approaches and Perspectives*, ed. by Timothy P. Fong, (New York: Altamira Press, 2008), 18 and 20.

<sup>547</sup> Quoted in "Hispanic students rally in protest."

<sup>548</sup> Quoted in Bowman and Zane, "1,500 High School Students Protest."

<sup>549</sup> Nancy Hernández, personal interview, (spring 2009, San Francisco, California).

<sup>550</sup> See Andreana Clay, *The Hip-Hop Generation Fights Back: Youth, Activism, and Post-Civil Rights Politics*, (New York: New York University Press, 2012).

Some high school youth knew about Ethnic Studies because they were part of radical youth organizations that were founded during the 1960s and/or included Ethnic Studies curriculum in their trainings. Kaira Espinoza explains how she became exposed to Ethnic Studies and the impact it had:

I started getting involved in different organizations like when I was 15, 16. REAL was really one of the first organizations that I was involved [with] on an organizing type of level, specifically around youth issues and education and stuff like that....It was really cool because we learned—part of the program—was learning about history. Not just history that they would teach you in school, but like Ethnic Studies history. Through [their] summer program we would learn about African American History, Latino History, Native American History, Asian History. I feel like that really kinda put like concrete stuff into things that I kinda knew through schools....I remember one thing that really, really stuck in my head that I learned was how usually they [re: standard education] teach you that Rosa Parks was tired and she just sat on the bus. But then when you learn the real story of how she was an organizer and it was planned, that that specific date, that specific time, that at some point they knew that they were organizing that they were not give up their seat....Learning those types of resistance histories really influenced the way I thought about stuff because you change your perspective from thinking like, 'Oh, things eventually change' to like, 'No, people actually organized for that change to happen, it didn't just happen spontaneously.' Because people finally understood that women should vote, or marriage across ethnicities is unfair, or whatever—it is because people organized around it.<sup>551</sup>

Kaira was exposed to Ethnic Studies through a youth organization that, among many things, provided her with the "underside" of activist history that impacted her perspective on social change.

Along with the youth movement having several of the influential young college adult organizers that were either majoring in Ethnic Studies, already had degrees in the field, or were very familiar with the discipline, another way youth were exposed to Ethnic Studies was because some schools already offered courses as an elective. Nancy Hernández explains how Ethnic Studies impacted her and the process of getting it implemented at Pittsburgh High:

I had been in juvenile hall. I had been into street gangs. I had been into a lot of beef as a middle schooler and beginning as a freshman. Students from UC Berkeley began to come to my high school and began workshops on Chicano history and Chicano movement. They started a class—we fought to get a class at our school. There was this whole organizing campaign to get this Ethnic Studies class provided at my high school. As the two years that it took to get that class went on, I became a pretty consistent part of that organization. Myself and one my best friends became the leads for our area for that organizations. We'd facilitate weekly meetings, do the outreach, we'd pull people from like three different cities to come to weekly meetings across the gang divide even though some of us were one side and others were another side. We got that class implemented in our high school. We also got a Chicano cinema class implemented in our high schools. Students from UC Berkeley through a program [called] *Chale* (Chicanos and Latinos for

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<sup>551</sup> Kaira Espinoza, personal interview, (summer 2004, San Francisco, California).



Empowerment), would come to our high school and teach that Raza studies class every day...I was really into the class.<sup>552</sup>

As Nancy demonstrates, Ethnic Studies impacted her in such a way that she organized—despite and across gang divisions—to have it implemented in school. Not only did Ethnic Studies decolonize knowledge by making education diverse but provided Nancy with an education that was relevant, that she was "really into." Last but not least, the example demonstrates the praxis and struggle that was central to the efforts of decolonizing knowledge.

### **Decolonizing Praxis**

Youth of color came together to demand an education system that was more relevant, reflective, and connected to their lives. However, the process of decolonizing knowledge for youth was one that would have to be likewise accomplished through decolonizing methods. That is, youth had to have a decolonizing praxis central to their activism. Explaining the importance of praxis, M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty claim that "Decolonization involves thinking oneself out of the spaces of domination, but always *within* the context of a collective or communal process...This thinking 'out of' colonization happens only through action and reflection, through praxis. After all, social transformation cannot remain at the level of ideas, it must engage practice."<sup>553</sup> In other words, decolonization primarily has a pedagogical dimension as an imperative to reflect, to understand, and to transform relations of dehumanization and objectification, as well as to pass this knowledge along to other generations. Both the centrality of transforming the self to re-envision society and the centrality of collective practice in transforming the self are necessary in decolonial praxis. How can we understand youth's activism as a decolonizing praxis? One way is to see youth's activism as reflective of what Walter D. Mignolo calls "epistemic disobedience" which signifies a de-linking from Western categories of thought, not in constant search for "newness," but as a movement towards a different place, to a different "beginning" in response to conquest and colonization, to spatial sites of struggle and building rather than to a new temporality within the same space.<sup>554</sup> By de-linking from several colonizing notions, youth worked towards a decolonial horizon that engaged in epistemological disobedience in multiple ways.

One of the ways that youth engaged in epistemological disobedience was by delinking from the traditional use of a classroom/school. Instead, the classroom/school was used in creative ways that helped youth with their activism. For example, the classroom provided the space for students who attended classes to gather and organize as it was relatively quick to mobilize everyone when a demonstration or action (like the walkouts) was planned. Although there was no single group that coordinated or organized the blowouts, youth also used existing organizing structures at various schools. In some schools the Chican@ student group MEChA or local Latino club played a significant role, while special events like "Raza Day" at UC Berkeley and UC Los Angeles (which is aimed at recruitment efforts) would expose them to organizing

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<sup>552</sup> Hernández, personal interview.

<sup>553</sup> M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, eds., "Introduction," *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, (Routledge: New York, 1997), xxviii.

<sup>554</sup> Walter. D. Mignolo, "Epistemic Disobedience and the Decolonial Option: A Manifesto," *Transmodernity: A Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World*, vol.1.2, (2011), 45.

potentials and cultural awareness.<sup>555</sup> María Guadalupe Ávila said she first got involved with activism when she was invited to attend a Raza Day event. Ávila states that during the event, people started "telling stories about our culture, things I never even knew. That's how I got interested, because there were so many things that they would explain to us that we never learned in school."<sup>556</sup> Also, many students were part of Student Empowerment Program (StEP) in their high schools.<sup>557</sup> This group brought together (outside) young, experienced organizers with (inside) student leaders to plan actions. StEP formed committees to deal with the logistical aspects of organizing an action. For instance, members of the program committee would set the agenda and schedule speakers, the legal committee would secure lawyers and makes sure to inform people of their rights in the event of arrests, and the sound committee would rent a sound system and possibly bring a portable generator in case the city turned the power off. After students gained experience working on two or three walkouts, they could begin to teach others.<sup>558</sup> In other words, young people used classrooms and schools in ways that served their purposes of activism.

Another way that youth engaged in epistemological disobedience was by challenging authority. Although many of the activist high school students were exposed to information, ideas, contacts, resources, tips on security, or had important help from college students and experienced organizers, the majority of the organizing was done by the youth themselves. As such, the walkouts challenged the hierarchical role between teacher and student that is generally based on a narrating subject (the teacher) that uninterruptedly teaches knowledge of and from the West to patient, listening objects (the students).<sup>559</sup> Additionally, the walkouts challenged the school's administration as it had economic consequences at the administrative level since public schools lost money for each unexcused absence per day. For instance, Heights Elementary School in Pittsburg, California lost \$17.20 for each unexcused absence on April 18 of 1994. When almost half of the 693 student population boycotted and picketed outside the school to protest the demotion of a Spanish-speaking principal, it meant that the school's loss would be up to \$5,543 if a legitimate excuse, not related to the protest, was not offered.<sup>560</sup> According to Jackie Arroyo—who was involved with organizing the 1998 walkout to Concord—the principal at her high school was very upset since it lost \$5,000 to \$6,000 the day of the action from student

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<sup>555</sup> Elizabeth Martínez, "Be Down With the Brown: Thousands of Raza Youth Blowout of School to Protest Racism," *Z Magazine* (November 1994), 42.

<sup>556</sup> Quoted in Roth and Johnston, "La Raza Youth Speak Out."

<sup>557</sup> I have a green colored page, with an image of part of the Aztec calendar in the front, that was folded into three served as flyer. The flyer gave a history of the recent protests and listed committees which included education, outreach, events/campaigns, policy, and barrio unity. It also included a disclaimer that said StEP follows a "50/50" rule to account for gender representation and respect. The flyer listed the different StEP meetings in the Bay Area and nearby, as well as contact information.

<sup>558</sup> García, 17.

<sup>559</sup> See Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos, (New York: Continuum, 1997 [1970]), chapter 2.

<sup>560</sup> M.E. Sprengelmeyer, "One-day boycott of Pittsburg school could cost district more than \$5,500," *Contra Costa Times*, (Apr. 20, 1994).

absences.<sup>561</sup> As expected, many schools officials found youth activism to be counterproductive, defiant, or even "stupid" since they generally saw it as conflicting with institutional interests.<sup>562</sup>

But how could youth not engage in epistemological disobedience when this is sometimes the only way that educational change can take place? For example, in 1974, after students boycotted Marina Elementary School in Pittsburg for the lack of a Latino principal in the district, the district later hired one. In the 1980s, after a one-day boycott was staged by students at Pittsburg High School in protest of alleged mistreatment of them, along with affirmative action issues, some of the problems were later addressed as a result.<sup>563</sup> Whether it is through walkouts, boycotts, or other forms of protest, engaging in epistemic disobedience is often necessary as it is a means to bring attention to pressing issues, to make necessary changes, and to demonstrate a collective struggle. As Gabriel Hernández explains, "The marches put people pushing behind what often gets reduced to paper pushing in these local struggles....More importantly, they give youth reference. They demonstrate to youth they're not the only Chicanos in the world experiencing discrimination."<sup>564</sup> Beyond the financial loss and use of walkouts to call attention to youth issues, the epistemic disobedience by Chicano youth highlighted how the educational Western global design of education is a failed one—and one of decadence.<sup>565</sup>

Epistemic disobedience required that youth in their activism engage in a "suspension of method." By bringing into light the problem of assessing methodology in the context of a colonized framework, Lewis R. Gordon argues that the suspension of method is the best 'method' to evaluate method itself.<sup>566</sup> In other words, suspending traditional methods is an essential move away from (as well as highlighting) that which is colonizing. For youth, suspending method meant moving away from the long-established customs found in schools, including the idea that knowledge is imposed from above and outside, that students are expected to obediently and in a docile manner receive facts, standards, and skills deemed appropriate by society, and that teachers are the ways in which knowledge is communicated and behaviors are enforced.<sup>567</sup> Instead, epistemic disobedience required a different method for youth: one that could help their empowerment. For example, because walkouts had to be carefully planned and coordinated, youth partook in many preparatory meetings that mostly concerned logistical matters. At weekly meetings, students would convene to train and educate on another, discuss aspects of their work, meet with activists from other movements, and develop long-range strategies and plans.<sup>568</sup> In planning the walkouts, usually a senior student would conduct a presentation on topics that included who would do security, who could have the appropriate technology (cell-phones and beepers at the time), what do if people were arrested, and how to call in updates. Since gang members were typically the ones doing security, this raised many concerns as possible rivalry problems could arise between them, but most of the logistics were under control the day of

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<sup>561</sup> Elizabeth Martínez, "High School Students in the Lead: Massive walkouts in California have important lessons for all organizers," *Z Magazine*, (March 1998).

<sup>562</sup> Elizabeth Martínez, "Be Down With the Brown: Thousands of Raza Youth Blowout of School to Protest Racism," *Z Magazine* (November 1994), 43; Donna Hemmila, "Martínez students punished for class walkout," *Contra Costa Times*, (May 19, 1994); Mike De Give, "Activist take over meeting," *The Dispatch*, n.d.

<sup>563</sup> Sprengelmeyer, "One-day boycott of Pittsburg school could cost district more than \$5,500."

<sup>564</sup> Quoted in Verónica Sánchez and Robin Templeton, "Fund Our Youth!," *Crossroads*, (May 1994), 24.

<sup>565</sup> Critiquing epistemology, Lewis R. Gordon argues for teleological suspension of disciplinarity. See Lewis R. Gordon, *Disciplinary Decadence: Living Through Trying Times*, (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2006).

<sup>566</sup> Lewis R. Gordon, "Sifting the Geography of Reason in an Age of Disciplinary Decadence," *Transmodernity* (Fall 2011), 97.

<sup>567</sup> See John Dewey, *Experience and Education*, (New York: Collier Books, 1963).

<sup>568</sup> Roth and Johnston, "La Raza Youth Speak Out."

action, with minor exceptions that included not having enough water for the march on a day that turned out to be very hot.<sup>569</sup> As longtime activist Grace Lee Boggs points out, "This kind of organizing takes a lot of patience because changing people and people changing themselves requires time. Because it usually involves only small groups of people, it lacks the drama and visibility of angry masses making demands on the power structure. So it doesn't seem practical to those who think of change only in terms of quick fixes, huge masses, and charismatic leaders."<sup>570</sup> In suspending method, youth of color engaged in epistemic disobedience where youth could organize, learn, think, and act in ways that could make significant changes to their lives and education. Moreover, not only did suspending method challenge the ideas the young people are passive objects that should obey educational authority and procedures but that oppressive conditions required more than the "master's tools."<sup>571</sup>

Suspending method allowed youth to utilize savvy tactics as they worked towards decolonizing knowledge. One of these savvy tactics included not announcing the actual dates of the walkouts until the last minute, like at the Apr. 1998 walkout to Concord, where the exact date was kept secret until the day before.<sup>572</sup> This surprised many school officials, and the reason for this tactic was that it minimized the possibility of anyone sabotaging efforts, co-opting moves, and of possible subversions or other threats. Another savvy tactic included using the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) metro system as part of their unifying strategy for the 1998 walkouts. The idea was a complex plan that included coordinating several schools to jump onto BART subway without paying before entering and exiting the station. The idea to use the subway as a way to bring people together in a common cause had circulated since 1992. Although many thought it couldn't be done, it happened in the 1998 walkout after three months of preparation. The plan for the demonstration was that students from each school participating in the walkout would go to the nearest BART station to connect with the youth from other schools from the area. After, they would jump onto the BART toward Concord without paying. Once at the arrival destination, youth would wait for the other schools to get there then, at 10:00am, march to the Concord police station for a rally.<sup>573</sup> Finally, another example of suspension of method included keeping the leadership strategically ambiguous, similar to previous social movements of the 1960s.<sup>574</sup> Having ambiguous leadership was helpful when students were threatened by school authorities, such as at one school, where an attempt by administrators to single out the organizers of an upcoming walkout they heard about failed when about 200 students showed up saying, "here are some of the organizers. There's more, but not everybody could come."<sup>575</sup> Keeping leadership ambiguous, thus, was done because it was harder to track down the "source" of the "disruption" (by the media or authorities), and so the focus would not be one person

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<sup>569</sup> Martínez, "High School Students in the Lead."

<sup>570</sup> Grace Lee Boggs, *The Next American Revolution: Sustainable Activism for the Twenty-First Century*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 49.

<sup>571</sup> See Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 2007); Lewis R. Gordon and Jane Anna Gordon, *Not Only the Master's Tools: African-American Studies in Theory and Practice*, (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2006).

<sup>572</sup> Martínez, "High School Students in the Lead."

<sup>573</sup> Elizabeth Martínez, "High School Students in the Lead." BART—although they were informed of student plans to board the train without paying—did not try and stop or arrest the students jumping the turnstiles.

<sup>574</sup> Todd Gitlin discusses how attention from the press helped undermine youth activism. See Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), chapter 5.

<sup>575</sup> Quoted in "San Francisco Bay Area: High School Students Strike for Chicano Studies," *Revolutionary Worker*, no. 756, (May 15, 1994).

leading but on the idea of planting seeds.<sup>576</sup> Connected to this, the name of the primary organizing group changed over time. Along with reflecting new energy and deflecting possible government infiltration, Fund Our Youth Project (FOYP) changed to the Student Empowerment Program (StEP) to Voices of Struggle (VOS) to Ollin.<sup>577</sup>

Youth's epistemic disobedience came with challenges. One included the architecture of the schools as some were fenced in with only a few entrance/exit doors. Although youth could still walkout from such schools, others like Berkeley High were entirely fenced in which meant that those who wanted to participate in a walkout and attend a protest would have to be absent since it would be too difficult to get out.<sup>578</sup> When the architecture in and of itself did not present a problem for youth to walkout, several schools, like Mission High in San Francisco, were locked down or chained to prevent students from leaving.<sup>579</sup> Another challenge that made it difficult for youth to participate in walkouts involved school administration or other institutional authorities—of which the responses to the activism varied. Some school officials were sympathetic,<sup>580</sup> at times even proud,<sup>581</sup> while at some schools youth were deliberately discouraged from organizing and participating in actions. For example, during the April 1994 walkout in San Francisco, authorities said the walkouts were illegal acts and singled out organizers.<sup>582</sup> At a different protest, at one school, the principal physically stopped a student from walking out by grabbing her, 2-3 students were suspended, and two were detained but not arrested.<sup>583</sup> At the walkout to Concord in 1998, 15 year old Jackie Arroyo, who wore a green shirt with a button that said "PRESS," was threatened (along with others) when walking out. She stated that the principal told her she would get in trouble and called her mom to ask if she knew of Jackie's involvement with the walkout.<sup>584</sup> Finally, the inexperience of the majority of the youth organizing was also a challenge to their epistemic disobedience since, for many, it was the first time they had participated in a demonstration of the type. As a result, sometimes the lack of experience and training in organizing trivialized the sustainability of activist efforts, like at a walkout where one student complained: "once the students left the building, there was no plan. Everybody was just standing there."<sup>585</sup> Connected to lack of experience, the turnover of student organizing and participation was a challenge too, as some who had been involved in the initial walkouts sometimes would drop out.

## Youth Schooling Youth Schooling Youth

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<sup>576</sup> Sánchez and Templeton, 25.

<sup>577</sup> Laurie Olsen, Jhumpa Bhattacharya, Mamie Chow, Ann Jaramillo, Dora Pulido Tobiassen, and Jesus Solorio, *And Still We Speak...Stories of Communities Sustaining and Reclaiming Language and Culture*, ed. by Carol Dowell, (Oakland, CA: California Tomorrow, 2001), 197.

<sup>578</sup> Martínez, "High School Students in the Lead."

<sup>579</sup> "San Francisco Bay Area: High School Students Strike for Chicano Studies," *Revolutionary Worker*, no. 756, (May 15, 1994).

<sup>580</sup> "Hispanic students rally in protest."

<sup>581</sup> Tanya Schevitz, "Students Hold March in Concord/Protesters target lack of educational access,"

*SFGate*,

(Apr. 23, 1998).

<sup>582</sup> "San Francisco Bay Area: High School Students Strike for Chicano Studies."

<sup>583</sup> Martínez, "High School Students in the Lead."

<sup>584</sup> Martínez, "High School Students in the Lead."

<sup>585</sup> Quoted in Marta Sánchez, "Latino Students Walk Out," *Third Force*, vol. 2.1, (Apr. 30 1994), 6.

With decolonizing praxis central to their activism, youth challenged the colonality of knowledge by "thinking themselves out of colonization" as they came together to re-envision society. Decolonizing epistemology required that youth create new ways of knowledge that went beyond traditional figure of Man and its normalizing Western-European knowledge. One way that youth did this was by creating new spaces and ways of learning that came from below, where youth of color ontologies, epistemologies, and practices were central. Rather than replicating top down approaches—familiar in traditional school setting, reflective of society's colonizing vertical/hierarchical relations of being—youth created spaces of decolonizing knowledge where youth could teach youth that could thereby teach other youth. The idea of "each one, teach one" in the movement made it so that people could connect and generatively share knowledge.

The decolonizing praxis that was used in the activism included several youth and organizations conducting workshops on critical topics; this was a way that youth created and transmitted new knowledges. For example, Pecolia Manigo, who was 17 and lived in the Tenderloin area of San Francisco, presented various workshops to students throughout the San Francisco Bay Area, including Potrero Hill Middle School where she spoke about facts and figures on the prison population and the proposition.<sup>586</sup> Tyger Walsh recalls:

I really remember there being hella workshops, all these events. Folks were having all these different workshops of histories of resistance in like third world countries, or like histories of resistance in this country. And just helping connect people back to their own ancestry of resistance—and that's fucking powerful, it's like knowing where you come from, and knowing in your own ancestry, that there's folks fighting back for like decades and centuries and using that power to help youth fight."<sup>587</sup>

I remember attending a workshop on the Prison Industrial Complex conducted by members from the youth organization School Of Unity and Liberation in Oakland that had a significant impact on me. The workshop was conducted by someone that I could relate to, the information was delivered in a way that engaged me, and it was presented in a summarized, bullet-point manner that made it easy for me to understand the complexity of the topic. I was inspired to see how the teaching was not top-down but had youth engaging in critical conversations. Through the sharing, I felt connected and inspired by knowledge producing the effect of like, "you feel this? I feel it too." To this day I can remember main points of the workshop, such as: that public schools were being less funded while prisons were not, how the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the constitution allows slavery to be legal in prisons, how corporations were using prison labor, how laws like Proposition 21 made it easier to imprison youth of color.

