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Dissident Vibrations: Radical Chicana Music and Politics

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in
Musicology

by

Kristie Beltran Valdéz-Guillén

2023

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2023

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Dissident Vibrations:
Radical Chicana Music and Politics

by

Kristie Beltran Valdéz-Guillén

Doctor of Philosophy in Musicology

University of California, Los Angeles, 2023

Professor Raymond L. Knapp, Chair

“Dissident Vibrations” builds on existing literature within the Black Radical Tradition, Chicana feminisms, and Sound Studies to propose that Chicanas have developed methods of musical political dissidence that, while varied in their style, delivery, and scale of impact, are woven together through a shared radical political imaginary. This imaginary resists containment by national borders, racial divides, or gendered constrictions, and advances visions of transformative, intersectional liberation. This work expands upon Deborah Vargas's concept of dissonance—an aberration from hegemonic gendered norms, regardless of the political commitments of the performer in question—by centering a commitment to radical political world-making through music.

The dissertation of Kristie Beltran Valdéz-Guillén is approved.

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Raymond L. Knapp, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2023

To Patricia, Alice, and Martha. Thank you for sharing your light.

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My colleagues at UCLA have been instrumental in shaping my thinking and feeling about music. A special thank you to Candace Hansen, Wade F. Dean, Morgan Woolsey, Monica Chieffo, Jamie Ace, Thomas Hanslowe, Marissa Ochsner, and Racquel Bernard, whose solidarity, shared love of music and empathetic commiseration at different stages helped me get to the finish line. Special thanks to Tom for transcribing the music for this project. I am also deeply grateful for my doctoral training at USC under the tutelage of George Sanchez, Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, Macarena Gomez-Barris, Jack Halberstam, Edwin Hill, and Taj Robeson Frazier. Their scholarship laid the theoretical foundations for my own and expanded my thinking in dynamic ways.

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I am the first in my family to graduate from college and now graduate school, and I could not have done it without my family's relentless support and belief in me. Thank you to my maternal grandparents, Jose Beltran Aldaz and Maria Beltran Valdez-Guillen, whose work as a Bracero and as a rural Mexican housewife paved the road for future generations with their courage, hard work and love. Thank you to my mother Maria del Rosario Beltran for working relentlessly to provide for our family growing up, while grounding me in my Mexican American roots. You instilled an early love of music, school, and books and for that I'll always be grateful. I also owe a deep thank you to my siblings, Jess, Tony, Karina and Chava for being my original music teachers and earliest cheerleaders.

Last, a heartfelt thank you to my care teams over the years. Special thanks to Dr. Lauree Moss, Dr. Michael Boucher, Rhoda Pregerson, Nancy Ortiz, and Leslie Cox. You have helped ground me and reach for my every ambition despite my neurodivergent challenges. Thank you for helping me get here, by digging deep, leading with grace and reimagining what's possible.

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 - **Black and Chicax Studies and Decolonial Cultural Theory**
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Disney Media Entertainment Distribution, Project Manager 2021-2023
Managed the Smartsheet 2.0 program mapping, development and launch. Led quantitative data analytics using programming languages r, Python, and SQL.

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Bio

Kristie Beltran Valdéz-Guillén is a First-Generation, neurodivergent Chicana scholar from Southeast Los Angeles. Kristie received her undergraduate degree from Scripps College in Politics & International Relations, with a minor in Latin American Studies. There she received the departmental award for best thesis in 2013, and a full ride merit-based Ellen Clark Revelle scholarship for women in leadership. She trained for three years at the University of Southern California Department of American Studies and Ethnicity PhD program. There, she acquired mixed methodological skill sets to study Latinx ska punk and immigration; she received departmental and NSF funding for this research. Kristie transferred to the UCLA Department of Musicology PhD program in 2016, where she expanded her research focus beyond one genre, toward an epistemological and ontological approach to dissident music writ large. Her interdisciplinary dissertation research bridges Musicology with Chicana, Black, Indigenous and Gender Studies to explore the lives and legacies of three radical Chicana musicians.

“For us Zapatistas, the arts are the hope of humanity, not a militant cell. We think that indeed, in the most difficult moments, when disillusionment and impotence are at a peak, the Arts are the only thing capable of celebrating humanity.”

-Dignidad y Resistencia

Introduction: Dissident vibrations as a musical politics

It is my hope that everyone reading this has experienced collective effervescence at a live musical event. Connecting through music is a profound human need. The hairs on the back of your neck prickling with excitement at the experience of shouting the lyrics to a bridge together, the whole body horripilation of consonant harmonies reverberating through the acoustic space, or deep bass traducing through your body—and the feeling, however fleeting, of embodied interconnection with a large group of people through song. *That’s* musical collective effervescence. Raymond Knapp illuminates the centrality of this musical collective effervescence toward the building of U.S. nationalism and a shared sense of identity among a diverse cadre of musical theater attendees throughout the 20th century.¹ Dissident vibrations as a theoretical frame builds upon these contributions to stake that this affective and spiritual plane of jouissance can be experienced through secular collaborative musical communion, mobilized toward radical political ends that challenge compulsory cis-hetero-patriarchal U.S. nationalism as a teleological goal of 2nd generation Chicana immigrant integration.

According to Emile Durkheim, when there is a collective communion of individuals a “sort of electricity is formed by their collecting which quickly transports them to an extraordinary degree of exaltation.”² Durkheim’s notion of collective effervescence as the driving force for religious

¹ Knapp, Raymond. *The American musical and the performance of personal identity*. Princeton University Press, 2010.

² Durkheim, Emile, and Joseph Ward Swain. *The elementary forms of the religious life*. Courier Corporation, 2008. While the racist and colonial overtones of his ethnographic observations must be noted and grappled with, Collective Effervescence as a sociological model has had long lasting impacts on the field that merit consideration.

institutions is rooted in the *liveness* of collective affective experiences, as well as the divine meaning ascribed to them. In this theory, the shared affective moment is experienced as something larger than each individual, and divine meaning is imposed on a symbol/deity as responsible for this energetic exchange. Scholars have since extended this model to fit secular social movement protests and musical events, and provided necessary accountability for Durkheim’s ethnographic racial and colonial overtones.³

Dissident vibrations posits that musical collective effervescence can be experienced at different gradations at live musical events, and via streaming services or analogue recordings, because musicking is a form of affective vibrational communion—at whatever scale, via any technology—between the musicians and the audience. This musical collective effervescence offers a potent political tool. The radical Chicana musicians selected for this project generate political consciousness through their repertoire and community-oriented musical projects. Taken together, Alice Bag, Patricia Wells-Solórzano, and Martha Gonzalez enact a decolonial Chicana musical politics in their dissident vibrations by codifying subjugated histories, generating radical listening publics, and composing experiences of affective attunement -- across a variety of listening forms.

Understanding these repertoires as vibrations offers us more possibilities for engaging music as a sociological event, and signifying medium. Nina Sun Eidsheim furthers this point by positing that “approaching music in this way takes into account its nonfixity and recognizes that it always comes into being through an unfolding and dynamic material set of relations.” These material

³ Pizarro JJ, Zumeta LN, Bouchat P, Włodarczyk A, Rimé B, Basabe N, Amutio A and Páez D (2022) Emotional processes, collective behavior, and social movements: A meta-analytic review of collective effervescence outcomes during collective gatherings and demonstrations. *Front. Psychol.* 13:974683. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.974683

relations are composed of both intermaterial organology, the historical materialism of the moment from which music emerges.

This dissertation is bound together by stories about radical hope as fugitive praxis.⁴ Across different historical periods, social locations, and settler-colonial geographies, the Chicanas I consider produced musical repertoires that directly challenged inequitable power structures. Voicing these challenges through a spectrum of musical genres, these Chicanas engaged in what I am calling dissident vibrations.

Rooted in literatures of Chicax/Latinx Studies, the Black Radical Tradition, women of color feminisms, decoloniality, and Musicology, I situate these dissident vibrations as the media through which Robin DG Kelley's freedom dreaming energies are transferred and transduced across land, time, spirits, and bodies.⁵ Significantly, these dissident vibrations forged diasporic communities in their political imaginaries and performance networks, establishing sonic sanctuaries of solidarity, hope, and what decolonial theorist Glen Coulthard terms "resurgent recognition."⁶ I propose an expanded understanding of the political via Shana Redmond's definition: wherever "three or more gather in the name of freedom."⁷ I welcome the multiple interpretations and methods deployed toward those imaginaries of liberation. As such, this project centers the labors of women freedom dreamers throughout Chicax diasporas in the U.S. who have mobilized musical practices as a method for spiritual, political, and social renewal across scales, media, or outcomes from the late 20th century to the present.

⁴ Jonathan Lear, *Radical hope: Ethics in the face of cultural devastation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The undercommons: Fugitive planning and black study* (Wivenhoe, New York, Port Watson: Minor Compositions, 2013).

⁵ Robin DG Kelley, *Freedom dreams: The black radical imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002).

⁶ Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red skin, white masks: Rejecting the colonial politics of recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

⁷ Shana L. Redmond, *Anthem: social movements and the sound of solidarity in the African diaspora* (New York: NYU Press, 2013).

To engage in these radical politics of demanding structural change, and to call together a political community through musical repertoires, constitute an act of hope for a possible world in which freedom, equity, and dignity manifest for all marginalized peoples. Though the teleological ends of these dissident vibrations vary among the Chicanas in this study—from the infrapolitical, and personal as political to the expressly political—the endeavor to mobilize through music toward a more liberated world across settler-colonial borders is a common thread.

The aim of this dissertation is to honor these untold histories of dissident musical cultural production, and diasporic space-making, by engaging in Aurora Levins Morales’s framework of *curandera* histories.⁸ These stories are told from the wounds of oppression created by settler-states upon our bodies, spirits, and lands; and these stories are the healing salve through which we bear witness to our pain and resilience, as we imagine new paths forward. “*Otro mundo es posible*”—another world is possible—if only we are courageous enough to sound it out into existence, and learn from those who have done so before us.⁹ To this end, this dissertation will methodologically include *testimonio* oral history interviews, as well as close listenings and close readings of archival materials (repertoire included), to better read against the grain of music and musical histories yet to be told in such a light.

“Dissident Vibrations” builds on existing literature within the Black Radical Tradition, Chicana feminisms, and Sound Studies to propose that Chicanas have developed methods of musical political dissidence that, while varied in their style, delivery, and scale of impact, are woven together through a radical political imaginary. This imaginary resists containment by national

⁸ Aurora Levins Morales, *Medicine stories: History, culture, and the politics of integrity* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1998).

⁹ *Critical Thought in the Face of the Capitalist Hydra I: Contributions by the Sixth Commission of the EZLN* (Durham: PaperBoat Press, 2016).

borders, racial divides, or gendered conscriptions, and advances visions of transformative, intersectional liberation.

This work expands upon Deborah Vargas' concept of dissonance—an aberration from hegemonic gendered norms, regardless of the political commitments of the performer in question—by centering a commitment to radical political world-making through sound.¹⁰ In *Dissonant Divas in Chicana Music*, Vargas defines dissonance as a methodological and analytic device that disrupts heteronormative and cultural nationalist limits of La Onda. Citing Ajay Heble, she further elaborates that dissonance as that which sounds out of bounds in the music—such as angular melodies and improvisations—but also what we hear “when our critical practice might in some ways be said to be out of tune with the musics and lives we seek to describe and interpret.” The out-of-tuneness as understood through the varied meanings of dissonance, commands our attention to music as power as well as to the power of music with regard to Chicana gender and sexuality.

The limits of this analytic are most resoundingly clear in Vargas's example of Rosita Fernandez. Though Fernandez is often elided by Chicano Studies due to her pro-Alamo political stance and U.S. nationalist musical repertoire, Vargas posits that the dissonances she produced as an independent Chicana artist merit consideration. Her chapter deftly demonstrates the third type of dissonance listed earlier, as it has unfolded in the field of Chicano Studies: seeing Fernandez as so distinctly other due to her politics that we could not hear her place in history. And while I agree that this is a generative exercise, it is here that my dissertation distinguishes dissidence from dissonance.

What matters chiefly is that dissident cultural productions are *explicit* and intersectional enunciations of dissent that critique or seek to dismantle the very structures that produce these inequities. By focusing on this labor across forms, genres, and political imaginaries, I propose that

¹⁰ Deborah R. Vargas, *Dissonant Divas in Chicana Music: The Limits of La Onda* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), p. xiv.

we are better able to glean the multiple pathways open to us for continuing this work. Dissidence in this sense is less a shared bullet-point list of demands, and more an energy of critique and transformation mobilized toward unjust socio-political circumstances.

I refer to this musical world-making as dissident vibrations.¹¹ I argue that Chicana musicians use their bodies and voices to manipulate political vibrations such as transnational folk music production, rural radical political musical theater, and decolonial feminist punk music. In effect, these women become musical instruments toward insurrectionary world-making politics.¹²

The project spans the late 20th to early 21st century, focusing on key dissident Chicana political and sonic theorists, each of whom ground a chapter. Chapter one elaborates on Patricia Wells-Solórzano's career from the late 1960s to the present, scoring for film, writing for musical theater, and playwrighting, in which she honors radical Chicax histories. Chapter two explores Alice Bag's oratorical and musical repertoire from the 1970s to the present, addressing gendered inequality and sexual violence, with an eye and ear toward her contemporary music video performance practices. Chapter three delves into Martha Gonzalez's decolonial imaginary through transnational musical and political folk music projects, as both a musician and academic. This chapter covers the late 90s to the present for Dr. Gonzalez's repertoire.

Taken together, these figures give us a more robust maneuverability as we assemble new methodological efforts in the study of political worlds, and Chicana musicality. Each does a

¹¹ Re world-making, see Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, "Sex in public" (*Critical inquiry* 24.2 [1998]: 547-566).

¹² Dissidence is the historically specific defiance of these processes of racial-capitalist, settler-colonial naturalization. Dissident cultural productions lay these distortions bare, by speaking directly about and from historically specific material conditions. Though these conditions vary among the women in consideration, I argue that they are bound together by their mobilization of dissident vibrational energies under hegemonic conditions of gendered, racial, classed, and ethnic oppression. These Chicanas' deployment of dissident vibrational energies toward different visions of liberations, and through different forms/genres, are bound together by a shared practice of freedom-dreaming through vibrational media. In both their content and their performance, dissident cultural productions mobilize subjugated communities toward transformative, liberatory, and collective action at best, and cohere possibilities of life otherwise at minimum.

particular type of dissident sonic work, through a distinct type of practice that develops alternative listening publics. In examining a plurality of genres for the articulation and dispersion of dissident vibrations, I aim to delineate what each form uniquely contributes to the practice of materializing radical political change. Here I am positing that musicality is an ontology in which all these dissident vibrational Chicanas engage, that allows them to generate the collective effervescence necessary to politically mobilize their communities. Beyond this central contribution, I intend for this project to contribute to interdisciplinary conversations delineated in the argumentation section below.

This dissertation is an antiphonal cry meant to be responded to polyvocally by all readers and listeners. And on that note, I'd like to begin with an example of the kind of dissident sonic cultural productions this project explores.

Alice Bag's 2018 video "White Justice" offers a searing critique of the U.S. settler state's treatment of racialized communities. The soft ballad overture hearkens back to an idealistic past in which marginalized peoples believed they could mobilize for effective reform and equal inclusion. Bag melodically sings about "blue skies" and a "march that [felt] like a parade"¹³ as the music video pans across archival footage from the 1970 Chicano Moratorium march.¹⁴ Her timbre reflects a nostalgic yearning for the conviviality of collective action and the belief in the plausibility of justice—a political hopefulness mirrored in the visuals culled for the music video. This idealist narrative shifts towards a dissident structural critique sonically, lyrically, and visually as the song builds toward the chorus.

¹³ "Blue skies, brown berets / This march feels like a parade / My neighbor and her children came / No one could stay away"

¹⁴ On February 28th, 1970 25,000 people convened in East L.A. to protest the Vietnam War and the disproportionate number of Chicano men who were being drafted and killed in the name of empire. LAPD fired canisters into the crowd, killing three Chicanos—among them, the notable and outspoken Ruben Salazar.

The bridge transitions from the idyllic portraiture of the march toward a criticism of the state’s purported colorblind ideology. Bag begins shifting her vocal performance from a slow melodic croon to an up-tempo gravelly intonation, as she asserts “Black clubs, blue collars / Blood red, silver dollars / You say justice is colorblind / I know you’re lying.” The ostinato of this musical and lyrical phrase drives home the insidious persistence of racial prejudice—from the LAPD’s brutal assaults on peaceful protestors at the Moratorium to the assassination of Ruben Salazar at the Silver Dollar Café. The footage of these events is displayed in tandem with the lyrical portrayals. Bag further extends her critique of state violence through the visuals paired to the second iteration of the bridge. By including footage of LAPD violence against MacArthur Park protestors at the 2007 Immigration Walk-Outs and the NYPD’s murder of Eric Garner in 2014, Bag is gesturing toward the insistency of racial state violence as an issue prevailing into the allegedly colorblind present, and affecting both non-Black Chicax and Black people. In making these lyrical and visual allusions to the long durée of racial state violence, Bag is ramping up her tempo as she builds to the refusal of the chorus.

Alice Bag engages in a dissident politics by laying these domestic settler state violences bare and engaging in what Audra Simpson terms a politics of refusal.¹⁵ That is, Bag uses her voice, coupled with autonomy from either U.S. or Chicax nationalism’s limitations,¹⁶ to critique their very

¹⁵ Audra Simpson, *Mohawk interruptus: Political life across the borders of settler states* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).

¹⁶ I draw on Stephen’s definition of autonomy here: “In most cases, self-determination does not imply secession from the nation-state but the broadening of rights within the structure of the nation-state. Thus engaging in a movement for ‘autonomy’ entails not only an assertion of a specific ethnic identity or identities but also a reformulation from below of what is meant by ‘the nation’ and how the rights of citizens are understood.” Lynn Stephen, “The Zapatista opening: the movement for Indigenous autonomy and state discourses on Indigenous rights in Mexico, 1970– 1996” (*Journal of Latin American Anthropology* 2.2 [1997]: 2-41), p. 3. Indigenous autonomy has deep literatures, which I am still delving into. For now, the following scholars are instructive in framing how I think through Alice Bag in particular (but all of the women in this dissertation as well) is engaging in acts of autonomy and decolonial refusal: *Critical Thought in the Face of the Capitalist Hydra I: Contributions by the Sixth Commission of the EZLN*; Tirso Gonzalez and Miguel González, “Introduction: Indigenous peoples and autonomy in Latin America” (*Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies* 10.1 [2015]: 1-9); Mariana Mora, *Decolonizing politics: Zapatista Indigenous autonomy in an era of neoliberal governance and low intensity warfare* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008); June C. Nash, “Autonomy begins at home: a gendered perspective on Indigenous autonomy movements” (*Caribbean Studies* 38.2 [2010]: 117-142); Lynn Stephen, “The Zapatista opening: the movement

foundations.¹⁷ Here, Bag refuses juridical recognition or an outsider's retelling of the violences she encounters at the intersections of race, class, and gender, and announces these domestic violences from the interiority of her own lived experiences of them. In narrativizing the long fetch of racialized exclusions experienced by Chicanxs in the U.S., and repudiating, through the visuals and the chorus, remediation with the white settler state, Bag engages in dissident vibrations. That is, she not only performatively and timbrally engages in Deb Vargas's notion of dissonance, but also directs this aberrant sonic and performative practice toward a structural critique of the state in an act of decolonial refusal.

Literature Review and Interventions

Dissidence requires dissidents: those whose visions of freedom exceed the boundaries of settler-colonial states' ideal constructions of citizenship, and/or formulations of personhood and land.¹⁸ While these visions of freedom are asserted across a diverse spectrum of scales, investments and actions, they share this decoloniality at their core.¹⁹ Decoloniality is not a static investment in a past-

for Indigenous autonomy and state discourses on Indigenous rights in Mexico, 1970– 1996” (*Journal of Latin American Anthropology* 2.2 [1997]: 2-41); Jason Tockman and John Cameron, “Indigenous autonomy and the contradictions of plurinationalism in Bolivia” (*Latin American Politics and Society* 56.3 [2014]: 46-69); Gemma Van der Haar, “The Zapatista uprising and the struggle for Indigenous autonomy” (*European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies/Revista Europea de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe* 76 [2004]: 99-108).

¹⁷ As Simpson elucidates, it is the local knowledges and histories that serve as Iroquois citizens' acts of refusal to juridical settler-state recognition or colonial anthropological fetishization.

¹⁸ Elora Chowdhury, and Liz Philipose, eds., *Dissident Friendships: Feminism, Imperialism, and Transnational Solidarity* (Urbana and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2016); Aileen Moreton-Robinson, “Imagining the good Indigenous citizen: Race war and the pathology of patriarchal white sovereignty” (*Cultural studies review* 15.2 [2009]: 61); Holloway Sparks, “Dissident citizenship: Democratic theory, political courage, and activist women” (*Hypatia* 12.4 [1997]: 74-110).

¹⁹ “Decoloniality has a history, herstory, and praxis of more than 500 years. From its beginnings in the Americas, decoloniality has been a component part of (trans)local struggles, movements, and actions to resist and refuse the legacies and ongoing relations and patterns of power established by external and internal colonialism—what Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui calls colonialism's long duration—and the global designs of the modern/colonial world.” P.16 Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh, *On decoloniality: Concepts, analytics, praxis* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), p. 16; see also María Lugones, “Toward a decolonial feminism” (*Hypatia* 25.4 [2010]: 742-759); Arturo J. Aldama and Naomi Helena Quiñonez, *Decolonial voices: Chicana and Chicano cultural studies in the 21st century* (Bloomington: Indiana University

tense event of colonization. It is, as Maldonado-Torres states, a “decolonial attitude” which “make(s) visible, open(s) up, and advance(s) radically distinct perspectives and positionalities that displace Western rationality as the only framework and possibility of existence, analysis, and thought.”²⁰ In this sense, the political labor each woman in this dissertation carries out seeks to displace U.S. racial capitalist hegemonies, while creating apertures for possible worlds that exist beyond the settler-colonial epistemologies, ontologies, and matrices of power. From their infrapolitical refusals to their vociferously seditious challenges to state authority, these Chicanas offer an array of radical traditions for contesting racialized and gendered state violence through sound.

By engaging in what decolonial cultural theorist Macarena Gomez-Barris terms the decolonial femme methodology—that is, centering women of color’s bodies and experiences as epistemic mediums—this dissertation aims to make decoloniality a methodological praxis.²¹ Though this may seem anachronistic (surely, decolonization was not a global movement, far less an academic literature at the time of some of these Chicana musicians’ careers), reading these Chicanas’ cultural production as an act of decolonial dissidence illuminates the profundity of their work beyond its immediate political messaging or network building. Dissident Chicana musical cultural production is an act of epistemic and ontological disobedience, that facilitates the building of worlds otherwise—if only by beginning to imagine them. “Dissident Vibrations” builds on interdisciplinary literatures to theorize dissidence through the sonic political performances of Chicana cultural producers and their

Press, 2002); Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonization is not a metaphor” (*Decolonization: Indigeneity, education & society* 1.1 [2012]: 1-40).

²⁰ Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh, *On decoloniality: Concepts, analytics, praxis* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018); Nelson Maldonado-Torres, “Thinking through the decolonial turn: Post-continental interventions in theory, philosophy, and critique—An introduction” *Transmodernity: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World* 1.2 [2011]: 1-15).

²¹ see Macarena Gómez-Barris, *The extractive zone: Social ecologies and decolonial perspectives* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017).

embodied experiences as women of color.²² Though these women were separated by geography, temporality, and the social movements of which they formed a part, I argue that they are bound together by the shared practice of using their bodies as political instruments to articulate a dissident praxis. In reading the archives, oral history interviews, and musical repertoire in this light, I hope to engage in Emma Pérez's decolonial imaginaries.²³ Such readings will allow access to histories yet to be told, and political interventions yet to be documented.²⁴

Women of color feminist theorists have labored over this daunting task for decades. To find the untold histories of women of color, Chicana historians Vicki Ruiz, Miroslava Chavez-Garcia and Maylei Blackwell argue that we must read against the grain in institutional archives and hegemonic historiographies of struggle. This task is monumental and pressing. As Stuart Hall asserts, the “fatal coupling of power and difference” of racism is experienced through gender; and this inequity of power impacts the stories we find available to us through official archival documentation. To contend with this loss, and to posit a decolonial alternative to knowing and being, a large body of work on Chicana feminist *testimonios* and *pláticas* argues that we must also turn to epistemological and ontological modalities of the flesh. Literatures within Black feminist and womanist theories also stake this claim regarding the power of narrative and re/claiming the self and collective herstories.

²² Chowdhury and Philipose, *Dissident Friendships*; Moreton-Robinson. “Imagining the good Indigenous citizen”; Holloway Sparks, “Dissident citizenship.”

²³ Emma Pérez, *The decolonial imaginary: Writing Chicanas into history* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999); “a theoretical tool for uncovering the hidden voices of Chicanas that have been relegated to silences, to passivity, to that third space where agency is enacted through third space feminism” (p. xvi).

²⁴ Stuart Hall, “Race, Culture, and Communications: Looking Backward and Forward at Cultural Studies” (*Rethinking Marxism* 5.1 [1992]: 10-18), p.17. To contend with this loss, and to posit a decolonial alternative to knowing and being, a large body of work on Chicana feminist *testimonios* and *pláticas* argues that we must also turn to epistemological and ontological modalities of the flesh. Literatures within Black feminist and womanist theories also stake this claim in regard to the power of narrative and re/claiming the self and collective herstories. This project is rooted in these feminist of color literatures’ notion of embodied knowledges, and extends the *testimonio* across a variety of sonic media to include oratory, story-telling/*pláticas*, and song. It is through these media that Chicanas documented and narrated their material conditions, as experienced through class, race and gender—and thus, they provide us a rich repository of historical materials to sift through to listen to hegemonically silenced voices’ contestations with power.

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I ground my definition of the political through scholars of the Black Radical Tradition, Decoloniality, and Woman of Color Feminisms. At the foundation of the former literature is *Black Marxism*, by political scientist Cedric Robinson. In his seminal monograph, Robinson traces the creations of new worlds as a Black radical response to racial capitalism. Therein, he reminds us that in the “peripheral and semi-peripheral regions of the modern world system...Gramsci’s hegemonic class rule was never to be more than a momentary presence.”²⁵ In this reconceptualization of Western enclosures upon Black personhood as ephemeral and incomplete, rather than hegemonically cemented in super-structures, Robinson urges us toward a more capacious understanding of political terrains and tactics: understandings that do not presume the state’s complete ability to regulate the multitudinous avenues through which people imagine, communicate, and build life beyond its limitations.

It is within this view that the power of cultural production to envision and materialize liberated futurities is situated. The women whose political and sonic theorizations I examine in this project put forth visions for these new worlds, challenging the hegemony of settler-state racial capitalism and all of its corollary circumscriptions,²⁶ while also articulating new modalities of relating

²⁵ Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), p.164.

²⁶ Gramsci, Antonio and Quintin Hoare, *Selections from the prison notebooks* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971).

to land, communities, and their bodies. These challenges to racial capitalism's interlocking structures come in a dynamic spectrum of political engagements; to grapple best with this dynamism I draw upon Robin D.G. Kelley's and James Scott's articulations of infrapolitics.

In his reconceptualization of the term, Kelley bridges intersectionality with Scott's definition of infra-politics.²⁷ Kelley redefines infra-politics as the everyday acts of resisting hegemonic power structures that people of color engage in through hidden transcripts of interaction and performance.²⁸ Identifying behaviors ranging from foot-dragging to blaring music at work, Kelley encourages historians to read and listen against the grain for the minute modalities working-class people of color utilize in order to negotiate hegemonic power and assert their full humanity.²⁹ This model provides a comprehensive understanding of how interlocking structures of power diffusely materialize in the lives of people of color and yet allow room for multiple modes of contestation, refusal,³⁰ and sabotage.³¹ Infra-political engagement, then, is as much about performance practices, affects, silences, and resignifications, as it is about overt political actions. Cultural theorist Edwin Hill attends to this musical engagement with the political at different scales through his conceptualizations of Negritude in the Major and Minor.³² Whether it concerns Binguine's forlorn narratives about loving a colonizer, or more explicitly nationalist numbers, Hill argues that Black Antillean music engages the political at various intersections of power and identity. Attuning myself

²⁷ James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

²⁸ Robin DG Kelley, *Race rebels: Culture, politics, and the black working class* (Simon and Schuster, 1996).

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus*.

³¹ Sarah Haley, *No Mercy Here: Gender, Punishment, and the Making of Jim Crow Modernity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016).

³² Edwin C. Hill and Edwin C. Hill Jr., *Black soundscapes, White stages: The meaning of Francophone sound in the Black Atlantic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013).

to these elements of music and oratory practices expands the sphere where the political exists and how it plays out in people's lives—particularly in terms of cultural production.

I draw on these theorists to articulate a vision of politics that centers a transformative razing of racial capitalism, settler-states, and gendered conscriptions across scales, structures, and cultural productions. More than a simple negation of structural subjections, this vision of politics puts forth new non-extractive relations to land, community, and our bodies within the U.S. settler state. These negotiations of power occur across a spectrum of action, from the plausibly deniable infra-political to the expressly seditious.

My effort to think through musical collectives and publics is related to the work of a number of scholars who identify when we hear the political. As Shana Redmond succinctly notes, the political is engaged when three or more gather toward liberatory ends. Redmond conceptualizes these political labors through anthems and sound franchises, which she defines as “internal communiques and acts of political performance that resisted the containments and fixity of nations and rights.”³³ Her conceptualization of anthems shifts from engagements with state structures or processes as the defining parameters of the political to the quotidian ways in which structurally oppressed peoples in the Black diaspora imagine, communicate, and build possibilities of life otherwise through cultural production. While expanding the parameters of what may be considered political terrain, Redmond argues that these liberatory cultural productions sometimes conform to the very structures of identity, resources, and power that they claim to rail against.

“Dissident Vibrations” connects Redmond’s conceptualization of the political with radical Chicana sonic producers and political actors. In attending to their repertoire in this light, I aim both to elucidate the political content of their messaging and to map out the political communities of which these Chicanas formed an integral part. In this way, I will demonstrate the political to be as

³³ Shana Redmond, *Anthem*. p.4

much in the content and form of their cultural productions as it is in the relationships built in/through struggles for freedom. Which is to say: this project is interested in how those who gathered in the name of freedom did so through music and in how this musical modality mediated the formation of relationships between the performer and her listening public(s).

In this aspect, my project applies Gaye Theresa Johnson's notion of reconstituted regionalisms to Chicana sonic cultural producers who cultivated political communities across diasporic space and time through dissident vibrations.³⁴ I bridge this with Floridalma Boj-Lopez's concept of mobile archives of indigeneity to posit that music also operates as a mobile archive for non-Indigenous Chicanas across these reconstituted regionalisms.³⁵ These musical mobile archives and diasporically reconstituted regionalisms challenge U.S. settler nationalisms that racialize Chicanas as others. In thinking through the role of musical theater specifically and musicality writ large, and in challenging these racially and ethnically exclusive nationalisms, I lean on seminal contributions to the field by Raymond Knapp.³⁶

These musical media offer insight into processes of dissident political engagement, Chicana racialization, and the broader social histories that they emerge from. To guide my thinking toward this end, I ground this project in George Lipsitz's diasporic models of the dangerous crossroads of cross-cultural borrowing, and the analysis of popular music as social history.³⁷ I see Lipsitz's approach to situating music as the "alternative archives of history, the shared memories, experiences,

³⁴ Gaye Theresa Johnson, *Spaces of conflict, sounds of solidarity: Music, race, and spatial entitlement in Los Angeles*. Vol. 36 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013).

³⁵ Floridalma Boj Lopez, "Mobile archives of indigeneity: Building La Comunidad Ixim through organizing in the Maya diaspora" (*Latino Studies* 15.2 [2017]: 201-218).

³⁶ Raymond Knapp, *The American musical and the formation of national identity* (Princeton University Press, 2005); Raymond Knapp, "Carl Nielsen and the Nationalist Trap, or, what, Exactly, is 'Inextinguishable?'" (*Carl Nielsen Studies* 4 [2009]: 63-76).

³⁷ George Lipsitz, *Footsteps in the dark: The hidden histories of popular music* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007); George Lipsitz, *Dangerous crossroads: popular music, postmodernism and the poetics of place* (London and New York: Verso, 1994), pp. 10-38.

and aspirations of ordinary people, whose perspectives rarely appear in formal historical archival collections,³⁸ as conversant with Clyde Woods’s articulation of a blues epistemology.³⁹

Woods attends to the ways in which the blues—as method and content—served as epistemological and ontological dissidence to Western regimes of racialized power. Beyond mere defiance, Woods demonstrates that the blues served as a method for Black people to imagine and create their immediate world anew. The political lies as much in the content of the songs’ denunciations of inequities as it does in testimonies of quotidian pleasures and challenges, thereby privileging geographically specific black working-class modes of knowing, relating, and creating.

Taken together, Lipsitz’s historical materialism of popular culture and Woods’s elaborations of geographically specific musical epistemologies frame my work’s methodological approach. The women whose work I examine are shaped by the historical-material contexts of the moment in which they lived, and the geographic specificity in which they developed their work.⁴⁰ This historical approach to popular culture is requisite if we are to comprehend the roles of power, land, and relations that were dialectically formative to and informed by these women’s cultural and political labors.⁴¹ Angela Davis expands our understanding of politics and gender in media production through her examination of Black feminist blues singers.⁴²

³⁸ George Lipsitz, *Footsteps in the dark*, p. xi.

³⁹ Clyde Woods, *Development Arrested: the blues and plantation power in the Mississippi Delta* (London: Verso, 2017).

⁴⁰ Geography here is articulated in the vein of Woods’s own emphases on both place/land and relations/community.

⁴¹ A Black Chicana in Chicago experienced power, land, and relations in a radically different way than a white passing Chicana in 1940s Los Angeles, and these distinctions framed their cultural labors. Drawing upon Woods’s contributions, this project will attend to this intersectional complexity. Further, this project also calls upon Woods’s theorization of the blues as a Black working-class epistemological praxis to propose that working-class Chicanas engage sonic production as a modality of producing, disseminating, and codifying dissident knowledges—albeit more anarchically organized than the cogency of Woods’s form and genre-specific work.

⁴² Angela Y. Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998).

Davis demonstrates how the blues provided a political platform for Black women due to its focus on the minutiae of women's quotidian lived realities—from mourning loves lost, to decrying labor injustices, to testifying against racial violence's strange fruits. It is in this thick description of the lived realities of interlocking structural inequity that we find an articulation of a Black feminism invested in amplifying personally experienced hardships as political articulations. Davis sees dissidence not only in the lyrics but in the self-assertive styles of singing and self-presentation of women singing the blues.

This project builds from Davis's interventions and bridges them with literatures on women of color feminisms.⁴³ In examining Chicanas' repertoire for political articulations, I will focus on both the structural politics that frame their experiences and foreground their quotidian engagements with the personal as political. Bridging this political division between the domestic and the public sphere is pressing, both in terms of codifying the epistemologies forged in and through the domestic realm and in acknowledging the intimate scale to which power inequities extend. Each cultural producer selected for this project contends with these inequities by uniquely mobilizing sonic media to forge the personal as political in both content and performative space.

Deborah Vargas's seminal work contributes to this conversation on gender and sonic media production among Chicanas. As noted, in *Dissonant Divas in Chicana Music*, Vargas defines dissonance as a methodological and analytic device that disrupts heteronormative and cultural

⁴³ Jacqui M. Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (Latham, New York: Kitchen Table/Women of Color Press, 1983, 2nd ed.); Maylei Blackwell, *Chicana power!: Contested histories of feminism in the Chicano movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016); Hazel V. Carby, "Becoming Modern Racialized Subjects: Detours through our pasts to produce ourselves anew" (*Cultural Studies* 23.4 [2009]: 624-657); Claire Alexander, *Stuart Hall and 'Race'* (New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 176-209; Ana Castillo, *Massacre of the Dreamers: Essays on Xicanisma* (New York: Penguin, 1995); Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2008); Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race, and Class* (New York: Random House, 1983); Grace Kyungwon Hong and Roderick Ferguson, eds., *Strange Affinities: The Gender and Racial Politics of Comparative Racialization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); Cherrie Moraga, *A Xicana Codex of Changing Consciousness: Writings, 2000-2010* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011); Aurora Levins Morales, *Remedios: Stories of Earth and Iron from the History of Puertorriquenas* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998).

nationalist limits of La Onda. Here Vargas is articulating dissonance expansively: it is the Chicana divas' disruption of heteronormative and cultural nationalist limits; the music's aberrant sonic qualities, which Jacques Attali would call noise;⁴⁴ and the critic's own mis/perceptions of musics and lives from which they are disconnected.

These interventions are foundational, and yet their limitations are why my dissertation distinguishes dissidence from dissonance. When the focus is merely on gendered dissonance as deviation from cis-heteronormative or ethnic-nationalist scripts—in terms of outfits, performance practices, or language(s) spoken—we lose sight of the ends to which this dissonance is being deployed. If these gendered and sexual dissonances are reifying a settler-racial-capitalist state, or any of its requisite hierarchies around categories of difference, I argue that they are not engaging the liberatory political realm as robustly as possible.

Stuart Hall's conceptualization of distortion furthers my thinking along these lines. I draw from his discussion of Marx's concept of distortion, not as a false consciousness of one's oppression but rather, as the eternalization of relations which are in fact historically specific; and the naturalization effect—treating what are the products of a specific historical development as if universally valid, and arising not through historical processes but, as it were, from Nature itself.⁴⁵ Hall approaches Marx's notion of distortion both as a naturalization of historically specific relations and as metonymic myopia in which we might confuse the market as an autonomous unity of its own, independent of the ideological categories that help produce and sustain it.⁴⁶ A mere focus on dissonant gendered and sexual scripts provides us examples of ruptures from hegemonic

⁴⁴ Jacques Attali, *Noise: The political economy of music*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985.

⁴⁵ Stuart Hall, "The Problem of Ideology--Marxism without Guarantees" (*Marx: A Hundred Years On*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1983), p. 32.

⁴⁶ *ibid.* p. 34.

expectations but does not necessarily engage with the historically specific relations or ideological categories that produced these scripts in the first place. The limitations of dissonance as an analytic approach are not reflective of a false consciousness on Vargas's or the divas' accounts but, rather, they are an opportunity to interrogate what is falsely naturalized and sustained when our political engagements do not attend to the structural, historically specific whole.

While dissident cultural productions occur across different media, I focus here on those that travel through sonic vibration: namely music, and musical theater. Sonic vibrations warrant a focus on the embodied affective and sensorial registers through which dissidence is transmitted and transduced. Building from key interventions in affect theory, I understand dissident vibrations as one medium for affective transmission that centers the body—a seemingly obvious intervention put forth within Chicana feminist theories and feminist musicology decades prior to queer affect theorizations. In centering the body as an intermaterial organ, this project aims, as an extension of seminal work by Nina Sun Eidsheim, William Cheng, and Suzanne Cusick to understand how radical Chicanas manipulated sonic vibrations, their instruments, and the bodies of their listening publics to enact transformative social change.⁴⁷ Taken together, then, dissident vibrations are political irruptions expressed through sonic vibrations, be it oratory, musical performance or musical theater. These vibrations transmit and transduce liberatory political messages and affective energies that mobilize bodies as intermaterial organs.

In particular, Nina Sun Eidsheim's concept of an intermaterial organological approach to the study of sonic vibrations, understands all materials through which sonic vibrations move as an organ

⁴⁷ Nina Sun Eidsheim, *Sensing Sound: Singing and Listening as Vibrational Practice* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015); William Cheng, *Just Vibrations: The Purpose of Sounding Good* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016); Suzanne G. Cusick, "Feminist theory, music theory, and the mind/body problem" (*Perspectives of New Music* [1994]: 8-27). See also Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2014); Sarah Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Mel Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012); Suzanne Cusick, *Music/ideology: Resisting the Aesthetic: Essays*. Amsterdam: G + B Arts International, 1998.

elemental to the sounding and sensing event. This enriches my understanding of the cultural productions and their examination, not simply as past performances to be historically dissected but also as live transmissions of radical hope, joy, and dissidence that transduce through our bodies. Additionally, Eidsheim's conceptualization centers people's bodies as musicking instruments—an assertion central to my claim that these radical Chicanas mobilized their voices and bodies as instruments for transformative social change.⁴⁸

Interventions

Building from these core interventions in the literature on music and politics, my project aims to contribute to the possibilities for transformative liberatory sonic engagements through an interdisciplinary approach. Below, I will detail how my project contributes to interdisciplinary conversations through four theoretical and one historiographical intervention.

First, this project expands knowledges of music of political dissidence and mobilization. This intervention is in conversation with the literatures within Chicano Studies and Women of Color Feminisms that articulate *testimonios* and portraiture as an epistemological fountain of experiential and embodied knowledge for disempowered communities. I add to these conversations through discussion of the political beyond the mere content of a *testimonio*—and the subjugated experiences that these media help to codify—toward the performative space and listening publics such engagements produce.⁴⁹

Second, this project enters conversation with scholarship on Chicana social movements specifically, as well as literatures on social movements and music more broadly. The former tends to

⁴⁸ Christopher Small, *Musicking: The meanings of performing and listening* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1998).

⁴⁹ That is, by focusing on vibrational performative transmissions and transductions, I elucidate how sonic performance practices engage in dissidence by virtue of the spaces that they help to create and the collective resonances they engender.

focus on Chicano youth and farm worker movements in the 1960s-1970s, largely from a cis-hetero-ethno-nationalist perspective. Recent work engages this same time frame from interracial coalition-building as well as feminist perspectives. My project will enter conversation with this work as I highlight the contributions of Patricia Wells-Solórzano to the Chicana Movement, but it will also extend beyond this time period and analytical focus on Chicana nationalist movements by centering a woman and critically evaluating Chicana nationalism's role in her dissident repertoire.⁵⁰ My project forwards a more capacious articulation of political engagement through the concept of dissidence. This allows for liberatory political engagements across scales and media, with the focus on the ethos, ends, and performance of each dissident vibration rather than a taxonomical, institutional, or market-based review of music's political impact. Further, the body of work on music and social movements regularly, even if inadvertently, naturalizes the settler-colonial racial capitalist state from which many social-movement actors are making demands. My project does not deride this modality of political participation but suggests that our conceptualization of political organization can benefit from a shift in perspective.

I argue that the analytic focus should not be on the demands made upon the state or the state's multi-scalar responses but, rather, on the quotidian efforts made by the political actors themselves, and on the relations to land and community that they are able to forge. I draw on decolonial cultural theorist Glen Coulthard's notion of resurgent recognition and Shana Redmond's notion of anthems to frame this approach; while settler-states frame the material conditions under which radical political mobilizations and cultural productions occur, oppressed people's liberatory

⁵⁰ The broader scholarship on music and social movements tends towards a more taxonomical and state-centered framework. These models articulate lists of limiting requirements that music must meet in order to be considered political or engaged in social movements; engage music from a social scientific lens that reduces it to matters of preference and identity, which subsequently coalesces political listening publics; and focus on mainstream popular music that was mobilized to political ends by social movement actors. Exciting new work is pushing beyond these sociological parameters, to embrace more capacious conceptualizations of sonic cultures and modalities of political engagement.

efforts should be understood as being directed at one another and not necessarily or solely at the state.

Third, this project centers diaspora rather than linear narratives of transnational immigrant experience, generational assimilation, or static notions of Chicana nationalism that abound in Latinx/Chicana Studies. Building on George Sanchez's seminal work on the process of Mexican-American identity formation and racialization histories in the U.S., this project seeks to extend how Chicanas specifically have experienced this racialization across diasporic space and time.⁵¹ Diaspora foregrounds the plurality of subjectivities and material experiences while centering modes of collective imagination as key to constituting its communities and identities.⁵² This analytic is useful for capturing the intangible affects, immeasurable connections, and non-linear circuits of expression that dis/located and dispossessed peoples experience. Focusing on diaspora allows me to center how cultural producers imagine and constitute relationships to one another, the land, and a broader sense of community across categories of difference often obfuscated when focusing on nationalisms as primary modes of identification.⁵³

Fourth, this project engages scholarship on Chicana Musicology and Ethnomusicology. Unfortunately, Chicana Musicology is an underdeveloped field that largely centers the Spanish

⁵¹ George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1995).

⁵² Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Gender and U.S. Immigration: Contemporary Trends* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Gendered Transitions: Mexican Experiences of Immigration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Alejandro Portes and Rubén G. Rumbaut, *Legacies: The Story of the Immigrant Second Generation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Alejandro Portes and Rubén G. Rumbaut, *Immigrant America: A Portrait* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014); Edward E. Telles and Vilma Ortiz, *Generations of Exclusion: Mexican Americans, Assimilation, and Race* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2008).

⁵³ Despite its limitations, diaspora allows us to think most poignantly for this project through the regional and racial differences between Lucy Parson's Chicago-based Afro-Chicanidad and Josefina Fierro de Bright's Los Angeles-based light-skinned mestiza Chicanidad.

colonial period, and is glaringly lacking in a critical analysis of power or the violence perpetuated by both U.S. and Mexican settlers.⁵⁴ My work endeavors to challenge this subfield's historical time period and repertoire, which is largely focused on corridos and mission music, while foregrounding how power operates intersectionally in shaping the historical-material contexts that framed each cultural production. Additionally, my work extends Steve Loza's challenges against the parameters of which sonic-cultures musicology considers its purview.⁵⁵ By including musical theater, and oft-elided ethnic genres such as Chicana punk and Chicana folk, I invite the field to open their bodies (minds, hearts, and ears included) to the multiple media through which sonic vibration and knowledges travel.⁵⁶

The fifth intervention is historiographic and alluded to throughout this section: doctoral research on radical Chicana sonic cultural producers is limited, especially regarding the time periods, regions, and repertoires that I examine. Though the literature on Chicana Musicology is scant, manuscripts across Chicano Studies and Ethnomusicology provide ethnographic and archival

⁵⁴ See, for example, John Koegel, "Mexican American music in nineteenth-century Southern California: The Lummi Wax Cylinder Collection at the Southwest Museum, Los Angeles" (*Revista de Musicología* 16.4, Del XV Congreso de la Sociedad Internacional de Musicología: Culturas Musicales Del Mediterráneo y sus Ramificaciones: Vol. 4 [1993]: 2080-2095 and 2630-2630); Antoni Piza, William J. Summers, Craig H. Russell, and Ferrer A. Gili. *J. B. Sancho: Pioneer Composer of California* (Palma: Universitat de les Illes Balears, 2007); Craig H. Russell, *From Serra to Sancho: Music and Pageantry in the California Missions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Robert M. Stevenson, *The Music of Colonial Spanish America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); William Summers and Gary Tegler, "Letter and Bibliographical Supplement To: The Rise and Fall of Indian Music in the California Missions" (*Latin American Music Review / Revista De Música Latinoamericana* 3.1 [1982]: 130-135); William J. Summers, "Recently Recovered Manuscript Sources of Sacred Polyphonic Music from Spanish California" (*Revista De Musicología* 16.5 [1993]: 2842-2855). These works are to be distinguished from contributions within Chicana history regarding the exact same time periods, which contest the colonialist fantasies of musical harmonization between settlers, natives, and mestizos through rigorous accounts of structural and physical racial violences; see Nicole M. Guidotti-Hernández, *Unspeakable Violence: Remapping U.S. and Mexican National Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); Miroslava. Chávez-García, *Negotiating Conquest: Gender and Power in California, 1770s to 1880s* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004); Omar S. Valerio-Jiménez, *River of Hope: Forging Identity and Nation in the Rio Grande Borderlands* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013).

⁵⁵ Steven Loza. *Barrio Rhythm: Mexican American Music in Los Angeles*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

⁵⁶ This project also enters into conversation with literatures on Latinx/Latin American Ethnomusicology. Within the past twenty years, this subfield has grown to include a number of robust ethnographic case studies on Latinx/Latin American musical cultures, methodologically conducted via participant-observation, qualitative interviews, and lyrical as well as performance analysis. Critical reflexivity along the lines of race, class, and gender is salient in this body of work, yet it is a burgeoning subfield.

insights into the musical cultures of U.S. Chicana communities. This project takes root in a belief that the (hi)stories we tell matter in forming our political consciousness and our sense of imaginative possibility. I want to explore the many ways radical Chicanas have shaped their worlds through musical cultural production, with the hope that this project will help us look back to look forward, and contribute to the literatures on contemporary Chicana Musicology and Ethnomusicology, which are particularly sparse from a critical decolonial and Black radical theoretical perspective.

But more than merely adding to the literature for its own sake, this project serves as a reflection of the radical possibilities Chicanas have long imagined and engaged in, and seeks to fill us with hope and empowerment for sonic methods at our disposal for transformative social change. In this sense, this project is a scholarly ambition as much as it is a personal conviction: stories tell us who we come from and where we might go. Through this project I endeavor to offer loving and rigorous portraits of these possibilities as told through the stories of three radical Chicanas who dared to dream of freedom.