Workshops inspired people like Jesse Osorio in high school to get involved with activism. Recollecting how he got involved with organizing, Jesse states:

The first person that I sat down and had a cool conversation was with Jasmine from the Third Eye Movement. She came into our school and did a workshop, not on Prop. 21 but more on police brutality. Given that I had seen a lot of police brutality in my neighborhood with friends and family who had been abused by police, it was something that I was able to connect with...she shared a story [of how] she was with someone who

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<sup>586</sup> Venise Wagner, "Teens Mobilize to Fight Youth Crime Initiative," *SFGate* (Feb. 16, 2000).

<sup>587</sup> Tyger Walsh, personal interview, (summer 2004, Oakland, California).

got shot out there by Stonestown [Mall]. It brought it together when I actually had someone else I could connect with and understand talk about dealing with issues of police brutality. Getting educated on that started getting the ball going.<sup>588</sup>

Through dialogue, personalized education, and Jasmine's experience Jesse was able to connect and begin the process of activism—what Paulo Freire would call "becoming conscious."<sup>589</sup> Furthermore, in addition to motivating Jesse to get involved with activism, workshops also provided practical skills. Jesse recalls taking Saturday media workshops:

There was a space for adults and youth to connect and share those things that youth were able to tap into. Where else you learn free media training classes at 15 and 16 with some nonprofit organizations that want to help out with the [No on] Prop 21 campaign and youth empowerment? They want to give kids these skills cuz obviously we were on the forefront and we are on the spotlight of this huge campaign. So why not give young people these skills that they are looking for to really get their voice out? There was a lot of youth empowerment with a lot of organizations and individuals that were teaching youth how to use all these tools that would help them fight with their cause: education, networking, how to do media, and security tactics, how to outreach and phone banking, all that stuff you probably you don't really learn in school.<sup>590</sup>

Jesse, like many other young people involved in the youth movement, received skills that were relevant, practical, and connected to organizing outside of formal school settings.

Along with workshops, another way that youth created and participated in spaces that worked towards decolonizing knowledge included retreats that Ollin called "advances." Preferring the term "advances" over "retreats" (the former stresses forward movement while the latter connotes taking a type of withdrawal), Ollin took about 50 young people primarily from the San Francisco Bay Area twice a year usually to regional Native American reservations. There, Latino/a youth would be introduced to aspects of their indigenous roots, which included participating in spiritual activities like sweats and sunrise ceremonies, and would receive cultural teachings from elders of various tribes. Youth could connect to the land and have political history, cultural knowledge, and language from a decolonial perspective. As Nancy Hernández explains, Ollin "emphasizes that as Latino/Chicano/Raza/Indigenous youth we have been colonized twice. We were first colonized by Spain and then by the United States. It is important for youth to acknowledge this and to claim the oppressor's language, in this case English and Spanish, and make it their own."<sup>591</sup> Along with using Spanish, English and Spanglish, Ollin also introduce the Nahuatl language that was spoken in central Mexico before Spanish conquest.

Attending or organizing conferences were other ways that youth created or participated in spaces that worked towards decolonizing knowledge. Along with providing many workshops in concentrated form, conferences allowed youth to network and build relationship. One example was the conference "Critical Resistance: Beyond the Prison Industrial Complex," a national conference and strategy session at UC Berkeley that took place on Sep. 24-27, 1998. Over 3,500 prisoners, scholars, activists, policymakers, advocates, cultural workers, and

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<sup>588</sup> Jesse Osorio, personal interview, (spring 2007, San Francisco, California).

<sup>589</sup> Paulo Freire uses the word "conscientização." See Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

<sup>590</sup> Osorio, personal interview.

<sup>591</sup> Quoted in Laurie Olsen, et. al, 201.

community members came together to address the growing global prison industrial complex.<sup>592</sup> At this conference, Ollin joined 100 other youth from across the country and called for a national walkout to "end mental and physical lockdown."<sup>593</sup> Other local youth of color activist groups, like Standing Together to Organize a Revolutionary Movement also attended, where they met people from groups like Student Liberation Action Movement in New York City and others from Boston and Chicago.<sup>594</sup> From this conference, Critical Tasks Youth Force coalition, which had a major role in the "No on 21" youth movement, was born. Another conference included a statewide effort by youth organizations like Youth Organizing Communities, Ollin, and the New Raza Left in Los Angeles that took place at Cal Poly Pomona on Jan. 29, 2000. Over 500 people—primarily high school and college-aged youth—attended; this conference was an effort to train activists in outreach, media, web-page design, and other skills. It was here where they agreed to finish the anti-Prop 21 campaign with two weeks of statewide actions called "Weeks of Rage," culminating before the election.<sup>595</sup>

The Weeks of Rage consisted of simultaneous and back-to-back non-violent protest actions that were planned to take place in late Feb., leading up to the vote on March 7<sup>th</sup>. The plan was that an organizing area would shut down schools and march toward a strategic area, and that an organizing area would coordinate and develop youth organizing committees for the blowouts (and organizational follow up to the actions) that included education, barrio unity, outreach/propaganda, policy/media, and events/campaign. The education committee would target areas for curriculum, update group with information, review/present materials, educate/teach core group, and develop workshops and training. The outreach committee would keep in contact with other areas, be responsible for flyering, mailings, phone banking, conducting presentations, meeting with other organizations, developing contacts in schools, outreaching to parents and making home visits. The barrio unity committee would focus on security for actions, negotiating during actions, gang involvement/outreach, develop truces, and defend and document police and "migra" attacks and abuses. The policy/media committee was responsible for media contacts, press releases, meeting with politicians, negotiating demands, media trainings, and pressuring school boards. Finally, the events/campaigns committee was responsible for fundraising. The youth organizing committees were to also plan on developing follow-up plans that included, pressuring school boards, negotiating demands with politicians, conducting press conferences, organizing door to door campaigns, hosting community forums and meetings, and creating parent committees and organizational support.

The walkout structure was comprised of five areas. The first was "legal" and it included: trained legal observers, lawyers, community members, organizations, know your rights and legal contact flyers, and legal training. The second was "logistics" and it included the march route, rally program (of which speakers would be 50/50 male/female representation), signs/noisemakers/banners, message of assembly, flyers of demands as to why youth were walking out, sounds system, and permits for march and rally. Next on the structure was the area of "security" which involved: security training, security for the march (for every 100 people there would be 10 security), making sure security would also be 50/50, having t-shirts and armbands

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<sup>592</sup> Angela Davis was one of the scholars involved with the conference. See Avery F. Gordon, "Globalism and the Prison Industrial Complex: an Interview with Angela Davis," *Race & Class*, 1999 (40): 145.

<sup>593</sup> Templeton, "Lockdown Walkout."

<sup>594</sup> Standing Together to Organize a Revolutionary Movement (STORM), "Reclaiming Revolution," (spring 2004), 25.

<sup>595</sup> Elizabeth Martínez, "The New Youth Movement in California," *Z Magazine*, (May 2000).



that marked the security team, negotiating with police, teams with team leader and runner, to lead march and control crowd, someone to deal with problems before they escalate, to have youth deal with youth. School coordination was fourth on the agenda. This area included teams of high school and college students and community members with legal observers at each school site, making sure every school site knew guidelines of the march, knew student rights, and the role of marchers, security, and press committee, getting flyers of demands and rights to students, documenting school response to walkouts (such as lockdowns, school police, student harassment, administration threats, etc).<sup>596</sup>

The first week began on Monday, Feb. 21, 2000. To set it off, over 40 Adults/Elders—which included long-time Chicana activist Elizabeth Martinez—had been arrested earlier in the day for having blocked various entrances to the Oakland Police Administration Building.<sup>597</sup> On this day, down the street in Oakland's center plaza, the hip-hop event "It's Not a Battle, It's a War," organized by the Third Eye Movement motivated over 1,000 youth, who then marched over and blocked the street at the City Jail, demanding to have the arrested adults released.<sup>598</sup> Some were released within the hour, while others stayed overnight.<sup>599</sup> The actions continued throughout the week in places like Los Angeles, San Diego, Eureka, Santa Cruz, and Stockton. Walkouts took place all over the state and protesters often marched through downtowns and/or rallied in front of places like the Hilton Hotel, PG&E, City Hall, county jail, or at schools. In order to remember imprisoned youth and those that may be imprisoned by the passing of the proposition, candlelight vigils took place this day at city halls in over 12 cities. There were also plans of having other actions including showing movies, videos, exhibits, and having prescient walks.<sup>600</sup>

An action that was particularly significant with regards to decolonizing knowledge took place on Friday, Feb. 25, 2000. In San Francisco, youth activist and supporters met at Dolores Park in the Mission district. There, with bullhorns and microphones, young people of color—including Nancy Hernández—spoke about the effects of Proposition 21. Others performed or engaged with spoken word and speeches. Along with protesting the proposition, the news that Amadou Diallo's New York police killers had been acquitted also fueled activists to march to the rundown continuation school (Phoenix High) located by 16<sup>th</sup> and Mission streets.<sup>601</sup> They took over the school yard overnight, transforming the portable classrooms into a "Freedom School" that included decorating it with colorful art, banners, and signs whereby the buildings were named for historical revolutionaries.<sup>602</sup> Hundreds gathered in the school courtyard for celebrations that carried through the night.<sup>603</sup> There was political education and cultural performances, and students attended workshops on topics such as the juvenile justice system,

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<sup>596</sup> Copy of "week of rage" planning sheet with author.

<sup>597</sup> Timur Hammond, Ari Rosmarin, and Rachel Rosmarin, "Special Report... Week of Rage: Samo students Protest Prop 21," *The SAMOHI*, vol. XC.9, (Mar. 24, 2000).

<sup>598</sup> Martínez, "The New Youth Movement in California"; The Ella Baker Center, "Birth of a Movement," *Ella's Voice: Newsletter of the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights*, (1999-2000).

<sup>599</sup> Hammond, et. al, "Special Report... Week of Rage."

<sup>600</sup> Martínez, "The New Youth Movement in California."

<sup>601</sup> "Youth vs. Prop 21," <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dadsaBzOjYE>, (accessed Feb. 7, 2012).

<sup>602</sup> In a black and white picture from Jesse Osorio's personal archive, there appears two male youth of color climbed on top of the school's entrance fence (that appears to be at least 10 feet tall), tying a large, handmade banner with graffiti-style words that reads "No Prop 21" on the right side and "Freedom School" on the left. Below the banner, there is an open gate where dozens of youth of color appear to be entering, exiting, standing, speaking, and smiling.

<sup>603</sup> Martínez, "The New Youth Movement in California."

mural painting, and ethnic studies.<sup>604</sup> As María Cordero—one of the organizers of the Third Eye Movement—explained about the "liberation school," "We were saying 'we want a real education, and this is what it looks like.'"<sup>605</sup>

Taking over the school courtyard of a rundown school and transforming it to meet the needs of youth highlighted how schools/education could be a place where youth could thrive and not feel oppressed. Kaira Espinoza participated in the action that seized the school. She recalls her experience:

We took [the school] over and we basically created—we decorated banners, we had workshops, had ethnic studies workshops, had spoken word, had art. And, so, it was kinda symbolic of 'this is what youth want'—we want something that is interactive, that's multicultural, that has art—this is what our ideal school is like. We are interested in school, not just your [re: adult/colonizing] type of school, you know, you have to ask youth what we like, and this is what we would want. And I think that was hella powerful. And we were there all night, all kinds of young people like came in and out throughout the night and went to the workshops and stayed throughout the performances and stuff. It was hella tight, you know, it was really cool that we were able to set up—transform—and we called it the freedom school. Yeah, and it was hella cool.<sup>606</sup>

Jinee Kim also recalls the night: "we had performances and then we had different workshops all set out. People slept over, people were bringing us food, like we had an overabundance of food all night, music, and all that stuff."<sup>607</sup> The establishing of freedom school was a symbolic act of decolonization that transformed a school to be a more welcoming space for youth of color. Moving away from Western norms of education, a decolonized school included a combination of workshops, performances, art, discussions, and conviviality.<sup>608</sup>

Particularly significant during the Week of Rage was the action on March 7<sup>th</sup>—election day—where about 1,500 students from Los Angeles schools marched to the Sherriff Station as they blocked major streets.<sup>609</sup> This walkout included students from the eastside high schools Roosevelt, Garfield, Lincoln, and Wilson, and two nearby schools: Shurr and Montebello High. Students from these schools marched from their respective schools and met at Belvedere Park, marched around East Los Angeles, and ended with a rally in front of sheriff station there. Youth collectively chanted "schools not jails, schools not jails," or "no on 21, no on 21," holding large banners that also stated "no on 21" in large, colorful block letters. At the rally, in addition to having Aztec dancers and impassioned speeches, youth from different schools gathered and talked about their conditions at school and about the proposition. For example, one young woman of color stated:

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<sup>604</sup> The Ella Baker Center, "Birth of a Movement."

<sup>605</sup> Quoted in Colin Turner, "Upset the Setup: The Fight Continues," *City on a Hill Press at UC Santa Cruz*, vol. 34.27, (May 11, 2000).

<sup>606</sup> Espinoza, personal interview.

<sup>607</sup> Jinee Kim, personal interview, (summer 2004, San Francisco, California).

<sup>608</sup> For decolonial critiques of western education, see *Decolonizing the University: Fulfilling the Dream of the Third World College*, Mattie Harper (producer) and John Hamilton (video camera and post-production), (2010), <http://vimeo.com/15729523>, (accessed Mar. 21, 2012), video; Claude Alvares also provides a decolonial critique of western education. See <http://vimeo.com/42357962>, (accessed Jun. 6, 2012).

<sup>609</sup> Martínez, "The New Youth Movement in California."

I go to Roosevelt and I see it's better than some other schools I've seen. But it's true that it's too many students for a classroom for a class of 20 and we're 50. I have a class where kids have to be sitting on desks. I mean, what is that, you know? If they have money to spend on prisons can't they fix the schools? My school is full of asbestos. It has cracks on the walls. Some wall was falling cuz it was raining. I mean, what is that? You know? See, how can they blame youth for it has become if the system forced us to become this way. The system has made us do this. The system made us go right here and protest. The system made us who we are right now. And they punish us for who they created. I don't think that's fair.<sup>610</sup>

Conversations such as this one demonstrate how youth were not only thinking critically about themselves, conditions, and society, but how activism had a decolonizing pedagogical dimension where reflecting, understanding, and, ultimately challenging relations of dehumanization and objectification, and passing this knowledge along to other generations was central. Moreover, actions like this challenged the idea that knowledge takes place in the classroom. In fact, because theorizing from below was taking place outside the classroom, one could argue that it was in the streets and in public that critical knowledge was taking place—that is, actions such as this one decolonized the idea that knowledge should be confined in a building but should be accessible to people and coming from those that are marginalized.

### **Decolonizing Grassroots Campaign**

Women and queers of color contributed to decolonial thought by pioneering methods that include, along with scholarship, poetry, prose, political analysis, fiction, storytelling, autobiography, and other forms of creative writing, often examining one's own life.<sup>611</sup> Rejecting the criticism that disclosing the personal reinforces the feminizing of dominant intellectual standards that turns it into something substandard, Laura E. Pérez argues that "Women of color's autobiographical writing and locating of self within scholarly texts has often staked a claim to theory and philosophizing itself, but through a consciously different protocol than that imposed by academia or literary canons yet knowingly positioning these as alternative archives of knowing and being."<sup>612</sup> We are also indebted to the activism of women of color methods that includes multi-issued approach to politics and organizing, particularly coalition building. Women of color, recognizing the similarities of their racialized, economic, gendered, and sexualized oppression among themselves and with women in the Third World, also worked to create linking struggles across colonial borders.<sup>613</sup> Since women of color have historically been

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<sup>610</sup> Quoted in "Proposition 21 protest March 2000 Los Angeles," [www.youtube.com/watch?v=DYYxq00in\\_A](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DYYxq00in_A), (accessed Nov. 11, 2011).

<sup>611</sup> Some examples of scholarly work that is creative include Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*; Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989); Norma Alarcón, Ana Castillo, Cherríe Moraga, eds., *Third Woman: The Sexuality of Latinas*, (Berkeley: Third Woman Press, 1993).

<sup>612</sup> Laura E. Pérez, "Enrique Dussel's *Ética de la liberación*, U.S. Women of Color Decolonizing Practices, and Coalitionary Politics amidst Difference," *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences*, ed. Peter Skafish, vol. 18.2, (Spring/Summer 2010), 127.

<sup>613</sup> See Pérez, 134; María Lugones, *Peregrinajes/Pilgrimages: Theorizing Coalition Against Multiple Oppressions*, (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Press, 2003); Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); Paola Bacchetta, "Decolonial Praxis: Enabling Intranational

excluded from intellectual spaces, women of color have had to speak for themselves, their communities, and in coalitional awareness of the distinct and similar ways that they experience oppression in the US.<sup>614</sup>

In a similar way, the decolonial praxis of the anti-Proposition 21 youth movement created new ways of knowledge through their use of many creative, grassroots strategies. One included working with whatever resources that communities had in order to spread the awareness about the issue. For example, since the movement could not afford expensive billboard advertising or air commercials that could inform the public about the measure, organizations like Ollin and Youth Organizing Community used popular education art skills to conduct a statewide banner drops on mostly freeway overpasses. They occurred simultaneously in cities like Oakland, San Francisco, Daly City, Richmond, South City/San Bruno, Sacramento, San Diego, and Los Angeles.<sup>615</sup> A weekly political education newsletter called the "Daily Struggle (Makin' Sure the Hood Knows What's Crackin')" was created and distributed door to door in neighborhoods.<sup>616</sup> These types of organizing tactics happened at a time when groups also orchestrated teach-ins, lectures, viewings, art exhibits, discussions, and other forms of creative resistance that included voter outreach at the Oakland NBA games and an Oakland community teach-in.<sup>617</sup> Nancy Hernández recalls the creative youth strategies that were used:

There was a whole bunch of different organization that all came together and pulled whatever resources they had to be a part of this anti-Prop 21 movement. There was like some arts organizations that painted banners and murals. Underground Railroad distributed a mixed tape against Prop 21. Other people used hip-hop concerts, and some people printed T-shirts and did posters, and people used photography. I guess everybody just pulled whatever skills they had to do outreach....<sup>618</sup>

The campaign against Proposition 21 was driven by grass-roots efforts, creative strategies, and popular education techniques: youth came together and worked with what they had.

Another epistemological decolonizing strategy of the movement was that it formed many collaborations and alliances between community groups, students, and non-profit organizations at the local, regional, and statewide levels. The research from Oakland's Data Center, for instance, provided the base of forming an anti-funding strategy that helped many young people understand the economic roots of the problem, the relationship between corporate power and youth of color oppression, and served as strategy of targeting corporate funders with the message of funding schools, not jails. The project Youth Force Coalition (which was formerly Critical Resistance Youth Task Force) gathered 30 member Bay Area organizations that came from a broad range of ethnic, racial, religious, sectoral, women and queer people politics. Organizations like Ollin in northern California collaborated with groups like YOC in southern California. That is, this became a coalition that recognized the importance of many intersecting categories of

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and Queer Coalition Building," *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences*, ed. Peter Skafish, vol. 18.2, (Spring/Summer 2010).

<sup>614</sup> Pérez, 139.

<sup>615</sup> Martínez, "The New Youth Movement in California."

<sup>616</sup> Davey D., "Hip-hop Activism to the Fullest!," *Davey D's Hip Hop Corner*, (2/1/2000), [www.daveyd.com](http://www.daveyd.com), (accessed Jun. 11, 2012).

<sup>617</sup> The Ella Baker Center, "Birth of a Movement."

<sup>618</sup> Hernández, personal interview.

difference—such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, and religion—which were strategically linked under the age umbrella of "youth."

Popular education was used to create critical consciousness with youth. A lot of the work in getting the word out on Proposition 21 or in mobilizing work involved, for example, speaking to youth in workshops or getting a bull-horn and going to high schools. Youth organizers would reach youth by letting them know why they were there, that "some crazy things were coming down" (meaning Prop. 21), and, depending on the situation, would often ask young people to get on the bull-horn and talk about their experiences with being policed. As Malachi Larrabee-Garza explains:

I think it was really great was seeing a lot of critical consciousness develop through asking critical questions....The use of critical questions—so, when we could go into workshops in high schools or even with bull-horns, we would ask them, 'talk about how you feel when a cop rolls up on you, what do they do?' or 'what is probable cause mean when it's you versus a white kid in the suburbs?' and asking them actually to speak [about] their own experience and their own knowledge....Because then you had young people, who analyzing their own experiences, were pulling out all of the subtext and all of the foreground for what this proposition was doing.<sup>619</sup>

Asking youth critical questions led to conversations as to why a lot of people would vote in favor of the proposition and the false beliefs surrounding the ballot. Doing this opened up an opportunity to talk about history and colonization. As Malachi tells, "We would try and have [a] hard, anti-colonial line [when] talking about the historical nature of this [proposition] and oppression generally; we would see people putting the dots together very easily."<sup>620</sup>

If the dots connected, it was because popular education methods of transmitting knowledge were used. Using traditional teaching approaches, such as handing them a thick reader that explained the proposition or giving a lecture on how the proposition would affect them, was not the norm. What was more useful was having conversations led through questions, and often handing them material, like flyers with bullet points, a CD, or poster that were part of the anti-Proposition 21 campaign. This latter method was more galvanizing as it did not require translating from adult normative methods to youth culture. Having activists share in public or have informal conversations through workshop style, youth were able to see that other young people experienced similar situations. As Malachi elaborates, "Through critical questions and pulling out their analysis, they could also see, 'Yo this Samoan kid is saying the same shit that happens to me—or this brown kid or black kid....I saw a lot of solidarity happening, and understanding happening, and some healing of relationships between different racial and ethnic groups through [the prop 21] fight [sic]."<sup>621</sup> The education around shared conditions was really crucial in building critical consciousness. Malachi continues, "I think there was something about them seeing other young people from different groups understanding that they are commonly in an oppressed situation and collectively resisting that made it like energetic and irresistible."<sup>622</sup>

Another epistemological decolonizing creative strategy was using urban culture in the organizing. The group VOS, for instance, had flyers that—below a cartoon image that depicted

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<sup>619</sup> Malachi Larrabee-Garza, personal interview, (spring 2012, San Francisco, California).

<sup>620</sup> Larrabee-Garza, personal interview.

<sup>621</sup> Larrabee-Garza, personal interview.

<sup>622</sup> Larrabee-Garza, personal interview.

an urban scene with San Francisco Bay Area architecture in the background and people of color holding a "school not jails" sign and fists in the air in front of it—read "School is taking me down a dead end track." The flyer had four bullet points that called attention to social issues that related to education, and also described what VOS was about: "Voices of Struggle is a group of Northern California High School and College age youth that is uniting the community to demand an education that is relevant to us. We are planning actions this spring to defend our right to a real education." An invitation to the next meeting followed the text. The Saturday, March 15, 1997, 10am meeting would be in downtown Oakland near the 19<sup>th</sup> street BART.<sup>623</sup> Organizers made protests relevant by engaging participants with urban youth culture, such as in the Concord rally—among others—where youth were centered on a flatbed truck that had speakers that played hip-hop. Also, activists often had a bullhorn or microphone with a long line of students waiting to speak about many relevant topics that included the issue that the respective propositions concerned, school conditions, or police brutality.<sup>624</sup>

Perhaps the most important in attracting many youth of color into the movement was that aspects of urban culture—like hop-hop music—were also incorporated in the activism. Along with being popular, hip-hop—whether playing music at events or infusing chants with a hip-hop flavor—drew many multi-ethnic youth into the movement. As Tricia Rose points out, "a solid segment (if not a majority) of an entire generation of African-American youth understands itself as defined primarily by a musical, cultural form...[N]o generation has ever dubbed itself the 'R&B' generation' or the 'jazz generation,' thereby tethering its members to all things (good and bad) that might be associated with [hip-hop]."<sup>625</sup> For the "Youth Movement," primarily using hip-hop music and urban culture played a central role in drawing and mobilizing diverse youth in general, particularly those of marginalized backgrounds.<sup>626</sup> A creative use of hip-hop was infusing rhymes with protest chants. At one of the Hilton Hotel lobby occupations in San Francisco organized by Third Eye Movement, for example, chants included customized versions of the hip-hop group "Sugar Hill Gang" 1979 classic "Rapper's Delight" and the chorus of multi-Platinum American rapper DMX's "Ruff Ryder's Anthem":

"Hotel, Motel, and the Hilton  
If you start a war on youth  
You ain't gonna win!"

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"Stop! Drop! People Gonna Rise to the Top!  
Ooh! Ooh! Prop 21's Gotta Go!  
Stop! Drop! People Gonna Rise to the Top!  
Ooh! Ooh! Prop 21's Gotta Go!"<sup>627</sup>

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<sup>623</sup> Copy of flyer in author's personal archive.

<sup>624</sup> Martínez, "High School Students in the Lead."

<sup>625</sup> Tricia Rose, *Hip-Hop Wars: What We Talk about When We Talk about Hip-Hop—and Why it Matters*, (New York: Basic Civitas, 2008), 8.

<sup>626</sup> For example, at an anti-Proposition 21 conference in East Los Angeles, "La Paz" rapped and "Yaotz" from "Aztlán Underground" shared spoken word. See Carlos Montes and David González, "Jobs Not Jails! No on Proposition 21," *FightBack!News: News and Views from the People's Struggle*, (winter 2000).

<sup>627</sup> Davey D., "Third Eye Fights Back Against Prop 21," *Davey D's Hip Hop Corner*, (2/4/2000), [www.daveyd.com](http://www.daveyd.com), (accessed Jun. 11, 2012).



By infusing culture and hip-hop into the activism, such as in chants, the movement attracted youth of color into the movement, made it relevant to participants, and simultaneously challenged mainstream media's negative portrayal of the music.

However, hip-hop and urban culture was not used only to attract those that would be most affected by the Proposition into the movement or to "spice-up" chants but also served as a tool for education and raising awareness about the issues. For example, on August 27, 1999, Youth Against Community Injustice-Nia (YACIN) played hip-hop at an educational event that included informing the audience about Proposition 21, the prison industrial complex, and Mumia's case. The Third Eye Movement staged "Under Siege" in Sep. which included hip-hop, poetry, and politics that educated the public about Proposition 21 and the prison industrial complex.<sup>628</sup> An Oakland hip-hop coalition (Black Folks Against Prop. 21, formed by artist Boots Riley of the Coup and Marcel Diallo of the Black Dot Artist Collective) organized "guerilla" hip-hop concerts in Dec. and also, along with the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, worked on voter registration.<sup>629</sup> Los and Rashidi Omari—who made up the hip-hop group Company of Prophets and believed that hip-hop was an important form of expression for young people that could also be used in a political medium—performed at anti-Prop. 21 events and participated in building the movement, such as through providing workshops on the relationship between hip-hop and organizing.<sup>630</sup> Ketih Knight of the social conscious hip-hop group "Marginal Prophets" was also a cartoonist that made a powerful caricature that brought attention to Proposition 21; many organizations made copies of it to pass around.<sup>631</sup> In the early 2000, East Oakland's "The Delinquents" were in the process of making post cards with images of them with big "Vote No on Prop 21" on the back.<sup>632</sup>

Combining hip-hop music and culture with politics was an effective strategy for organizing as it spoke to many youth's urban problems. Hip-hop was a tool that organizers used to unify people and this method spoke to many young people about and on their terrain. Jewnbug recalls the role of music in the "No on 21" movement: "You also had concerts. It was like a concert combating against oppression—that was unique! You had youth that were not gonna buy into the main-stream gimmick hip-hop. It was like, we are up here spittin' underground hip-hop."<sup>633</sup> Using hip-hop with activism served as an example beyond California on the ways that the music could be used as a political and consciousness-raising force. As Harmony Goldberg explains:

I think the hip-hop culture of it [was an] example that people around the country still relate to as the main expression of how [it] can be used as a force—both it's like fun and accessible but also it's like confrontational.... I think that in this era it's pretty unique ....A lot of the direct action stuff [like the Seattle World Trade Organization protest] has been mostly people from privileged backgrounds. The Prop 21 stuff was a direct action movement of young people mostly of color who were fighting in their own interest.<sup>634</sup>

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<sup>628</sup> The Ella Baker Center, "Birth of a Movement."

<sup>629</sup> Martínez, "The New Youth Movement in California."

<sup>630</sup> Turner, "Upset the Setup: The Fight Continues."

<sup>631</sup> Davey D., "Third Eye Fights Back Against Prop 21."

<sup>632</sup> Davey D., "Third Eye Fights Back Against Prop 21."

<sup>633</sup> Jewnbug, personal interview, (summer 2004, San Francisco, California).

<sup>634</sup> Harmony Goldberg, personal interview, (summer 2004, San Francisco, California); for a racial critique of the Seattle WTO protest, see Elizabeth Martínez, "Where was the Color in Seattle? Looking for reasons why the

The "No on 21" movement was unique for incorporating hip-hop culture and music that was used to raise awareness on politics. The music component of the activism is what inspired Jesse Osorio to get involved with The Third Eye Movement group of the "No on 21" youth movement. Describing the process, Jesse states:

The first party I went to was off the hook. [It] was actually at the CELLspace [in San Francisco] with *Zion I*, *Goapele*, and *Local 1200* DJs—it was a packed house and it was cool. It was like also the first little event I went to that was like a community event that was really, really dope. It felt more like I was home. I had been to concerts and all that. It wasn't until that event, I felt like so [at] home. It felt like a family event that was so cool with community and everyone helped in and did that. I think that's what got me into this [re: activism].<sup>635</sup>

Feeling at home, in community, and having fun at a party that incorporated consciousness-raising music with politics were some of the reasons that Jesse, like other youth, continued being involved with the "No on 21" movement.

A major hip-hop/cultural event during the No on 21 movement was "Lockdown 2000: A Cultural Revelation" that took place on Jan. 29, 2000 in downtown Oakland. This event was organized in the spirit of cooperation, attracted a large, ethnically diverse, multi-generational crowd and was considered a success. More than 1,500 attended the event that included spoken word, speakers, and hip-hop performances, dance, and artists, which included Michael Franti/Spearhead, Local 1200 DJs, Amandla Poets, Jason "The Kreative Dwella," and former fugitive Ida McCray Robinson of "Families with a Future Upsurge!"<sup>636</sup> Donating their time, they brought attention to social issues like the Mumia Abu Jamal's court case, the prison industrial complex, and Proposition 21 with a "powerful political punch...delivered with terrific artistry and pizzazz."<sup>637</sup> Events such as this one were important and reflected an activist politic that shared but also moved away from 1960s organizing strategies. Reflecting on this, Jewnbug explains:

Some of the strategies [1960s organizers] implemented were the strategizes we're using today. I think we also learned that guns caused a lot of deaths. You don't see youth getting the gun for organizing....We were fighting with spoken words, we weren't shooting the guns. Fighting with, 'who, who, who, who, who, who!' You know, shouting out the words. I think we were fighting with dance, using form of art.<sup>638</sup>

Youth borrowed from some of the organizing strategies of the 1960s as much as they created new forms of empowerment relevant to their struggle.

One of the reasons hip-hop was effective at drawing many youth of color was because its connection to urban culture. In the US, Black and Latino youth of the New York (particularly

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Great Battle was so White," *COLORLINES: News for Action*, (Mar. 10, 2000), [www.colorlines.com](http://www.colorlines.com), (accessed Jun. 11, 2012).

<sup>635</sup> Osorio, personal interview.

<sup>636</sup> Davey D., "Hip-hop Activism to the Fullest!"; for more on Ida McCray Robinson see Kim Murphy, "Boy Turns in Mother in Hijacking," *The Los Angeles Times*, (Mar. 25, 1987).

<sup>637</sup> Davey D., "Hip-hop Activism to the Fullest!"

<sup>638</sup> Jewnbug, personal interview.



the Bronx) area, in the tradition of defiance and of working with little resources, developed the artistic expression that eventually came to be popularly known as hip-hop.<sup>639</sup> Many components make up hip-hop culture, although the most well-known elements include rapping or MCing, while other defining components involves DJing (spinning), breakdancing, and graffiti writing—and also, as Gwendolyn D. Pough notes, "the often forgotten fifth element, knowledge."<sup>640</sup> Hip-hop's origins in the US can be traced to the 1970s when it began as an underground phenomenon of basement parties, high school gyms, and clubs. With turntables and a microphone, DJs and MCs created music from the borrowed beats of soul, funk, disco, reggae and salsa, overlapped with lyrics that reflected their alienated experiences in urban reality. Part of the expanding hip-hop culture included graffiti writers who left their tags on subways and decrepit city walls (as proof that they were there), and hip-hop crews were formed—which some argue were a peaceful alternative to gangs as they met on city streets and in parks to settle disputes thorough lyrical battles and break-dancing completions rather than violence.<sup>641</sup>

Using hip-hop music as a means of political education is not an unfamiliar one. For example, during the late eighties, groups like N.W.A were influential, and Chuck D of Public Enemy moved the crowd as he combined "dope beats" with social critique and commentary.<sup>642</sup> Other hip-hop artists that were influential and rapped about social themes—like racism, violence, social injustice, and hardships of living in urban/inner city America—included the late Tupac Amaru Shakur (also known as 2Pac) and the Grammy Award-winning Lauryn Hill who had released the song "Everything is Everything" in May of 1999 which told the story of the struggles and problems that black communities faced, particularly youth. Rapping about deep-rooted themes raised consciousness on many social issues, and a lot of hip-hop music inspired a generation to consider issues of police brutality, death penalty, nationalism, along with trivializing American identity. Hip-hop awakened many by politicizing them, and much of what some consider "hip-hop activism"—using hip-hop along with community organizing—can be seen in large urban areas like, Los Angeles, Washington DC, Atlanta, San Francisco, and beyond, including cyberspace.<sup>643</sup> One reason that using hip-hop as a means of political education in 1999-2000 seemed to be unique was because it broke from the corporate appropriation of the genre that turned it into what Tricia Rose calls the "gansta-pimp-ho" trinity.<sup>644</sup>

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<sup>639</sup>As scholar H. Samy Alim notes, there are diverse global hip-hop cultures that have alternative "origins" of hip-hop culture. See H. Samy Alim, Awad Ibrahim, Alastair Pennycook, eds., *Global Linguistic Flows: Hip Hop Cultures, Youth Identities, and the Politics of Languages*, (New York: Routledge, 2009), 7-9.

<sup>640</sup> See introduction of *Home Girls Make Some Noise*, edited by Gwendolyn D. Pough, Elaine Richardson, Aisha Durham, Rachel Raimist, (California: Parker Publishing, LLC, 2007), vi. H. Samy Alim notes that, in addition to knowledge, hip-hop culture also includes fashion, language, style, and politics. Moreover, Alim argues that hip-hop culture refers to the often overlooked diversity of hip-hop practices in many regional scenes both inside and outside of the US. See H. Samy Alim, et. al, *Global Linguistic Flows*, 2 and 7.

<sup>641</sup> Angela Ards, "Organizing the Hip-Hop Generation" in *That's the Joint!: The Hip-Hop Studies Reader*, Murray Forman and Mark Anthony Neal, eds., (New York: Routledge, 2004), 312.

<sup>642</sup> Chuck D continues to make political hip-hop music. In 2010, he released the track "Tear Down That Wall," referencing racial profiling and the US-Mexico border. See John Benson, "Chuck D Takes Aim at Arizona; Public Enemy in the Studio," (Jun. 18, 2010), <http://www.billboard.com>, (accessed Jun. 11, 2012).

<sup>643</sup> Ards, 313. Oakland's Davey D's "Hip-hop Corner," which keeps people up to date on the issues affecting urban youth and latest industry trends, is one example of cyberspace hip-hop activism.

<sup>644</sup> Tricia Rose discusses the "dumbing down" of hip-hop that took hold in the middle to late 1990s and reached a peak in the early 2000s. Although "gangstas, hustlers, street crimes, and vernacular sexual insults" were always part of hip-hop culture/genre, Rose points out how these figures were more complex and ambivalent before corporate mainstream's hold simplified their meanings. See Tricia Rose, *Hip-Hop Wars*, introduction.

In the San Francisco Bay Area, along with several local rap and hip-hop artists and organizations like Boots of "The Coup," "son of Nat Turner," "2Pac One Nation Committee," "The Black Dot Collective," and "Underground Railroad," one of the driving forces that coupled hip-hop culture with organizing against Proposition 21 was the youth-led activist group known as the "Third Eye Movement."<sup>645</sup> This group was known for having initiated a grassroots campaign against police brutality that combined direct action, policy reform, and hip-hop concerts that served as fundraisers, voter education forums, and mass demonstrations. By using hip-hop culture and combining grass-roots activism with policy analysis, Third Eye Movement educated and politicized many people as well as helped youth express their concerns in their own language and on their own terms. For example, Third Eye activists used rap and song to testify before the San Francisco Police Commission in 1997 after Officer Marc Andaya beat, kicked, and pepper sprayed Aaron Williams—an unarmed black man—that eventually died restrained in an unventilated police van. By the sixth week of these appearances, three of the given commissioners had resigned, and their replacements soon fired Andaya, who had a notorious record of police misconduct that included the involvement in the death of another black man, had been found guilty by the Oakland's police review board for using excessive force in 1993, had revealed five lawsuits filed against him and 37 formal complaints of racism and brutality.<sup>646</sup> Third Eye also was involved in raising awareness of the case of Sheila DeToy, a 17-year-old white girl who was shot in the back of the head by police.<sup>647</sup>

Using hip-hop in the anti-Prop 21 campaign was useful as the movement was youth-led and defined, and it also included a race-based political analysis of the issues that were relevant to the population. Hip-hop in general provided a space where youth could think of alternative politics, where revolutionary thinking could be ignited, where conversations about social justice could have an outlet. While hip-hop drew some to participate only in the concerts and related protests, others connected the music and the consciousness raising it provided and got involved with organizing or other actions. However, using an activist hip-hop agenda came with obstacles and drawbacks, such as not finding financial/foundational or institutional support as many resist sponsoring radical and politicized agendas that address criminal justice system, police brutality, and the phenomenon of mass incarceration. In addition, using hip-hop often came with related contradictions, like supporting the problematic misogynists/heterosexist politics that some of the culture often promotes, celebrating hip-hop music at a protest that was sometimes problematic in the message it encouraged, using hip-hop to tap into common vulnerabilities and mutual oppression often disconnected with building community or strategizing for next steps, or staging a hip-hop activist rally on a Saturday in front of city hall when it's closed.<sup>648</sup> Although using hip-hop culture in organizing accomplished to appeal and express aspects of a generational identity that asserted a collective sense of political possibility and responsibility by challenging political

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<sup>645</sup> Davey D., "Hip-hop Activism to the Fullest!"

<sup>646</sup> For more about the case, see Jim Herron Zamora, "Panel in dark on cop's violent past," *SFGate*, (Feb. 10, 1997); Jim Herron Zamora, "Panel finds S.F. cop guilty of lying to get job," *SFGate*, (Jun. 27, 1997); Susan Sward, "S.F. Warned About Officer," *SFGate*, (Jun. 27, 1997).

<sup>647</sup> For more about the case, see Anastasia Hendrix, "Mother of slain girl files wrongful death claim," *SFGate*, (Nov. 13, 1998).

<sup>648</sup> See Ards, 322; Part IV provides analysis of the politics of hip-hop and gender. One explanation why the protest was held on Saturday could be that it was a day when the community could come together, and perhaps not so much to protest city officials since Alameda County Supervisor and Congresswoman Barbara Lee secured a spacious location in downtown to serve as the "No on Prop 21" campaign office. See Davey D., "Hip-hop Activism to the Fullest!"

and social norms, it also alienated many, such as those of immigrant, queer, feminist, or other alternative urban communities that identify with other styles of music and culture.<sup>649</sup>

### **Conclusion:**

Through a combination of discourse analysis of newspapers, interviews, and reflection on participant observation, in this chapter I argued that youth's activism worked towards decolonizing knowledge in a variety of ways. Youth challenged their educational system to be one that valued diversity in language, culture, history, and curriculum by their terms and from below. By demanding Ethnic Studies and highlighting the importance of history from the perspective of marginalized communities, youth activism attempted to decolonize curriculum and schools. Using colonizing spaces for their purposes, finding creative ways to challenge traditional colonizing roles of authority, finding new ways to achieve their purposes, and building and creating new knowledges and ways of learning "from below," youth moved away from the spatial site of struggle between public education and Chican@ youth towards a different place, to another horizon where learning and teaching was envisioned through a youth-centered way. Looking at the ways in which the praxis and creativity contributed to the decolonization of knowledge, the activism of youth of color moved epistemology from being about universals to particulars, from singular to plural, from dismissing or discarding to decentering and rereading.

In addition, I claimed that, through "epistemic disobedience" and in the "suspension of method," youth of color demonstrated that their concern was not so much with traditional modes of acquiring knowledge but about the impetus of decolonizing knowledge collectively so that knowledge could work to liberate people and not oppress them. With workshops, conferences, and other decolonizing spaces of knowledge, youth transformed the idea of learning and teaching, and engaged in methods and practices that challenged hierarchical relations of power by producing new knowledges. Youth's epistemic activism transcends what is understood as theory—not only as something that can exist outside the university but comes with a practice that is both individual and collective. Moreover, youth of color reconfigured the idea of the traditional thinker to be one that, in addition to thinking, not only also practices with others that are marginalized or coming from marginalized spaces, but produces theory and practice in marginalized ways. As youth activism is not only in the streets, youth's decolonizing of knowledge impacted institutional structures too by requiring that youth's epistemic perspectives, cosmologies, and insights be at the center.

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<sup>649</sup> For a critique of hip-hop that as it relates to race, class, gender, and sexuality, see Gwendolyn D. Pough, et. al, *Home Girls Make Some Noise*.

**Chapter six:**

**Youth Activism Decolonizing Power**

## Introduction

In preceding chapters, I pointed to influential theories that demonstrate how the project of colonizing the Americas became a model of power that would be inseparable from systems of domination (like capitalism) structured around the idea of race and gender. Also, I previously argued that age politics should be one of the central axes by which to understand modernity/coloniality. Here, I wish to extend this argument by highlighting how central to the reproduction of the coloniality of power are laws that target and oppress youth. Based on interviews, newspaper articles, and organization reports, I suggest that the activism of youth of color in California at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century challenged this type of coloniality of power in multiples ways. This, for example, included openly facing institutional and administrative authorities, contesting contenders of neoliberalism directly, or using mainstream media to their advantage. In addition, I argue that youth's activism also worked towards decolonizing the coloniality of power by building coalitions, institutions, and other forms of power that went beyond the youth movement.