Chapter Breakdown

Chapter one will examine the obfuscated musical labors of Patricia Wells-Solórzano, a composer, musician, and music educator whose work originated in partnership with the United Farm Workers (UFW) grape strike when she was a college student at California State University, Northridge. During her solidarity work with the UFW she met Agustin Lira, the musician and composer who would draft the UFW's canonical anthems and who would become her mentor and musical colleague in their protest music group Alma. Much of Wells-Solórzano's musical contributions to Alma, el Teatro Campesino, and music education are subsumed under Agustin Lira's body of work despite her roles as manager and tour coordinator for Alma and her original scores and performance productions of contemporary Teatro Campesino plays "Regeneración:

Ricardo Flores Magón and the Mexican Revolution of 1910” (2010); “The Life and Times of Candelaria Arroyo” (2004); “Esperanza and Luz: A Tale of Two Immigrant Women” (2001); and others. Additionally, Wells-Solórzano founded a community music education program called Generaciones Project featuring Mexican and Latin American Folklore, including the radical musical tradition of Nuevo Canto.

This chapter strives to disaggregate Wells-Solórzano’s creative labors from Lira’s as well as to recenter and amplify the dissident musical contributions that Wells-Solórzano has made in the years since her inaugural involvement in the movement. In doing so, I situate her within a genealogical lineage of musical dissidence routed through the Chicano farmworkers’ movement, which she has expanded into more capacious projects in her own creative and educational endeavors since then. Through oral-history interviews with Patricia Wells-Solórzano I contextualize her historical narrative with archival research on Agustin Lira and Teatro Campesino at the UCSB and UCSD Special Collections. Additionally, I conduct a deep listening and analysis of her group’s *Songs of Struggle and Hope*, recorded by the Smithsonian Folkways Collection, as well as the music she scored for the documentary film *The Fight in the Fields: Cesar Chavez and the Farmworker’s Struggle* (1997). By bridging these Musicological and Ethnomusicological approaches to engaging her creative and educational labors, I aim to reveal the dynamic contributions she has made to Chicana dissident musical repertoires. This chapter will also seek to highlight the role of a diasporic political and musical training—in both Mexico City and rural California—and will examine how this is reflected in the form and content of her repertoire, teaching practices, and performances.

Chapter two will examine the political dissidence of Alice Bag’s repertoire throughout her career as a punk vocalist from 1977 to the present. In a recent interview, Bag argued that, “The value of music and art in the revolution is that it nourishes your emotions. It touches you on a

different level than an argument. It's not just the ideology: it's emotion that provides the fuel.”⁵⁷ This conceptualization of music’s role in social transformation places its affective transmission and transduction at the center—a stance made all the more important given the gendered themes embedded throughout Bag’s repertoire. This chapter is interested in examining how Alice Bag has mobilized dissonant affects to express dissident gendered politics through her music, and theorizes what political labors this affective resonance enacts through a decolonial femme analytic outlined earlier.

While there is some archival and scholarly work that corrects historiographic silences around Chicano contributions to the 1970s LA punk scene and the gendered significance of Chicana punks’ stage presence, there is no scholarship that focuses on Bag’s performances and repertoire, particularly during her resurgent career. This chapter aims to situate Bag’s political dissidence as much in the lyrical content of her anthemic contestations against gendered inequity as in the timbral delivery and performative style of these messages. This chapter employs interdisciplinary methods, including oral history interview, archival review, and close listenings. In weaving these sources together, I reveal the political dissidence and diasporic imaginary that is emblematic of Bag’s work. Her articulations of dissidence are routed through a decolonial femme imaginary that expands across the U.S.-Mexico border—centering women of color’s experiences and voices as diasporic nodes of connection and dissent. Such a focus allows for a centering of the personal and affective as political realms through which Bag delivers her dissident contributions.

Chapter three explores the decolonial political music project, *Entre Mujeres*, that was produced by Martha Gonzalez transnationally. Through an oral history *testimonio* interview with Gonzalez, close reading and comparative analysis of Spanish language lyrics, and compositional

⁵⁷ As quoted in “Alice Bag and Punk Rock's Enduring Battle for Women's Rights,” *Vice*, 2017 (https://www.vice.com/en_ca/article/vvjmwb/alice-bag-and-punk-rocks-enduring-battle-for-womens-rights, accessed August 22, 2020).

interpretation, I elucidate how Chicanas have mobilized *son jarocho* toward decolonial political ends. While the historical narrative of *son jarocho* has predominantly focused on male musicians, women have played a vital and often overlooked role in the genre.⁵⁸ Historically, women participated in *son jarocho* through singing, dancing, and playing percussion instruments such as the tarima.⁵⁹ Their contributions were integral to the social fabric of *son jarocho* gatherings, known as fandangos, where women would lead the singing and dancing, fostering a sense of community and cultural continuity.⁶⁰ Moreover, women in *son jarocho* have challenged patriarchal norms and reclaimed spaces traditionally dominated by men, actively shaping the genre and exerting agency within their communities.⁶¹ Acknowledging and amplifying the historical role of Chicana and Mexicana women in *son jarocho* is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of the genre's evolution and its potential for decolonial praxis.

Chapter four serves as a conclusion that reflects on dissident vibrations across different geographies and sonic media. It will center a cadre of women whose dissident sonic repertoire are often elided by Musicological inquiry, such as Lucy Parsons, Josefina Fierro de Bright and *Dignidad y Resistencia*. By expanding the geographic horizons of Latinidad toward a hemispheric analysis, this chapter positions dissident vibrations as a theoretical analytic that can be scaled. Including the women above will provide a grounded view of the diverse array of sonic media Chicanas and Latinas have mobilized towards dissident ends.

⁵⁸ Fuentes, Martha. "Gender, Affect, and Sound in the Afro-Mexican Son Jarocho Tradition." *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 32, no. 1 (2020): 86-105. doi:10.1111/jpms.12259.

⁵⁹ Flores, Ana. "Sound, Affect, and Migration: The Role of Women in Contemporary Son Jarocho in the United States." *Ethnomusicology Forum* 27, no. 1 (2018): 97-116. doi:10.1080/17411912.2018.1446809.

⁶⁰ Ruiz, Gabriela. "Rethinking Performance: Fandangos, Performative Communities, and the Dialectics of Presence and Absence in Son Jarocho." In *Mexico's Indigenous Communities: Their Lands and Histories, 1500-2010*, edited by Laura A. Lewis and Yanna Yannakakis, 120-135. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

⁶¹ Vargas, Deborah R. *Dissonant Divas in Chicana Music: The Limits of La Onda*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012.

Chapter 1: Chicana movement folk music and Patricia Wells-Solórzano

Patricia Wells-Solórzano is a decolonial feminist Chicana musician, playwright, educator, and activist who has been at the forefront of decolonial folklore for decades. Her parents were young Mexican American migrant farmworkers in the 1950s borderlands town of Brawley, California, and her life unfolds within the historical trajectory of the Chicano Movement's folk music and community theater practices. For Patricia, and for many other Chicano Movement students living under the overt intersectional structural oppression of the long 1960s, folk music and community theater provided more than a symbolic identity marker, festive soundscape, or expressive medium. Music and community musical theater functioned as viable spaces of social transformation via cultural transmission, collective memory codification, and training, the latter through helping musickers become more empowered agents. These functions aided Chicax musickers in navigating intersectional oppressive structures of race, class, and gender, kindling the dissident vibrations of imaginative decolonial possibility and interconnected collective responsibility through song. Before considering Patricia Wells-Solórzano's specific contributions to the Chicano Movement, and in order to value them appropriately, we must consider the larger positionalities of the traditions she engaged in. The following section will provide this theoretical and historical context before returning to Wells-Solórzano's musical contributions and biographical context.

The Chicano Movement folk-song tradition is part of a larger global genealogy in which music has played a role in transformative liberatory social movements at infrapolitical as well as macro-political scales. As Chicano Movement music became more widely disseminated, it contributed to the goals of decolonizing Chicax culture through promoting Indigenous languages, unionizing farming practices, and providing a testimonio to the embodied experience of living in a state of *nepantla*-- while resisting racial state capitalism, U.S. imperialism, and assimilation.

In this regard, Chicano music from the 1970s is best understood in dialogue with two other decolonial musical movements that were also employing music as a decolonial strategy: Latin American *Nueva Canción* (New Song) and South African liberation music. The songs performed by Mercedes Sosa in Argentina, Silvio Rodríguez in Cuba, Fela Kuti in Nigeria, Violeta Parra and Víctor Jara in Chile, Pete Seeger in the United States, and many others forge a global sound franchise of anthems that announce the emergent worlds that these artists and their corollary social movements forged into being. Like Chicano music, these decolonial musical movements were rooted in folk traditions of resistance that were used to commemorate historic uprisings while also imagining decolonized futures. The most significant differences among these decolonial musical movements involved the disparity in access to media outlets that helped them attain regional, national, and global audiences. This does not necessarily mean that one movement was more effective than another or that one movement had more supporters. However, what it does suggest is that social conditions help determine which decolonial strategies are available to oppressed peoples for their use.

From a cultural sociological perspective, the index of the success of political music lies in its ability to shift consciousness and mobilize action among its target populations as well as those outside of the political music's intended audience.⁶² However, this strictly utilitarian social scientific approach to the valuation of music's political efficacy—while pragmatic, and understandable—fails to capture the impacts of political music movements whose very notion of successful decolonization was to ideologically and materially eradicate colonial notions of temporality, metrics of success or value, or epistemological and ontological models. The decolonial musical movements in Latin America, South Africa, and the United States are similar in that they used folkloric music to decolonize their national and ethno-racial identities, produce decolonial subjectivities, and ideologically counter hegemonic racial state terror to varying degrees of success as conventionally

⁶² Rosenthal, Rob, and Richard Flacks. *Playing for change: Music and musicians in the service of social movements*. Routledge, 2015.

measured. While these outcomes may not match the institutional political involvement imagined by cultural sociologists as the paragon of political efficacy, overlooking these repertoires' significant cultural impact in shaping social consciousness, fostering a sense of sociocultural cohesion, codifying contested minorities national histories, and uplifting dissident spirits within each respective country would be analytically negligent.

Chicano movement music is unique among these decolonial musical movements because it was the only movement that successfully cultivated a global diaspora of supporters who were already living outside of Mexico or the countries where liberation music had emerged. In this sense, by virtue of its diasporic existence outside of both Mexican and American hegemonic borders and subjectivities, Chicano Movement folk music enacts Deborah Vargas' notion of dissonance contra la onda and Shana Redmond's notion of Black anthems uniting a community outside the bounds of nationalism or its borders. It exists in the break, the hyphenated *nepantla* in becoming Mexican American. Chicano Movement folk music thus extends into the terrain of dissident vibrations by directing this dissonance toward a politically dissident teleology, while communicating through and to a racialized working class set of communities on both sides of the border. That is, to paraphrase Floridalma Boj Lopez—the challenge of Chicano Movement music becomes not just challenging two settler-nation states, but more primally, to survive them.

Musical folklorists from the long 1960s around the world gave rise to popular repertoires beyond elite concert halls or recital stages in socio cultural and regional identity-specific contexts in which folk music served as an accessible archive, collective lifeline, and shared memory that exceeded nations or their efforts at homogenizing nationalism. This folk musical practice precedes this era and extends beyond Chicanx communities, however its reemergence in the long 1960s was in part due to the dual processes of U.S. Cold War imperialist intervention and localized Global South movements towards the decolonization of settler-colonial nation states and dictatorships.

While often categorized under nationalist repertoires, these folk songs provided a counterpoint to official understandings of their countries' histories, politics, and cultures while promoting dissident ways of thinking and feeling about these phenomena.

In an interesting parallel to the organizational structure of the Chicano movement, its protest music served as a functionally Alinskyist approach to social transformation. With the broad shared goals of changing existing material socioeconomic structures through education and labor, subsections of the movement set specific achievable goals to collectively reform hegemonic structures and policies. The music that was generated by and for these movements served a similarly pragmatic purpose: to invigorate the movement members' spirits toward the accomplishment of their goals. Songs such as "De Colores" functioned as both dissident soundtrack to UFW strikes and as an affective tuning fork for shared historic moments in which campesinos, through both belabored breath and downtrodden but defiant physical steps shared over long distances, gained a moment of collective effervescence geared toward radical hope. Lured by the soft yearning of the melody, the bucolic folksiness of its lyrics, and the accessible repetitive structure, protestors could jump in and join at any verse, with untrained but historically resonant voices. This participatory antiphony across both musical and musical theater activities enticed Chicano audiences into social movements that sought to decolonize material socioeconomic structures, and it also amplified a shared sense of identity and radical hope that other worlds were possible. Imagining these other worlds is significant work. Kindling hope under oppressive structures and eras of financial duress is significant political work. Documenting working class Chicanos' lived experiences (within and beyond their movement roles) through song is significant epistemological work.

A decolonial Chicana/Latina musicology must decenter nationalism and the flattening of categories of difference that exist in the broader Latina diasporas. For instance, a decolonial Chicana/Latina musicology decenters the folkloric tradition of Spanish, Hispanic, Mexican, or

Mexican American music as metonymic for Latinidad or racial identity, while also striving to create decolonial subjectivities that exist beyond national borders. Engaging in dissident vibrations within decolonial music repertoires would include lyrically and instrumentally signifying a challenge to the settler colonial state terror's hegemony, ideologically, and materially. This is often accomplished by lyrically weaving participants together through their identities as workers and students, as well as with problematic use of “raza” as an ethno-nationalist metonymic substitute for “mestizo”, “criollo,” “ladino” or, simply, “white” Latin Americans and their descendants.

This does not mean that Chicanxs—Mexican Americans—or Mexicanxs cannot produce decolonial music. Simply that historiographically, decolonial praxis requires truthful accountability for how racial paradigms migrate and operate across national boundaries in the Americas.

Decolonization also requires us to consider and build alternative possibilities, of life otherwise. This requires that as we rightfully incorporate talented musicians and activists such as Patricia Wells-Solórzano into our Chicax/Latinx Musicological archives, we must also remember to hold nuance and take the “expanded view” offered to us by Dr. Boj Lopez. In her recent popular media article, Dr. Boj Lopez elaborated upon this expanded view on indigeneity and Latinidad:

“It is in this context that I think we should consider the work of a term like Latinx. Naming Indigenous people as Latinx has more often than not served to obscure the sovereignty of Indigenous people who cross settler borders for their own survival. At the same time, as we work to defend ourselves against this harm, we must also remember that many in our community also claim Latinx to articulate or understand their own position as immigrants, workers, students, and so on. Therefore rather than advocate for one versus the other or some uneasy combination, I would argue that we consider who we leave out and what politics we obscure when we take a stance that Latinidad and Indigeneity is an either/or choice. It is important to remember instead that as I noted in the beginning, the Kab’awil models for us an expansive gaze, one that can engage multiplicity, and plurality. This expansive gaze can teach us that rather than a Latinx or Indigenous discourse, it is important to consider the work, genealogy, possibility, limitations, and violence of each term and move accordingly.”

It is with this delicate care for context and nuance that the Chicano Movement's flattening romanticization of Aztec identity, problematic erasure of Indigenous communities as separate from mestizo "raza," and Wells-Solórzano's own racial and ethnic identities, must be held. Her courageously shared oral history offers us valuable insight into how a woman of both Yaqui and white settler descent came to identify as Chicana, and how her repertoire of dissident decolonial folk music and musical theater enters a longer genealogy of decolonial musical dissent. The complexities of identity, naming, and power will be grappled with throughout this chapter, as will the equally salient vector of power in her life story: gender.

A decolonial feminist musicology cannot be conceived without also decolonizing its epistemologies, ontologies, heritages, and histories. While the decolonial project calls for dismantling totalizing claims to knowledge production in favor of particular knowledges that counter hegemonic narratives, it is not conceivable without defining the conditions under which decolonization can take place. To decolonize musicology may seem impossibly difficult because it draws on often unacknowledged traditions governing European theoretical practices derived from ancient Greek philosophy or German (hyper-nationalist) romanticism. Furthermore, musicology exists within specific institutional structures that are inherently tied up with processes of colonization (as well as decolonization) within Western societies. How do we decolonize not only our research questions but also our academic disciplines? In decolonizing musicology as a research field, we decolonize the tools used to carry out those investigations. We decolonize our ontologies and epistemologies. We decolonize the ways in which we define knowledge creation within ethnomusicological, anthropological, critical studies, performance studies, and sociocultural frameworks.

Situating Patricia Wells-Solórzano as a prominent figure within this global genealogy is a long overdue correction of an academic oversight and an archival silencing. Wells-Solórzano's creative labors must be parsed from Agustín Lira—a Chicano Movement folk musician whose work is codified by the likes of the Smithsonian Folkways, and all the UFW members who went on strike to his tunes. Because she was both his wife and his student, Wells-Solórzano's intellectual and creative labors often become subsumed under Lira's catalogue and political activism, if mentioned at all. This chapter will aim to recenter and amplify the dissident musical contributions that Wells-Solórzano has made in the years since her inaugural involvement in the movement. In doing so, I situate her within a genealogical lineage of musical dissidence routed through the Chicano farmworkers' movement, and a broader global dissident wave of *Nueva Canción*.

In her writing, Wells-Solórzano reflects on the role music played in decolonizing her own consciousness: “As I became more aware of the world around me... [and] of the roles that women played in our community, I began to see music as a reflection of what was happening...I saw music as an expression of decolonial thought” (Wells-Solórzano 1995, 80). Like many other young activists studying at universities during this period, Wells-Solórzano participated in decolonizing practices through social movement folk music.

Wells-Solórzano's musicking is imbued with the *Chicanidad* of a *mujer* who has lived her life in the *nepantla* that Gloria Anzaldúa elaborated upon. In the open wound of *la frontera*/the border, the in-betweenness of “*ni de aquí, ni de allá*.” This chapter will trace how her Chicana identity formed through her embodied experiences as a working-class Borderlands mestiza woman with Yaqui ancestry who traversed great lengths to discover a life after an abusive childhood in Brawley, California. This chapter will follow her relationship to land and somatic memory as she pursued this identity formation through school and music. My hope is that in understanding Wells-Solórzano's story, readers will feel the deep well of her empathy and creative alchemy. Her strength and courage

to remember across generations, to sing and tell theatrical stories for all generations, and to teach the next generation, require more than just musical analysis to apprehend.

Methods

Prying apart Wells-Solórzano's narrative from Lira's is vital. By integrating her work as an intervention in this repertoire of Chicana political histories, as well as situating this effort within a genealogy inaugurated by her Yaqui grandmother, I disaggregate Wells-Solórzano's creative labors from Lira's, re-centering and amplifying the dissident musical contributions that Wells-Solórzano has made in the years since her inaugural involvement in the movement. In so doing, I situate her within a genealogical lineage of dissident vibrations routed through the Chicano farmworkers' movement, which she has expanded into more capacious projects in her own creative and educational endeavors since then.

To accomplish this, I conducted five oral-history interviews with Patricia Wells-Solórzano and conducted archival research on Agustín Lira and Teatro Campesino at the UCSD Special Collections, to contextualize her historical narrative. Additionally, I transcribed and conducted a deep listening and analysis of her group's "Songs of Struggle and Hope," recorded by the Smithsonian Folkways Collection, as well as the music she scored for community musical theater. By bridging these Musicological and Ethnomusicological approaches to engaging her creative and educational labors, I reveal and clarify the dynamic contributions she has made to Chicana dissident musical repertoires. This chapter also highlights the role of a diasporic political and musical training—in both Mexico City and rural California—and examines how this is reflected in the form and content of her repertoire, teaching practices, and performances.

Early Life

Lorenzo Barcelata's "Maria Elena" filled Loretto Wells' home, the piano keys stridently keeping the waltz pulsing through the humble Mexicali home's walls. The family did not own a radio in the 1930s, so her daughter's—Carmen's—daily practice sessions were the sole source of musical entertainment available to them. Nana Loretto proudly listened to the triple meter romancing her home's soundscape, knowing that the pesos she set aside every week for her daughter's piano lessons with Profesor Maynardi—an Italian socialist refugee from Mussolini's regime who believed in centering Mexican repertoire alongside composers such as Verdi—were well worth the investment.

Doña Carmen, who raised Nana Loretto, paid for her to learn piano as a young girl, but her prematurely arthritic hands prevented her from continuing her practice. And yet, she believed firmly in the transformative power of music, and despite her working class means, was committed to having her children exposed to the arts. Tia Carmen—Patricia's aunt—would go on to play classical piano for the rest of her life, filling her own home with virtuosic performances and Patricia's childhood home with the hesitant clucks of introductory lessons, as she patiently guided Patricia's small hands along scales.

Nana Loretto—the woman who nurtured Patricia's sense of identity, history, and love of music—was a Yaqui Indigenous woman. As a child, she was forcibly removed from her tribe and placed in housing with Doña Carmen, a mestiza woman. The systematic removal of Indigenous children was part of an ongoing process of colonization, part of the transnational project of Indigenous genocide in the Americas and Canada.⁶³ In Nana Loretto's case, it occurred under the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas. The official narrative of such programs was that Indigenous children

⁶³ Nicole M. Guidotti-Hernández, *Unspeakable Violence: Remapping U.S. and Mexican National Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); Jessica Bissett Perea, and Gabriel Solis. "Asking the indigeneity question of American music studies." *Journal of the Society for American Music* 13, no. 4 (2019): 401-410.

could be “civilized” into alignment with nationalist notions of Western modernity through exposure to “la raza noble.” The history of these practices, as elucidated by Guidotti-Hernandez, centers the role of non-Indigenous and non-Black Chicanxs in perpetuating settler-colonization, and constitutes Indigenous violence.⁶⁴

Under Doña Carmen’s guardianship, Nana Loretto completed her studies at *la escuela normal*—Mexico’s nationalized vocational teacher’s college system aimed at creating accessible education, particularly among rural communities.⁶⁵ This was a rare accomplishment for women of her generation in general, and especially so for Indigenous women.⁶⁶ Subsequent to her graduation, Nana Loretto was hired by the Colorado Land and Mining Company in Cerro Prieto, Mexicali to teach the miners Spanish. Wells-Solórzano muses that this employment opportunity was interesting, considering Nana Loretto did not speak a lick of English.

Here, Wells-Solórzano recalls her grandmother describing the men she taught as “*todos barbudos y cochinos*” *all bearded and dirty*. Nana Loretto fell sick for two weeks, at which point one of her students showed up at her front steps and asked to speak with her. Taken aback by this very clean-shaven, unrecognizable man, she allowed him to visit her on the porch as was customary. This man was a contractor at the mines and an educated Presbyterian minister, Elbert George Wells. After this first visit, he would pay her several more, and would eventually ask for her hand in marriage.

Nana Loretto forged her own path in a generation and binational circumstance that circumscribed her possibilities according to gender, indigeneity, and class. And yet, she persisted in

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Patricia Ducoing, Watty. "Origen de la escuela normal superior de México." *Revista Historia de la Educación Latinoamericana* 6 (2004): 39-56.

⁶⁶ Oresta, López. "Women teachers of post-revolutionary Mexico: feminisation and everyday resistance." *Paedagogica historica* 49, no. 1 (2013): 56-69.

defying these enclosures. Wells-Solórzano warmly and proudly notes that this is the Yaqui spirit—to fight, to give and to create. Patricia identifies this as the source of her own fighting and creative spirit. But beyond these personality traits, Nana Loretto also importantly played a pivotal role in her political consciousness and musical development as a child.

Wells-Solórzano warmly recalled evenings sitting with Nana Loretto in her Mexicali home—which she and her father would visit every weekend, driving to and from Brawley, California. There, in the comfort of her diasporic borderlands home, Nana would tell Wells-Solórzano stories about the Mexican Revolution, los hermanos Flores-Magon, and the role that women played in transforming social inequality throughout Mexican history. Nana Loretto told stories of working-class histories of courage, resilience, and creative possibility in response to oppressive socio-political circumstance. In this vein, I call upon the work of Alma Itzel Flores who theorizes the intergenerational transmission of *saberes*/wisdoms between mothers and daughters as an ontological and epistemological act of radical world making.⁶⁷ Bridged with Aurora Levins Morales' notion of *curandera* histories, we are able to read these childhood memories of being told oral histories as both an intergenerational praxis of relational consciousness raising, and story-telling, *testimonio*, as a healing modality.⁶⁸ Both of these interventions would prove pivotal to Wells-Solórzano's own relationship to her repertoire, performance practices, and the story-telling capacity of her musical theater works. Across her musical media, Wells-Solórzano shares the same stories Nana Loretto shared with her.