## The Coloniality of Power and Youth

One of the ways that the coloniality of power connects to age oppression is evident in the escalating anti-gang laws that have been popular since the mid-1980s. Since then, a series of gang legislation has been created with the attempt to "control" the so-called gang violence phenomenon. For example, the "Street Terrorism Enforcement And Prevention Act" known as STEP Act was created in 1988 as a response to the use of handguns in violent youth crimes.<sup>650</sup> At the time, California was virtually alone among the large urbanized states to resist the urge to harden penalties for very young juvenile murderers. However, this changed when politically ambitious Republican Legislator Chuck Quackenbush launched a media-focused set of hearings to support his AB 136 bill. This proposed legislation dropped the age at which children could be tried for murder in criminal courts and would allow for them to face a potential sentence in prison of life without option of parole. To push his agenda, Quackenbush organized events at which the surviving relatives of murder victims talked about the tragic loss of their family members and publicly shared their unalleviated sorrow.<sup>651</sup> Scaring white, middle-class voters, the anti-youth "science" produced by "conservative academics was trumpeted by right wing 'think tanks' and given enormous coverage in the press. They were invited to present their flawed research to legislators, to the United States Congress, and to other gatherings of elected officials."<sup>652</sup> AB 136 was passed and signed into law in 1994, the same time that the "Three Strikes and You're Out" ballot for violent and habitual adult offenders was being considered.

By the mid-1990s, federal legislature created laws that would change juvenile justice institutions across the county. After various proposals to amend the 1994 US Crime Bill, the US Legislature in 1996 passed the "Violent Youth Predator Act"—sponsored by conservative Republican Bill McCollum of Florida—which offered millions of dollars to states that

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<sup>650</sup> Lizabeth N. De Vries, "Guilt by Association: Proposition 21's Gang Conspiracy Law Will Increase Youth Violence in California," *University of San Francisco Law Review* 38:191 (Fall 2002). For more information on Gang Legislation in California see <http://www.streetgangs.com/laws>, (accessed Oct. 28, 2010).

<sup>651</sup> Barry Krisberg, "Hate the Player and Hate the Game: The Politics of the War Against the Young," *Continuing the Struggle for Justice: 100 Years of the National Council on Crime and Delinquency*, Barry Krisberg, Susan Marchionna, Christopher Baird, eds., (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2007), 43.

<sup>652</sup> Krisberg, 44.

implemented harsh "juvenile justice" policies.<sup>653</sup> Also during the 1990s, the trend of similar anti-gang (of color) measures from the 1980s (that were already in effect) continue,<sup>654</sup> and many repressive policies and punitive laws were being passed in California that had racial implications that particularly targeted (the demographically "growing") immigrant populations. For example, Proposition 184, known as "the three strikes and you're out law," and Proposition 187—the anti-immigration law—were both passed on the November 8, 1994 election. Proposition 209, known as "the elimination of affirmative action program" was passed in November of 1997, and Proposition 227, the "English for the Children Initiative," passed in June of 1998.<sup>655</sup> As Paulo Freire explains, "In their political activity, the dominant elites utilize the banking concept to encourage passivity in the oppressed, corresponding with the latter's 'submerged' state of consciousness, and take advantage of that passivity to 'fill' that consciousness with slogans which create even more fear of freedom."<sup>656</sup> In other words, the various propositions served as a top-down means of oppressing and instilling fear in marginalized populations.

The most extreme anti-gang law was Proposition 21 known as the "Juvenile Crime Initiative" on the March 2000 ballot.<sup>657</sup> As part of a nationwide movement aimed at "backing down on juvenile criminals," Proposition 21 had in its backdrop an intense national debate over how to best prosecute and incarcerate violent youth.<sup>658</sup> According to the 2000 California Primary Election Ballot Measure Summary, Proposition 21 would increase "punishment for gang-related felonies, home-invasion robbery, carjacking, witness intimidation and drive-by shooting, and [would create] crime of gang recruitment activities."<sup>659</sup> What made the initiative controversial is that it would make it easier for prosecutors to obtain adult conviction of juveniles, target more individuals for prosecution as gang members, and increase prison terms (adults and juvenile) for a wide variety of offences.<sup>660</sup> In other words, Proposition 21 would increase the power of prosecutors (instead of judges) to send juveniles (fourteen and older) to adult court rather than adult prisons, problematically define "gangs" as well as create new "gang-related"

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<sup>653</sup> Victor M. Ríos, "Adult time for juvenile crime: the social effects of criminalization on Chicano and Black male youth," (Ph.D diss., University of California at Berkeley, 2005).

<sup>654</sup> These laws range from addressing gang participation, drive-by shootings, murder, carjacking, shooting from a motor vehicle, robbery, discharging a weapon from a car, sentence enhancement, driver's responsibilities. There are also city municipal codes related to graffiti, and "the gang deterrence and community protection act of 2005" was enacted recently. See <http://www.streetgangs.com/laws> (accessed Oct. 28, 2010). In Alameda County, a gang injunction in the area of North Oakland was announced on Oct. 14, 2010. For more information, see: <http://stoptheinjunction.wordpress.com/> (accessed Oct. 28, 2010).

<sup>655</sup> Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *The Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 50; also see 43-50.

<sup>656</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos, (New York: Continuum, 1997 [1970]), 95.

<sup>657</sup> Proposition 21 was endorsed by former California (Republican) governor Pete Wilson and had derived from the Gang Violence and Juvenile Crime Prevention Act of 1998. Over 45 pages that describe Proposition 21 is a result of a collection of proposals that failed in the Democratic-controlled state legislature when Wilson was governor. See Jake Henshaw, "Will Voters 'Hammer' Youthful Offenders?," *Youth Today*, (Feb. 1, 2000). SB 334, which had recently been passed by the Democrat-controlled California legislature, was a watered-down version of the Proposition 21 as it lowered the age for which many youth could be prosecuted for many new offenses. See Alan Goodman, "California's Prop 21: A Violent Crime Against Youth," *Revolutionary Worker*, no. 1041, (Feb. 6, 2000).

<sup>658</sup> See Mark Gladstone, "Youth Crime Crackdown Up to Voters," *Los Angeles Times*, (Feb. 01, 2000).

<sup>659</sup> See: [http://primary2000.ss.ca.gov/VoterGuide/summary\\_21\\_22.htm](http://primary2000.ss.ca.gov/VoterGuide/summary_21_22.htm), (accessed Oct. 29, 2010).

<sup>660</sup> Cynthia Cuza, "Youth Tell Wilson No on Proposition 21," *L.A. Watts Times*, vol. XXVIII, no. 662, (Feb. 3, 2000).

crimes that were not ordinarily considered offenses, direct gang members register with a police database, reduce confidentiality in juvenile court, and limit the use of probation for young offenders.<sup>661</sup> This meant that the measure would tighten probation rules, stiffen penalties for crimes that fall under a broad definition of "gang-related," remove confidentiality provisions on juvenile records (making them public documents), and make anybody arrested in a gang-related crime to register with a law enforcement database.<sup>662</sup> Providing an example of how "anti-gang" propositions problematically defined "gangs," Ryan Pintado Vertner (with Jeff Chang) highlights that "in at least five states, wearing baggy FUBU jeans and being related to a gang suspect is enough to meet the "gang member" definition. In Arizona, a tattoo and blue Adidas are sufficient."<sup>663</sup> Reducing the damage minimum from \$50,000 to \$400 for vandalism like graffiti—crimes typically associated with juvenile delinquent behavior—and changing them from being considered misdemeanors to felonies, is an example of how Proposition 21 created new "gang-related" crimes that were not ordinarily considered offenses.<sup>664</sup>

The juridical oppression of youth of color continues through the enactment of gang injunctions. A gang injunction is a civil suit filed against a group of people considered a "public nuisance" that prohibits them from participating in activities that include: appearing in public with anyone that police have labeled as a "gang member", loitering, being outside between 10pm-5am curfew, possessing graffiti paraphernalia (that includes felt tip markers), and possessing or being in the presence of anyone possessing firearms, drugs, or drug paraphernalia (that includes rolling papers). Defendants are not entitled to a free attorney and standards of evidence are lower than in criminal court since injunctions are a civil suit.<sup>665</sup> A month after young Black male Oscar Grant was fatally shot by Bay Area Rapid Transit police officer Johannes Mehserle in the early morning hours of New Year's Day in 2009,<sup>666</sup> Oakland City

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<sup>661</sup> See Mark Gladstone, "Youth Crime Crackdown Up to Voters," *Los Angeles Times*, (Feb. 01, 2000). Around the same time, The Youth Criminal Justice Act in Canada was legislated in 1999 and came into effect in 2002. This act reduced the ages from 12 to ten when one could be considered a youth offender and from 16 to 14 when a young offender could be transferred to adult court and ultimately adult prison. Unlike Proposition 21, however, this act was paradoxically accompanied by a set of principles that allowed the diverting of youth from the justice system to restorative, community-based alternatives. For more on this, see Bernard Schissel, "Justice Undone: Public Panic and the Condemnation of Children and Youth," *Moral Panics over Contemporary Children and Youth*, Charles Krinsky, ed., (Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2008), 15. According to Alan Goodman, criteria used by the Oakland Police Department to add a youth to the statewide gang database (named CalGang) includes: "When the individual resides in or frequents a particular gang's area, affects their style of dress, use of hand signs, symbols, or tattoos, or maintains ongoing relationships with known gang members and where the law enforcement officer documents reasonable suspicion that the individual is involved in gang related criminal activity or enterprise." See Alan Goodman, "California's Prop 21: A Violent Crime Against youth," *Revolutionary Worker*, no. 1041, (Feb. 6, 2000).

<sup>662</sup> Vince Beiser and Karla Solheim, "Juvenile Injustice: Proposition 21 aims to send thousands of California teenagers to adult prisons," *LA Weekly*, (Feb. 17, 2000); Anthony Montoya, "Taking on Proposition 21," *LatinoLA*, (Feb. 18, 2000).

<sup>663</sup> Ryan Pintado-Vertner, "The War on Youth," *COLOELINES: News for Action*, (Dec. 10, 1999).

<sup>664</sup> For an personal account of doing graffiti art and how it connects to Proposition 21, see Lisa Gray-Garcia, (aka Tiny), "Incarceration or Education?," *Poor Magazine/Prensa Pobre* (Feb. 2000), [www.poormagazine.org](http://www.poormagazine.org), (accessed May 21, 2012).

<sup>665</sup> "Betraying the Model City: How Gang Injunctions Fail Oakland," report by Critical Resistance Oakland, (Feb. 2011).

<sup>666</sup> Demian Bulwa, Wyatt Buchanan, Matthew Yi, "Behind murder charge against ex-BART officer," *SFGate*, (Jan. 15, 2009).



Attorney John Russo went public that he would file gang injunctions throughout the city.<sup>667</sup> Since then, the North Oakland gang injunction has been put temporarily in place (June 2, 2010); it identified 15 African American young men and created a 100-block "safety zone" where the aforementioned prohibited activities were enforced. Another injunction that names 40 alleged Norteños (traditionally Latino gangs from Northern California) was proposed that would create approximately two square miles of "safety zone" in East Oakland with a threat of up to 11 more to follow. Although they have not been proven effective but drain community resources, and despite many possible alternatives (such as investing money in public education and community programs), 60 gang injunctions have proliferated in California since 1987 when the first one was filed in Los Angeles.

In one example, the media portrays the court-ordered gang injunction as serving to break-up and stop alleged crimes—including robberies, witness intimidation, and drug dealing—that are linked with a North Oakland street gang.<sup>668</sup> What is missing in the media reports such as this one is US Census Bureau 2009 data that reveals a racial demographic transition in California where over half of the population is of color, that 26 percent of the total population is under the age of 18, and how Oakland's Alameda County reveals similar figures.<sup>669</sup> The media also fails to underscore how gang injunctions target Black and Latino youth that have tense relations with police and how they contribute to police harassment of those that would fit the description under its rubric of categorization. For instance, it was difficult to credibly argue that almost half of the black males between the ages of 21 and 24 that had been entered in the Los Angeles County's gang database were current gang members.<sup>670</sup> Gang injunctions reflect the coloniality of power as it reflects a geo-politics where gentrification is behind the motives of implementation as they are applied in neighborhoods of color in metropolitan areas that are disenfranchised and border neighborhoods that are majority white or gentrifying/"redeveloping." Like during colonization, injunctions divide communities and families and contribute to the criminalization of youth of color. Moreover, like colonized youth that were violenced, exploited, and used for imperialist purposes, youth of color in contemporary times generally have very little personal, social, and institutional power—unless they organize.

## Decolonizing Power with Activism

Through activism, youth of color worked towards decolonizing the coloniality of power on multiple registers. One included holding those in political/institutional power accountable to the general social problems they faced, including those particular to California. Across several schools, many students were heard and received attention from superintendents and principals and/or demanded a public hearing with elected officials.<sup>671</sup> For example, a delegation of seven students met with the superintendent in San Francisco after the April 22, 1994 march. In

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<sup>667</sup> "Betraying the Model City: How Gang Injunctions Fail Oakland," report by Critical Resistance Oakland. John Russo eventually resigns to become manager of Alameda City. See Ali Winston, "Russo resigns, Oakland City Council to vote on gang injunction strategy," *Kalw News: The Informant*, (May 4, 2011), [www.informant.kalwnews.org](http://www.informant.kalwnews.org), (accessed Jun. 22, 2012).

<sup>668</sup> One example is Cecilia Vega, "Gang crackdown underway in North Oakland," *ABC7 News (KGO-TV/DT)*, (Feb. 18, 2010).

<sup>669</sup> See, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06/06001.html>, (accessed Sep. 9, 2011)

<sup>670</sup> "Betraying the Model City: How Gang Injunctions Fail Oakland," report by Critical Resistance Oakland, 5.

<sup>671</sup> Verónica Sánchez and Robin Templeton, "Fund out Youth!," *Crossroads*, (May, 1994), 24.



addition to asking for ethnic studies on all campus, an end to police harassment, and to have classes no larger than 25 students, the delegation said they wanted to be part of the decision-making process and called for the creation of paid student positions on the school board.<sup>672</sup> San Francisco School Board members Leland Yee and Tom Ammiano met regularly with the youth after the April walkout, and the School Board apologized for the lack of Latino holidays in the school calendar.<sup>673</sup> Jewnbug, one of the activists of the "No on 21" campaign, also worked in a government position for the San Francisco Youth Commission. This placed her in a unique position that enabled her to talk with the board of supervisors and pressure them to respond against the proposition.<sup>674</sup> In Hayward, after students staged a massive walkout, the superintendent immediately made an appointment to meet with student representatives the following week. As UC Davis student Margie Berta stated at a 1994 march in Sacramento: "We know that this demonstration will not solve anything today or tomorrow. We do know, however, that it will give officials a kick in the pants when they see that we can organize, that students can get things going. It's not going to end here. The next step is to go back into our schools and deal with our teachers, school boards and policies. It's going to be a long haul."<sup>675</sup> These examples show how youth of color were aware that, by organizing, they would be heard and "call the shots."

Youth of color also challenged the coloniality of power was by holding accountable the corporations that funded Proposition 21. The proposition was funded by corporations—even though there was no apparent connection as to how they would benefit from supporting an anti-gang measure—because former governor Pete Wilson had requested financial backing. Because Wilson was a possible presidential candidate at the time, several corporations financially supported the proposition, including W. Barron Hilton—chairman and heir to Hilton Hotels—which gave \$10,000. Other major corporations like UNOCAL 76 (\$50,000), Pacific Gas & Electric (\$25,000), and Chevron (\$25,000) also contributed. Having an anti-youth legislative bill financially backed by corporations that had no explicit connection to the issue at stake demonstrated a colonizing neoliberal politic that not only supported the privatization of state-owned enterprises, deregulation of markets, and the promotion of the private sector in society but also the increase in corporate power that benefits the upper classes.<sup>676</sup> Since youth under eighteen can't vote and generally do not have the large amounts of money required to put out TV ads or billboards, young people found creative ways to directly target the corporations that funded Proposition 21 and hold them accountable, such as through various militant actions called "Storming the Funders."<sup>677</sup> For example, in the city of Concord on September 29, 1999, the

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<sup>672</sup> Catherine Bowman and Maitland Zane, "1,500 High School Students Protest," *The San Francisco Chronicle*, (Apr. 23, 1994).

<sup>673</sup> Marta Sánchez, "Latino Students Walk Out," *Third Force*, vol. 2.1, (Apr. 30, 1994), 5-6.

<sup>674</sup> Jewnbug, personal interview, (summer 2004, San Francisco, California).

<sup>675</sup> Quoted in Sánchez and Templeton, 24.

<sup>676</sup> This, of course, is not particular to the US but reflects a system of economic disparity that is not only intricately connected to racial domination but also gendered hierarchies that are part of a colonizing global matrix that shapes inter-subjective viewpoints and structures of relations of power. For a discussion on this, see Ramón Grosfoguel, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, and José David Saldívar, "Latin@s and the 'Euro-American Menace': The Decolonization of the U.S. Empire in the Twenty-First Century," *Latin@s in the World-System: Decolonization Struggles in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century U.S. Empire*, ed. by same authors, (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2005), 14-16.

<sup>677</sup> Also, many organizations, like C-Beyond, believed that corporations, like Chevron, Gap, Old Navy, Victoria's Secret, and Toys R Us, benefited from the proposition since they hired prisoners as "slave labor," still legal under the 13th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. See C-Beyond, "C-Beyond Out in Force," *Women & Girls' Tech Up*, (2000), [www.techup.org/org/org\\_main.html](http://www.techup.org/org/org_main.html), (accessed Feb. 13, 2012).

organization C-Beyond picketed the offices of Chevron and the Hilton Hotels Corporation to demand that they stop funding the initiative as well as start denouncing the proposition.<sup>678</sup> This protest—which had the goal of presenting the CEO's of the companies with a brick to symbolize the prisons they were helping to build by financially supporting the bill—included a moment of silence in recognition of the 1.8 million that were currently in prison, people passing out fact sheets to people driving or walking by, and marching down a main boulevard holding protest signs and saying chants like, "Hilton's Guilty! Chevron's Filthy."<sup>679</sup> Chevron publicly pledged to not give any additional support while Hilton did not respond. Because of this, on October 27 of 1999, Third Eye Movement members and others occupied the San Francisco Hilton Hotel's lobby where over 300 people showed up and surrounded the hotel, raising fists and chanting customized versions of popular hip-hop rhymes.<sup>680</sup> Adding to this, youth groups throughout California clogged the corporations' phone lines demanding that the chairman W.B. Hilton denounce the initiative and stop the funding.

Activist continued protesting corporations that were connected to Proposition 21. In mid-November, after the day-long Saturday workshop "Upset the Setup" that took place at UC Berkeley and brought around 300 youth and supporters together to strategize on ways to defeat the initiative, participants bused to Oakland to protest at the Hilton. They demanded the night manager deliver a letter to the higher-up that listed their demands, and the group also brought a brick to symbolize the approximately 22,000 new jail cells that would be built if the measure passed.<sup>681</sup> Youth Organizing Communities [YOC] in Los Angeles also organized an action against Hilton. They distributed flyers to meet and protest at the Hilton Hotel Corporation in Beverly Hills at 11am on Friday, December 3, 1999.<sup>682</sup> In addition, coordinated by Youth United for Community Action (YUCA), Third Eye Movement, and Critical Resistance Youth Force, hundreds of youth picketed and occupied the PG&E buildings in San Jose and San Francisco, marking their presence with chants like "Hilton's shady, Chevron's filthy, PG&E is just as guilty."<sup>683</sup> The day after, youth visited San Francisco's PG&E and disrupted the brown-bag luncheon with the company's CEO.<sup>684</sup> Following this meeting, PG&E held a press conference where it announced that it pulled out of funding the bill and now opposed the proposition.<sup>685</sup> C-Beyond also delivered a brick—which symbolized the prisons that the company's funding of Prop 21 would build—to the Concord PG&E manager. Later, youth clogged PG&E's phone lines for a week, and the company eventually met their demands and pledged to donate to the "No on 21" campaign (although they never followed up).<sup>686</sup> The San Diego Gas & Electric Co. also heard from the local youth activists.<sup>687</sup>

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<sup>678</sup> The Ella Baker Center, "Birth of a Movement," *Ella's Voice: Newsletter of the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights*, (1999-2000).

<sup>679</sup> C-Beyond, "C-Beyond Out in Force."

<sup>680</sup> Cuza, "Youth Tell Wilson No on Proposition 21"; Elizabeth Martínez, "The New Youth Movement in California," *Z Magazine*, (May 2000); Davey D, "Third Eye Fights Back Against Prop 21," *Davey D's Hip Hop Corner*, (2/4/2000), [www.daveyd.com](http://www.daveyd.com), (accessed Feb. 16, 2012).

<sup>681</sup> Elizabeth Martínez, "The New Youth Movement in California," *Z Magazine*, (May 2000); The Ella Baker Center, "Birth of a Movement"; Linda Shin, "News in Brief," *The Daily Californian*, (Nov. 22, 1999).

<sup>682</sup> Copy of the flyer with author.

<sup>683</sup> The Ella Baker Center, "Birth of a Movement."

<sup>684</sup> Martínez, "The New Youth Movement in California"; The Ella Baker Center, "Birth of a Movement."

<sup>685</sup> Cuza, "Youth Tell Wilson No on Proposition 21."

<sup>686</sup> The Ella Baker Center, "Birth of a Movement"; Martínez, "The New Youth Movement in California."

<sup>687</sup> Martínez, "The New Youth Movement in California."

Last but not least, youth activism challenged the coloniality of power by using media to their advantage. This strategy was not new as previous youth movements, such as the Black Panthers and the New Left, had used media for political purposes.<sup>688</sup> At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, youth orchestrated their movement with media in mind. Malachi Larrabee-Garza provides an example of this challenging process:

The spots we tried to get on KMEL [Radio] and 94.5...we tried to really get the media outlets that young people are listening to carry the story to talk about it and that was a huge struggle. It was really weird—[they would respond with] like, 'that's contentious,' or 'that's our funders.' It was interesting to push intuitional media to get with the program—which they ended up doing a bit.<sup>689</sup>

A way that participants of the movement relied on their own media was by using DJs to help with spreading political message at events. Many of the DJs were part of the organization Underground Railroad and they would play at events, rallies, and on mobile trucks. This helped spread the "No on 21" message to many in the community that were not necessarily connected to organizing. Some people who did not know about the proposition would show up to see the DJs. The events, which included political education, brought awareness to a larger crowd than those involved with organizing. Although youth under 18 years of age couldn't vote, activists found other creative ways to shape, inform, and influence the public, including potential voters.

Youth also worked with news media through their activism. Youth were aware of how news media functioned was because they learned through mobilizing actions, particularly through the "No on 21" campaign. Nancy Hernández recalls that, "The media swooped up through those arrest actions. They kind of showed us that there are certain things that we can do that the media won't cover. Like, we did some actions that the media just didn't show up [to]. Then we did other actions, like the Hilton [sit-in], and the media was all over it. It gave us more experience with press conferences, with how to create your sound bite..."<sup>690</sup> In addition to learning about media "in the field," youth activist also received media training. Jesse recalls that:

Every time at rallies when media did come through to see what we were doing, it seems like they were always bumping into people that were prepared about what messages they should send out and everything...A lot of the organizations that we were really working together with us made sure to have our media team set. If media [came] through [they would] not just ask questions to anyone who was just there [but] would actually speak with people that were trained to speak with the media, what messages they were really trying to get sent out.<sup>691</sup>

Many youth received media training and were prepared to strategically speak in ways that helped disseminate an informed message about their activism.

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<sup>688</sup> See Jane Rhodes, "Fanning the Flames of Racial Discord: the National Press and the Black Panther Party," *Harvard International Journal Press Politics*, 4.4, (1999); Jane Rhodes, *Framing the Black Panthers: the Spectacular Rise of a Black Power Icon*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007); Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making & Unmaking of the New Left*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

<sup>689</sup> Malachi Larrabee-Garza, personal interview, (spring 2012, San Francisco, California).

<sup>690</sup> Nancy Hernández, personal interview, (spring 2009, San Francisco, California).

<sup>691</sup> Jesse Osorio, personal interview, (spring 2007, San Francisco, California).

Receiving media training not only prepared youth with how to deal with the media but also how to view them as an activist resource. Nancy explains, "We went to a lot of trainings...[we learned] to not curse out the reporters because they are a tool but to also not respond to every question that they ask you cuz they are not friends [as] they historically portray us in a bad way. [We learned to] only give them what you want to give them but be very wary of them, but use them as a tool."<sup>692</sup> One of the tactics youth activists learned was to be savvy with media's tactics of message manipulation. Jesse elucidates how diverting the media was important:

What worked really good...was making sure when the media asks you a question or asks you a different question [how they may] divert [it] from your real message, what you are trying to say. For example, some TV station comes to interview you, [asking] why are you here. [A response was:] 'We are out here to stand together in solidarity with the young folks that are against the proposition.' Some of these [media] people will be like, 'why are you cutting class, shouldn't you be in class right now?' [We could respond:] That's the not the issue, the issue is that they are trying to lock us up with the proposition.<sup>693</sup>

Jesse highlights how many youth were prepared to spin media's interview tactics to the advantage of activists in order to not only spread an anti-Proposition 21 message but also to represent youth of color in ways that did not portray them in a negative light. This was important because media is an influential force that shapes social perceptions. As Todd Gitlin observes, "from within their private crevices, people find themselves relying on the media for concepts, for images of their heroes, for guiding information, for emotional charges, for a recognition of public values, for symbols in general, even for language."<sup>694</sup>

Through media, youth made an impact on several fronts. One example was San Francisco's KGO-TV *Sunday on Seven* news program that granted a half-hour special dedicated to youth related issues. The segment began by alluding to the massive, peaceful sit-in demonstration at the downtown San Francisco's Hilton Hotel that took place on March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2000—the day after Proposition 21 passed—of which 175 people were arrested for refusing to leave the lobby.<sup>695</sup> The show focused on four local young activists of color who were interviewed about the effects of Proposition 21 and youth of color issues in San Francisco.<sup>696</sup> In addition to working available media, the youth movement also produced their own media. For instance, four short grassroots documentary videos show how music, art, and education were

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<sup>692</sup> Hernández, personal interview.

<sup>693</sup> Osorio, personal interview.

<sup>694</sup> Gitlin, 1.

<sup>695</sup> Justino Águila, "USA: 175 Arrested at Hotel Protest Against Youth Crime Initiative," *The San Francisco Examiner*, (March 9, 2000). W. Barron Hilton—chair of Hilton Hotels corporation) was among the many that funded the proposition.

<sup>696</sup> The interviews were separated into two. In the first section, two young adult activists were interviewed (Jewnbug, who I interviewed for the dissertation, was one of them). In the second set of interviews, there were two high school student activists of color. This segment also focused on an alternative "youth centered" high school in the Bay Area and a phone-line program in San Francisco led by youth.

central to the mobilization of young people in the Bay Area.<sup>697</sup> Nancy Hernández discusses the impact that media attention had beyond the San Francisco Bay Area:

I've travelled places and people in like New York and Boston and Chicago, that I've met at conferences, they're like, 'I saw you in the thing...you are from the Bay, do you know about Prop 21?' I'm like, 'how do you know about that in Boston? [Prop 21] was Cali[ifornia]. I don't know what's going on in other places—how do you know about that?' The media picked up on [our No on 21 movement] and it was really useful in spreading to other places the stance that young people in California took against [the proposition].<sup>698</sup>

As Nancy highlights, the youth movement in the San Francisco Bay Area had an impact beyond California and the media played a role in this process.

Using media to their advantage, youth's activism decolonized power by challenging the anti-youth narrative across the country. Popular negative stereotypes about youth of color were that they are deviant and violent-prone criminals, and common traits that were associated with youth in general—including naiveté, apathy, or immaturity—were challenged by the activism of young people. Their activism showed the world images of youth exuding confidence, idealism, and taking civic responsibility for their education and society. For example, in addition to local and state-wide news coverage, the 1998 multi-ethnic walkouts received attention through a national television campaign. "Rock the Vote"—a nonprofit organization started by music executives to empower young voters—produced a thirty second commercial that included a re-enactment of the San Leandro walkout of October 1998. This commercial was shown with popular television shows that targeted a young audience like, *The Simpsons*, *The X-Files*, *The Jerry Springer Show*, and NBA basketball. San Francisco 22-year-old native Lateefah Simon was the executive director of the Center for Young Women's Development; she played a key role in the walkouts and became a national spokesperson for the organization and received a MacArthur "Genius" Fellowship award in 2003. Simon had experience meeting politicians, including local mayors, boards of supervisors, and President Clinton, and she advocated to politicians on behalf of young people. For Simon, youth activism was about "not waiting for politicians to define our fates."<sup>699</sup> As Malachi Larrabee-Garza recalls, "I remember the centering of youth as the future, that youth are always the leading force in social change movements."<sup>700</sup>

Thus, from the bottom up, youth of color with their activism not only impacted politicians, administrators, corporations, and media, but also the national narrative. With their activism, youth challenged the coloniality of power by designing their own reality to be one of uniting their collective voices and experiences. Decolonizing the coloniality of power included holding those in political/institutional power accountable to the general social problems that young people faced, forcing corporations to reckon with the power of youth. By using media structures (as well producing their own forms of media), youth activism also challenged the

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<sup>697</sup> The following are videos produced by the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights organization in the San Francisco Bay Area: *Books Not Bars*, *Not Down With the Lockdown*, *The Birth of a Movement*, and *Shame the Devil [The CD] Release Party*, n.d.

<sup>698</sup> Hernández, personal interview.

<sup>699</sup> Quoted in Marc Sandalow, "Politics of Youth Gets a Lift/Rock the Vote Group Praises Bay Area Teens," *SFGate*, (Nov. 29, 1999).

<sup>700</sup> Quoted in in "The Power of the Youth Don't Stop: 10 Years After Prop 21," commemoration event that took place in Oakland, (Apr. 22, 2010). Program with author.

negative representations of them. Youth demonstrated their power in shaping popular culture and altered the popular misconception that youth of color are pathologically violent. Youth's mobilization efforts influenced and opened doors for media to represent young people in ways beyond the negative representations. In other words, youth's activism interrupted the coloniality of power by changing the narrow trope of crime and deviance that was linked to them. Instead, youth became associated with being organized, critical, and leading social change: youth were providing the answers to many of the social problems.

### **Building Collective Power with the Youth Force Coalition**

In addition to challenging institutional, corporate, and media's hegemony, youth's activism worked towards decolonizing the coloniality of power by also building their own power. One of the ways youth built power was by forming coalitions. One example is the project Youth Force Coalition (YEC) whose first campaign was against Proposition 21 in which 30 member organizations were involved. This was formed at the September 24-27, 1998 "Critical Resistance: Beyond the Prison Industrial Complex" national conference and strategy session at UC Berkeley. Over 3,500 prisoners, scholars, activists, policymakers, advocates, cultural workers, and community members came together to address the growing global prison industrial complex.<sup>701</sup> At this conference, a two-day strategy session with over 250 youth—ranging from students to gang members—took place where they discussed different programs, what kind of movement one needed, and the ways in which lives and chances of youth could be improved.<sup>702</sup> Ollin joined other youth from across the country and called for a national walkout to "end mental and physical lockdown."<sup>703</sup> Other local youth of color activist groups attended, like Standing Together to Organize a Revolutionary Movement (STORM) whose members met comrades from groups like Student Liberation Action Movement in New York City and others from Boston and Chicago.<sup>704</sup> In the Bay Area, a few months after the conference, different organizations connected and eventually formed Critical Youth Task Force in April of 1999. The purpose was to create a space from different organizations to come together and to discuss different approaches. The goal was to have organizations coordinate with each other in order to become a powerful coalition of organizations that could continue to do their own work as well as work in collaboration.<sup>705</sup> Eventually this became the Youth Force Coalition (YEC).

YEC brought together organizations from a broad range of ethnic, racial, religious, sectorial, women's and queer people movements. In particular, this coalition recognized the importance of other intersecting categories of difference—such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, and religion—which were strategically linked under the umbrella of age. In general, young people from various communities and backgrounds took part in creating integrated identity politics against Proposition 21 by forming a racially and culturally heterogeneous political movement organized strategically under the category of "youth." This was one of the characteristics that distinguished the anti-Proposition 21 movement from previous

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<sup>701</sup> Angela Davis was one of the scholars involved with the conference. See Avery F. Gordon, "Globalism and the Prison Industrial Complex: an Interview with Angela Davis," *Race & Class*, 40 (1999), 145.

<sup>702</sup> Youth Force Coalition history that was on the YEC website before it became obsolete. I have a hardcopy of the history in my personal archive.

<sup>703</sup> Robin Templeton, "Lockdown Walkout," *The Nation*, (Nov. 16, 1998).

<sup>704</sup> Standing Together to Organize a Revolutionary Movement (STORM), "Reclaiming Revolution," (spring 2004), 25.

<sup>705</sup> Youth Force Coalition history that was on the YEC website before it became obsolete.

1960s activism. For example, while the 1960s movements often responded to forms of white supremacy, the youth movement differed in that it responded to racism as well as other forms of power. During the Civil Rights era, much of youth opposition was mobilized around strong racial identifications, many of which were primarily based on homogeneous and/or nationalist understandings of "ethno-racial" politics.<sup>706</sup> By contrast, while using "race" and "ethnicity" as distinct markers that served as important categories of difference in organizing, they were not the primary group unifiers in the youth movement. Instead, "youth" became the principal category of mobilization. Unlike in the 1960s, youth from the Bay Area came together from a diverse range of political youth identity backgrounds. Having a history of activism to draw upon, as well as reflecting demographic shifts and new political climates, the "No on 21" movement called for new conditions, strategies, and categories for political organizing that differed from previous times. Through forming decolonizing coalitions like Youth Force, youth at the turn of the century demonstrated that lessons from the activism of the late 1960s have been learned and expanded.

The YFC demonstrated how decolonization is also about how racial solidarity intersects with other forms of oppression. This is important since politics of decolonization involves reconstituting ontology and epistemologies that are connected to new relations of conviviality where racial solidarity and coming to terms across differences between oppositional and relational consciousness is essential. Through the ideological contribution of the concept of simultaneity of oppressions, much of women of color and queer thought since the 1970s has stressed the importance of looking at the many hierarchies that came with racial colonization, including the relationship between imperialism, race, class, gender, and sexuality.<sup>707</sup> For example, the Combahee River Collective—named in commemoration of a slave-freeing guerrilla action planned and led by Harriet Tubman in 1863 in South Carolina—was a group of Black feminists in Boston that produced a statement saying they were "actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression" and saw as their particular task "the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking."<sup>708</sup> Paola Bacchetta reminds us that it's important to have a feminist and queer perspective in mind when thinking about decolonization, leading one to see the inseparability of race, racism, ethnicity, gender, and sexualities.<sup>709</sup> In other words,

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<sup>706</sup> The Black Panthers, Brown Berets, and The Young Lords are a few examples.

<sup>707</sup> Some examples of this work are: Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds., *This Bridge Called my Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, (New York: Kitchen Table Press, 1983 [1981]); Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, Barbara Smith, eds., *All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, but Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies*, (New York: The Feminist Press, 1982); Barbara Smith, ed., *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*, (New York: Kitchen Table Press, 1983); Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches by Audre Lorde*, (New York: Crossing Press, 1984); Alma M. García, ed. *Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings*, (New York: Routledge, 1997). Along with the concept of simultaneity of oppressions, we are also indebted to the activism of queer women of color methods that includes multi-issued approach to politics and organizing, particularly coalition building and linking struggles. For relevant literature, see María Lugones, *Peregrinajes/Pilgrimages: Theorizing Coalition Against Multiple Oppressions*, (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Press, 2003).

<sup>708</sup> "A Black Feminist Statement: The Combahee River Collective," *All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, but Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies*, ed. by Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith, (New York: The Feminist Press, 1982).

<sup>709</sup> Paola Bacchetta, *Decolonizing the University: Fulfilling the Dream of the Third World College*, Mattie Harper (producer) and John Hamilton (video camera and post-production), (Feb. 26-27, 2010), <http://vimeo.com/15729523>, (accessed Mar. 21, 2012), video.



decolonization is about challenging the inseparability of the many hierarchical forms of power that have been shaped by the violence of colonization.<sup>710</sup> Thus, decolonization does not solely refer to the end of formal colonial relations, such as those of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century in the Americas. Instead, intrinsic to decolonization is the confrontation with racial, class, gender, and sexual hierarchies that came about and was strengthened by European modernity as it enslaved, colonized, and disappeared populations through the globe. Understanding decolonization in this way, through theories of intersectionality that attempt to undo the colonial categories of race, class, and gender, Marcelle Maese-Cohen suggests that the undoing of the continual reproduction of interlocking relationality of power can move us "toward planetary decolonial feminisms."<sup>711</sup> The YFC was an example of a new decolonial politic that went beyond racial/ethnic solidarity to also include the politics of gender, sexuality, class, and religion.

Along with the campaign, the YFC built power by allowing organizations a space where they could put differences aside as they worked towards a larger social justice struggle. Organizations that benefited from this space and politic included STORM and Ollin. In their history and summary written after the organization came to an end, STORM alluded to tensions with Ollin, mentioning that there was a misunderstanding regarding taking credit for a walkout that the latter had primarily organized. As STORM declared, "We tried to meet with Ollin to resolve these tensions. But resolving conflict was not one of our strong suits. Both organizations made mistakes in these meetings. The meetings didn't diffuse the conflict; they escalated it."<sup>712</sup> The tensions between them, however, had deep roots and can be traced to the time of RAW/Anti-War early 1990s organizing, before both groups became formal organizations. These tensions included tactical differences with organizing, such as what should happen on the ground, what should happen with security, and personal differences or incidents that happened in the heat of the moment, such as a physical altercation that occurred between people. Once groups became more solidified, there was also a difference in organizing methodology: STORM was generally grounded in Marxist-Leninist ideologies where the group structure included having a base, an organizer, politics of what one should believe in, and a line of cadres based on level of development; Ollin was grounded in decolonial politics where the use of culture, like spirituality, and building of community was central. Thus, there were personal, tactical, and political differences and approaches.<sup>713</sup> Despite long-lasting rifts, the coalition did not serve as a homogenizing move that sought for total unity but served as a decolonizing move that allowed for many organizations to come together to build potential bridges across differences. What the YFC provided was a space to ritualize coalition and alliance building.<sup>714</sup> Moreover, coalition and alliance building contributed to the decolonial turn as it worked to transform what Boaventura de Sousa Santos calls "post-abyssal thinking" into a deeply self-

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<sup>710</sup> See "Queer Latin@ Academics, Arts, and Activisms," Xamuel Bañales (producer) and John Hamilton (video camera and post-production), (Oct. 11, 2011), [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IfQMjsf\\_GRC](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IfQMjsf_GRC), (accessed Mar. 3, 2012), video.

<sup>711</sup> Marcelle Maese-Cohen, "Introduction: Toward Planetary Decolonial Feminism," *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences*, ed. Peter Skafish, vol.18.2, (Spring/Summer 2010), 18.

<sup>712</sup> See Standing Together to Organize a Revolutionary Movement (STORM), "Reclaiming Revolution," (spring 2004), 27.

<sup>713</sup> Many of the younger activists were not familiar with the "rifts" between previous collaborative organizing attempts and wanted move beyond sectarian conflicts between older organizers.

<sup>714</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa, *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, ed. by AnaLouise Keating, (London: Duke University Press, 2009), 154.



reflective undertaking that considers solidarity participation in the construction of a personal and collective future.<sup>715</sup>

Although far from perfect, the YFC helped to challenge the coloniality of power, including neoliberal ideology that, among many things, advocates for economic free trade and open markets, and supports deregulation, the privatization of nationalized industries, and the role of the private sector in modern society.<sup>716</sup> As Gloria Anzaldúa writes, "One is to not be lulled into forgetting that *coalition work attempts to balance power relations and undermine and subvert the system of domination-subordination* that affects even our most unconscious thoughts."<sup>717</sup> In addition, Prishni Murrillo who was a member of Ollin during the "No on 21" campaign elaborates on the importance of coalitionary work as it relates to ontological and epistemological considerations. She states: "Coalition work was super critical for the actual campaign, but its most critical role was in making us feel part of a larger movement and broader community. Youngsters got to meet people and learn about issues and facts that would normally be limited to adults in college classrooms. Organizing brought that knowledge to the streets. It brought folks like Angela Y. Davis out of books and into our events."<sup>718</sup> Coalitions like the YFC helped to decolonize ontology—and in the process, knowledge too—as it brought people from diverse communities that otherwise may not have known each other to learn together about critical issues. Not only did coalitional work raise critical issues in public, it also introduced many young people to one another and put many into a position of solidarity. Reflecting on the coalitional work of the "No on Prop 21" youth movement in the San Francisco Bay Area, Nancy Hernández state:

There were people who I normally would see walking down the street and wouldn't even know them are now my friends because I met them during prop. 21...I was working with people who were transgendered before I knew what to be transgendered was...I probably wouldn't have known some like butch queer girl from like the East Coast who's hella white and involved in some union...This kind of person would not be in my day unless there was something to pull us together.<sup>719</sup>

Youth activism and the coalitions that formed in response galvanized a lot of people, brought a broad community of people to together, and provided a space for people like Hernández to work with people across communities that she normally may not have met members from. Working together across differences in coalitionary form was one of the ways that youth challenged the coloniality of power.

### **Building Institutional Power with the Youth Empowerment Center**

As youth organizations wanted to work closely together, and after they heard about an affordable empty warehouse building in West Oakland and a pro bono legal support program, Adam Gold had the idea of forming an umbrella organization that could provide fundraising and

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<sup>715</sup> Boaventura de Sousa Santos, "Beyond Abyssal Thinking: From Global Lines to Ecologies of Knowledges" in *Review*, xxx:1 (2007), 43-44.

<sup>716</sup> See Manfred B. Steger, "Neoliberalism: A Very Short Introduction," (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>717</sup> Anzaldúa, 149, (italics in the original).

<sup>718</sup> Quoted in "The Power of the Youth Don't Stop: 10 Years After Prop 21."

<sup>719</sup> Hernández, personal interview.

support for groups that were dedicated to building the youth movement.<sup>720</sup> This idea became a reality in April of 2000, when the non-profit Youth Empowerment Center (YEC) was started by four of the Bay Area's most innovative youth projects. These groups came together to share resources and space, and to work together to build the youth movement. Having roots in the "No on Proposition 21" campaign of 1999-2000—which brought young people together from all over the state to fight a racist and anti-youth ballot initiative—these groups shared the common vision that the youth movement should build justice and liberation for their communities and self-determination.<sup>721</sup> The **four founding groups** of the YEC were: C-Beyond, School of Unity and Liberation (SOUL), Underground Railroad, and the Youth Force Coalition (YFC). C-Beyond was a youth-organizing project based in the suburban city of Concord, California and was led by high-school aged youth that fought for educational equity and social justice. SOUL was (and continues to be) a center that provided organizing trainings and political education that offered various opportunities for young people to learn about social change.<sup>722</sup> Underground Railroad was a collective of young artists that produced events and launched the Mandela Arts Center in 2001 as an after-school hip-hop arts academy for young people in Oakland. Finally, as I previously mentioned, the YFC was a network of more than twenty youth organizations of the San Francisco Bay Area that worked on different issues but came together to wage collaborative campaigns against the prison industrial complex. The YEC also sponsored BAKA, an East Oakland-based youth development project that combined the Brazilian martial art of capoeira with mentorship and academic counseling for young people, and STARC, a national network of student organizers and activists who wage campaigns for corporate accountability, economic justice and racial justice.