In reflecting on her own musical theater contributions through the Teatro Inmigrante's productions of "Regeneración: Ricardo Flores Magón and the Mexican Revolution of 1910" (2010); "The Life and Times of Candelaria Arroyo" (2004); and "Esperanza and Luz: A Tale of Two

⁶⁷ Alma Itzel Flores. "De tal palo tal astilla: Exploring Mexicana/Chicana mother-daughter pedagogies." PhD diss., UCLA, 2016.

⁶⁸ Aurora Levins Morales, *Medicine stories: History, culture, and the politics of integrity* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1998).

Immigrant Women” (2001), Wells-Solórzano credits Nana Loretto’s oral histories as central to her musical story-telling practice. She hearkened back to those weekend visits as pivotal moments to her political consciousness raising, and to the kind of musical story telling she wanted to continue in the genealogical legacy. She shared through a yearning inflection: “I wish Nana would’ve been alive to see these plays, especially the Flores-Magón play. She loved him so much. She would’ve been so proud.” That she not only saw herself as an extension of Agustín Lira’s musical legacy, but also rooted herself in this femme epistemological orientation, offers us a profound insight into what mobilizes Wells-Solórzano’s political work through musical media, and reorients the conventional narrative that she is merely Agustín’s protégé or life partner if she is acknowledged at all. These seeds were planted in her long before him, and this chapter will work to shift that narrative.

Before taking on that endeavor, it is important to pause and note the conventional narrative of Alma and Lira’s central role. The Smithsonian Folkways Archives as well as Library of Congress records, for instance, register the group’s music under “Agustín Lira and Alma” with none of the other instrumentalists or songwriters listed. This is particularly fascinating in the Smithsonian Folkways album “Songs of Struggle and Hope” which prominently features Lira and Wells-Solórzano in a familiar embrace, smiling while holding their instruments. This proximity is suggestive of their interpersonal intimacy as partners, while Wells-Solórzano’s possession of an acoustic guitar conveys her musical involvement in the album’s production. This chapter strives to provide Wells-Solórzano the creative, managerial, and educational credit she deserves as a co-creator of Lira’s repertoire and performance practices—and to narrate them within a longer intergenerational lineage of decolonial femme methodologies, of which dissident vibrations forges an integral part.

These intergenerational practices are also multi-media approaches to knowing and being in the world. In addition to the oral histories Nana Loretto shared with Wells-Solórzano, she also

modeled practices of resignifying texts. Through bashful laughter, Wells-Solórzano shared that her favorite bedtime stories were of a popular Mexican cartoon *Memin*. And while she found his misadventures inherently amusing, it was in her Nana Loretto's imaginative retelling of these stories that Wells-Solórzano found the greatest joy. Through embellishments, plot twists and word play, Nana Loretto resignified the meaning of a simple comic strip—engaging Wells-Solórzano's memory and wit. Wells-Solórzano also laughed as she shared that her Nana would replace the words to popular Mexican songs such as “Cielito Lindo” to say “*Si a tu ventana llega un burro flaco trátalo con cariño porque es tu retrato.*” If a skinny donkey arrives at your window, treat him with care because it's your reflection. In reflecting on this playful rendition of a classical Mexican number, Wells-Solórzano observed that her grandmother was a “real intellectual” in the ways she engaged history, popular culture and people. Nana Loretto's investment in musical education, as well as her practices of oral history telling, and these resignifications of both stories and songs, also planted deeper seeds in Wells-Solórzano, of dialogical relationships with hegemonic narratives of history, power and possibilities, which bore fruit in her later career as a musician.

In this way, I argue that the development of Wells-Solórzano's political consciousness and musical transmission of that consciousness far preceded Agustin Lira's instruction or influence. Instead, I frame her dissident vibrational practices as a form of femme epistemologies and methodologies—and in the case of her Yaqui grandmother, an Indigenous decolonial epistemology—of documenting stories, and crying out against injustice through storytelling and song. This reframe is significant.

Situating Wells-Solórzano's labors through an Indigenous femme methodology⁶⁹ of dissident vibrations aligns with her earliest didactic modeling of this approach. Long before she learned her

⁶⁹ Macarena Gómez-Barris, *The extractive zone: Social ecologies and decolonial perspectives* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017).

first chords on the guitar with Lira, she learned radical oral histories from her Nana Loretto that she would then incorporate into the musical theater narratives, with the hope of sharing these stories with a broader audience than her Nana was able to. Long before she would lock herself in a closet in Lira's Fresno home to practice scales and perfecting her pitch, she would learn that her voice—untrained and unharmonized with anyone's melodies—could stand alone as a story telling instrument. It was these early didactic lessons from her Yaqui grandmother that situated an embodied Indigenous femme methodology of dissident vibrations, and story-telling in Wells-Solórzano that would later be re-activated musically under Lira's tutelage.

Correcting this narrative is also central to correcting the historiographical elision that currently exists around Wells-Solórzano's work. Although she shares co-production and co-writing credits for the majority of Lira's body of work, Wells-Solórzano is not prominently featured on album paratext, far less in any scholarship on Chicana radical repertoires—whereas Lira is canonized therein.⁷⁰ As I argue, she should be seen as an equal creative agent and contributor to Alma, not only compositionally and performatively, but also for her managerial and teaching labors.

Wells-Solórzano also imbued the group with a tradition of dissident sonic vibrational cultures she brought into the mix. Correcting these elisions is done in the vein of Vicki Ruiz's call to bring Chicanas "from out of the shadows" of historical memory, and also Emma Perez's notion of "decolonial imaginaries" as a challenge to hegemonic historiographies.⁷¹ The silences around Wells-Solórzano's musical, political, and managerial labors speak to the gendered inequity present in Alma,

⁷⁰ Martha, Gonzalez. "Songs of Struggle and Hope by Agustín Lira and Alma." *American Music* 36, no. 2 (2018): 250-252.; Marissa Mendoza. "Canciones del Movimiento Chicano/Songs of the Chicano Movement: The Impact of Musical Traditions on the 1960s Chicano Civil Rights Movement." (2012).; Ragland, Cathy. "Rolas de Aztlán: Songs of the Chicano Movement." *Journal of American Folklore* 121, no. 482 (2008): 489-490.

⁷¹ Vicki L. Ruiz. *From out of the shadows: Mexican women in twentieth-century America*. Oxford University Press, 2008.; Emma Perez. *The decolonial imaginary: Writing Chicanas into history*. Indiana University Press, 1999.

and in musical spaces, which naturalized her work to the point that it was rendered invisible.

Limning her achievements for the reader is therefore less about punctuating one individual's creative accomplishments, and more about challenging a pervasive pattern in Chicana historiography that invisibilizes the women whose voices, bodies as instruments, and labors contributed so much to how we listen, sound out, and speak up against injustices.

The remainder of this chapter will sketch Wells-Solórzano's musical education as both a student and teacher, explore pivotal moments that shaped her career as a musician, and in closing, closely examine "The Revolución: The Life and Times of Ricardo Flores-Magon," a musical play co-written and co-produced by Wells-Solórzano. Throughout, I hope to be able to trace this decolonial femme methodology of dissident vibrations across Wells-Solórzano's body of work. I argue that it is through this intergenerational epistemological transmission of vibrational dissidence through women in her family line, that Wells-Solórzano developed the political consciousness and storytelling practices that Lira's musical education would later support in setting to music.

Musical education

Aside from these early exposures to learning "Chopsticks" with her Nana Loretto, or classical repertoire through her Tía Carmen's brief instruction, Wells-Solórzano's musical education did not formally continue until the fourth grade. She recalled the public-school music teacher, Mr. Gaveldon, entering the classroom with a harpsichord and leading the class in singing "Cielito Lindo." This impromptu performance was especially memorable for her because it was the first time she heard the song without her grandmother's embellishments, inducing a comical confusion as she belted out the only rendition she knew. After this brief introduction to musical performance, Mr. Gaveldon administered a math test "with a bunch of fractions. And only maybe 9 or 12 of us passed, and he told us we had musical aptitude, so we could pick any instrument we wanted." At a

loss for what instrument to choose, she sought her elder brother's advice. Mimicking his pubescent newly baritone voice, Wells-Solórzano restated his matter-of-fact statement in a bemused tone:

“Dub, Pat, girls play clarinet.” And so it was. She would continue to play clarinet until middle school.

Though she credited this early training for teaching her scales, chords, and the discipline that musical practice requires, she found Mr. Gaveldon's pedagogical style emotionally abusive. She recounted a classmate of hers asking a question about the score—a question that Wells-Solórzano shared, and was on the cusp of asking—when Mr. Gaveldon stooped down to the student's level to bellow the beratement, “WHAT ARE YOU, STUPID?!” She knew then that the belittlement that underscored his pedagogical approach would soon be enacted directly upon her if she didn't remove herself from the situation. And so, with great trepidation about leaving a musical practice that she found enriching and fulfilling, she announced her decision to leave the school band. Her teacher begged her to stay, insisting that she had talent that should not be wasted. She resolved to abstain from practicing clarinet, but compromised that she would play the bells instead. Wells-Solórzano calculated the probability of scorning the bell player was likely lower than the first-chair clarinetist. She would return to the clarinet briefly from 5th-7th grade when she changed schools and joined the marching band but found the relationship with that domineering teacher to be challenging as well. And so again, she dropped her formal musical education. Through a wistful sigh, she shared “and I wasn't gonna ask my parents for private music lessons...so I just left the clarinet after that.”

After this middle school experience, her formal musical education would take a hiatus until her mid-twenties. She had begun studying history at the prestigious UNAM-Mexico City but agreed to return after a year on the condition that Lira would teach her how to play. Eager to mend their relationship, he enthusiastically accepted this term of agreement., and Wells-Solórzano returned to Fresno at age 26 to begin her intense musical tutelage.

She recalls spending hours practicing the recorder in one of the many closets of Lira's home—each serving as a makeshift practice studio for the musicians he worked with and trained. Wells-Solórzano credits her early training on the clarinet for her ease in picking up the fingering techniques, and quickly remembering scales. After hours of what she described as “annoying the other players with [her] recorder,” they would each emerge from their closets into a room to practice together. This was a daily routine for seven years, though she would eventually graduate from recorder to guitar. Her life became immersively about musical practice.

For a Chicana who had felt that such private music lessons had long been out of her reach—and a compassionate musical teacher even a further impossibility—this opportunity felt unparalleled. Patricia attributes the drive to get up and practice every day, even when her fingers hurt or were bloodied, to this deeply rooted drive, the *ganas* and hunger for a musical education she never had. The *ganas* to fulfill the musical promise she knew she had in her but had never received the institutional educational support to advance. This drive would compel her to practice for up to seven hours a day. Never satisfied with merely memorizing a song, or learning new chord progressions, she wanted her rhythm, harmony, and alma—*soul*—to shine through.

Lira noted this passion and commitment to excellence in her, and sought new ways to challenge and expand her horizons as a musician. To Wells-Solórzano's surprise, this included teaching her jazz chords and repertoire—to which she had never been previously exposed living in the California borderlands. As she dedicated herself to fluency in these syncopated rhythms and new scales, with the same *ganas* she had committed to Mexican folk repertoire, she realized that her passion had a deeper significance. It was not simply a matter of learning an instrument for its own sake, but for the ability to codify and share musical traditions and stories of oppressed communities.

One day after practicing this new repertoire, Lira turned to her and said, “You're ready. What do you want to learn next?” Wells-Solórzano knew immediately that she wanted to further

develop her musical skills in a way that was aligned with her ethnic background: she wanted to learn how to play the requinto (a small guitar) that she remembered from the trios she had listened to growing up. She purchased her first requinto in Mexicali, which she later gave to inmates at Soledad during her outreach work there. After a year of practicing on this lower quality requinto, she invested in a slightly better instrument—but notes that it was the third requinto that she purchased from a lauded luthier on Sunset Blvd, Señor Arturo Valdez, that would become her most prized possession. Through this connection to the requinto, Wells-Solórzano expanded the wavelength range upon which her dissident vibrations could travel. Learning requinto was more than a homecoming to an instrument pivotal to her childhood soundscapes, it was a new voice through which her political messaging could be communicated.

The span of time in-between her last lesson as a clarinetist and bell player, and her first lesson on the guitar and requinto with Lira was a journey of self-discovery shaped through historical education, student activism, and travel.

Her time at CSUN

Welts and bruises had marked her relationship with her mother growing up—an abusive relationship heightened during her adolescent years. Wells-Solórzano recalls Mr. Walker, a Black high school counselor and a brilliant saxophonist, who took a special interest to her during these trying years. Concerned over her plummeting academic performance, he inquired what was going on. In a moment of courageous earnestness, Wells-Solórzano unveiled the troubling circumstances mirroring her home—a shocking revelation given her mother’s public reputation as the “Dolores Huerta of Brawley.” Esperanza Solórzano was an outspoken Chicana who made unapologetic demands and criticisms at city council meetings, some of which incited the development of a local park and led to an increase in diverse hires in the public-school system (of which Mr. Walker formed a part.)

To his credit, Mr. Walker did not discount the veracity of Wells-Solórzano's claims, and empathetically asked her if she'd like to leave her home. Mimicking her ashamed teenage intonation, Wells-Solórzano replied sheepishly that she had already tried this—spending extended months at her aunt's home—but that, also, she didn't have much time left until college anyway. As an “A-class” student—a tracking system that differentiated students' learning possibilities based on past performances on state exams and coursework—Patricia had long known that college would be on her horizon. Her drop in GPA because of her trying circumstances would not circumscribe her potential: Mr. Walker was committed to helping this promising small-town Brawley scholar reach her fullest potential at the furthest proximity within her comfort zone. Far enough from home for safety, and yet close enough to extended community to feel a sense of belonging. Wells-Solórzano had high hopes that CSU Northridge would fit this bill.

However, she recalls being vastly disappointed by the Chicana Movement culture she encountered in this environment. A few things felt jarringly out of place to Wells-Solórzano's small-town sensibilities. She recalls feeling out of place on an aesthetic level—preferring to wear t-shirts, flannel, and bell bottoms as opposed to her Chicana classmates' “tight dresses, high heels and full faces of makeup.” The high femme femininity she encountered in this collegiate culture clashed with the low femme and tomboy femininity she had grown accustomed to in both Brawley and Mexicali—humility and modesty were important to her, and that she didn't find this aesthetically mirrored was off-putting.

She viewed this as connected to the far more disturbing component of the Chicana Studies community at CSUN: Chicano professors' sexual harassment and unethical sexual engagements with students—one of whom was Wells-Solórzano's roommate. To her, the dissonance between men who lectured and wrote about liberation yet did not uphold practices of equity and respect for all genders, was both disillusioning and disgusting. She wanted no part in a movement so fractured in

its demands that it left women behind. And so her active involvement in CSUN Chicano Movement activity—which was otherwise lively and strong—deescalated. She owed this in part to these gendered disparities in treatment and leadership opportunities, but also in part to insider information received from her aunt’s boyfriend at the time.

Her aunt’s boyfriend was a white FBI officer who tipped her off to remove herself from these mobilizations and organizations, due to active surveillance. Wells-Solórzano recalls suspicious individuals in all black clothing taking surreptitious telephoto lens surveillance photographs from atop buildings during marches, and white plain clothes agent provocateurs encouraging violence. These infiltrations are well documented by Rudy Acuña’s second edition of *Occupied America*, as well as by COINTELPRO files.⁷²

Disillusioned by the campus Chicano activist culture, Wells-Solórzano withdrew from all organizing activities until her Jewish friend coaxed her back into action. Through her prodding, Wells-Solórzano rejoined the ranks of radical CSUN student organizing, but this time, through off-campus mobilizations in solidarity with the United Farm Workers.

In 1968, Patricia recalls marching outside of a Safeway grocery store, “going around in a circle, chanting our demands, and trying to stop people from buying Gallo wines.” Unwavering despite the blistering heat, Patricia fondly remembers these actions as re-instilling in her the political urgency that had called her toward CSUN and Anthropology in the first place: “human dignity, and a community of people who professed their commitment to studying and upholding it.”

Reinvigorated by this organizing work, and more resolutely dispassionate about her studies where

⁷² Rodolfo Acuna. *Occupied America: a History of chicanos*. PRENTICE HALL, 2019.; Edward J. Escobar. "The dialectics of repression: The Los Angeles police department and the Chicano movement, 1968-1971." *The Journal of American History* 79, no. 4 (1993): 1483-1514.; Kristen Hoerl, and Erin Ortiz. "Organizational Secrecy and the FBI's COINTELPRO—Black Nationalist Hate Groups Program, 1967-1971." *Management Communication Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (2015): 590-615.

she felt ostracized not only as a working-class first-generation Chicana in a predominantly white field, but also as a rural student without cosmopolitan airs about her, she decided to withdraw from the university. She would spend the next few years supporting herself in Northridge by working odd jobs, before officially moving up to Fresno to study *teatro campesino*/community theater under the guidance of Agustin Lira.

While studying *teatro campesino*, Wells-Solórzano felt a swell of purpose. This artistic practice called upon her political commitments to liberatory artistic production, while also being true to the accessibility and no-fuss approach that felt authentic to her Brawley and Mexicali upbringing. She noted how folks did not need to have years of professional training in theater production, acting, or music—they simply needed to demonstrate a commitment to keep showing up, and telling their stories together. She continued this work for 2 years, under Lira’s tutelage. In this proximity, a romance between Lira and Wells-Solórzano developed. Though fondly recalled as the early years of their courtship, in retrospect, Wells-Solórzano shares that the discrepancy between their expectations at that stage were stark, staggering, and painful. Where Wells-Solórzano believed she had met a soulmate whom she could marry and share a life’s work of producing political folk music and community theater—Lira was less certain about formalizing their commitment or planning a future. Heartbroken, Wells-Solórzano returned to Brawley where she despondently spent two weeks “curled into a little ball in [her] bed, crying, and not wanting to do anything at all.”

Seeing her in this afflicted condition, Wells-Solórzano’s mother encouraged her to explore alternate possibilities for her future. Perhaps enrolling in a community college, baby-sitting... perhaps traveling to Mexico City to study at UNAM? Of all the mundane options her mother listed to ignite her *joie de vivre* again, the latter sparked the embers of a latent hope in her heart. She had never gone to Mexico City as an adult, much less as a university student to be enrolled in the country’s most prestigious institution of higher education. She recalled wiping her tears and nodding

along, saying “Ok, maybe UNAM.” Within days, her mother helped her buy a train ticket and made arrangements for her to stay with a remote uncle upon her arrival.

Through a warm smile and a pause, Wells-Solórzano affirmed the transformative moment this journey would mark in her life. Choosing to chart new paths forward in Mexico City after her disillusionment at CSUN and heartbreak with Lira was more than a reactive salve for a wounded spirit, it was an intentional decision to reconnect with her Mexicanidad in a way that was negated in both prior experiences. However, the experience of traveling to Mexico City was more than a romanticized return to a diasporic homeland—it was also a moment at which Wells-Solórzano understood the vast complexities of Mexican identities, histories, and cultural legacies, and how they were seen as distinct from those of Chicanxs.

Mexico City

Wells-Solórzano left for Mexico City in 1970 by train from Mexicali. This was the first time in her adult life she travelled deep into Mexico, far past the Baja California region that her family came from, into the Mexican heartland. The passing desert landscapes were dotted with tin foil huts that housed local Indigenous families. While Wells-Solórzano knew that anti-Indigenous sentiment was rampant in Mexican diasporic communities, to see its visceral, structural violence, if only in passing, was infuriating. Her deep connection to her family’s own Yaqui Indigenous roots heightened this outrage.

Part of what drove her to embark on this trip to Mexico City was her desire to learn “real history, *our* history, that they never teach you in the United States.” Here, Wells-Solórzano didn’t just mean Chicax history—which she would soon learn did not transpose into a Mexican context—but also histories of ongoing colonization that could explain the structural violence against Indigenous communities she had witnessed en route to UNAM-Mexico City. In the storied lecture halls of this

prestigious university, she would eagerly learn U.S. histories from what she deemed “the opposite perspective”: these professors framed the 1848 land grab as colonial dispossession rather than Westward expansion, and the United States’ ongoing foreign aid diplomacy as soft-arm imperialism. Outraged by the suppression of these narratives in her earlier educational years, Wells-Solórzano felt moved to become a medium for transmitting these stories back to Chicax communities, while also communicating the unique situation of Chicaxs in relation to the U.S. settler state to her UNAM colleagues.

Through a frustrated tone, Wells-Solórzano remembered sitting around an outdoor café table in Mexico City’s Colonia Roma with a group of her UNAM peers. They were discussing the arts as a medium for political consciousness raising, a topic which fascinated her. While they praised the works of Victor Jara, Mercedes Sosa, Violeta Parra and other members of the Latin American Nueva Canción movements, one Chilean exchange student turned to her in a demeaning tone and said “*Y los Chicanos en los estados unidos que tienen? ¿Son pendejos o que? ¿Porque les falta consciencia politica?*” “And what do Chicanos in the United States have? Are they stupid or what? Why do they lack a political consciousness?” Cheeks flushed in embarrassment and outrage; Wells-Solórzano admonished him for diminishing the racialized struggle of Chicaxs in the U.S. in his comment. She reflected, “We had not been allowed to learn our own histories, how could we know about our own leaders in the struggle, in music or anywhere else?”

She additionally stated that they had people like Agustin Lira—who she proudly claimed as the “Chicano Victor Jara, someone who comes from campesino roots, who knows and lives the struggle he sings about.” Snidely, this Chilean counterpart challenged her to produce a longer list. Wells-Solórzano refused. She lingered on this harsh interaction in our interview because it was a formative moment for her. The combination of her radicalizing educational experience at UNAM, and this combative challenge to produce a list of leftist Chicax political musicians clarified what

role she needed to play upon returning to the U.S. She would become the radical musical storyteller that her community needed.

This labor of narrating lesser-known Chicax and Mexican histories through song has a long history in Mexican folk repertoire. Corridos, specifically, were a pivotal form of codifying and communicating working class war time stories during the Mexican Revolution.⁷³ Maria Herrera-Sobek has also excavated the various gendered tropes that this hyper cis-hetero patriarchal genre deploys in its depictions of women: often objectified, deified, or elided altogether.⁷⁴ For Wells-Solórzano to decide that her Chicax musical practice would center Chicax histories, and uplift women's roles therein, is an intervention that should not be taken lightly. Though her songs exceed the strict compositional parameters of a corrido—she also delves into boleros, huapangos and more—it should be noted that this practice of narrating a working-class racialized history through song is a tradition she is invoking across these genres and expanding to include gender in ways not previously engaged.

Alma

Part of Wells-Solórzano's contribution to Alma that is elided by the group's website page, or the Smithsonian's recording of their work, is the amount of managerial labor that she exerted for the group in addition to her roles as vocalist and guitarist. She recalls beginning to tour with Agustín at the age of 24, at first with small local shows, but gradually progressing to larger venues. Wells-Solórzano remembers being approached by both audience members telling them to stop talking so

⁷³ Americo Paredes. *A Texas-Mexican cancionero: Folksongs of the lower border*. University of Texas Press, 1995.; Ric Alviso. "What is a Corrido? Musical analysis and narrative function." *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture* 29 (2011): 58-79.

⁷⁴ María Herrera-Sobek. *The Mexican corrido: A feminist analysis*. Vol. 795. Indiana University Press, 1990.

much politics and play dance songs, and potential management agents repeating this message with the addendum that they should clean themselves up. To her ears, these scrutinizing comments reflected the pigeonholed imagination of what Chicana/Mexican music ought to be—exotic entertainment deprived of any overt political messaging. While this presumption conflicts with the long-standing legacies of Mexican/Chicana music that contests power structures and represent otherized identities—it does reflect the popular folk genres that predominate in the U.S. imaginary of Mexicanidad: rancheras, boleros, and mariachi.

Fed up with this call to perform otherness in a prescriptive way (if at all), Wells-Solórzano turned to Agustin and said, “Well shit, I can do this. I can manage us.” Rather than waiting for an external agent to validate the profitability or validity of their musical works, she decided to take the self-agentic role of creating opportunities for their music and authentic selves to thrive. The California Arts Council’s program for emerging artists was instrumental in supporting this endeavor. The program provided training for artists in how to book shows and manage tours, empowering emerging artists to handle the entrepreneurial end of their artwork with up-to-date market research, contact lists, and protocols. Armed with this training, Wells-Solórzano took to booking their first extended tour at the young age of 26. She negotiated livable wages for her and her touring musicians, chose the locations and audiences she wanted to engage with musically (and custom tailored this list further through both positive and adverse experiences), planned transportation and housing, and split the driving labor with her bassist, Ravi. She conducted all this additional labor for no additional pay or even recognition. In sum, Wells-Solórzano took on a managerial role for her group that allowed for their repertoire to become more widely known, and that generated a livable wage for each of the musicians—while also having this crucial contribution written out of historical narratives. It should not be lost on us that she managed the band while also practicing the guitar so assiduously that her fingers would bleed.

I linger on this role because to me it elucidates the pivotal strategic labors that are required for professional musical viability, that are elided in the narrative history of Agustín Lira's legacy and Alma, per any information available in the academic literature, Smithsonian Folkways publications, or on popular media online. The academic literature within women of color feminisms speaks at length on the obfuscation of women's labors, particularly within movimiento work in the 1960s and 70s.⁷⁵ Here, though Rolas de Aztlán, for example, incorporates Lira's central contributions to the United Farm Workers Movement, the historiographic absence of Wells-Solórzano's work casts Chicana logistical and emotional labors into the shadows of history.⁷⁶ Part of this dissertation's contributions is to reclaim these labors and take them out of the shadows, per Ruiz's metaphor.

The burden of this managerial labor, coupled with the cis-heteropatriarchal touring cultures she encountered, disenchanted Wells-Solórzano from a performative process she otherwise delighted in. Exchanging energy with audiences—particularly working class Chicana audiences—brought her a sense of purpose and fulfillment as a folk musician. However, the devaluation of women she witnessed through musicians' infidelity and dismissive or pejorative speech pervaded these experiences. To her, it made little sense to be singing about empowerment and liberation on stage when the musicians before or after her did not have a shared integrity behind their messages. This did not detract from the positive contributions she feels she was able to make, which she shared through poignantly memorable shows.

⁷⁵ Maylei Blackwell. *Chicana power! Contested histories of feminism in the Chicano movement*. University of Texas Press, 2016.; Dionne Espinoza, and Maylei Blackwell, eds. *Chicana movidas: new narratives of activism and feminism in the movement era*. University of Texas Press, 2018.; Cherríe Moraga, *A Xicana codex of changing consciousness: Writings, 2000–2010*. Duke University Press, 2011.; Alma M. García. "The development of Chicana feminist discourse, 1970-1980." *Gender & Society* 3, no. 2 (1989): 217-238.; Perlita R. Dicochea. "Chicana critical rhetoric: Recrafting La Causa in Chicana movement discourse, 1970-1979." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 25, no. 1 (2004): 77-92.

⁷⁶ Rolas de Aztlán. "Songs of the Chicano Movement. 2005." *Washington, DC: Smithsonian Folkways Recordings*.; Vicki L. Ruiz. *From out of the shadows: Mexican women in twentieth-century America*. Oxford University Press, 2008.

The performance that stood out the most to Wells-Solórzano was at the Smithsonian American Folklife Festival in 1990,⁷⁷ which “took place for two five-day weeks (June 27-July 1 and July 4-8) between Madison Drive and Jefferson Drive and between 10th Street and 14th Street, south of the National Museum of American History and the National Museum of Natural History.”⁷⁸ By this point, she had been performing professionally, and managing the group’s nationwide tours for nine years, and she recalls being exhausted—at the brink of giving up a musical career. Alma was invited to the festival for two weeks, to perform and intermingle with other global folk musicians whose repertoires were similarly dedicated to freedom struggles. Markedly, she remembers spending most of her time with a Palestinian group, Sabreen, and the SNCC Freedom Singers.⁷⁹ Cordell Regan and Bettie Mae Fikes became her close friends on this trip. They were drawn together by a shared commitment to anti-racist struggle in the United States—and Wells-Solórzano felt a deep anger and solidarity for the violence inflicted upon them by the state as they demanded their Civil Rights.

When the artists were not slotted to perform their repertoire, they were scheduled to host Q&A chats under tents with the audience. These were moments that felt integral to Alma’s line of work: engaging with the audience through dialogue was a pedagogical opportunity seldom provided to them. Instead, Agustin would often intersperse their performances with monologues on Chicana history and the importance of fighting for one’s rights. So, to share space with folks who were interested in their music and allow for antiphonal exchange excited Wells-Solórzano tremendously. Regarding this conversation, she holds only the regret that when an audience member asked her if

⁷⁷ Richard Bauman, Patricia Sawin, Inta Gale Carpenter, Richard Anderson, Garry W. Barrow, William J. Wheeler, and Chong-sung Yang. *Reflections on the Folklife Festival: An Ethnography of Participant Experience*. No. 2. Indiana University Press, 1992.

⁷⁸ “1990 Festival of American Folklife.” Smithsonian Folklife Festival. Accessed October 5, 2020. <https://festival.si.edu/past-program/1990>.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

she had children, she tersely responded that “not all women are meant to be mothers,” in the presence of her own mother. While she unfairly faced this sexist interrogation into her reproductive choices as a professional musician, Wells-Solórzano didn’t hold any anger toward the audience member. Rather, she reflected on the responsibility of musicians to be held accountable for their platforms—and hoped that her words didn’t harm anyone that day.

She also recalls with giddy excitement that this was the year that Nelson Mandela was released from prison, and he happened to be in DC that week.⁸⁰ Her mother saw his motorcade as she was walking to the festival and enthusiastically told all who would listen. Through a smile, Wells-Solórzano fondly shared that she had invited her mother along for one week, and that this time spent together was very healing for their relationship. Marked by physical abuse in her early childhood through adolescence, the relationship had mostly been characterized by distance in her adulthood. This trip allowed her mother the opportunity to be a zealous “stage mom” in Wells-Solórzano’s words, and to reconnect with her adult daughter in a meaningful way.

After experiencing racism on tour—such as being refused service at restaurants “anywhere east of the Southwest”—Wells-Solórzano felt ready to give up her musical career as a touring musician. When she presented her concerns to Agustin, he encouraged her by offering Bessie Smith’s brother’s experience, and suggesting that it was in this genealogy that Wells-Solórzano’s work was situated. He told her of how Clarence Smith, “did everything you know, he got the gig, he did the routes, he mapped out the routes, he got the contracts, he got the bus, he paid the musicians, and all of this in the South that was ready to kill them.” Though the anti-black terrorism enacted by white vigilantes and state officials alike does not transpose into Wells-Solórzano’s Non-Black

⁸⁰ Edwin Chen. “Mandela Speech Draws Cheers From Congress: South Africa: A Reference to American Heroes Brings Standing Ovation. He Cites 'Thirst' for Human Rights.” *Los Angeles Times*. *Los Angeles Times*, June 27, 1990. <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1990-06-27-mn-631-story.html>.

experience of racism, this comparison is significant. For one, it acknowledges that Agustín understood the importance of people of color’s strategic and logistical labors that undergirded musical touring possibilities. And, for another, it offers the existence of a genealogy of people of color whose role in musicking is often historiographically elided: the managers, the booking agents, the entrepreneurs. Wells-Solórzano recalls that this conversation, in addition to the Smithsonian Folk Life Festival in 1990, gave her the encouragement to continue with her musical career “even through the very difficult times.”

After returning from the Smithsonian Festival, Wells-Solórzano found herself reinvigorated to continue advancing dissident Chicana politics through music. The breakout rooms at the festival, where bands could jam out together, served as an inspiration for her—where she was a self-described “fly on the wall.... taking in all the role models I had in front of me for how to stay in the *lucha* through music.” That her inspiration arose from Palestinian and Black-American musicians should not be lost on us: both groups were living under states of racial and ethnic siege in settler states. To speak out against these conditions—particularly through song—was a treasonous act. Patricia saw the poetics of relation amidst these conditions and felt that she stood to learn from those who had engaged in this protracted struggle long before her. While holding space for the opacity of their material conditions, experiences, and identities, she found these jam session rooms a space to build interracial and transnational solidarities necessary to dissident vibrations among Chicanas. This opacity and poetics of relation would ground her work as a dissident music educator.

Her teaching

Teaching music lessons has been Wells-Solórzano’s primary source of professional income, and the heart of her pro-bono solidarity work. To the former point, Project Generaciones was founded in 2010 by Wells-Solórzano and Lira to transmit the genealogy of protest through music to

children in their Fresno working class immigrant community. Toward the latter, Wells-Solórzano has participated with various organizations—primarily the William James Association and Cruz X—that bring artists into prisons. She recalls feeling called to do this work from a place of empathy for the oppressed communities of color who largely composed the prison populations she visited, and because she wanted to share the radical transformative messages, and transfigurative spiritual potential that music held. She hoped that she could, if only one lesson at a time, teach musicking and harmonizing as practices one progressively improved upon, rather than an inherent quality one was born with. She also noted that learning an instrument required lots of time, which she felt the incarcerated people she visited could reclaim from the state,⁸¹ by centering pleasure, and dissident vibrations.

The incarcerated men at a Florida State penitentiary were particularly struck by Wells-Solórzano's harmonizing and asked if they could have a recording of their performance as well as her harmonizing exercises. After hearing her story of having learned music in her early adulthood through rigorous practice, these incarcerated men were inspired to begin their own study. Wells-Solórzano mused that she received a call from the penitentiary years later to let her know that her tape was the most frequently borrowed, as incarcerated men sought to learn and practice harmonization. This is a poetic exchange. In a life circumstance mired by state violence and disharmony amidst incarcerated racial groups, these men sought to use their voices to create a sense of internal harmony when practicing alone, and harmonized unity when practicing in groups. That Wells-Solórzano's story served as an inspiration to them is a testament to the power of folk musicking: learning by practicing and hard-living, rather than mastering repertoire and technique

⁸¹ "Dissonance in Time: (Un)Making and (Re)Mapping of Blackness," in *Futures of Black radicalism*. Damien Sojoyner. *Verso Books*, 2017.

through classical conservatory training. The accessibility of this approach, Wells-Solórzano notes, is what motivates all her pedagogical endeavors.

Much of her pedagogical pursuits required undoing a mythologization of inborn musical talent. She recalls both the incarcerated men, and her students at Project Generaciones frequently commenting “It's not for me, you know, it's too difficult for me to understand.” Wells-Solórzano learned over the years that the pedagogical challenge to this had to mirror Paulo Freire’s model of teaching in the favelas: you have to teach accessibly, and with content that invokes the wealth of the students’ cultural capital.⁸² She laughed at the idea of teaching her students chords, and the circle of fifths, musing that she would have no students at all if this were her approach. This focus on music theory and classical training elided other embodied modalities for learning and teaching music that resonated more closely with folk as a genre. Her approach sought to challenge the hegemony of classical musical training and to integrate her students as a population that viewed themselves as outside of the purview of the classical canon and its mythology of inherent talent.

When it comes to dissident vibrations as an embodied, sensorial transmission of political contestation through sonic media, this pedagogical approach becomes incredibly important. By centering the bodies of her students, and herself, Wells-Solórzano is disrupting western canonical music pedagogies—and is didactically modeling the body-centered, culturally competent approach to embodied healing through sound being researched at the frontiers of music therapy. In this approach, students learn harmony by *sensing* it in their bodies, they learn songs by *sensing* where their fingers should move in relation to the frets (whose notes or tablatures they initially have no knowledge of), and they learn to inflect the original song with their own affective realities, by *feeling* their way through each measure. This focus on affectively led pedagogy forges part of a broader

⁸² Paulo Freire. "Pedagogy of the oppressed (revised)." *New York: Continuum* (1996); Pierre Bourdieu. "Cultural reproduction and social reproduction." *London: Tavistock* 178 (1973).

femme decolonial methodology first put forth by Macarena Gomez Barris in *The Extractive Zone*. Wells-Solórzano's commitment to embodied musical learning that invites the whole student into the space—emotions, sensations, and physical memory included—she is practicing a decolonial femme pedagogy.

In 2000, Wells-Solórzano and Lira founded the Generaciones Project through a California Arts Council grant, which supported the development of local artists giving back to their local communities. Through public, accessible lessons on guitar, requinto, and vocals, students learn Mexican folk repertoire, but Wells-Solórzano also believes in incorporating curricula that inspires the students' curiosity and passion. As such, she joyously reflects that she'll go from playing *De Colores* to a love song by Guns N' Roses with a student who requests that material. By centering students' creative endeavors and self-agency in her pedagogical approach, Wells-Solórzano didactically models the kinds of liberatory dissident vibrations that she performs and sings about. She also refuses a western canonical approach to the repertoire that students "ought" to learn—enthusiastically including music across genres, languages, and levels of difficulty differentiated for each student's learning process.

In reflecting on the songs in Alma's repertoire that have carried the greatest impact for her professionally, Wells-Solórzano shared that "Ser Como el Aire Libre" was a particularly poignant song. Referring to the more technically advanced huapango strumming techniques, and to the broken measures that structure the song's rhythm, Wells-Solórzano observes:

I really like it as a tool, porque los chamaquitos, my older students, ya son teenagers, and they all learned how to play the song, and when they learned how to play it they were real proud [*laughter*], you know because it's impressive to other people, it's a good teaching song for the children and I always tell them, it's broken right here, and they just look at me, it takes a long time to understand the concepts of music verdad.

Reflective of her didactic musical pedagogy of the oppressed, Wells-Solórzano does not lead her music lessons with music theory. Instead, she allows students to be drawn to rhythms, the challenges

of complex strumming techniques, and the bragging rights that come with expanding one's repertoire. As they learn "Ser Como el Aire Libre," she interweaves both the history and structure of the song into the lesson. Wells-Solórzano imparts oral histories to the students about the Afro-Mexican origins of the huapango Veracruzano,⁸³ and how it is a product of colonization, hybridity, and resistance. She then situates the song's lyrics within the historical context from which it emerged: narrating migrant workers' treacherous journeys, and Lira's own childhood growing up as a child of a repatriated family in Mexico.⁸⁴

After this macro and micro historical contextualization, Wells-Solórzano practices the strumming with each student, didactically modeling how to perform the song, while encouraging them to tap into the spirit of the song's meaning. To her, the song invokes a "feeling of freedom to me, your hair in the wind when you're riding a bike or just traveling, you know, that's why I relate it to the migrants." Wells-Solórzano interjects a spirit of expansive freedom, as well as reimagining migration as exploratory, liberating travel while playing this song, and she encourages her students to tap into the affective registers of the song's history and meaning for themselves, too.

Wells-Solórzano also effusively articulated that love needs to be at the core of any radical political movement. In reflecting on her earlier performance years with Alma, she noted "back then we were doing I would say about 75% political stuff and about 25% love songs because it's really important to reach out, it's not all about 'La Revolucion', love *is* revolución." Integrating love songs throughout their sets and repertoire was as much a performative choice—she noted how it was critical to break it up with "una cancion alegre, una cancion de amor" "*a happy song, a love song*" for every few expressly political songs they played—as much as it was a dissident political choice. In

⁸³ Alex E. Chávez, *Sounds of crossing: Music, migration, and the aural poetics of Huapango Arribeño*. Duke University Press, 2017.; Heredia Ortiz, Victor Manuel. "Veracruz: sociedad y cultura popular en la región Golfo Caribe." *Tzintzun* 49 (2009): 217-222

⁸⁴ Francisco E. Balderrama, and Raymond Rodríguez. *Decade of betrayal: Mexican repatriation in the 1930s*. UNM Press, 2006.

Wells-Solórzano's view, there is no sustainable social movement that is not rooted in and nourished by love, both affectively and materially through actions. She observed that, "any movement is nothing if you don't have that harmony, that love, that people aren't backing you up, you know, it starts at home, verdad." Here, the harmonies she is referring to in their love songs, serve as a reminder that dissidence need not sound dissonant—in fact consonant harmonies in her view, were reflective of the unity and love needed to build any social movement as a protracted, sustainable struggle.

Here, her dissident vibrations materialize through consonant harmonization that challenge neoliberal notions of individualism or the need to be a lead singer to invoke a platform or political change. While centering Lira's lead vocals, Wells-Solórzano's harmonization expands the wavelengths upon which the dissident messages of political upheaval, and love as a radical modality of transforming this world, could travel upon. She effectively and didactically models what radical interconnection sounds like, while maintaining the independent "flavors" that she believes both she and Ravi brought to Alma.

Further, in songs such as "She Won't Come," which Wells-Solórzano helped compose and write, based on the duo's relationship, paints a picture of a fiercely independent woman whose voice and guitar playing works in harmony with her counterpart, who lyrically acknowledges that she is beyond containment to social gender norms. This agentic entanglement infuses the song with a refreshing take on love—not as a romanticized enmeshment of two people, but as a constant negotiation in which, lyrically and instrumentally, the Chicana at hand never loses her voice. This too, is dissident.

Community musical theater

In addition to her musical contributions to Alma, Wells-Solórzano also prolifically scored or arranged community musical theater productions. Her key productions include Teatro Inmigrante musical plays “Regeneración: Ricardo Flores Magón and the Mexican Revolution of 1910” (2010); “The Life and Times of Candelaria Arroyo” (2004); “Esperanza and Luz: A Tale of Two Immigrant Women” (2001); and others. Additionally, Wells-Solórzano founded a community music education program called Generaciones Project featuring Mexican and Latin American Folklore, including the radical musical tradition of Nuevo Canto.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic closures, Project Generaciones has continued its important programming and lessons online. Through individual lessons on Zoom, Wells-Solórzano can offer her students individualized attention that further allows for this differentiated pedagogy that is attuned to each students’ interests and challenges. She wistfully remarks that, while she is grateful for the ability to remain connected to her students—for her, teaching is her heart’s work as a musician—the virtual lessons are simply not the same. Due to the inability to have multiple voices or instruments playing synchronously online, Wells-Solórzano believes students are losing part of the “magic of performing...the liveness and real emotion that washes over your whole body and connects you to all the other performers.” For her, this loss of collective effervescence and embodied connection to other musicians is more than a personal loss—it’s a performative phenomenological shortcoming in her students’ educational experiences that she hopes that a safe return to the classroom will help to remedy.

El Teatro Inmigrante has also shifted toward online platforms during the pandemic. Founded in 2000 as the grant program was defunded through Republican state legislative moves, el Teatro provides a platform for local Fresno residents to express themselves through grassroots

community theater. Their approach to popular theater is informed by the 1960s Teatro Campesino that Lira co-founded and co-facilitated with the UFW, and which Wells-Solórzano believed was necessary to reinvigorate outside of los campos—the fields.

Debuted in 2010, “Regeneración: Ricardo Flores Magón and the Mexican Revolution of 1910” was co-written, co-composed and co-performed by Wells-Solórzano and Lira for the Teatro Inmigrante group in Fresno. Though recordings of its debut performance are scant on YouTube, and no official documentation is available, this section of the chapter will work with available recordings, directed by Lira, as well as information gathered via the interview with Wells-Solórzano. All scores were generously transcribed by Thomas Hanslowe—in the following snippet, only two voices are captured in a three-part harmony, due to audio quality.

Yo escribo tu nombre

E - scribo tu nom bre en las pa -

- redes de mi ciudad e - scribo tu nom bre en las pa - redes de mi ciudad

Fig. 1 Score of “Yo escribo tu nombre”, transcribed by Thomas Hanslowe

The video opens with a three-part harmony “Escribo tu nombre/ en las paredes/ de mi ciudad” “I write your name/ on the walls/ of my city.” x2 accompanied by gentle strumming on the guitar. The vocals

are a warm invitation as much as they evince a soulful wistfulness—as if the vocalists seek to write Flores-Magon’s name on their city walls through the tenderness of their cadence. As the couplet comes to an end, the third instrumentalist and vocalist stands up and delivers the following introduction to the *mise en scene*:

“Ricardo Flores Magon was born on September 16th 1873 on Mexican Independence Day. He is considered to be the father of the Mexican revolution. Ricardo dedicated his life to ending the brutal dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz, and to liberating the oppressed Mexican people.”

Her tone is decisive, proud, and matter-of-factual, her arms opening wide as she stresses the word liberating. Her final words cue five community Chicana actors to rush onto the makeshift stage—decorated simply with a red and black striped accordion-fold background (notably the colors of the EZLN movement). The women are dressed in midi skirts and rebosos, with two long trenzas and black face masks. The two men are dressed in khaki pants and a white cotton button up—meant to represent the campesino outfits reminiscent of the early 20th century hacienda life.⁸⁵

The selection of this song as the overture to the play is genealogically decisive. It is derived from a poem titled “Yo te nombro, libertad” written by Italian-Argentinean author Gian Franco Pagliaro during the U.S. imperialist occupations of South America in the 1960s and 1970s. “Yo te nombro libertad” quickly became one of the anthems of a continent ablaze in dissident discontent, and musical renditions of Pagliaro’s poem proliferated from Pinochet’s Chile to Peron’s Argentina, defying fascist states’ enclosures upon musicians’ free expression.

In her decision to cover Pagliaro’s poem, Wells-Solórzano enters this South American genealogy of dissident vibrations. This is significant for a few reasons. First, as evidenced in Wells-

⁸⁵ Zuzana M. Pick. *Constructing the Image of the Mexican Revolution: Cinema and the Archive*. University of Texas Press, 2010.; Philip Jowett, and Alejandro de Quesada. *The Mexican Revolution 1910–20*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013.

Solórzano's anecdotal experience at UNAM, the connection between South American and Chicana politics and ideologies could not be more severed—both in the lifetime of Flores-Magon, and in the time of this musical's production. Second, Wells-Solórzano's arrangement of the song prominently places both women's voices. And finally, both in the genealogical invocation and in the performance of the musical in Chicana communities (Fresno, and Los Angeles), the song evokes the creation of a third borderlands space.

Narratively, the play continues with an actress shouting, "Mira, the palace of Porfirio Diaz!" There is a slight pause before she doubles down and screams "Abajo con el asesino!" The group joins her with fists lifted proudly, screaming "abajo!" The woman in the soft pink reboso leads the chant again "No mas muertes indigenas!" The group responds in English "No more Indian genocide!" which they fervently shout with increasing urgency four times, with a non-diatonic whistle being blown, coming in on the second chant. An actor portraying a police officer rushes the group and hits the lead chanter with his baton, silencing their cries and transitioning into the play's next musical interlude: "El Inmigrante."

G A G Bm G
 Yomevoy p'alotro la - do yomevoy [guitar] yomevoy p'alotro
 6 A G Bm G A G
 la - do yomevoy [guitar] yomevoy p'alotro la - do donde nohay re-vo - lu -
 12 Bm F#
 ción

Fig. 2 Score for “El Inmigrante”, transcribed by Thomas Hanslowe

“Yo me voy al otro lado/ Yo me voy al otro lado/ Yo me voy al otro lado/Donde no hay revolucion.”

“I am going to the other side/ I am going to the other side/I am going to the other side/ Where there is no revolution.”

In the context of the musical play, the delivery of *lado* into a lower note and elongated note values denotes a sorrowful descent into the other side of the border—an inversion of the hegemonic narrative of migration to el Norte. As she sings this from her chest voice, Wells-Solórzano closes her eyes and furrows her brows in empathetic introspection, which enlivens the historical narrative performance by bringing its affective weight into the present moment. As the instrument through which these dissident vibrations are being communicated, Wells-Solórzano allows the listener to not simply learn a historical lesson—that Flores Magon was arrested and extradited to the United States—but also to feel the sorrow of this carceral displacement. This is punctuated by despondent wistfulness of the final refrain’s *diminuendo*, communicating the sorrow of being forced to go to a land without revolution. This is sung as the camera pans to the scene of the actor portraying Ricardo

Flores Magon resisting arrest by two officers, dressed in differing uniforms. While this might have been reflective of the shoestring budget, it could also be interpreted as the bilateral effort on behalf of the U.S. and Mexican governments to permanently silence vocal dissidents during this time period.

However, this initial listening is complicated by listening to the song at length. The song narrates the suffering of an immigrant caused by having to leave his country, in which a revolutionary war is raging. Upon realizing he must travel North to the United States, the narrator (Lira) requests his mother's benediction: "Adios mi madre querida" (*goodbye my dear mother*) is sung by Lira alone while the ensuing refrain "hécheme su bendición" (*give me your blessing*) is the introduction of Wells-Solórzano's voice into the song. She harmonizes with him in this refrain, paralleling the mother's desires to bless her son on his dangerous journey; and affirming that, on the other side "no hay revolución" (there is no revolution). As Lira continues to narrate the migrant's trek, Wells-Solórzano mournfully sings melismatic "aaaahs" while he states "no lloren mis compañeros que me hacen llorar a mi tambien" (*Don't cry my companions, because it makes me cry too.*) This passage is rich with historical and performative meaning.