Gold served as the YEC's executive director from April 2000-December 2001, and by the end of his term, the YEC was a million dollar organization that sponsored several groups.<sup>723</sup> In addition to connecting the various works of the founding groups, resources were combined to receive amenities that were difficult to have as individual organizations, including health benefits, administrative support, and a space to house all the groups. Located at 1357 5<sup>th</sup> street in Oakland, next to the West Oakland BART subway stop, the YEC—like the "No on 21" campaign—was built from scratch, mostly through local activist and volunteers. For example, the warehouse was found through West Oakland activist J. Imani. After partnering with the Alliance for West Oakland Development—a local group headed by long-time activists—offices were designed with the help from Just Act organizer Ja-Ching Chen, and the five-room frame was built by the African-American Contracting Association. Many volunteers assisted with organizing the space, including Jess Alexander who helped with the electrical wiring set-up, teacher John Pilgrim who aided with developing the computer network, and long-time activist

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<sup>720</sup> Annual Report 2001 of the Youth Empowerment Center, 2.

<sup>721</sup> I have hardcopies of documents that gives information about the YEC that was public on their webpage ([www.youthec.org](http://www.youthec.org)) that is no longer activated.

<sup>722</sup> [www.schoolofunityandliberation.org](http://www.schoolofunityandliberation.org), (accessed Mar. 11, 2012).

<sup>723</sup> In addition to private donations, the YEC received funding from many grants, including the Surdna Foundation, Levi-Strauss Foundation, Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, and the East Bay Community Foundation. The YEC board of directors include Adam Gold as Treasurer, Harmony Goldberg as President, Anthony "Van" Jones as Secretary, Lateefah Simon from the Center for Young Women's Development and Cindy Weisner from People Organized to Win Employment Rights. See "Youth Empowerment Center: 2001 Proposal to the East Bay Community Foundation," page 10 and attachment A. Copy with author.

Raquel Laviña who led the painting crew. Creating something from very little, the YEC staff formally moved into the warehouse by December 2000.<sup>724</sup>

I worked for a program in San Francisco that was part of the Youth Force Coalition when they announced the YEC would be opening in the East Bay at the end of 2000. I was excited when I heard the news, especially since I was a resident of West Oakland and the center would be located in the same area. During the summer before the YEC formally opened, as I volunteered my time by setting up electrical outlets, hammering nails, and painting walls of the building, I was dumbfounded; I couldn't believe that an actual space for youth empowerment could exist. Participating in the literal construction of the space, I thought about my own life path as a young person, and how much of my politicization and consciousness had been self-guided. As such, I often faced many roadblocks and discouragements, and the journey was a relatively lonely process. I thought about the impact and difference a space like the YEC would have made upon my life. I could only imagine how much more politicized and empowered I could have been, had I had a center like the YEC during my younger years. As I painted one of the inside walls of the dim warehouse and reflected on the lack of a YEC-like space during my youth, my excitement for the space quickly mixed with anger: I felt robbed of a youth experience that could have further helped my personal empowerment, possibly contributing to a fuller potential of social transformation than the one I had experienced. Although I had access to other community youth centers, like the *Boys & Girls Club*, I hardly felt safe there as bullying, teasing, and having hierarchies were common. Additionally, politicization, consciousness raising, and movement building were not part of their purpose. Despite my personal moment of rage, I was glad that the YEC would exist to help inspire current youth and forthcoming social movements.

The YEC contributed to building a stronger youth movement by providing the infrastructure that would let youth groups build more youth power. The way that the YEC did this was by providing fiscal sponsorship, financial management, space, technology, capacity-building and support by acting as the umbrella organization. As a non-profit 501c3 recognized by the federal and state governments, the YEC sponsors youth-serving and youth-led projects that worked for social justice and built the leadership skills of young people. Accordingly, this would allow emerging youth groups to apply for foundation and government grants and receive donations that could be tax-deductible. By managing the financial and bookkeeping needs of the member groups, the YEC staff was responsible for making sure that project staff would get paid, pay their operational bills, and have a handle on other related fiscal programmatic needs.

Also, the YEC managed offices in West Oakland that housed youth projects, and they rented their meeting space to community groups on a sliding scale of which no one was turned away for lack of funds. Part of the managing of the space included handling reservations, maintaining a chore/cleaning system, and providing reception for visitors to the groups housed within the center. The YEC provided technology support and infrastructure to the group, including a server network, website space, and internet/email access. They also rented out high-tech, digital documentation equipment such as a video camera, projector, and laptops to project staff and community groups who lacked access to these resources. Helping to build the capacity of member groups, the YEC assisted with fundraising, financial management, staff management, and the overall operation of their respective projects. Furthermore, the YEC held collective meetings, provided trainings, and conducted one-on-one hands-on support to the founding groups as a way to help them through the ups and downs of running their own organizations.

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<sup>724</sup> Annual Report 2001 of the Youth Empowerment Center, 3.

Along with providing fiscal sponsorship and other related support to youth organizations, the vision behind the YEC was a commitment to building powerful organizations that were youth-run to affect change in their own lives and communities. For example, the YEC published a needs assessment report in 2001, which outlined the organizational development needs of more than a dozen youth organizing and leadership groups, and also underwent an intensive 8-month strategic planning process to figure out how they could best serve and support the youth movement and the greater community.<sup>725</sup> Their needs assessment was published in 2002 and identified the following challenges for youth organizations: 1) lack of resources, especially for organizational development and other long-term self-evaluative work; 2) inadequate time to do organizational development and take advantage of the existing technical assistance and training resource; 3) lack of culturally and program-appropriate technical assistance.<sup>726</sup>

By forming one organization with four groups that would provide youth organizing, political education, organizer training, cultural work, and network-building to advance the youth movement, the YEC worked towards challenging the coloniality of power by building youth power through decolonizing methods that included art, activism, community building, and political education. Although many people study and hypothesize about the role of youth in society, Adam Gold believed that the YEC was "another kind of laboratory" and was "bigger than any one non-profit."<sup>727</sup> Gold elaborates on this by stating that, "We see ourselves as just one voice in a sea of voices, all of which need to be heard. We want to be part of a youth movement that is [a] part of a huge movement of all people who fight to provide for their people and end oppression in all its forms."<sup>728</sup> In a little over a year, an empty warehouse was turned into a dynamic center for the Bay Area youth movement by dedicated staff, activists, and volunteers. In locations where such established centers did exist, the YEC represented a decolonizing space created by young people that was established in order to engage marginalized communities and promote social justice.<sup>729</sup>

Unfortunately, the YEC did not last very long; it faced many sustainability challenges, including the changing socio-political-economic climate of the time. In particular, the 9/11 event and succeeding "War on Terrorism" had a deep effect on the YEC operations at the end of 2001, and on the youth movement in general. With the fall of the twin towers in New York City, a new series of hate crimes against Muslims, Arabs, and other people of color escalated. In a climate of general dominant pro-war and conservative attitudes, the YEC—like other radical youth organizations—were suddenly forced to navigate through a dramatically different political terrain. In reaction, many non-profit youth organizations had to modify how they thought about and conducted their work.

Even though many groups were already financially struggling during the economic recession of the 1990s, new funding challenges surfaced after 9/11. For example, many foundations decided to shift resources away from national youth organizing to New York relief

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<sup>725</sup> I have hardcopies of documents that gives information about the YEC that was public on their webpage ([www.youthec.org](http://www.youthec.org)) that is no longer activated.

<sup>726</sup> Youth Empowerment Center, "Building organizations making change: a Needs Assessment of Bay Area Youth Social Justice Organizations," (Jun. 2002), 2.

<sup>727</sup> Quoted in the Annual Report 2001 of the Youth Empowerment Center, 2.

<sup>728</sup> Quoted in the Annual Report 2001 of the Youth Empowerment Center, 2.

<sup>729</sup> For more on youth that create spaces to promote social justice, see the section on "Street Corner Democracy: Youth, Civil Society, and Community Change" in *Beyond Resistance! Youth Activism and Community Change: New Democratic Possibilities for Practice and Policy for American's Youth*, ed. by Shawn Ginwright, Pedro Noguera, and Julio Cammarota, (New York: Routledge, 2006).

work. Reflective of the workings of the non-profit industrial complex, where the relationships between the state and those in power, including foundations, have an impact in control, derailment, and everyday management of political movements,<sup>730</sup> the sudden change of focus and funding priorities left some projects scrambling as they looked to secure other resources elsewhere. YEC's projects also felt the need to make adjustments from their originally planned programming to take into account the surrounding dramatic social changes. Without jeopardizing existing community organizing programs, some program took a direct anti-war perspective while others carefully assessed the needs of their respective communities and developing a strategy that would take the topic of war into account.<sup>731</sup>

In addition to the socio-political-economic context, there were other challenges that the YEC faced. One challenge included the YEC internal structure which had confusing lines of funding, support, and authority; it was also an administration-heavy structure, which drained valuable resources from on-the-ground work.<sup>732</sup> Other problems were connected to the infrastructure of the warehouse. The building did not have heating or air-conditioning, the windows and bars were fake and would fall out, the floor was made of cement, the furniture was worn-down, the presence of mice and rats was common, and, because it would continuously flood when it rained, electronic equipment had to be elevated on boxes to avoid damage. Additionally, YEC had a tense relationship with the landlords of the warehouse. Interested in selling the space to developers, the landlords did not care to fix any of the infrastructural problems, and sometimes they claimed that the rent was not paid on time when it had been. The landlords also began renting the space adjacent to the YEC—which had a large stage and was used by the Mandela Village Arts Center during the week—to club promoters during the weekend. Friday and Saturday nights were turned into late-night clubs that had strippers and alcohol, and this limited the YEC from having any programming during the evenings on the weekend. Malachi Larrabee-Garza who worked at the YEC recalls, "I remember Monday morning, sweeping condoms from the front cement areas...beer bottles, the bathrooms were full of piss, [and] throw-up; they were like running the [raunchiest] clubs out of there."<sup>733</sup>

Last but not least, another significant challenge that affected the YEC was that it was mysteriously broken into, vandalized, and robbed in early 2002 after 11:30pm on Friday, January 25, 2002. One computer monitor was smashed, office furniture was left in a state of disarray, office doors were pried/kicked open, and most of the files were rifled through and scattered. Most of the computers were stolen, including the file server and backup hard drive that contained a majority of the computer files for all of the projects. The sound equipment and CD's for hip-hop shows and DJ classes were also stolen. The following month, despite piecing together evidence and clues, the YEC was unable to arrive to any solid conclusions as to why/how this happened. Because of the lack of solid leads, the Oakland Police Department decided to not pursue an investigation. The person/people that burglarized the YEC were never identified, but many of the youth organizers suspected that it was connected to government infiltration, surveillance, and intimidation tactics that were familiar to disrupting political organizations.

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<sup>730</sup> For more on the non-profit industrial complex, see INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*, (Cambridge, Mass: South End Press, 2007).

<sup>731</sup> Annual Report 2001 of the Youth Empowerment Center, 9.

<sup>732</sup> Funding report letter from Youth Empowerment Center to the East Bay Community Foundation, (Nov. 12, 2004). Copy of letter with author.

<sup>733</sup> Malachi Larrabee-Garza, personal interview, (spring 2012, San Francisco, California).

Although the YEC was prepared for a system failure, they did not anticipate theft. As a result, they had to spend much unanticipated staff time and unbudgeted funds to replace stolen and damaged equipment and furniture, restore data that included three databases containing contact and other personal information of roughly 2,500 individuals and organizations, and establish new security procedures to enhance the existing security systems. Estimated total losses were almost \$22,000.<sup>734</sup>

After four years, the YEC announced on October 31, 2004 that it would be permanently closing down on December 31 that year. The YEC had conducted programming through times of war, intensified repression in the community, and economic recession; but the tightening of non-profit funding severely affected the organizations. C-beyond had to close its doors due to changes in the funding world. Although Youth Force Coalition had a victory campaign with Books not Bars that, among many things, stopped the expansion of the Super Jail in Alameda County, it struggled to function as a coalition of youth groups as many were also trying to survive as independent organizations. Similarly affected by the tightening of funding, Underground Railroad and Mandela Arts Center had to discontinue their programming, which included providing DJ classes, "Freestyle Fridays" events, and support for youth to record their own CD's. Despite being nationally recognized for its political education and training programs, SOUL also encountered funding problems. Thus, even though the YEC excelled at providing administrative, financial, and technical assistance, it could not manage the extra fundraising and ongoing organizational development support that the projects needed. Because it no longer made sense to spend money on administration when programming was suffering, and rather than be invested in institutional survival, the YEC decided to respond to the programming needs of the organizations.<sup>735</sup>

## **Building Power Beyond the Youth Movement**

Although the passing of Proposition 21 was very disappointing to many involved in the struggle to defeat it, some activists also felt validated for their work in the counties that did not pass the bill.<sup>736</sup> Many—like Luis Sánchez of YOC and Maria Cordero of Third Eye Movement and Lisa Pintado of C-Beyond—believed the work around defeating the proposition was also about building a larger youth movement and awareness of issues that affected young people of color.<sup>737</sup> As Tina Bartolome, who was part of Underground Railroad in 1999-2000, explains, "I understood that in a long-haul struggle I needed to see beyond winning or losing the vote to how this particular fight could play a strategic role in bringing more young people of color into leadership as part a movement for social justice."<sup>738</sup> In other words, there was an understanding

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<sup>734</sup> Emergency Funding Request Letter from Youth Empowerment Center to East Bay Community Foundation, (Feb. 7, 2002). Copy of letter with author.

<sup>735</sup> "YEC: Closing Letter," (Oct. 31, 2004), personal copy with author. This letter was placed on the YEC website before it went obsolete.

<sup>736</sup> Collin Turner, "Upset the Setup: The Fight Continues," *City on a Hill Press at UC Santa Cruz*, vol. 34.27, (May 11, 2000).

<sup>737</sup> Turner, "Upset the Setup: The Fight Continues."

<sup>738</sup> Quoted in in "The Power of the Youth Don't Stop: 10 Years After Prop 21." On a side note, Tina Bartolome from "Underground Railroad" program, along with artist Goapele, recorded the popular song called "Don't Explain" that was produced during (and relating to) the "No on 21" campaign. At an event in May of 2012 in San Francisco, Tina mentioned that this song was part of an effort to have more representations of women of color in hip-hop music.

the movement was not just about defeating proposition 21 but about building power and a larger movement for social justice. Despite the passing of the proposition, many built meaningful local connections and cross-state alliances and experienced the power of working together through the campaign. Moreover, many students continued having meetings in places like InnerCity Struggle in Los Angeles.<sup>739</sup> Folks in the Bay Area continued youth work in other ways, like Youth Force, which had plans of organizing against the prison–industrial complex.<sup>740</sup> Many saw the movement as growing, full of potential, and even headed towards a "new civil rights movement led by youth," as YOC member Lester García explained. For García, "youth aren't going to be silent anymore. We also have a voice and we're going to do what it takes to have our voices heard."<sup>741</sup> Through "No on 21" youth movement—like the walkouts of the 1990s and other protests—many youth realized how much power they had. Thus, in addition to challenging the coloniality of power, youth of color also worked towards building a decolonizing power.

The building of youth power beyond the "No on 21" movement came with a lot of challenges. For examples, the building of the organization Homies Organizing the Mission to Empower Youth (HOMEY), of which members from Ollin helped to create during the youth movement, experienced a lot of struggles, particularly related to questions of adult power and organizing strategy. HOMEY originally began as a program that served part of a larger organization in the mission neighborhood in San Francisco by providing a variety of community services. The larger organization that housed HOMEY had a majority of adult leadership whose activist lineage was traced to the organizing of the 1960s. Kaira Espinoza, who worked with HOMEY, explains the differences in generational approaches to activism:

[the larger organization] had done this really good neighborhood center that provided services for seniors [and] provided childcare. And this new program [HOMEY]—they hired youth to do this youth program—but when that leadership of young people really did start organizing in the hood, really started organizing with high school aged youth, and gang members—especially in Latino neighborhoods was a big controversy....I don't know what it was; [the larger organization] was scared or they didn't really think that you could organize gang members...they kinda saw them beyond a solution. They just didn't agree with [the organizing]. So, HOMEY ended up having to become its own organization, instead of just a program of the [larger] organization because of those differences [sic].<sup>742</sup>

Xicana youth activist Nancy Hernández also worked at HOMEY during this time of struggle. When Hernández worked in the program, the goal was focus on anti-Prop 21 youth organizing, and her responsibilities included helping the statewide coalition. However, the larger organization had a different vision of the program and handled the tension problematically. As Nancy Hernández elaborates, "Our fiscal sponsor was like, 'that's not in our goals and objectives; we don't even want to work with gang youth anyway.' They fired all of us—they fired the entire [HOMEY] staff. They kept the grant that we got, they kept the office that we came to them with,

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<sup>739</sup> Susana Benavides, "Prop 21 Inspires Student Activism," *The Rough Rider*, vol. LXXV I, Issue 4, (Apr. 11, 2000).

<sup>740</sup> Turner, "Upset the Setup: The Fight Continues."

<sup>741</sup> Quoted in Turner, "Upset the Setup: The Fight Continues."

<sup>742</sup> Kaira Espinoza, personal interview, (summer 2004, San Francisco, California).

and they fired all of us."<sup>743</sup> Experiences of adult abuse of power that led to fallouts within organizations, like in the Third Eye Movement and HOMEY, traumatized many youth: how they were treated and the way the situation was handled impacted many in negative ways. Despite the criticisms that the HOMEY could not survive as an independent group and the subsequent struggles it faced as it tried to establish elsewhere, the organization is still around, has grown, and is able to continue doing the kind of work it wants.<sup>744</sup>

Nevertheless, many learned important lessons and worked towards taking next steps. This included learning to build a stable base of support, not relying solely on mobilization efforts but focusing on deeper organizing, and shifting from organizing on "no" efforts to ones that promote "yes."<sup>745</sup> One way the building of the youth movement continued was through the Youth Force Coalition space. As Malachi Larrabee-Garza explains, "I really saw [Youth Force Coalition] as a central vehicle to continuing to have synergy, to continuing to foster movement culture, and build power in the bay...and that it was influencing people in different states and countries...this is part of the broader thing, the movement, the building beyond it."<sup>746</sup> One example of the post-Prop 21 movement building sponsored by the Youth Force Coalition included the second annual "Upset the Setup: A State-wide Youth Strategy Session to Stop the War on Youth" that happened on Saturday, May 6, 2000 where over 650 high school, middle school, and college students attended. Held at Fremont High School in Oakland, the conference included three strategy sessions and 32 workshops on topics that included the prison industrial complex and hip-hop as a tool of liberation. Youth came from as far away as Brooklyn, New York to participate, and over 80 organizations attended the conference— including the Third Eye Movement, Concord's C-Beyond, and southern California-based YOC. The morning began with inspirational speeches and a hip-hop performance by Company of Prophets in the school's auditorium. Before everyone separated to attend workshops, the MC told attendees that they had the power to change the nation and that no one else but them were going to do it.<sup>747</sup> The following year, Upset the Setup III took place in November. Over 60 youth organizations and 500 youth from all over the state attended. This conference featured two large strategy sessions and over 30 practical workshops on organizing topics, such as outreach and understanding the prison system.<sup>748</sup>

The horizon for the post-Prop 21 youth movement included targeting other events, building collaborative efforts, and continuing advocacy for youth and education. For example, YOC planned to target the upcoming Democratic National Convention (DNC) that would take place August 14-17, 2000 in Los Angeles to continue building the youth movement and to train more youth activists. For Luis Sánchez of YOC, targeting the convention was important since the Democratic (and Republican) party and its politicians should be held accountable for attacking a population with little power and voice that included young people, people of color, and women.<sup>749</sup> Close to the DNC, a collation of social justice organization formed—including YOC, Coalition for Educational Justice, Communities for a Better Environment, and a university collation that comprised of MEChA, Black Student Union, and the Bus Riders Union—

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<sup>743</sup> Hernández, personal interview.

<sup>744</sup> For more information on the organization, see <http://www.homeysf.org>, (accessed Mar. 25, 2012).

<sup>745</sup> "Ella Baker Center: A Brief History," n.d., [www.ellabakercenter.org](http://www.ellabakercenter.org), (accessed Feb. 9, 2012).

<sup>746</sup> Malachi Larrabee-Garza, personal interview, (spring 2012, San Francisco, California).

<sup>747</sup> Collin Turner, "Upset the Setup: The Fight Continues," *City on a Hill Press at UC Santa Cruz*, vol. 34.27, (May 11, 2000).

<sup>748</sup> Annual report 2001 of the Youth Empowerment Center, 7.

<sup>749</sup> See Turner, "Upset the Setup: The Fight Continues."



organized a march to former Governor Gray Davis's office with over 1,000 youth, community members, teachers and supporters, which eventually led to a meeting with one of his representative. For 2001, YOC was also planning to create a "Youth Platform" based on a transformative vision of education, and also trained many young people on globalization and its effects on education and on non-violent direct action.<sup>750</sup> Others also discussed taking up a campaign for educational justice, to fight for better resources for students and teachers, for better conditions and wages, and the reinstatement of bilingual education, as well as exposing racist brutal practices of the LAPD.<sup>751</sup> Long-term strategies included changing the nature of public debate, securing powerful allies, isolating the pro-incarceration forces, and winning meaningful changes. The Ella Baker Center along with other organizations like the Youth Force Coalition launched a "Books Not Bars" collaborative campaign to stop the building of a super jail.<sup>752</sup> Between 2000-2003, Books not Bars, along with the Youth Force Coalition, focused their organizing efforts on combating the creation of one of the country's largest juvenile hall in Alameda County. Because of their campaign, Alameda County reduced the expansion by 75% and relocated the structure closer to the families of those that had incarcerated children. This campaign moved the Ella Baker Center from protest strategies to include a combination of protest and policy agenda.<sup>753</sup> The Ella Baker Center continued their work through campaigns that work at bringing attention to the California Youth Authority's abusive and ineffective system and creating "green" jobs.