The cis-heteropatriarchal musical nationalism (here portrayed through the narrative of a migrant leaving one settler-national territory for another and wistfully mourning the loss of a motherland in this way) is pivotal to corridos, a genre that is inflecting this song's lyrical composition—though not the instrumentation, interestingly. It is historically fitting, then, that the narrative centers a male immigrant's journey North and decenters Wells-Solórzano's narrative voice as the mourning mother. As historian Ana Rosas elucidates, reproductive labor, love, and emotional

labor are elided from the archives and literatures on the Bracero Program era in U.S. and Mexican historiographies.⁸⁶

This emotional labor of yearning as well as the reproductive labor left behind in the wake of migrant men's absence, is often historiographically omitted. By interjecting the narrative mother's sorrow through Wells-Solórzano's untexted lamenting, this emotional and gendered labor is being alluded to, if only in the background to the male narrator's voice. Wells-Solórzano then shifts from this background vocal lament to harmonizing with Lira's voice and narration of a migrant traveling up North—detailing the hazardous stops en route. In this way, while the narrator speaks of being alone while migrating, the affective ties and laments of his narrative mother accompany him. After the chorus is sung in harmony and with *diminuendo*, the vocals come to a silent halt as Lira leads with a guitar solo that is accompanied by Wells-Solórzano. Here, the instruments come to represent the deafening silence created by distance during seasonal migration, a condition of transnational labor exacerbated by the US government's censorship and detainment of migrant workers' letters and other intimate affective mementos.⁸⁷

The integration of a song about a migrant man's journey to the United States in a play about Flores-Magon's transnational organizing, and ultimate extradition, forges an interesting parallel in these ways. Biographically, Flores-Magon also left behind a broken-hearted mother and partner.⁸⁸ The reproductive and affective labors of these women in his life are, too, often elided. By interweaving a woman's voice and affective experience into this song's narrative—in the context of this play, specifically—the role of women in transnational migratory experiences is brought forth

⁸⁶ Ana Elizabeth Rosas. *Abrazando el Espíritu: Bracero Families Confront the US-Mexico Border*. Vol. 40. Univ of California Press, 2014.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Colin M. MacLachlan. *Anarchism and the Mexican Revolution: The Political Trials of Ricardo Flores Magón in the United States*. Univ of California Press, 1991.

from out of the shadows, from out of the silences of our archives.⁸⁹ Additionally, this parallel permits for an interesting inversion in meaning of the song's lyrics. While sung from the record's original intention—to narrate the experience of a migrant worker—the notion of “going to the other side where there is no revolution” is seen as a positive gain. However, when sung in the context of the musical play, this same lyric along with the timbral and tonal delivery, effectively shift the meaning to one of a sorrowful loss: departing the revolution Flores-Magon fought so hard to propitiate, for the hope of refuge on the other side.

Narratively, the song then transitions the viewer into a scene where a young Chicana actor donning a cotton peasant dress is shown at center stage. She bellows:

“If you have come into the revolution only to remove Porfirio Diaz, then you will continue to be the SLAVE that you are today. Where is this so-called democracy?! *Please*, help us free him! Free Ricardo! Free Ricardo! Free Ricardo! Free Ricardo!”

She leads the audience in this chant with her fist up high before walking off of stage right. It is unclear who she is, or why she would be appealing to a Mexican national audience for Flores-Magon's clemency in a United States prison. However, historical context aside, the content of her message is dissident. Rather than focus teleologically on simply deposing Porfirio Diaz, this character cautions against gestural reform without substantive change. She calls into question the validity of the democracy, and the freedoms available therein to people with limited choices among despotic oligarchic leaders.⁹⁰ Her invocation of Flores-Magon's name both suggests his leadership style and political principles as antithetical to these anti-democratic despotic leaders and mobilizes

⁸⁹ Vicki L. Ruiz. *From out of the shadows: Mexican women in twentieth-century America*. Oxford University Press, 2008.

⁹⁰ Justin Akers Chacón. *Radicals in the Barrio: Magonistas, Socialists, Wobblies, and Communists in the Mexican-American Working Class*. Haymarket Books, 2018.

her voice as a dissident vibrational instrument for his liberation and ongoing insurrectionary political commitments.

Her exit cues “La cancion del Indio,” performed by Wells-Solórzano and Lira:

A D A C# F#m C#
 An enel cer-ro llo ran do enel ri - se agranda no - la pennadel
 8 F#m A D A C# F#m
 in-dio el sol y la luna y es te canto mi o be sa rantus pie - dras
 15 C# F#m
 ca mi no del in - di - o

Fig. 3 Score for “La cancion del Indio”, transcribed by Thomas Hanslowe

“Ando en el cerro/ llorando en el rio/se agranda la noche/la pena del indio/el sol y la luna/y este canto mio/besaran tus piedras/camino del indio.”

“I’m on the hill/ crying in the river/ the night gets bigger/ the sorrow of the Indian/ the sun and the moon/ and this song of mine/ will kiss your rocks/ the path of the Indian.”

The visuals transition to a sepia shot of a campesino harvesting maguey, as they sing “Ando...noche”, and it transitions back to a wide screen shot of Wells-Solórzano and Lira on stage left from “La pena del indio” to “camino del indio.” The visuals of the song pair well with the material reality undergirding Flores-Magon’s political agenda: at the time of the Mexican Revolution 90% of the Mexican population were landless campesinos.⁹¹ These campesinos were largely employed in debt peonage arrangements at haciendas, with a majority of the population situated in

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

rural haciendas.⁹² While the demographics of the campesino population span multiple racial formations in Mexico, Indigenous communities formed a disproportionate portion of this labor pool. In this sense, the visuals for “Camino del Indio,” along with the lyrical and instrumental components of the number, allude to the melancholy of Indigenous campesinos’ plight in pre-revolutionary Mexico. The narrator of the song is also clearly non-Indigenous as the lyrics delineate that “este canto mio” *this song of mine*, “besaran tus piedras” *will kiss your rocks*. This bifurcation between the musical narrative belonging to a mestiza singer, and the path of oppression belonging to the Indigenous person mirrors an interesting connection in relation to Flores-Magon’s biography.

The placement of this song within this play does not make much narrative-historical sense, as Flores-Magon was a light skinned mestizo. Perhaps it is meant to center the Indigenous nations within Mexico whom Flores-Magon believed should be autonomous—and not forced into the “so-called democracy” of the Mexican nation-state. Wells-Solórzano initiates the song, on an A chord, singing “Ando en el cerro”, suggesting that the narrator is on this proverbial hill alone. Wells-Solórzano’s narrator is then enjoined in the sorrowful weeping into the river in the following line via Lira’s harmonization. Despite the questionable applicability of this song to the narrative of Flores-Magon—unless it is a reclamation of his Indigenous ancestry, or of his pro-Indigenous autonomy politics—it is significant that the character who led the cry for his freedom, and the musician who led the lament of this condition of inequity for which he was jailed for denouncing, were both Chicanas.

But the more likely interpretation is to be found somewhere closer to a middle ground. Here, perhaps we can hear the mournful lament of an Indigenous person stranded on a hill alone, weeping into a river at his plight in life as a moment of colonial abjection to which Ricardo Flores Magon would never be fully privy to as a light skinned mestizo. However, due to his solidarity work

⁹² *Ibid.*

for the liberation of all workers, including Indigenous campesinos from oligarchic rule in Mexico, toward an anarchic vision of the future, he too, was subjected to the dire circumscriptions around his livelihood in a way that mirrored that of the Indigenous campesinos whose rights he fought for. Natalie Molina reminds us that state apparatuses are ever adaptive in this way: redeploying racial scripts to adaptively limit who counts as a full citizen—and here, which dissidents could be racialized as other.⁹³

Narrator: The PLM spread along the Mexican border, making strong connections with other rebel newspapers. When *Regeneracion* was delivered to a plantation or to an industrial center, it created excitement!

Campesino actor: *Comel! Gather! News from Ricardo Flores Magon!*
(The actors huddled and exclaimed in excitement around the actor with the newspaper in his hands.)

Campesino actor: Does anybody here know how to read. (Actors bow their heads in shame)
Well I know how to read, and I'll do it for you with pleasure!

The scene cuts to a Mexican state official visiting the Flores-Magon mother's home, demanding that she tell her sons to back down and "abandon their struggles." She responds by decisively stating "I would rather die alone than have my sons stand down! *Largese de mi casa! Afuera de mi casa! Afuera de mi casa!*"

Merlinda Espinoza opens after this renunciation of state presence in her home, by softly singing:

El pajarito enjaulado/pez en la pecera/mi amigo es tan preso/ha dicho lo que piensa/ por la pisoteada...
(*The caged bird/a fish in the fishbowl/my friend is so confined/he has said what he thinks/ about being walked all over.*)

Her voice provides the undercurrent melody as a bohemian radical actress comes to center stage, exclaiming:

⁹³ Natalia Molina. *How race is made in America: Immigration, citizenship, and the historical power of racial scripts*. Vol. 38. Univ of California Press, 2014.

The revolution will break out at any moment! *Pause* We long time observers of the social and political life of the Mexican people cannot be deceived! The signs of the colossal upheaval leave no doubt that something is about to surge, something is about to collapse!”

Her prophetic exclamations are enveloped by Quiroz’s leading three-part harmony of the refrain:

Escribo tu nombre en las paredes de mi ciudad/ tu nombre verdadero/ tu nombre y otros nombres que no nombro/ por temor.

(I write your name on the walls of my city/ your true name/ your name and other names I will not name/ out of fear.)

This is enclosed by the three singers leading a melodic chant, met with rhythmic clapping by the audience: “libertad, libertad, libertad” (*“liberty, liberty, liberty”*).

Yo escribo tu nombre 2

The musical score is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of six staves of music. The lyrics are written below the notes. Chords are indicated above the notes. The lyrics are: "Ri - car do en jaula do pez en la pece ra mi amigo es tan pre so a dicho lo que pien sa [edit] e - scribe tu nom - bre en las pa - ra des demi - ciudad tu nombre ve ra de ro tu nom bre y ot ras nom bres que no nom bro por te mor li bertad li bertad li bertad li ber tad".

Fig. 4 Score for “Yo Escribo Tu Nombre” transcribed by Thomas Hanslower

The opening refrain likens Flores-Magon’s imprisonment to the unnatural enclosures of both a birdcage and a fishbowl—all simply because he spoke his mind. His own dissident political enunciations were so threatening to two settler-colonial states that they required the physical

enclosure of a carceral cell, a parallel that should not be lost on us. The affective weight of this enclosure is further captured beyond the lyrics. As this refrain is sung, Quiroz and Wells-Solórzano use consonant harmony in their vocals to create a sense of transcending the enclosure, collectively.

The narrator's description of writing Flores-Magon's name throughout the walls of her city parallels women's historical role in maintaining Flores-Magon's political legacy, and his transnational organizing capacities in Los Angeles.⁹⁴ Further, this visual commemoration of inscribing his name upon city walls does interesting work. First, it conflates the ocular centrist modality of honoring his legacy with the aural/musical medium through which this inscription is being communicated. The textual thus becomes a multi-media homage of radical political mobilization. Second, this commemoration of Flores-Magon's work and incarceration by writing on city walls speaks volumes about the placemaking processes of radical Chicanas/Mexicanas on both sides of the border, and the defiant community building that transcended the boundaries of carceral enclosures. Here, the city walls become the metaphorical medium through which the memory of a radical political organizer can be restored and uplifted, beyond censure of the state. For a Chicana to narrate such a seditious act—to not only side with someone labeled a binationally treasonous anarchist, but to grieve his incarceration and vow to carry on his legacy—is itself to create a trace of dissidence.

Generations after the political gravity of this has diminished, two Chicanas are taking it upon themselves to paint Flores-Magon's name upon their city walls, both through flyers meant to promote the event, but also aurally—in their oratorical and singing performances in this play. As such, the narrator remakes her city of Los Angeles—while Quiroz and Wells-Solórzano remake their smaller city of Fresno—by painting a name through sound.

⁹⁴ MacLachlan, Colin M. *Anarchism and the Mexican Revolution: The Political Trials of Ricardo Flores Magón in the United States*. Univ of California Press, 1991.

I center the Flores-Magon play that was co-written and co-produced by Wells-Solórzano because of how it ties into her matriarchal genealogy. Aside from planting the seeds of musicality in Wells-Solórzano's heart and mind, Nana Loretto also tended to her political consciousness through oral history telling. One of the histories she loved to tell Wells-Solórzano was that of the Mexican Revolution and the PLM, led by the Flores Magon brothers. She recalls her grandmother sitting in her chair, plaiting Wells-Solórzano's hair while she spoke about *Regeneracion* as the rebel newspaper that dared to speak of freedom during the Porfiritato, and Ricardo Flores-Magon as unjustly incarcerated because his leadership posed a threat to the rich people's control of both the U.S. and Mexico.

Through this popular oral history telling exercise, Nana Loretto engaged in dissident vibrations. That is, she was using her own body as an instrument for the transmission and transduction of dissident sonic repertoire—in this case, oral histories. In both content and form, she didactically modeled to Wells-Solórzano how to engage in dissident vibrations across media. To search for stories that remained hegemonically silenced/untold, and to amplify them through one's voice, and any instruments available. When discussing this musical play with me, Wells-Solórzano took a long pause and sighed wistfully—“Ay, she would've loved it, you know? She would've been so proud to know I was carrying these stories on, and that I was doing it through music. She looooved music.”

Through those early experiences of oral history telling at Nana Yaqui's feet while she plaited her hair, Wells-Solórzano learned the power of story. The power of learning who she was and where she came from was more than individual identity formation: it was a guide/blueprint for where Chicaxs might collectively hope to go. These oral history telling practices became even more important to her considering the hegemonic erasure of popular resistance and radical political figures. Given this intergenerational transmission of decolonial dissident epistemologies and

vibrational practices of storytelling, I have shown in this chapter that the political nature of Wells-Solórzano's musical labors is routed through a Yaqui matrilineal line, rather than Lira's latter influence in her life. Chapter 2 will examine the dissident vibrations of Alice Bag's music, specifically centering her work on gender and domestic violence.

Chapter 2:

Alice Bag' s Chicana political punk and the domestic sphere

"Punk was another word for unity. If you showed up, you weren't just pledging allegiance to a new vision of punk, you were pledging allegiance to a new vision of L.A."

-Theresa Covarrubias, lead singer of The Brat

"Music is a method," as much for a researcher looking to find ethnomusicological answers as for the working-class people of color who use it to critically engage the world around them.⁹⁵ Through its sonic, performative, and subcultural elements, music reflects and refracts their collective stories. From the blues to corridos, conjuntos to punk, this collective storytelling creates sonic spaces for commiseration over shared struggles, celebration of quotidian pleasures, and dissonant ruptures from hegemonic identity scripts and political vocalization when formal methods of participation prove inaccessible.⁹⁶ It is precisely for its ability to capture the ephemeral, infrapolitical life of working class people of color—who institutional analyses might elide—that music provides a powerful tool for understanding how Chicanas are culturally, economically, and politically integrating into the U.S. settler state.

This chapter takes LA Latinx punk seriously as a site for such political contestation, gendered bicultural dissidence, and identity formation. I posit that under racial capitalism and settler colonial state terror, Chicanas like Alice Bag pulled from their own femme epistemologies around surviving the impossible to forge a defiant alternative through their art. Specifically, by focusing on

⁹⁵ Redmond, Shana L. *Anthem: Social movements and the sound of solidarity in the African diaspora*. NYU Press, 2014.; Woods, Clyde. *Development arrested: The blues and plantation power in the Mississippi Delta*. Verso Books, 2017.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*; Davis, Angela Y. *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday*. Vintage, 2011.; Halberstam, J. Jack. "7 What's That Smell?" In *In a Queer Time and Place*, pp. 152-188. New York University Press, 2005.; Johnson, Gaye Theresa. *Spaces of conflict, sounds of solidarity: Music, race, and spatial entitlement in Los Angeles. Vol. 36*. Univ of California Press, 2013.; Vargas, Deborah R. *Dissonant divas in Chicana music: The limits of La Onda*. U of Minnesota Press, 2012.

Alice Bag's resurgent career since the mid 2010s, I hope to weave together a portrait of how one Chicana disobeyed bicultural norms through her major contributions to LA punk and, in so doing, set an example for her fans to growl, stomp, and scream their way to a more decolonial futurity through engaging in dissident vibrations. But first—what's punk, anyway?

Defining Punk

Cultural historian, Dick Hebdige, theorizes punk as a white, male, British phenomenon that arose out of Thatcher's neoliberal policies and subsequent displacement of white blue-collar workers. Characterized by its "nihil[ism]...[and] separation from ... cultural contexts," Hebdige argues that British punk was a subculture of cultural dislocation and political disattachment.⁹⁷ This identity, formed around a common denominator of white dispossession, was not free from the racism, sexism or xenophobia shaping their macro social realities. Although Hebdige's work on British punk provides interesting insight into one set of origins of a subculture of disengagement from neoliberal politics and culture, it fails to include an analysis of race, gender, or the transnational diasporas of punk.

In a pivotal disjuncture from this discourse, Gaye Theresa Johnson asserts in *Spaces of Conflict, Sounds of Solidarity* that, although British punk did influence LA Chicano/Black punk in the early 1970s, East LA punks of color reconfigured the ideological meaning, culture and sonic expressions of punk.⁹⁸ Coming of age during dismal social and economic crises—in which supply side economic policies were aggravated by the state's abandonment of social welfare responsibilities—LA punks of color's world view was shaped by displacement, joblessness,

⁹⁷ Hebdige, Dick. *Subculture: The meaning of style*. Routledge, 2012.

⁹⁸ Johnson, Gaye Theresa. *Spaces of conflict, sounds of solidarity: Music, race, and spatial entitlement in Los Angeles*. Vol. 36. Univ of California Press, 2013.

transnational migrations, and even colorblind discrimination within the white West LA punk scene. Despite the similar roots in neoliberal economic crises, LA East side punk was distinguished by its active criticism of the structural inequalities its participants experienced, as opposed to the nihilistic disengagement of their British counterparts. Further, LA punks of color firmly rooted their sounds and messages in their local as well as transnational struggles and identities rather than seeking to separate themselves from them as Hebdige notes about the British punk scenes.

These distinctions are most evident in the music of Los Crudos, The Brat and Bad Brains, all of which addressed Black and Chicano punks' encounters with segregation and immigration. Los Crudos, in particular, expanded on these political messages by addressing the transnational interconnectedness of Latinos' economic, racial and political subjugation. In doing so, Johnson argues:

Chicano and Black [punk] artists were trying to do something more meaningful than escape the structures of their everyday existence: many were finding new ways to make their own and their communities' histories relevant to punk identity.

Thus, contrary to Hebdige's portrayal of punk as nihilistic, disengaged, locally based or all white, Johnson demonstrates that for LA punks of color, it was a critical site of racial, transnational and economic solidarity. Despite these limitations, Johnson otherwise successfully defends her argument that East LA punk was a site for interracial infrapolitical contestation. Through recession proof DIY aesthetic, transnationally routed and rooted lyrics, and shows, these youth formed subcultural communities committed to producing "a new vision of punk...and a new vision of LA." Though far from perfect—particularly in reference to punk's gendered exclusions—Johnson's account weaves this infrapolitical community into a broader regional narrative of interracial solidarity and resistance to second-class subjugation. Placing these youth's DIY contestations alongside concurrent social movements such as Mothers of East L.A suggests their resonant historical significance.

Johnson and Hebdige provide crucial insight into the inner political workings and meanings of punk as a subculture, and its various articulations. In *Backyard Brats and Eastside Punks*, Jimmy Alvarado adds his intimate knowledge of the East L.A. punk genealogy as a long-time musician and promoter.⁹⁹ Through a cursory historical review of Eastside punk's ebbs and flows, Alvarado demonstrates how Latinos have reformulated what punk means at different junctures, in response to the socioeconomic conditions they were living in. Further, Alvarado argues that despite pessimistic diagnoses that punk is dead, "East LA punk is alive and bigger than ever, and some see no end in sight... You're always gonna have a kid who wants to play three-chord fast songs." Alvarado's work allows us to see how Latino punk has always been politically conscious and responsive to social realities. He also affirms punk as an ideology and musical scene that will continue to grow and branch out—particularly through growing subcultures like Latino ska, skacore and reggae.

Black Hawk Hancock and Michael J. Lorr further this work by exploring how punk subcultural identity and music is created through collective practices at each concert in *More Than Just a Soundtrack: Toward a Technology of the Collective in Hardcore Punk*.¹⁰⁰ Through moshing, stage diving and intimate physical proximity between performers and concertgoers, Hancock and Lorr posit that punks embody their subcultural epistemology and relationship to the world. This "embodiment, manifested in displays of involvement and group membership, becomes the conduit between music, identity, conventionalized expressions, and how people configure their social worlds." I apply this framework, of the embodied concert-going experience as inherently political, to my ethnographic observations, in which I witnessed the pit become a site of solidarity as much as a reproduction of male hegemony

⁹⁹ Alvarado, Jimmy. "Backyard Brats and Eastside Punks: A History of East LA's Punk Scene." *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 37, no. 2 (2012): 157-180.

¹⁰⁰ Hancock, Black Hawk, and Michael J. Lorr. "More than just a soundtrack: Toward a technology of the collective in hardcore punk." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 42, no. 3 (2013): 320-346.

My work further expands upon these foundational texts by examining Alice Bag's contributions to the Los Angeles punk scene since her re-emergence in 2015. Existing scholarship on music as a site of political transformation or subcultural resistance focuses on the expressivity of music, or how that music is articulated within rigid racial boundaries. The following section will provide a theorization of how Alice Bag counters bilateral settler state terror—and domestic violence at all scales.

State Terror and Domestic Violence

Domestic violence happens at various scales within settler nation-states, and the U.S. is no exception. From the onslaught of public racial terror attacks by white nationalist men to the thousands of underreported private gendered attacks against women—a culture of violence is endemic at home. Patricia Hill Collins theorizes the connection between the domestic sphere of the family to that of the nation, positing that the same unfounded intersectional hierarchies of power and control undergird both.¹⁰¹ That is, gendered and racial violences of all gradations are not aberrations from how nuclear families, or the nation as a family, are supposed to function: they are the hegemonic mutually constitutive norms.

Hill-Collins's position is a cornerstone of my argument that U.S. settler nationalisms intersectionally oppress its most marginalized members through various gradations of domestic violences. To counter these violences or the nationalisms that engender them is a dissident act. I argue that through her direct refusal of both the U.S. white justice system, and gendered violence, Alice Bag is engaging in dissident vibrations that sound out against these nationalist hierarchies and

¹⁰¹ Collins, Patricia Hill. "It's All in the Family: Intersections of Gender, Race, and Nation." *Hypatia*, vol. 13, no. 3, 1998, pp. 62–82.

violences. In both her live performances and her recordings, Bag generates a collective effervescence and radical political consciousness among her listening publics.

To argue these claims effectively, I first provide historical context on the broader Chicana Movement to which Bag alludes in “White Justice,” and the generations of intersectional precarity that “He’s So Sorry” refers to. I next provide a theoretical framework for the discussions on nationalisms and music, with a special ear for the voices of women of color theorists. I conclude with an analytical reading of the songs in tandem with the official music videos, understood within the broader framework. It is my hope that rendering Bag’s work in this light will help elucidate the significance of her most recent contributions, which have yet to be written about academically—and that, inversely, her work will help us learn more about the intimacies of nationalism’s intersecting violences for women of color.

In a recent interview, Bag shared that a pivotal role of music in revolutionary contexts is the emotional labor it conducts.¹⁰² This conceptualization of music’s role in social transformation places its affective transmission and transduction of collective effervescence at the center—a stance made all the more important given the gendered themes embedded throughout Bag’s repertoire. As I examine the political dissidence of Alice Bag’s repertoire throughout her career as a punk vocalist from 1977 to the present, I focus especially on how she mobilizes dissonant affects to express dissident gendered politics through music, and theorize what political labors this affective resonance enacts through a decolonial femme analytic outlined earlier.

While there is some archival and scholarly work that corrects historiographic silences around Chicano contributions to the 1970s LA punk scene and the gendered significance of Chicana punks’ stage presence, there is no scholarship that focuses on Bag’s performances and repertoire,

¹⁰² As quoted in “Alice Bag and Punk Rock's Enduring Battle for Women's Rights,” *Vice*, 2017 (https://www.vice.com/en_ca/article/vvjmwb/alice-bag-and-punk-rocks-enduring-battle-for-womens-rights, accessed August 22, 2020).

particularly during her resurgent career. This chapter aims to situate Bag's political dissidence as much in the lyrical content of her anthemic contestations against gendered inequity as in the timbral delivery and performative style of these messages. This work will be conducted through interdisciplinary methods, including intertextual close readings and close listenings. In weaving these sources together, I endeavor to reveal the political dissidence and diasporic imaginary that is emblematic of Bag's work. Her articulations of dissidence are routed through a decolonial femme imaginary that expands across the U.S.-Mexico border—centering women of color's experiences and voices as diasporic nodes of connection and dissent. Such a focus will allow for a centering of the personal and affective as political realms through which Bag delivers her dissident contributions and generates political consciousness through musical collective effervescence.

Chicanx History Context

Chicanx Studies often demarcates 1848 as the beginning of the Chicanx experience in the U.S. The year marks the ending of the U.S.-Mexico War through the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.¹⁰³ The binational agreement promised that Mexicans who decided to stay in the newly U.S. colonized territories would be granted equal citizenship; however, this was little more than colonial lore. In the decades following the treaty, white settlers' theft of Mexican and Indigenous property owner's lands was rampant; and the justice system bolstered this process through linguistic, financial and cultural inaccessibility.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Valerio-Jiménez, Omar S. (Omar Santiago), 1963-. *River Of Hope : Forging Identity and Nation in the Rio Grande Borderlands*. Durham [NC] :Duke University Press, 2013.

¹⁰⁴ Guidotti-Hernández, Nicole Marie. *Unspeakable Violence : Remapping U.S.. and Mexican National Imaginaries*. Durham :Duke University Press, 2011.; Foley, Neil, author. *Mexicans In the Making of America*. Cambridge, Massachusetts :The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014.

Miroslava Chavez-Garcia illuminates how gender furthered these inequities during this early U.S. settler colonial period: elucidating not only the same property wars with Anglo settlers, but also the challenge of petitioning the new nation-state for protection from abusive husbands to no avail.¹⁰⁵ From the inauguration of the Chicana experience in the U.S., then, broken promises of equality and interlocking structures of oppression have been pivotal. The nation-state's maintenance of violent marriages reflects Hill-Collins's argument that gendered violence is at the foundation of both social contracts.

These inequities compounded over time, with moments of mass migration and economic depression earmarking peaks of xenophobic and racist policies toward Chicanos. The Mexican Revolution precipitated mass immigration of working class peasants to the United States, settling largely in the borderlands region, with Los Angeles as a central hub.¹⁰⁶ The economic downturn in the 1930s led to racially charged xenophobic immigration practices that targeted this newly prominent Chicana community in Los Angeles.¹⁰⁷ The Mass Repatriation of the 1930s was a concerted effort between the INS, social workers and police officers to deport up to 1.1 million Mexicans and Mexican descended Americans, under the guise of national economic protection.¹⁰⁸

Ironically, within a decade the bilateral Bracero program would be signed into effect in 1945—recruiting these same working class peasants to labor in the agricultural sector left depleted by war time deployments.¹⁰⁹ Historians demarcate this period as one rife with racist labor violations, in

¹⁰⁵ Chávez-García, Miroslava, 1968-. *Negotiating Conquest : Gender and Power in California, 1770s to 1880s*. Tucson :University of Arizona Press, 2004.

¹⁰⁶ Akers Chacón, Justin. author. *Radicals In the Barrio : Magonistas, Socialists, Wobblies, and Communists in the Mexican American Working Class*. Chicago, IL :Haymarket Books, 2018.

¹⁰⁷ Sanchez, George Joseph. *Becoming Mexican American : Ethnicity and Acculturation in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1943*. [Place of publication not identified] :[publisher not identified], 1989.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Rosas, Ana Elizabeth, 1978- author. *Abrazando El Espíritu : Bracero Families Confront the US-Mexico Border*. Oakland, California :University of California Press, 2014.

which Mexicans' socio-economic precarity was perpetuated through racist ideologies that placed them beneath the protections of either nation's citizenship.¹¹⁰ Women in this period were left to run the small villages in Mexico that were emptied by absent husbands, and took on both the reproductive and affective labors of rearing families on their own.¹¹¹ Yet, despite this increase in responsibilities, there was not a parallel augmentation in sexual or gendered freedom.

On the U.S. side of the border, this same period witnessed the opening of war time industry positions for men and women of color in Los Angeles. For Chicaxs, this provided the socio-economic mobility that allowed them to break out of traditional family norms (such as staying at home until marriage.)¹¹² However, they were each paid half of what their white counterparts were paid, with women making less than half of what men made. Any demands to increase wages were framed as anti-patriotic and quickly led to dismissal from coveted employment positions.¹¹³

This era of racially constricted wartime social mobility was punctuated by the Zoot Suit Riots of 1943—in which white navy service men assaulted Chicano youth without provocation, and for which the LAPD arrested up to 500 Chicanos for self-defense.¹¹⁴ This period of seemingly forward economic progress was stagnated with a reminder that race would continue to mark Chicanos as outsiders to the nation these service men vowed to protect—and for which many Chicanos were

¹¹⁰ Schmidt Camacho, Alicia R. *Migrant Imaginaries : Latino Cultural Politics in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands*. New York :New York University Press, 2008.; edited by Donna R. Gabaccia and Vicki L. Ruiz. *American Dreaming, Global Realities : Rethinking U.S. Immigration History*. Urbana :University of Illinois Press, 2006.; Akers Chacón, Justin. *No One Is Illegal : Fighting Violence and State Repression on the U.S.-Mexico Border*. Chicago, Ill. :Haymarket Books, 2006.; Gonzalez, Gilbert G., 1941-. *Guest Workers or Colonized Labor? : Mexican Labor Migration to the United States*. Boulder :Paradigm Publishers, 2013.

¹¹¹ Rosas, Ana Elizabeth, 1978- author. *Abrazando El Espíritu : Bracero Families Confront the US-Mexico Border*. Oakland, California :University of California Press, 2014.

¹¹² Escobedo, Elizabeth Rachel. *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits : the Lives of Mexican American Women on the World War II Home Front*. Chapel Hill :University of North Carolina Press, 2013.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Alvarez, Luis, 1972-. *The Power of the Zoot : Youth Culture and Resistance during World War II*. Berkeley :University of California Press, 2008.

giving their own lives. The same xenophobic immigration racial script¹¹⁵ was revisited post-war through Operation Wetback of 1954 and the McCarran-Walter Act of 1965—both state initiatives that were indicative of a racially and ethnically exclusive nationalism.¹¹⁶ These intergenerational injustices set the stage for the multiple movements that would be historiographically coalesced as the Chicano Movement.

Beginning with the 1962 UFW organizing led by Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez, the movement proliferated across the Southwestern and Western United States throughout the decade.¹¹⁷ By 1967, Chicano students in Los Angeles had forged organizing groups such as the Brown Berets, United Mexican American Students (UMAS) and The Young Citizens for Community Action (YCAA), and within a little over a year, they staged the historic East LA walkouts on March 6, 1968.¹¹⁸ Historians estimate around 20,000 Chicano students from East Los Angeles walked out of school to highlight the racial inequity that characterized their public schools.¹¹⁹ Students' chief demands were to change LAUSD curricula to integrate Mexican American histories and cultures, including folklore, provide bilingual education, and increase Mexican American representation among staff and administration.¹²⁰ Though the demands fell flat and were

¹¹⁵ Molina, Natalia. *How Race Is Made in America : Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts*. Berkeley :University of California Press, 2014.

¹¹⁶ Hondagneu-Sotelo, Pierrette. *Gendered Transitions Mexican Experiences of Immigration*. Berkeley, Calif. :University of California Press, 1994.

¹¹⁷ Shaw, Randy, 1956-. *Beyond The Fields : Cesar Chavez, the UFW, and the Struggle for Justice in the 21st Century*. Berkeley :University of California Press, 2008.; García, Matt. *From The Jaws of Victory the Triumph and Tragedy of Cesar Chavez and the Farm Worker Movement*. Berkeley :University of California Press, 2012.

¹¹⁸ edited by Mario T. Garcia. *The Chicano Movement : Perspectives from the Twenty-First Century*. New York :Routledge, 2014.

¹¹⁹ Ibid; Mora, Carlos, 1959-. *Latinos In the West : the Student Movement and Academic Labor in Los Angeles*. Lanham, Md. :Rowman & Littlefield, 2007.

¹²⁰ García, Mario T. *Blowout! Sal Castro And the Chicano Struggle for Educational Justice*. Chapel Hill [N.C.] :University of North Carolina Press, 2011.; edited by Margarita Berta-Ávila, Anita Tijerina Revilla, Julie López Figueroa. *Marching Students : Chicana and Chicano Activism in Education, 1968 to the Present*. Reno :University of Nevada Press, 2011.

not met, due to the school board claiming lack of funding, these students' mobilization set an important precedent for the intergenerational protest that would occur two years later in 1970: the East L.A. Chicano Moratorium—pictured in “White Justice.”

Yet for all the disruption and progress made by the Chicano Movement, women and LGBTQ issues were largely cast aside.¹²¹ Chicano Historians have largely historiographically elided women in leadership roles and equity issues along the lines of gender or sexuality were seen as internally divisive issues to be dealt with after Chicano equality was achieved.¹²² This elision affected not only the representation of minoritized groups within the Chicano community in the movement, but it also refuted the personal negotiations with power as political issues to contend with. The domestic violence of both nationalisms and its patriarchal violences at home were cast aside for Chicanas to deal with on their own. Chicana feminism's interventions and Alice Bag's interjection of personal experiences into political songs can be most lucidly seen against this backdrop.

Despite the concerted mobilizations to achieve equity for the Chicano community in the 1960s—and the many progressive successes achieved since then—the disparity in life and educational outcomes persists to the present day. Mirroring their 1968 counterparts, Los Angeles Unified School District students conducted a walk out in 2006 to protest anti-immigration bill HR 4437. The *LA Times* reported that nearly 40,000 students across Southern California joined the walk out, eclipsing both the 1960s Blowouts and the Prop 187¹²³ demonstrations. As with similar protests

¹²¹ Moraga, Cherrie. "Queer Aztlan: The Re-formation of Chicano Tribes," in *Queer Cultures*, ed. Deborah Carlin and Jennifer DiGrazia, 2004, p. 224-238

¹²² Blackwell, Maylei, 1969-. *Chicana Power! : Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement*. Austin :University of Texas Press, 2011.

¹²³ Proposition 187, also known as the "Save Our State" initiative, was a controversial ballot measure put forth during the California general election of November 8, 1994. Proponents framed the issue as a solution for the perceived strain on public resources that undocumented immigrants place. They contended that denying benefits to this population would incentivize them to seek legal residency and, consequently, alleviate the financial burden on taxpayers.

in the 1960s, this student movement fanned the flames of the Chicana community's discontent, and inspired a historic turnout for the 2007 May Day rally in Los Angeles. This is the event featured in the latter half of Alice Bag's "White Justice" video, in which police began firing tear gas canisters into the crowd, and beating unarmed peaceful protestors.

Through culling this footage in the music video, and in employing a 1960s girl-group aesthetic for "He's So Sorry," Alice Bag is in effect pointing to the long *durée* of these forms of domestic violences experienced by Chicanas in the United States. In so doing, she's making a statement about nationalism's very character: its white justice cannot be reformed, and its violent ways won't change with a mere apology.

Nationalist theories

In *Black Marxism*, political scientist Cedric Robinson argues that nationalism is the product of myth-making around a shared collective origin, imbued with explanations for the economic stratification of society based on "categories of differentiation."¹²⁴ This position is significant for arguing that racial or ethnic differentiation is essential to nationalism; by extension, the exclusion of certain racial or ethnic groups is equally fundamental. The Chicana history traced above provides the context to support such a foundational claim, in the context of this chapter. Drawing upon Robinson's categories of differentiation as a guide, let us delve into how other scholars theorize nationalism and cultural production.

¹²⁴ Robinson, Cedric J. *Black Marxism The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*. Chapel Hill, N.C. :University of North Carolina Press, 2000. Beginning post-enclosure in Western Europe, Robinson traces the inception and transition from monarchic feudal kingdoms to mercantilist nations through myths which claim that Europeans were descendants of the Trojans and that figured Black Europeans as the sons of Ham. This mythological explanation not only set parameters around who counted as part of the national body politic as a full citizen, but also delimited the boundaries of an imagined community and what that community's cultural production would come to represent. Robinson posits that if we are to understand contemporary inequities in cultural representation or in racialized economic stratification of society, we must trace these genealogies of racialized nationalist differentiation to these origins.

Raymond Knapp defines nationalism as the constructed notion of a collective identity bound together by a shared sense of: a valued region; folk-like cultural production that points to a shared heritage; the evocation of collective and individual virtues; a delineated narrative around right to the land; a medium to communicate these messages; and the reception of these elements by a critical mass of the collective.¹²⁵ Under this paradigm, nationalism must produce cultural reference points and from them, create a tautological mythology of its own existence.

Knapp argues further that musicals in the U.S. are an effective medium toward this end, because they not only brought a specific audience together within a constructed community, but also sent that audience out into a larger community armed with songs to be shared, providing at least some basis for achieving a sense of unity among the increasingly varied peoples of a country expanding rampantly both geographically and through immigration.

This coherence of a constructed community through a musical medium is a significant intervention. In contrast to Benedict Anderson's reliance on newspaper circulation to cohere these communities,¹²⁶ Knapp articulates a performative medium with vivid afterlives in the memories of attendees. Further, for the duration of the performance, the constructed community is able to narratively wed disparate groups into an inclusive melting pot mythology of U.S. American identity, intended to "reassure a nation of its own essential goodness." This narrative suturing of disparate white ethnic groups on stage was formative to the hegemonic racial mythologization of whiteness in the United States, and its multicultural language (at best) around racial categories of difference.

Knapp deftly demonstrates how music served as a potent medium to convey these White U.S. mythological constructs, and to cohere a sense of community across different scales and regions—

¹²⁵ Knapp, Raymond. "Carl Nielsen and the Nationalist Trap, or, what, Exactly, is 'Inextinguishable?'" *Carl Nielsen Studies* 4 (2012).

¹²⁶ Anderson, Benedict R. O'G. (Benedict Richard O'Gorman), 1936-2015, author. *Imagined Communities : Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London ; New York :Verso, 2006.

and thus constructing within these spaces a sense of shared heritage spanning valued regions. My own work builds on this seminal contribution by exploring how music and oral practices foster a community constructed through shared musical collective effervescence, and dissident values, for Chicanas in the U.S. However, I differ in how I understand the relationship between land and community, building on instructive models provided by decolonial social theorist Macarena Gomez-Barris and other women of color theorists.

Gomez-Barris posits that the “the nation state functions through the process of selection and also through a series of exclusions” that delimit land, people, and cultural productions along colonial divisions.¹²⁷ In moving away from naturalizing nations as units of analysis, or scales of communal organization, I aim to foreground these divisions and how power operates through them while also allowing for the pluriverses¹²⁸ of social organization that exist outside of them. To do so, this project moves toward what Gomez-Barris terms the social ecologies that undergird and “see beyond the colonial divide.”¹²⁹ These social ecologies state the “visible and invisible forces between the human and nonhuman, between animate and inanimate life” that warrant a perception of the nodes of interconnection otherwise obfuscated from nation-based, or institutionally focused analyses. This is a significant shift, in considering both how communities are forged in more capacious ways than around static notions of mythologized identity, but also in considering relations to land as an entity—from which the women in this project have been dis/located within, are exiled from, and deeply rooted in.

¹²⁷ Gómez-Barris, Macarena, 1970-. *Where Memory Dwells : Culture and State Violence in Chile*. Berkeley :University of California Press, 2009.

¹²⁸ Escobar, Arturo, 1951- author. *Designs For the Pluriverse : Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds*. Durham :Duke University Press, 2018.

¹²⁹ Gómez-Barris, Macarena. *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives*. Durham :Duke University Press, 2017.

This reconceptualization permits a grounded understanding of the opacities of localized knowledges, relationships, and cultural productions within the context of state structures and processes, while also opening toward translocal and transnational relations and routes. That is, rather than listen for an authentic representation of ethnic national identity or the modes in which these repertoires shift American national identity, this project is committed broadly to understanding how Chicanas have cultivated a dissident political and cultural repertoire grounded in their locally rooted and transnationally routed social ecologies. Specifically, I endeavor to understand how these macrostructural contexts have informed Alice Bag's work, and how her repertoire responds to nationalism's domestic violences.

While social ecologies represent a relatively new theoretical tool, women of color feminisms have long been challenging the universality of an imagined national collective. Among other seminal interventions, Chicana feminisms question the validity of the U.S. settler state, and offer alternative visions to exclusive nationalisms. Gloria Anzaldúa canonically theorized the borderlands as the *nepantla*: a third culture, or open wound. In theorizing this third space—the in-betweenness of being neither from the U.S. nor Mexico, nor being included fully in either nation-state—Anzaldúa offers a radical departure from reformist inclusion-based arguments.¹³⁰ The borderlands and Chicanidad *are* external to the hegemonic nation-state's citizenship, by inherent design. *Nepantla* offers us the analytic to explore what a life outside of full inclusion into a nation-state looks and feels like for Chicanas, and in so doing seeks not a remediation with the state but possibilities of life otherwise.¹³¹

¹³⁰ Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands = La Frontera*. San Francisco :Aunt Lute Books, 1999.

¹³¹ Regarding “life otherwise,” see Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford, Calif. :Stanford University Press, 1998.

A central aspect of Bag's contributions are in bearing witness to this interstitial third space, and imagining liberation outside of nationalism's domestically violent confines.¹³²

Bridging the political division between the domestic and the public sphere is pressing, both in terms of codifying the epistemologies forged in and through the domestic realm and in acknowledging the intimate scale to which power inequities extend, and where patriarchal inequities inherent to nationalism are reproduced. Each Chicana musician selected for my dissertation contends with these inequities by uniquely mobilizing sound to forge the personal as political in both content and performative space. But for this chapter, Alice Bag illuminates the quotidian domestic violence experienced by the female protagonist in "He's So Sorry," a Shangri Las inflected rendition of a 1960s love song. In bringing her own personal history with domestic violence to the performative sphere, Bag breaks through intersectionally silencing shame and musically critiques abuse posturing as love. Drawing on Angela Davis' interventions about the personal as political in blues feminisms,¹³³ we can read this song and Bag's performative speeches preceding it as Chicana feminist interventions building a sonic epistemology of the personal as political.¹³⁴ To fully understand the dissident vibrations' political saliency from an intersectional feminist perspective, we must also route these contributions through abolition feminist theoretical frameworks.

Abolition Feminism

Monica Cosby on a shakedown/prison raid on a person's cell where personal property is destroyed:

"If there is anybody out there who has never been in prison, but understands violent relationships, it is the same. Just because he (the guard) was insulted, he retaliated against us and I ended up in solitary

¹³² The work of other Chicana theorists, such as Nicole Marie Guidotti-Hernández and Chávez-García, Miroslava, has also helped me frame this endeavor.

¹³³ Davis, Angela Y. (Angela Yvonne), 1944-. *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism : Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday*. New York :Pantheon Books, 1998.

¹³⁴ Hill Collins, Patricia. "It's All in the Family:Intersections of Race Gender and Nation." *Hypatia* Vol 13 No 3, pp 62-82

(confinement). It just kind of clicked. And I think it had been knocking around in my head for a while that what was happening to me inside (the prison) was what happens in violent relationships.”

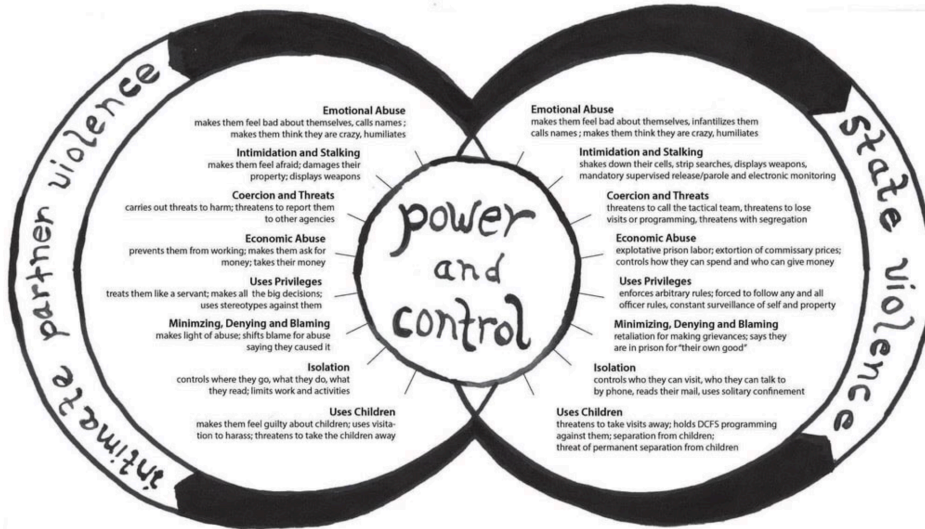


Fig. 5 Monica Crosby’s intimate partner violence and state violence power and control wheel

In the epigraph, Monica Crosby, a formerly incarcerated Chicago-based abolition feminist, delineates how settler colonial state violence and intimate partner violence are similar states of precarity for those subjected to its oppressive shackles. Abolition feminism takes seriously the intersections between intimate partner violence and state violence, as both systems are grounded in abusive power and control over subjugated populations. In *Abolition. Feminism. Now.*, Angela Davis et al assert that:

the root causes of racism, police violence, sexual violence and gender-based violence are the same ... the work to end gender violence must include attention to how structural oppression and state violence shape and indeed deepen the impact on survivors.¹³⁵

¹³⁵ Davis, Angela Y., Gina Dent, Erica R. Meiners, and Beth E. Richie. *Abolition. Feminism. Now.* Vol. 2. Haymarket Books, 2022.pp. 79-80

In linking intimate partner violence and state violence as a lethal nexus of structural oppression, the authors expound upon Hill-Collins's theorization of the family as the smallest unit of the settler patriarchal state. This firmly grounds the expertise on matters of survival and resistance within the lived experiences of survivors of both macrostructural state violence and the intimacies of microstructural state violence in the home. This shift toward believing survivors' testimonies and shift away from the state for resolutions to its own violence are highlighted in the following passage:

The result is that these groups are left uniquely vulnerable to increased harm from relationships and from the state... These [legal] reconceptualizations of safety require understanding that the pretext of ending gender violence allows the state to determine the nature of the problem, to decide on 'reasonable' solutions, and to categorize people as either deserving to be free from injury or not. These are the same tactics that people who cause harm in intimate relationships use: arbitrary authority, attribution of blame to justify punishment, and expulsion of those who are objectionable, threatening, or obsolete.¹³⁶

While a liberal feminist take on federal legislation such as The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) would laud the state's involvement in repudiating domestic violence and hypothetically protecting the vulnerable, abolition feminism rejects negotiating justice or liberation from gender based violence without taking into account, and holding accountable, the primary structural perpetrators. Instead, this passage highlights Glen Coulthard's notion of Indigenous decolonial "resurgent recognition." Through resurgent recognition, Coulthard posits that decolonization will not occur by asking permission or recognition from settler states; instead, liberatory transformation will come as a product of the oppressed looking rhizomatically to one another for recognition of harms done, and for collective problem solving around what justice and remediation of harms done might look like. Taken from this standpoint, I situate Alice Bag's solo repertoire and memoir as media that operates within this category of resurgent recognition—it creates the musical, performative and literary space for Chicana domestic violence to see, affirm, and help liberate one

¹³⁶ Ibid. pp104-5

another. Davis et al argue that this process of decolonization is a pinnacle of abolition feminism moving forward, welcoming all expressive mediums through which survivors can find and share their voices. For me, as a domestic violence survivor and a survivor of two settler states—I have found both solace and solidarity in the following songs, and I hope to demonstrate where that meaning lies for me and potentially other similar listeners.

Close listenings & Close readings

The following epigraph is culled from Alice Bag's intimate memoir, "Violence Girl":

At home, we watched the news on TV and heard that a riot had broken out when a bottle had been thrown at a police officer. From my perspective, it had been a minor altercation and the police had made no attempt to catch the individuals who had been throwing bottles in the first place. A reporter name Ruben Salazar, who was favorably disposed toward the Chicano movement and had been an outspoken critic of police brutality, had been shot and killed by a deputy sheriff. The riot squad had been called in to clear out the demonstrators, using tear gas and batons, resulting in dozens of injuries and three deaths. I remembered the worried faces of those parents clutching the hands of their small children as we drove away to safety. I couldn't believe that what had started as a peaceful march protesting a war halfway around the world had turned out to be so ugly.