Continuing to build honest, concrete relationships with people and organizations that work for justice, freedom, self-determination and revolutionary change was also a goal.<sup>754</sup> Jinee Kim describes the many positive outcomes that came from the No on 21 campaign:

A lot of people got trained and exposed. But really for San Francisco, specifically, I think, it kinda spread through the Bay Area too, but we were able to just strengthen our community, a community of young people of color organizers....And because we worked with each other for a few years now, 'schools not jails' as a collective has never had trust issues. I know that a lot of coalition and alliance building has so much like internal problems and we've never faced that. Everybody is kinda just like more family atmosphere. That became solidified during [the No on 21 movement and] that's why we have to continue this. That's a gain, a major, huge victory....I don't think a lot of cities or regions have that kind of collective or even a collective sense [sic].<sup>755</sup>

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<sup>750</sup> Luis Sánchez, "Youth Demand Education as Human Right," *InnerCity Struggle Organizing History*, (Jun. 1, 2001).

<sup>751</sup> Carlos Montes, "Youth Fight Back & Build Movement for Justice!," *FIGHT BACK: News and Views from the People's Struggle*, vol. 3.2, (Spring 2000).

<sup>752</sup> The Ella Baker Center, "Birth of a Movement." For more on this campaign, specifically the participation of the group Asian and Pacific Islander Youth Promoting Advocacy and Leadership group, see Soo Ah Kwon, "Youth of Color Organizing for Juvenile Justice," *Beyond Resistance! Youth Activism and Community Change: New Democratic Possibilities for Practice and Policy for American's Youth*, ed. by Shawn Ginwright, Pedro Noguera, and Julio Cammarota, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 215-228.

<sup>753</sup> The Ella Baker Center, "Birth of a Movement." For a video about the "books not bars" campaign, see [www.youtube.com/watch?v=pxyrrw9wFFM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pxyrrw9wFFM), (accessed Feb. 13, 2012); Annual Report 2001 of the Youth Empowerment Center, 9.

<sup>754</sup> Montes, "Youth Fight Back & Build Movement for Justice!"

<sup>755</sup> Jinee Kim, personal interview, (summer 2004, San Francisco, California).

If colonization was about destroying communities, the No on 21 movement, as Jinee highlights was decolonizing as organizing strengthened the Bay Area community in general and young people of color specifically. Moreover, even though Proposition 21 passed, the success was being able to solidify alliances and relationships through coalitions.

Organizations like Ollin continued evolving their youth organizing principles of grass-roots mobilizing and direct action. In collaboration with other youth activist organizations/networks, many members of Ollin continued their activist efforts by organizing local actions and events under a changed name that reflected the mutable origins of the group, as it loosely became Tojil and then Huaxtec.<sup>756</sup> Others from Ollin, often simultaneously, also worked in different organizations like Youth Together and HOMEY. The actions by these organizers have included various May 1<sup>st</sup> (immigrant day) mobilization and events like Xicana Moratorium Days or Ethnic Studies conferences for high school students. For example, the 2006 Xicana Moratorium began with a sunrise ceremony at 5am in San Francisco that gathered about 200 people—half of them youth—together to honor ancestors, give thanks for life, and pray for the liberation of land, spirits, and humanity.<sup>757</sup> In March of 2011, the Ethnic Studies 10<sup>th</sup> annual conference—which brought about 1,000 high school students from the San Francisco Bay Area—to place UC Berkeley and was organized by series of local youth and student organizations, like Youth Together and Young Queers United for Empowerment.<sup>758</sup> Members from Huaxtec formed the group Coatlnecalli recently, and their organizing efforts include organizing the 2011 (32<sup>nd</sup> annual) Xicana Moratorium Day and challenging the implementation of Oakland's recent gang injunctions.<sup>759</sup>

Thus, despite the passing of Proposition 21, the movement around it had many positive long-term effects. Even though many became disillusioned with electoral politics, the movement radicalized countless youth. Others, like Malachi Larrabee-Garza, learned important lessons like dealing with "political heartbreak," which means understanding activist work as long-term and not getting attached to one outcome or one campaign.<sup>760</sup> Along with the economic realities of having jails instead of schools, the awareness on the prison industrial complex and of a failing educational system, the proposition, combined with how young people would be affected by the passing of the position, galvanized youth into action. In addition, the energy of middle and high school students motivated many college students who had been inactive with activism.<sup>761</sup> Proposition 21 organizing helped train many youth in the San Francisco Bay Area and influenced Southern California to build a tradition of youth activism. The anti-proposition 21 campaign was more than an attempt at blocking Right-wing legislation. Along with defeating the proposition, one of the goals was to organize and build a long-term movement that would change the political and economic realities of many marginalized folks in California. That is, one focus of the campaign was on training youth to be politically conscious in building a larger social movement. Beyond resistance to the bill, many organizations long term goals were about unifying youth and

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<sup>756</sup> Ollin had resulted from the evolution of From Fund Our Youth Project (FOYP), the Student Empowerment Program (StEP), and Voices of Struggle (VOS).

<sup>757</sup> See [www.myspace.com/landnlife](http://www.myspace.com/landnlife), (accessed Feb. 12, 2012).

<sup>758</sup> For brief information about some of these conferences, see, [www.youthtogether.net/peace/2011/01/27/10th-annual-ethnic-studies-conferences/](http://www.youthtogether.net/peace/2011/01/27/10th-annual-ethnic-studies-conferences/), (accessed Feb. 12, 2012).

<sup>759</sup> See, [www.oaklandlocal.com/article/young-people-organize-xicana-moratorium-day-response-oaklands-gang-injunctions](http://www.oaklandlocal.com/article/young-people-organize-xicana-moratorium-day-response-oaklands-gang-injunctions), (accessed Feb. 12, 2012); For a video of mobilizing of the gang injunctions, see, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=utuzLLUjBnE>, (accessed Feb. 12, 2012).

<sup>760</sup> Larrabee-Garza, personal interview.

<sup>761</sup> Elizabeth Martínez, "The New Youth Movement in California."

creating a better society, such as getting youth-run centers built throughout the community, like the Youth Empowerment Center. Perhaps more importantly, youth learned that they do not need to be empowered but are powerful already. As Jewnbug clarifies:

I have issues with [the term empowerment]. Don't say that you are gonna empower youth because that means that you can take someone's power and give power. We are all powerful people and we need to acknowledge our power and then use it and put it into action and utilize it for effective change. I think the youth today look back at the 60s and were able to draw from that and say, 'hey, I'm powerful, I don't need you to tell me I'm powerful. I can do this. They were doing it to.' I think that was important, something that was learned.<sup>762</sup>

Challenging the coloniality of power, youth's activism showed the world that, along with being educated on political affairs, they had power, were using it, and were power itself.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I expanded the idea of coloniality of power by demonstrating by examining the ways it connects to the oppression of youth, evident through escalating anti-gang laws that have been popular since the mid-1980s. In addition, I examined the activism of youth of color at the turn of the 21<sup>th</sup> century to argue that it challenged the coloniality of power in multiple ways. I highlighted how the walkouts challenged institutional and administrative authorities and also had a significant impact on challenging media and anti-youth narrative across the country. Also, I underscored the militant activism of youth of color, such as how they directly challenged neoliberalism as they targeted and confronted corporations that funded Proposition 21. Believing the work around defeating the proposition was also about building a larger youth movement and awareness of issues that affected young people of color in general, the activism of youth in California at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century also challenged the coloniality of power by building meaningful connections, coalitions, and self-established forms of institutional power, including the creation of the Youth Empowerment Center in Oakland. Although it closed down a few years after it was opened, the creation of the center reflected a politic of youth's activism that worked towards decolonizing the coloniality of power by building coalitions, institutions, and other forms of power that went beyond the youth movement against Proposition 21.

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<sup>762</sup> Jewnbug, personal interview.

**Chapter seven:**

**Towards a Transgenerational Consciousness**

## Conclusion

In this dissertation, I argued that the activism of young people of color in California at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century worked towards decolonizing being, knowledge, and power, and that they should be understood as contributing to the unfinished project of decolonization—the global decolonial turn that began in the mid-1900s. In general, I examined how activism provided youth a creative, practical, and effective way to collectively call attention to repressive conditions and social issues that affected them. For example, youth's activism brought awareness to racist-adultist propositions and the state's growing investment in prison building instead of education, the problems of not receiving a quality education and not successfully completing school, not having culturally relevant curriculum, and not having adequate and safe school facilities. In other words, through an interrelated network of primarily Xican@ activists—and later multi-ethnic organizers—egalitarian forms of youth activism brought attention to how public education and relevant programs were not meeting the needs of many students of color in particular and how racism—along with other forms of oppression—was at the core of many of the social problems they faced. In particular, the blowouts and youth movement strengthened ties between young people in high school, college students, and other adults, and often forcing administrators and others in power to pay more attention to youth's needs. Furthermore, through their decolonizing activism—which included implementing various types of creative strategies in their organizing, forming progressive coalitions, and conducting innovative actions—young people of color challenged the national anti-youth discourses that stereotyped them to be criminal or indifferent to social issues.

Like youth activism at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in California, many movements leave a distinct legacy from which to build upon. One example is the social movement of AIDS activism. According to Steven Epstein this movement positioned itself in relation to science, shaped the character of public engagement with science, and sought to change the ground rules about how the game of science is played. In part, this movement accomplished such changes since it included a significant component of communities that were primarily white, middle-class men with a significant degree of cultural capital, political clout, and fund-raising capacity. The AIDS activist community included many who were professionals, artists, and intellectuals ranging from doctors, scientists, educators, nurses, and other health practitioners. Although this range of people provided the AIDS movements a way to develop what Antonio Gramsci has called "organic intellectuals," it also provided interlocutors between experts and the public.<sup>763</sup> Another example of activism that is significant is the Asian American Movement (AAM) that began in the late 1960s. Grounded in a vision of structural change that would provide their communities and people across the country with peace, equality, justice, and necessary basic services, one of the lasting effects of the AAM is that it created a new framework of Asian community infrastructure, achieved more democratic governance in their communities, changed curriculum in the academy, and helped shape public policies affecting the community. By triggering a wave of new leaders in Asian American civic life, the AAM helped many populate, build, or re-energize service, advocacy, and grassroots organizations and institutions that repeatedly challenged the country's power and social structure through many ways.<sup>764</sup>

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<sup>763</sup> Steven Epstein, *Impure Science: AIDS, Activism, and the Politics of Knowledge*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), introduction, especially p. 12.

<sup>764</sup> Michael Liu, Kim Geron, and Tracy Lai, *The Snake Dance of Asian American Activism: Community, Vision, and Power*, (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008), 176-177.

On the one hand, unlike the AAM and AIDS movements, youth activism in California at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century positioned itself in relation to a "War on Youth" that, among many things, included drastic cuts in public services, the dismal decay of public education, the growing prison industry, and the criminalization of a generation. Also, unlike the AIDS movement but perhaps more similar to the AAM, youth activism did not have many professionals with cultural capital as part of the organizing component. Instead, youth activism was led by grass-roots activists, many of whom were of marginalized backgrounds and with minimal financial resources or lack of strong institutional backing. On the other hand, like the AIDS and AAM movements, youth of color at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in California also left a distinct legacy with their activism. For example, this activism demonstrated the power of young people's organizing, the value of building coalitions across race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, and the importance of making connections with the ways that many marginalized communities are linked by colonizing struggles. Grounded in a decolonizing vision that sought to affirm their cultural identities, youth activism in California at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century also elucidated the importance of decolonizing epistemologies, and challenge long-patterns of racist/adultist power relations and institutional practices. Furthermore, this activism has influenced the creation of several youth-centered institutional and social infrastructures based the idea of "youth empowerment," positively affected education and public policy to move away from punitive or deficit models, and developed a new wave of leaders that are reconfiguring age-based politics and understandings.

By demanding an educational system and society that would value their talent, history, and humanity, youth of color activists accomplished many concrete changes in institutional and social settings. These changes included the hiring of more Latin@ teachers and counselors, having Ethnic Studies courses implemented in high schools, pushing for bilingual education and services sensitive to the students' cultural needs, creating ethnically specific student-retention programs, promoting greater respect for ethnic diversity in the classroom, pushing for the right to celebrate relevant holidays, and raising awareness to lack of access to good college preparatory training, apprenticeships, job training programs and mentoring. By fostering a sense of collective pride, consciousness, and organizing, youth of color challenged the logic of coloniality, including neoliberal individualism, with their activism.

Perhaps one of the most lasting effects of the activism of youth of color in California at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century was raising awareness about the colonizing relationship between age, power, and other categories of difference. By organizing under "youth," this category offered a flexible way where Latin@s, Asians, African Americans, American Indians, and other people could come together in struggle, which was different to strategies in earlier youth organizing. For example, in the beginning of its formation, SNCC played a major role on the frontlines of activism against white supremacy. In addition, SNCC had adopted ideas from Gandhi's nonviolent philosophies and their foundation was based on American traditions of Christian idealism and pacifism.<sup>765</sup> Because their focus on desegregation eventually shifted to political rights, their "philosophical commitment to nonviolent direct action gave way to a secular, humanistic radicalism influenced by Marx, Camus, Malcolm X, and most of all by the SNCC organizers' own experiences in southern black communities."<sup>766</sup> Academic and long-time grassroots activist Trinity A. Ordonia notes that SNCC was eventually torn apart by "internal

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<sup>765</sup> Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle, SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s*, (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981 [1995]), 2.

<sup>766</sup> Carson, *In Struggle*, 3.

class, race, and sex dynamics and politics after a very large number of white students joined the organization in late 1964."<sup>767</sup> It was in 1966 when Black militant Stokely Carmichael was elected to be executive director of SNCC that the group moved in the direction of advocating for Black separatism and cultural nationalism.<sup>768</sup> Thus, by the late 1960s, SNCC "no longer advocated nonviolence or stood under the emblem of black and white working together. Instead, it called for black power."<sup>769</sup> Calling for black consciousness and power, excluding white activists from SNCC, and building black-controlled institutions reflected some of SNCC's many internal conflicts that eventually led to the organization falling apart.<sup>770</sup> The final splitting up of this group led to the formation of other radical movements. Eventually, the Civil Rights movement moved into "Power Movements" that included Blacks, Chicanos, Asian and Native Americans coming as separate communities that organized around racial/ethnic politics. At the time when The New Left and the Anti-War movements formed, many radical activist groups emerged, like the Black Panthers, The Brown Berets, and the Young Lords.<sup>771</sup> Moreover, the Feminist and Homophile movements became stronger after the 60s as well.<sup>772</sup>

Although the youth movement at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century used "race" and "ethnicity" were useful categories of difference in organizing, they were not the primary group unifiers. Instead, "youth" became the principal category of mobilization. Through their decolonizing activism, youth as youth proved they were a force to be reckoned with, and that they could do what adults traditionally said they could not do. For instance, as I noted previously in the dissertation, some youth handled media relations or served as liaison with police during demonstrations.<sup>773</sup> In Sacramento, Kahlil Jacobs-Fantauzzi was class president and organized many multi-cultural historically based activities. In Hayward, Elsa Quiroga began her activism in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade when she, along with other students, made a video that was presented to the School Board which helped keep Latino counselors at her school. At 16, Quiroga had attended various leadership conferences, worked on a summer youth program, served as a peer counselor, and became president of the La Raza club at her school. She spent two months organizing for the April 22, 1994 blowout, which included setting up committees, making flyers, and working on outreach.<sup>774</sup> Youth as a political category for mobilization and identification worked to transcend and disrupt familiar forms of segregation based on categories of difference, such as race, class, gender, and sexuality. As Jennifer Tilton argues, "coming together as 'a youth movement' or as the 'hip hop generation,' activists could craft alliances across Oakland's

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<sup>767</sup> Trinity A. Ordon, "Coming Out Together: An Ethnohistory of the Asian and Pacific Islander Queer Women's and Transgender People's Movement of San Francisco, (Ph.D. diss., University of California at Santa Cruz, 2000), 31.

<sup>768</sup> Ordon, "Coming Out Together," 48.

<sup>769</sup> Peter B. Levy, *The Civil Rights Movement*, (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1998), 14.

<sup>770</sup> Carson, *In Struggle*, 3.

<sup>771</sup> The following films provide more information about these groups: *Eyes on the Prize II: America at the Racial Crossroads 1965-1985*, produced by Henry Hampton at Blackside, Inc., (Alexandria, VA: PBS Video, 1989), episode 3; *Chicano! History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement*, produced by Galan Productions, Inc., and the National Latino Communications Center, (Los Angeles, CA: NLCC Educational Media, 1996), episode 3; Palante, *Siempre Palante!: The Young Lords*, produced by Iris Morales (New York, NY: Latino/a Education Network Service, 1996).

<sup>772</sup> See Ordon, "Coming Out Together"; Stephan L. Cohen, *The Gay Liberation Youth Movement in New York: An Army of Lovers Cannot Fail*, (New York: Routledge, 2008).

<sup>773</sup> Elizabeth Martínez, "The New Youth Movement in California," *Z Magazine*, (May 2000).

<sup>774</sup> Elizabeth Martínez, "Be Down With the Brown: Thousands of Raza Youth Blowout of School to Protest Racism," *Z Magazine*, (Nov. 1994), 43.

increasingly multiracial poor and working class. They could also reach out to young people in cities and neighborhoods in California and the nation where Latino or Southeast Asian youth were seen as the most 'dangerous youth.'<sup>775</sup>

Nevertheless, the self-conscious, youth-centered perspective evident in the activism of the young people I write about was not particularly new. In fact, age-awareness in organizing existed in the youth activism of the 1960s. One example is evident in a "letter of congratulation" published in SNCC's newspaper *The Student Voice*. L.D. Reddick writes: "Eureka! At last the students have their own publication...now the 'Troublemakers' will be able to tell their own story. We shall expect it to be authentic, comprehensive, revealing, penetrating—and with a certain something of the college atmosphere."<sup>776</sup> Reddick seems to be excited to know the story that affects young people will (now) be told through their own perspectives. As a result, Reddick believes "youth voice" will produce more liberating, honest, and accurate insight about their experience in the movement. Another example is the resolution passed at the December 1968 National Council meeting of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS):

We must realize our potential to reach out to new constituencies as both on and off campus and build SDS into a youth movement that is revolutionary....Institutions like the schools, the military, the courts, and the police all act to oppress youth in specific ways, as does the work place. The ruling class recognizes the critical potential of young people. This is why they developed so many organizational forms to contain them.....Building a class-conscious youth movement means fighting racism....Youth must be in the front ranks of all phases of the struggle, just as now they are in the leading role in raising the fight against the main enemy—U.S. imperialism—throughout the whole society....<sup>777</sup>

As the resolution shows, SDS discussed the systemic oppression of young people and the importance of building a revolutionary youth movement that would not only go beyond campus organizing, but would also place an emphasis on class-, race-, and imperialism-consciousness central to the vision. One difference with age-consciousness in organizing during the 1960s is that—along with factors that included politics, demographics, socio-historical context—youth at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century served less as a political identity among many but as the locus by which to organize other identities of difference.

Like with youth organizing at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in California, problems with adults and adult-centered approaches to organizing were also evident in social movements of the 1960s. For example, it was not unusual that young people often would do all the "hard work" in activism while adults in higher positions received most—if not all—the credit. As Charles Payne notes, many members of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and SNCC organization complained that Martin Luther King would "come into a town where SNCC or CORE had done the dangerous, thankless work of getting something off the ground, give some speeches to the adoring masses and the fawning press, and then fly off to the next place, leaving others to deal

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<sup>775</sup> Jennifer Tilton, *Dangerous or Endangered?: Race and the Politics of Youth in Urban America*, (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 225.

<sup>776</sup> Carson, Clayborne, ed., *The Student Voice: 1960-1965, Periodical of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee*, (Connecticut: Meckler, 1990), 8.

<sup>777</sup> See "Toward a Revolutionary Youth Movement" and "Revolutionary Youth Movement II," *Student Power, Participation and Revolution*, ed. by John and Susan Erlich, (New York: Association Press, 1970), 182-193.



with the letdown," since he "was too cautious, too bourgeois, too concerned about offending the Kennedys."<sup>778</sup> Julian Bond—one of the first involved in the Atlanta sit-ins as a junior in college—provides a similar critique of adults as he recalls Ella Baker's advice. Bond states: "I can remember her warning against entanglement with adults . . . just to keep our movement pure. That we had started it, we had carried it forward, and we could carry it on by ourselves."<sup>779</sup> Rather than giving top-down advice and reshaping of the movement, or attempting to control youth energy and ideas through a traditional adult perspective, it seems that Baker recognized and encouraged youth power instead.

Although a "youth consciousness" existed in the 1960s, I believe that youth activism in California at the turn of the century, however, bequeathed a more solid understanding of what this meant, what it looked like, and of its explicit importance to organizing and how it relates to modern society. Part of the reason why the youth movement was more overtly self-conscious and youth-centered at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is that—in addition to the neoliberal racial attack on youth that was launched in the 1980s—it needed to split off from adults in a more explicit way, whether consciously or unconsciously, in order to highlight the war they were fighting which not only included racism but also age oppression as a central dimension. "Splitting off," however, like what occurred during the 1960s movements across race, gender, and sexuality fault lines, was not necessarily a detriment as it came with productive components. As Trinity A. Ordoná notes, "race-exclusive organizing focused on group identity and meetings were political opportunities to develop leadership and decisions-making skills. This type of identity politics, which drew sharp divisions between one racial group and others, was viewed as a necessary strategy to self-empowerment and future solidarity with others."<sup>780</sup> That is, separation in previous movements helped particular communities to develop and work on leadership, and the practice of separation is sometimes still used as an organizing strategy as it can provide a "safe space" for people to, for example, work together, disclose information, and share. Moreover, a more developed awareness of racism, classism, sexism, and heterosexism is, in part, due to the splits that occurred in the different movements.

"Youth consciousness" in youth organizing at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, among many things, provided youth a space to build their leadership, to build on movement by their terms, and to make organizing relevant to their lives. As Armando Garzón from Mt. Miguel High School in San Diego stated, "Basically, high school students organized everything [for their local anti-Prop. 21 protest], but MEChA members have been a big support informing us on certain objectives on how to do a protest."<sup>781</sup> Having high school students organize the majority of their activism was important because, as San Diego's MEChA co-chair Manuel Roman believed, it served as a way for high school students to develop awareness in the community and social consciousness.<sup>782</sup> In addition to building their leadership on their own terms, separation from adults provided youth more clarity of the kind of oppression they faced: adultism. To some

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<sup>778</sup> Steven F. Lawson and Charles Payne, *Debating the Civil Rights Movement, 1945-1968*, (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publisher, Inc., 1998), 115; It's important to note, however, that Payne also highlights how these organizations benefited from King's name and prestige.

<sup>779</sup> Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, *Voices of Freedom: an Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s*, (New York: Bantam Books, 1990), 63.

<sup>780</sup> Ordoná, "Coming Out Together," 344.

<sup>781</sup> Quoted in Crystal Fambrini, "Students protest Prop. 21," *The Daily Aztec: The Independent Student Newspaper Serving SDSU and the College Community*, vol. 83.79, (Feb. 24, 2000).

<sup>782</sup> Rebecca Wolf, "No on 21' Rally on Campus Draws Hundreds," *Whittier College Quaker Campus*, (Feb. 24, 2000).

degree, the narrow aspects of the youth movement that led to a separation from adults denaturalized adulthood as much as it highlighted adult oppression. In fact, it was because of the youth movement that I realized that age oppression was systemic. In turn, this awareness helped me making sense of a lot of the struggles I had faced as young person. It was also because of the youth movement that I became empowered as an activist—proving to the world that I had the thinking, creativity, skills, and power to change society. Finally, it was because of the youth movement that this dissertation came about. Thus, if it weren't for the youth-centered focus of the activism I write about, perhaps I, like many others, would not have been aware as to the racializing aspects of adulthood, and how modernity/coloniality depends on the oppression of youth of color, and how other forms of oppression happen because of adultism.

While being youth-centered served as a strength, this also became disadvantageous. To this, Adrienne Rich's critiques of U.S. feminisms apply: "... 'safety' for women becomes valued over risk taking, and women-only space—often a strategic necessity—becomes a place of emigration, an end in itself."<sup>783</sup> In a similar way, the youth movement needed to move beyond the safety net and the end goal of being for and by only young people. Although the youth movement in some ways was in conversation with the world at large,<sup>784</sup> perhaps it needed to be youth-centered in order to challenge the perverted logic of colonization that routinely dehumanizes young people and creates unnatural distances between the generations.<sup>785</sup> That is, separation—like those reflected in the previous splits in the 1960s activism, although necessary—reflected the divisive logic of colonization by which stronger intergenerational links were needed to move the movement further so as to work towards the re-humanization of the generations again.

Although youth activism at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to some degree became insular with regards to age politics, aspects of intergenerationality within the organizing should be noted as it nevertheless had an important role within youth activism. In particular, there were some significant youth leaders who played central intergenerational roles with organizing, some which came from families that had activist backgrounds. For example, Rebecca Armendáriz from Gilroy learned activism from her father who had a background in organizing prison inmates. 18-year-old Ixtlixóchitl Soto from Yuba City, daughter of a Chicano Studies instructor, became president of MEChA and helped organize walkouts. There were also young adult leaders who played important roles in forming intergenerational links, the majority college students. For example, Juanita Chávez—niece of the late César Chávez and daughter of Dolores Huerta—was an undergraduate at UC Berkeley and had influence on many young people. UC Berkeley students like Rosalía Gonzales, Hernán Maldonado, and Benicio Silva worked and travelled for the regional coordination of high school youth.<sup>786</sup> Miguel, who was 13 at the time of the walkouts, got involved with activism because his older brother started bringing him to meetings. Miguel states, "He wanted me to get involved with Chicano studies and learning more about my history, so he started bringing me here, and that's where I learned all this stuff."<sup>787</sup> As such,

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<sup>783</sup> Adrienne Rich, "Living the Revolution," *Women's Review of Books*, 3.12, (Sep. 1986), 3.

<sup>784</sup> For example, Verónica Sánchez (22) and Robin Templeton (24), like many other reporters in the movement, were young, reported about youth activism to an audience that went beyond their age groups.

<sup>785</sup> Frantz Fanon examines Black-White relations that become perverted as a result of colonization. That is, it's not that black-white relationships are inherently perverted but the colonial context makes them as such. See Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann, (New York: Grove Press, 1967).

<sup>786</sup> Martínez, "Be Down With the Brown," 42.

<sup>787</sup> Quoted in Robert Roth and Annie Johnston, eds., "La Raza Youth Speak Out," *Breakthrough*, (summer 1995).

Miguel since elementary school, had a social consciousness of changing the world. He states, "When I was in sixth grade, I was talking to sixth graders, and fourth and fifth in my elementary school. I was talking about grapes. I went around to different classes and told them to stop buying grapes, because of the pesticides that they are putting on the grapes that's killing the farmworkers and their children. Their children have been born with cancer and missing parts of their body."<sup>788</sup> For Jackie Arroyo, 15 year old student at Jefferson High school in Daly City, her involvement with activism happened almost naturally since her older brother Sergio Arroyo had been active with youth activism since she was in middle schools. Many meetings had taken place at their house, and the continuity of the struggle as part of the family tradition helped the activism to sustain despite the number of difference in years. By the April 1998 Concord walkout, Jackie was a leader of the first walkout she organized and attended. She "proudly" wore a green shirt and was in charge of speaking with the press.<sup>789</sup>

Beyond the youth leaders, there were important webs of intergenerational links and practices that were part of youth organizing I studied in this dissertation. For instance, part of the organizing plan of pressuring the state into changing the educational system during the 1990s involved an intergenerational strategy that included a network of students, parents, and some support of teachers/faculty.<sup>790</sup> At Rebecca Armendáriz's court hearing—she faced the possibility of being convicted of a misdemeanor, which could include one year in county jail, a \$2,500 fine and up to five years of probation—her mother Sally Armendáriz, also a Chicana activist in Gilroy, said she was proud of her daughter's involvement in the Mexican Independence action.<sup>791</sup> Some events during the "No on 21" movement included a multi-ethnic, multi-faceted, intergenerational gathering of people where youth and "Hip Hop headz" worked alongside elected officials and the religious community.<sup>792</sup> Older adults, like partners Gabriel Hernández (a union organizer in Oakland at the time) and Adriana Montes (who helped with organizing young women) had central roles in the Chicano Moratorium coalition and in the Fund Our Youth Project (FOYP) which had a relatively flexible inter-generational organizing structure.<sup>793</sup> As Hernández explains: "We would go into schools at the request of the local Raza club or other students, and bring them together for workshops on issues like identity. We would work with them breaking down the problems at their particular school, then talk about what to do. The students are really looking for someone who will listen to them. Once they hear, see, and feel the concern, their dignity and power are unleashed."<sup>794</sup>

There are intergenerational efforts in organizing that are approached distinctly. For instance, activist Gabriel Hernández, who had a crucial role in the walkouts of the 1990s, was taught to organize by thinking about the idea of seven generations, which means that one starts with great grandparents, then grandparents, then parents, then yourself, then yourself as a parent,

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<sup>788</sup> Quoted in Roth and Johnston, "La Raza Youth Speak Out."

<sup>789</sup> Elizabeth Martínez, "High School Students in the Lead: Massive walkouts in California have important lessons for all organizers," *Z Magazine*, (Mar. 1998).

<sup>790</sup> Luis Antonio Sánchez, *La Voz de Berkeley*, vol. 4.3, (Dec. 1993), 4.

<sup>791</sup> Armendáriz was being charged for having signed for the bus that took Gilroy High students who had walked out from school to attend an educational rally in San Jose. See Carolyn Jung, "Chicano students forgo class show support for woman charged in '93 walkout," *San Jose Mercury News*, (Jan. 28, 1994).

<sup>792</sup> Davey D., "Hip Hop Activism to the Fullest!," (2/1/2000), [www.daveyd.com](http://www.daveyd.com), (accessed Mar. 1, 2012).

<sup>793</sup> FOYP had six main demands that they distributed on flyers that listed free education, language, life, liberty and work, freedom of movement and security of person, self-determination as human rights, and that corporations and the military should stay out of school. Copy of flyer listing demands is in possession of author. The author and date are unknown.

<sup>794</sup> Quoted in Martínez, "Be Down With the Brown," 42.

grandparent, and eventually great grandparents.<sup>795</sup> This idea is grounded in a particular indigenous-centered view, and one example of this type of perspective is evident in the award winning film *For the Next 7 Generations*.<sup>796</sup> Other generative intergenerational models of organizing include three recent activist efforts that I was involved with at UC Berkeley. One is the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Ethnic Studies Department which included establishing a committee of alumni, undergraduate and graduate students, and faculty.<sup>797</sup> Another was the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Queer people of color conference "(re)Generations of Solidarity: Shifting Lenses and Igniting Hearts."<sup>798</sup> The plenary session included an intergenerational panel with seven members representing high school, undergraduate, and graduate students, and community members, activists, and professionals of varying ages. Last but not least, at the October of 2011 meeting where the Association of Jotería Arts, Activism, and Scholarship was first established, the idea of transgenerational mentorship was central to the vision.

Unfortunately, there are intergenerational models that do not lead to positive cycles of change. For example, after two months of organizing for a walkout in the city of Hayward, high school student Elsa Quiroga was called in by the principal. When Quiroga explained what was happening, the principal said that "a walkout is stupid," and other teachers shared the same view.<sup>799</sup> When over 70 youth walked out of a high school in Gilroy in protest of educational and political concerns that related to the racist social climate at the time, the superintendent Ken Noonan was angry, appalled, and believed the act was done "by some very stupid [young] adults."<sup>800</sup> Instead of talking with the students, or trying to understand their action, the school board proceeded to prosecute. At a school district meeting that was attempting to prosecute an activist for helping with a walk out, Juan Zepeda highlights the disconnect of perspectives. Zepeda said he was very proud of the effort of staying up until 2am the night before the action, working on banners and flags for the protest, but at the meeting "now you tell us it was wrong, it was stupid."<sup>801</sup> In Martinez, California, after 60 sixth-graders walked out of class in protest of the elimination of their end of the year celebration party, Vice Principal Janet Steinhoff stated: "'We can't have anarchy....These kids can't just rise up,'" and proceeded by giving detentions and suspensions.<sup>802</sup>

Although one could argue that protesting the cancellation of an end of the year celebration did not merit a walk out or was hardly a cause with political sustenance, the point is that the celebration was important to youth and that they chose a form of collective protest to express concern and call attention to an act they perceived as unfair. In particular, this example highlights how, despite the reason for the walkout, the youth were reprimanded for their action, rather than administration seeking a more productive alternative to deal with the situation. Besides, what was an act of truancy for the adults that saw punishment as a solution was a political statement of empowerment for the students. And the problem is not that youth are

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<sup>795</sup> Quoted in Roth and Johnston, "La Raza Youth Speak Out."

<sup>796</sup> See <http://www.forthenext7generations.com>, (accessed Mar. 26, 2012).

<sup>797</sup> For a video of this event, see *Decolonizing the University: Fulfilling the Dream of the Third World College*, Mattie Harper (producer) and John Hamilton (video camera and post-production), (2010), <http://vimeo.com/15729523>, (accessed Mar. 21, 2012), video.

<sup>798</sup> For a list of the different Queer people of color conferences in California, see <http://www.qpocc2012.org/history.html>, (accessed Mar. 1, 2012).

<sup>799</sup> Martínez, "Be Down With the Brown," 43.

<sup>800</sup> Mike De Give, "Schools chief angry over the walkout," *The Dispatch*, (Sep. 21, 1993).

<sup>801</sup> Quoted in Mike De Give, "Activist take over meeting," *The Dispatch*, n.d.

<sup>802</sup> Donna Hemmila, "Martinez students punished for class walkout," *Contra Costa Times*, (May 19, 1994).

making political statements—in fact, in the logic of modernity, this is how one exercises a right to citizenship. The problem is the way youth are making them, and, more fearfully, that they were being done without the proper consent of adult channels and, in the process, challenging those in authority whom generally do not know how to deal with youth. These youth emphasized the power differential that takes place when they organize in mass, and the adult anxiety that Noonan and other administrators exhibited reflected a destructive, negative intergenerational model of relating.

There were other situations when administration approached youth protest in a manner that worked towards a more productive horizon, one that had a humanizing component where listening to youth in good faith was taken into consideration. For example, at the Hayward protest of April 22, 1994, the Hayward Unified School District gave principals some leeway so they could pay attention to the students and the school. This, along with his experience in history, reflected in Superintendent Marlin Foxworth comments, "I thought the young people today were organized and respectful. Their interest and enthusiasm made you proud that you get to work with them. They are dealing with the issues which haven't gone away since I was teaching in East Los Angeles...in the late 1960s."<sup>803</sup> Although many young people may have more courage and less social responsibilities that can allow them to be at the frontlines of activism, a positive intergenerational model is necessary. Such a model can help to create a stronger social movement, where youth can contribute in other ways besides in frontline work, just like adults can be in the frontlines and not only behind the scenes. The point is that intergenerationality can lead us to more humanizing horizon. Although we are interlinked and interdependent in our organizing, we often are conscious of power of this type of model.

Although we benefitted from the intergenerationality found in youth organizing at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in California, it is far from being central to general social consciousness. For instance, when one refers to activist history—its past horrific events and the way people challenged them—known leaders are often seen in heroic light. Many are proud of leaders like Harriet Tubman, MLK Jr., Cesar Chavez, and so forth. Yet, when history is in the making, like the countless involved in resistance efforts, then it seems like social change is a problem. But another problem is the lack of intergenerational consciousness that reveals how activism of before and now is interrelated in fundamental ways.<sup>804</sup> As I noted previously in this dissertation, Marcos, who was a 21 year-old student at UC Berkeley during the 1990s walkouts, believed that he did not know it was possible to organize so many young people, thinking that youth activism was a thing of the 1960s.<sup>805</sup> Why are the histories of youth activism hidden? Why are not the histories of social movements central to standard education? Why would anyone feel that activism is a thing of the past, like of the 1960s? Where is our power to change the world?

A move towards intergenerationality would be essential to the sharing of activist histories, such as learning about the many models of adult mentorship that were not necessarily adultist. Ella Baker, for example, was not only catalyst to the emerging youth movement of the

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<sup>803</sup> Quoted in "Hispanic students rally in protest," *The Times: San Mateo's County's Daily Newspaper*, vol. 94.97, (Apr. 23-34, 1994).

<sup>804</sup> One example is Joe Rodríguez' editorial, "The way to protest: truthfully," *San Jose Mercury News*, (Feb. 3, 1994), who compares a particular action that resulted in prosecution during the 90s with the civil rights. He signals the blowouts of the 1960s as "honest" and the 90s prosecuted incident as dishonest (students had parents sign release forms without knowing the event was not sponsored by the school, and they justified it through school by calling the day a "spiritual holiday"), without looking at the socio-historical context or how strategy and tactics were involved in both eras in valid ways.

<sup>805</sup> Quoted in Roth and Johnston, "La Raza Youth Speak Out."

1960s but also helped sustain their activism over time. Despite the differences in generations, Ella Baker, like others of the time, such as Bayard Rustin, Bob Moses, Angela Davis, and Betita Martínez, understood that organizing was a way of life—not separate from everyday affairs. Rather than focusing on depending on specific leadership that could lead to movements falling apart when the person is no longer around, activist such as these, had confidence in co-operative movement building where building local leadership was the focus. Often, such leaders forced on group processes and interaction, strategies that included facilitation that would let ideas develop from the people present—how each could make a contribution—instead of instruction and lecturing allowed for many in a generation to take tools everywhere. As a result, many grass-roots organizers emerged out of a lifetime of experience—not necessarily or solely from a book—where the necessity of knowing that one cannot survive in the environment unless one understands how to work with local people and respect their leadership capabilities came from practice and not only theoretical inquiry.

The shortcomings of social movements and of society at large, when it comes to the lack of placing importance on the power of intergenerationality, highlights the imperative of working to move towards a transgenerational consciousness. What I mean by this is that, in addition to having a colonizing adulthood central to modernity that fears young people's power and strategically works to suppress it, one can avoid the lack of intergenerational consciousness if we reconnect to a transgenerationality that has a trans-psyche consciousness and practice at its core. This is because transgenerationality, which goes beyond the intergenerational links that exist in the mundane, places an emphasis on the ancestors that came before us and those yet to come. A transgenerational consciousness means connecting with the spiritual, to make bridges beyond the mundane, to leap in and through modern constructs of time and space. Contrasting Puritan theology that depended on the strict demarcation between devil and divine, many indigenous people were comfortable with spirituality and its "invisible world." In several of the northeastern tribes, children, particularly youth, occupied a particularly powerful position between the worlds of the visible and invisible.<sup>806</sup> Perhaps perspectives like this one can explain a youth of color interstitial subjectivity position that sees an importance in honoring ancestors. For example, to celebrate the late César Chávez' birthdate, almost 400 Latino students from different schools protested at district offices in Richmond.<sup>807</sup> Also protesting for a better education and honoring the late César Chávez, close to 600 middle and high school students marched from Dolores Park to the rally at the Civic Center.<sup>808</sup> These youth, like others that honor descendants, point to how ancestors exist before us (that we in fact exist because of this/them), how we build upon this in the "now," the contemporary moment.<sup>809</sup> Moreover, moving towards a transgenerational consciousness means being aware that life comes after current generations are no longer on earth, and that the current cycles of violence and negativity that have been naturalized in modernity/coloniality will continue to be challenged by new people that will generate other ways

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<sup>806</sup> Anna Mae Duane, "Suffering childhood in Early America: Violence, Race, and the Making of the Child Victim," (London: The University of Georgia Press, 2010), 52.

<sup>807</sup> Martínez, "Be Down With the Brown," 40.

<sup>808</sup> "Hispanic students rally in protest."

<sup>809</sup> For a recent example, as part of the decolonize Oakland movement, a candle light vigil called "Honoring Our Ancestors" was organized on the evening of November 17, 2011. Part of the event included projecting images of recent and past ancestors onto the walls of city hall in downtown Oakland's Frank Ogawa Plaza. See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=envd2QhO64E> and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=envd2QhO64E>, (accessed Jun. 11, 2012).

of existing. Thus, a transgenerational consciousness reminds us that many existed before humans in the present, and many more will continue after we are no longer alive.

To conclude, at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, W.E.B. Du Bois stated: "The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line,—the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea."<sup>810</sup> Du Bois was pointing to the persisting (global) racial/ethnic hierarchy that emerged in the modern world. At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, however, Ryan Pintado-Vertner (with Jeff Chang) calls attention to the "The War on Youth" which describes the nationwide-decade-long reduction of youth services and expansion of aggressive politics and prisons that combined to target and criminalize youth of color.<sup>811</sup> The activism that consequently emerged at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century not only reaffirmed that the problem of the color line is not only a problem of the 20<sup>th</sup> century but of modernity itself,<sup>812</sup> but also demonstrated how the general and widespread color line intersected with other categories of difference—particularly age—as pervasive anti-youth of color attitudes culminated. Although the public educational system in California remains in crisis, curriculum changes still need to be made, and anti-youth laws and attitudes continue, activism at the turn of 21<sup>st</sup> century came with many gains. The gains from activism included providing youth of color the opportunity to form a collective voice, helping many of them empower themselves to channel their frustrations into demands—some of which were met and institutionally implemented, like having Ethnic Studies classes in high schools. In hindsight, despite many of obstacles that youth face in public schools, many high school students saw the walkouts as a positive step for the entire school since it opened the lines of communication between dissatisfied students and school officials. In a similar way, perhaps the same could be said about the relationship between youth activism and adult society general: that the energy, creativity, vision, and love of young people that manifests in their activism inevitably shake the inertness of adulthood. From this perspective, the impact of youth movements is the necessary driving force that someday will finish the project of decolonization.

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<sup>810</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Soul of Black Folk, Du Bois Writings*, Ed. Nathan Huggins, (New York: Library of America, 1984), 372.

<sup>811</sup> Ryan Pintado-Vertner, "The War on Youth," *COLORLINES: News for Action*, (Dec. 10, 1999).

<sup>812</sup> See, Sylvia Wynter, "1492: A New World View," *Race, Discourse, and the Origin of the Americas*, ed. by Vera L. Hyatt and Rex Nettleford, (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 40.

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