I will never forget that day, August 29, 1970, for two reasons: One was that I had never before realized that I was part of a minority group, and I felt good about being part of something as powerful as the Chicano Movement; the other was the understanding that this group had enemies who weren't afraid to throw bottles at us or shoot us. Throughout my early childhood, policemen had been the knights in shining armor who has rescued my mother from my father's vicious attacks In my eyes, they had always lived up to their motto, "To Protect and Serve." That day I saw my knights like the other people in my life: Their capacity for good was matched by their capacity for evil. It almost seemed like diametrically opposed impulses had to exist for the world to make sense. My own world was coalescing into a ball of love and hate, trust and treachery. (p. 70)

Alice Bag's "White Justice" is a searing critique of the U.S. settler state's treatment of racialized communities. The soft ballad overture hearkens back to an idealistic past in which marginalized peoples believed they could mobilize for effective reform and equal inclusion. Bag melodically sings about "blue skies" and a "march that [felt] like a parade" as the music video pans

across archival footage from the Chicana Moratorium march. Her timbre reflects a nostalgic yearning for the conviviality of collective action and the belief in the plausibility of justice—a political hopefulness mirrored in the visuals culled for the music video. This narrative idealism shifts towards a dissident structural critique sonically, lyrically, and visually as the song builds toward the chorus.

The bridge transitions from this idyllic portraiture of the march, toward a criticism of the state's purported colorblind ideology. Bag begins shifting her vocal performance from a slow melodic croon to an up tempo and gravelly intonation, as she asserts "Black clubs, blue collars /Blood red, silver dollars/You say justice is colorblind/I know you're lying." The ostinato of this musical and lyrical phrase drive home the insidious persistence of racial prejudice—from the LASD's brutal assaults on peaceful protestors at the Moratorium to the assassination of Ruben Salazar at the Silver Dollar Café. The footage of these events is displayed in tandem to the lyrical portrayals. Bag further extends her critique of state violence through the visuals paired to the second iteration of the bridge. By including footage of LASD violence against MacArthur Park protestors at the 2007 Immigration Walk Outs, and NYPD's murder of Eric Gardner, Bag is gesturing toward the insistency of racial state violence as an issue prevailing into the allegedly colorblind present, and affecting both non-Black Chicana and Black people. In making these lyrical and visual allusions to the long duree of racial state violence, Bag is ramping up her tempo as she builds to the refusal posited in the chorus.

The guitar transitions the bridge into the chorus, jarring the listener and commanding full attention as the texture and tempo shift into a distorted march. Inflecting her voice with a gravelly timbre, as noted, Bag exclaims the chorus' first stanza alone before being joined by her band members in its repetition. This gestures toward the amplification of one dissident voice into a plurality of voices through joined in collective action: be it the shared vibrational experience of

screaming these lyrics live at a show, or participating in one of the historical marches depicted in the video. Notably, as Bag is joined by her bandmate's shouts, her own vocal timbre becomes grittier, reflecting a more resolute repudiation of the white justice system and the racial violences that prevail under/through it. This building resolve and aggression are mirrored in the injustices portrayed in the video: in the first iteration of the chorus, we see police officers encroaching upon Moratorium protestors with their rifles loaded, and in the closure of the second repetition, the camera pans to the Silver Dollar Café and a photograph of Ruben Salazar's assassination. These visuals are delivered as Alice declaratively screams the last line of the chorus: "just ISN'T just." This signals a finality that forecloses upon the possibility of resolving racial injustice with the state, and the terminal lethality that those who dare vocalize this position face.

Alice Bag engages in a dissident politics by laying these domestic settler state violences bare and engaging in what Audra Simpson terms a politics of refusal. That is, Bag uses her voice coupled with sovereignty from either U.S. or Chicana nationalism's limitations to critique their very foundations. Here too, Bag refuses juridical recognition or an outsider's retelling of the violences she encounters at the intersections of race, class and gender, and announces these domestic violences from the interiority of her own lived experiences of them. In narrativizing the long fetch of racialized exclusions experienced by Chicanas in the U.S., and declaring both through the visuals and the chorus, a repudiation of remediation with the white settler state, Bag engages in dissident vibrations. That is, she not only performatively or timbrally engages in Deb Vargas' notion of dissonance, but also directs this aberrant sonic and performative practices toward a structural critique of the state, to serve as an act of decolonial refusal.

"He's So Sorry" offers us insight into a different formulation of Alice's dissidence. The song musically and visually invokes the 1960s girl group iconography: specifically alluding to the Shangri La's "Leader of the Pack" dialogue preceding the first verse. This allusion is significant considering

that Alice herself was born in 1958; during her formative years she witnessed domestic violence in her own home during precisely the decade from which the quoted song is culled.¹³⁷

Sociologists of Mexican immigration and Mexican-American domestic life have found that notions of proper womanhood are contingent upon both proximity to generation of arrival, and the location from which the im/migrants arrived.¹³⁸ Bag is one generation removed from the first generation Mexican culture that sociologists indicate is pervasively more conservatively cis-hetero patriarchal than its later generational counterparts.¹³⁹ Womanhood in Alice's family was thus among the more conservative, constricting, and violently silenced strain among Mexican migrant descended communities. To invoke the Shangri-Las' "Leader of the Pack" prologue was more than a time stamp referring to her own experience of domestic violence; it was also a narrative shift away from the culturally reinforced silencing around the issue. By literally opening up a dialogue about a violent boyfriend, and having it punctuated with the sound of cocking a gun, Alice is making a statement about the lethality of the issue of domestic violence.

According to federal Department of Justice statistics, one in three Latinas experiences domestic violence in their lifetime—and this is considering that due to anti-immigrant laws, the rates of reporting are below 50%. Of the incidences reported, physical and sexual assault are the key modalities of violence. The dialogue itself is vague in terms of the offending boyfriend's actions, but we know enough to anticipate repeated abusive behavior: Alice and Lysa Flores exchange the words "Are you really gonna go back to him?" "He said he was sorry" "He always says that" "I really

¹³⁷ Bag, Alice. *Violence Girl : East L.A. Rage to Hollywood Stage : a Chicana Punk Story*. Port Townsend, WA :Feral House, 2011.

¹³⁸ Blake, Debra J., 1955-. *Chicana Sexuality and Gender : Cultural Refiguring in Literature, Oral History, and Art*. Durham :Duke University Press, 2008.; Roesch, Claudia H., 1958- author. *Macho Men and Modern Women : Mexican Immigration, Social Experts and Changing Family Values in the 20th Century United States*. Berlin, [Germany] ; Boston, [Massachusetts] :De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2015.

¹³⁹ González-López, Gloria, 1960-. *Erotic Journeys Mexican Immigrants and Their Sex Lives*. Berkeley :University of California Press, 2005.

believe him this time”; this too is backed by DOJ statistics that 63% of Latinas are revictimized by intimate partners after an initial attack.

The visual representation of the dialogue is shown in black and white, with the women wearing beehive hairdos, and Peter Pan collar dresses reminiscent of the 1960s style that girl groups would have donned. The aesthetic decision to mirror the sonic qualities/genre, and to recreate the dialogue portion of “Leader of the Pack” in black and white point to how far back this issue fetches for Mexican descended (and all) women. These visual and sonic approaches also serve to draw people in by pleasing them, as the girl group style offers a sense of a community—of women working together and creating fun where there is none extended to them. This levity acts as a counterpoint to the gravitas of Alice’s visceral lyrics about the violence itself.

The narrative arc of the song makes logical sense to most of us. When in an abusive situation—one in which the power is imbalanced, and especially when coercion or violence are used to maintain this power—we should leave it. Unequivocally, we intuitively glean that we should reject the conditions of dehumanization that come with entering into a contract where we are treated as less than equal, as objects and not subjects. While there are so many valid reasons why people stay in these situations—and layers of complexity that this video and song do not grapple with—here I am interested in examining the parallels between Alice Bag’s dissident refusal of state remediation of justice in *White Justice* and the dissident refusal of staying in an abusive relationship in “He’s So Sorry.” Namely, that while we logically understand the narrative of refusing the conditions of an abusive relationship, and leaving a situation in which power is coercively or violently maintained, we do not extend this same logic to our relationship to the state. For intersectionally marginalized communities, the gradations of violence are multitudinous and compounded. For women of color—and Latinas in particular—the crossroads of state violence and patriarchal violence converge in relation to immigration status, race, underemployment, and wage theft.

While the lyrics place the onus on an individual's choices and actions, to stay or leave in the relationship, I argue that the girl group stylization gestures toward a collective camaraderie and harmonized empathy to the protagonist's situation. Additionally, I read the closing refrain—"Just because he's sorry doesn't mean he's gonna change/Just because you love him doesn't mean you gotta stay," as a dissident refusal to reform the abusive relationship. It is beyond change, and feelings of love or loyalty to a man are not reason enough to stay in a coercive or violent relationship. Through a microcosmic portrayal of patriarchal violence, Bag offers a refusal of the gendered violence undergirding U.S. nationalisms: they too are beyond reform, and are not permanently binding.

In part, what the harmonized empathy offers us is what Glen Coulthard terms resurgent recognition: rhizomatically turning to one another for justice and solutions rather than the state.¹⁴⁰ While Bag might not have a solution laid out for anything beyond a dissident "get out," her vocalization of the problem breaks the silence that maintains staying as the status quo. Through visceral lyrics and heartfelt delivery, she extends this resurgent recognition to other women of color bound by the same vows of silence and loyalty—and dissidently offers this empathetic witnessing in lieu of a white justice system that would and could not do the same.

I expand our understanding of which cultural productions engage the political by weaving across genres, sonic mediums, and repertoires to listen for voices of dissident women in Chicana history. Through expansive black radical definitions of politics, my work examines the repertoires of women whose labors endeavored to disrupt hegemonic structures of power and circumscriptions

¹⁴⁰ Coulthard, Glen Sean, 1974- author. *Red Skin, White Masks : Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. Minneapolis, Minnesota :University of Minnesota Press, 2014.

around categories of difference.¹⁴¹ They accomplish this labor through what I call dissident vibrations, which are enunciations of dissent expressed through music.

I argue that these women, in producing these dissident vibrations, reconstituted their relation to land, community, and time. When Alice Bag takes extended pauses in between her songs to address a Los Angeles crowd, to share her experience with domestic violence growing up before singing “He’s So Sorry,” she is reconstituting her relation to the temporality of a set—in which one is expected to be as productive as possible, and play as many tunes as can be slotted—and toward community by creating a space for vulnerability and intimacy. In doing both of these things, Bag is invoking Damien Sojoyner’s reconceptualization of Black time as oriented around care and community, rather than structured by choice and productivity.¹⁴² This, in conjunction with the messaging and the performance itself, are dissident apertures toward a new modality of relating to one another, time, and land.

This restructuring is more than a mere gesture towards freedom. If we are to understand that domestic violence is the product of the patriarchal nature of nationalism—and in part, this is why people tolerate it as much as they do—then what Bag is doing by centering it is refusing not only a racist white justice system, but also refuting the nationalism it upholds by virtue of its inherent gendered violence. This hearkens back to Shana Redmond’s call to “oppose all nationalisms”: a call echoed by women of color political theorists who understand the intersections of race and gender as inextricable vectors of power undergirding the nation-state and its ideological constructs/mythological narratives.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ Kelley, Robin D. G. *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class*. New York : Toronto : New York :Free Press ; Maxwell Macmillan Canada ; Maxwell Macmillan International, 1994.;Redmond, Shana L. *Anthem : Social Movements and the Sound of Solidarity in the African Diaspora*. New York :New York University Press, 2014.

¹⁴² Johnson, Gaye Theresa, and Alex Lubin, eds. *Futures of Black radicalism*. Verso Books, 2017.

¹⁴³ Redmond, Shana L. "Perspectives on Critical Race Theory and Music." American Musicological Society Conference, Boston, MA.

This position evinces a distrust in the legal system as having systematically denied marginalized groups their rights, and as being constitutionally incapable of remedying this—Saidiya Hartman elucidates these liberal limitations in *Scenes of Subjection*,¹⁴⁴ arguing assiduously that this systematic exclusion from U.S. liberal democratic processes is not an aberration; it *is* the nation, it *is* American culture. The solution is not a reform: it is the urgent demand for total razing of these settler state structures we hear in “White Justice,” and a refusal to stay in the domestic situation we hear of in “He’s So Sorry.”

But beyond an academic intervention in and of itself, Bag’s centering of both forms of domestic violence: that of inept justice systems and gendered violence in private spheres, her work also reorients the listener’s sense of time. In both songs she talks about an identification with a prolonged pattern of violence, and being a victim across a long span of time—in which the narrator is being asked to only believe in the present moment and reform. She meets the disillusionment of this delayed justice and protracted state violence (victimhood) with rightful anger in the distortion and screaming in “White Justice,” and tongue in cheek refusal and encouragement for other women to refuse, too, in “He’s So Sorry.” Performatively, it is Bag’s own identification in both cases that forges part of what connects these seemingly different songs together: she enfolds the domestic sphere into the national problematics by demonstrating how white supremacy feminizes the other. And while she may not provide a blueprint for how best to dismantle these structures, her message is clear: these injustices do not work, and reformist apologies will no longer suffice. One dissident vibration at a time, she is calling the possibility of life otherwise into being.

¹⁴⁴ Hartman, Saidiya V. *Scenes Of Subjection : Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*. New York :Oxford University Press, 1997.

“A song is a sonic and literary manifestation in life’s soundscape; a unique, cathartic memento as well as a powerful political tool. A song can also be an important historical text. A person’s *testimonio*—life views, triumphs, aphorisms, and struggles—can be expressed in song lyrics. In this way, song lyrics can transmit ways of knowing and theorizing about life. It can also be viewed as alternative ways of creating knowledge. When practiced in community, songwriting can be a powerful exercise in consensus building and collective knowledge production.”

-Martha Gonzalez, 2015¹⁴⁵

Chapter 3

Decolonial Feminist Son Jarocho: Exploring the *Artivista* Legacy of Martha Gonzalez and Entre Mujeres

Chicana history must be recuperated from out of the shadows of white western historical narratives. Historian Vicki Ruiz provides a canonical example of this recuperative endeavor by methodologically reading against the grain in her seminal monograph, *From out of the shadows: Mexican women in twentieth-century America*.¹⁴⁶ By reading against the grain in archives and oral histories, Ruiz culls the material realities of Chicanas in the 20th century with intimate detail and empathy. This intellectual labor of reading against the grain is what allows scholars in the fields of Latinx/Chicanx Studies and Gender Studies to fill the elisions in hegemonic historical narratives and bring intersectionally diverse historical actors from out of the discursive shadows. In this sense, Chicana historians’ commitment to recuperating our historical voices from out of the shadows is an intergenerationally urgent project—one that requires diverse methodological approaches and historical media to accomplish.

Music is a critical site for furthering research on Chicana history. Culling the musical histories of Chicanas provides the possibility to engage with hegemonically silenced repertoires, such as dissident vibrations that forged a challenge to hegemonic historiographies and power structures.

¹⁴⁵ Gonzalez, Martha E. (2015) ““Sobreviviendo”: Immigration Stories and Testimonio in Song,” *Diálogo*: Vol. 18: No. 2, Article 12.; all quotations from Martha Gonzalez, unless indicated otherwise, are from your oral history

¹⁴⁶ Ruiz, Vicki L. *From out of the shadows: Mexican women in twentieth-century America*. Oxford University Press, 2008.

To recuperate radical Chicana feminists' voices from out of the shadows, it is important that we not only read against the grain in primary and secondary historical material but also listen deeply to the lived experiences of Chicanas directly. Here I borrow from both Pauline Oliveros' notion of deep listening and from Buddhist notions of deep listening, as a practice in mindfulness and empathy for the other.¹⁴⁷ Methodologically, this chapter deploys Ruiz's reading against the grain, grounded in deep listening principles, through an oral history with Martha Gonzalez. Using a semi-structured qualitative interview protocol, I facilitated two one-hour long oral history interviews that were recorded and transcribed. I then bridge the coded findings from these interviews with a close reading and deep listening to the *Entre Mujeres* album, with specific attention to the song "Sobreviviendo." This multifaceted interdisciplinary approach allows me to capture the complexity of Chicana feminists who produce dissident music, while also grappling with the shadows of the genres they choose to work within. By attuning my analysis to the shadowy presences of colonization and patriarchy in the son jarocho tradition, I endeavor to demonstrate how Dr. Gonzalez and the women involved in *Entre Mujeres* are actively making history by creating dissident vibrations through this traditional genre.

Mexican women's transnational folk music cultures forge an act of infrapolitical dissidence. Drawing upon literatures from the Black Radical Tradition, Chicana and Black feminisms, as well as decoloniality, this chapter examines the ways in which Mexican women's folk music functions as the vibrational media of dissidence, challenging oppressive structures and reclaiming narratives of resilience, community, and cultural identity.

Clyde Woods' notion of the Blues epistemology recognizes the blues as a knowledge-generating practice that emerges from the lived experiences of Black communities in the United

¹⁴⁷ Oliveros, Pauline. "The Earth Worm Also Sings: A composer's practice of deep listening." *Leonardo Music Journal* 3, no. 1 (1993): 35-38.; Bidwell, Duane R. "Deep listening and virtuous friendship: Spiritual care in the context of religious multiplicity." *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 35, no. 1 (2015): 3-13.

States.¹⁴⁸ Woods' geographic and thematic specificity allows him to articulate how this Black Radical Tradition manifests as a Blues epistemology: a Black working class consciousness through which Black countercultural narratives could be constructed to internally challenge the dehumanization that has accompanied the anti-Black racist myth-making that birthed the U.S. settler state.¹⁴⁹ That is, to assert Black humanity and freedom dreams amid their structural negation.

This theory foregrounds the ways in which marginalized communities generate knowledge and meaning through musical expressions rooted in their material realities. Extending Woods' theorization into Mexican women's folk music, I argue that Mexican women participate in a decolonial woman-of-color feminism-driven practice of knowledge-production that codifies their struggles, resilience, and collective wisdom. This is especially significant among all-women *son jarocho* groups, a historically male dominated genre with gendered respectability politics delineating acceptable participation. These gendered respectability politics—which rendered women's participation in fandangos to be vulgar and lower class beginning in the Spanish colonial era—has long been intertwined with the formation of the Mexican settler-state's nationalist project.¹⁵⁰ In this sense, their very participation in this *Entre Mujeres* project is a dissident decolonial act of refusal toward traditional gendered conscriptions.

In this sense, the transposition of Woods' theory allows us to glean the material realities of Mexican women through song, including a sort of *son jarocho* epistemology, routed and rooted through the Mexican diaspora on both sides of the border. Shana Redmond's notion of the anthem furthers this understanding of the radical potential of music for marginalized communities.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ Woods, C. (1998). *Development Arrested: The Blues and Plantation Power in the Mississippi Delta*. Verso Books.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ Mosse, George L. *Nationalism and sexuality: Middle-class morality and sexual norms in modern Europe*. University of Wisconsin Press, 2020.

¹⁵¹ Redmond, S. (2014). *Anthem: Social Movements and the Sound of Solidarity in the African Diaspora*. NYU Press.

According to Redmond, an anthem represents a collective call to action, a rallying cry that embodies a shared sense of purpose and resistance.¹⁵² By examining Mexican women's folk music as a set of anthems, we recognize its capacity to mobilize communities, foster solidarity, and challenge oppressive systems. It becomes a sonic expression of infrapolitical dissidence, operating beneath and beyond traditional political structures, yet powerful in its ability to disrupt and resist.

Combining these theoretical perspectives, we can explore Mexican women's folk music across borders as an act of infrapolitical dissidence. This dissidence arises from the grassroots and everyday practices of Mexican women, challenging dominant power structures while operating in the interstices of the institutionally normative political realm. Through their music, these women articulate a collective voice that resists oppressive narratives and reclaims their agency and culture while also speaking out in relation to issues that are both personal and political. Their songs become a form of dissident vibration that rejects conventional political processes and asserts alternative decolonial modes of feminist resistance and social change.

These dissident vibrations are mobilized toward two ends in the *Entre Mujeres* project. One is the practice of collaborative musicking that allows Chicana women to reimagine *son jarocho* traditions to center their voices. Both the collaborative nature of this endeavor as well as the reworking of traditions that historically excluded them constitute prescient political work. The second end toward which these dissident vibrations are mobilized is to layer into a tradition through lyrical content that is communal and addresses women's labor and unique challenges. In the lives of the *Entre Mujeres* women musicians, musicking is both a practice and a site of feminist communion through the performance sphere. In both the oral history interview as well as in her publications about this project, Gonzalez purports that this communion occurs through both performance as well as through the collaborative songwriting process. That is, through the content of the music and lyrics

¹⁵² Ibid.

as well as through the collaborative musicking processes, these dissident vibrations engage the participants in creative processes that allow them to reimagine musical tradition and their place in them. *Entre Mujeres* also includes 15 women from 5 different countries responding to a translocal dialog between Veracruz and Los Angeles.

The transnational nature of Mexican women's folk music in the *Entre Mujeres* project provides an additional layer of complexity. It reflects the diasporic experiences of Mexican women, who navigate physical and metaphorical borders in their journeys of migration, survival, and cultural exchange. The music becomes a site of connection and solidarity, transcending geopolitical boundaries and fostering transnational communities of resistance while also forging a sonic franchise for these diasporic communities. It disrupts and challenges nationalistic narratives, embodying a decolonial praxis that transcends borders and overturns the hierarchies imposed by colonial legacies and structures. This effort towards decoloniality as opposed to decolonization is a central contribution of the *Entre Mujeres* project led by Dr. Martha Gonzalez.

Decoloniality, as put forth by Mignolo and Walsh, aims to dismantle the structures of colonialism that continue to shape power relations and knowledge production.¹⁵³ By challenging and dismantling the epistemological assumptions and cultural narratives that perpetuate colonial legacies, decolonial scholars aspire to provide alternative ways of knowing and being.¹⁵⁴ Within the context of *son jarocho*, decoloniality calls for the centering of women, the recognition and valorization of Indigenous and Afro-Mexican contributions to the genre, the deconstruction of respectability politics in the performance sphere, and, especially, the decentering of Eurocentric perspectives and norms. Mexican and Chicana women's involvement in *son jarocho* contributes to this decolonial

¹⁵³ Mignolo, W. D. (2007). *Delinking: The rhetoric of modernity, the logic*

¹⁵⁴ Lugones, M. (2008). *Coloniality of Gender*. *Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 28(2), 611-621.; Maldonado-Torres, N. (2016). *Decoloniality and the New Human Condition: Global Dialogues on the Decolonization of Knowledge and Being*. Routledge.

project by challenging dominant narratives and reclaiming *son jarocho* as instrumentalists and vocalists where this has been a foreclosed opportunity in the past. Through their participation and artistic contributions, women disrupt the colonial power dynamics that have historically limited their agency and assert their own narratives about their material realities on either side of the border.

Chicana and Black feminisms share a decolonial emphasis on collective agency and community-building. These theoretical contributions help frame the significance of women's contributions to *son jarocho* as part of a broader praxis of feminist decoloniality through dissident vibrations. Chicanas have historically assumed positions of community organizing and collective action, all while centering the arts and cultural empowerment within their communities.¹⁵⁵ The involvement of women from the Mexican diaspora in *son jarocho* aligns with these principles by fostering spaces of solidarity, collaboration, and cultural preservation of a genre that was long marginalized as a pejoratively working-class repertoire. Furthermore, by participating in the transmission of *son jarocho* traditions and engaging in community-based initiatives, women contribute to the revitalization and decolonization of cultural practices, strengthening the bonds within their communities and challenging oppressive structures. This is all the more important given sociological research demonstrating a rift in identification with the country of origin by the second generation.¹⁵⁶

Black feminist thought also provides a foundational framework for understanding the decolonial significance of *son jarocho* among Mexican descended women. Specifically, Martha Gonzalez's emphasis on collaborative lyric writing in the production of the *Entre Mujeres* album draws heavily from bell hooks's notion of communion and love from a feminist perspective. In hooks's *Communion: The Female Search for Love* (2002), she explores the transformative power of love

¹⁵⁵ Gonzalez, Martha. "Chican@ Artivistas: Music, Community, and Transborder Tactics in East Los Angeles." (2020).

¹⁵⁶ Alba, Richard, Tomás R. Jiménez, and Helen B. Marrow. "Mexican Americans as a paradigm for contemporary intra-group heterogeneity." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 37, no. 3 (2014): 446-466.

as a political act that challenges patriarchal systems.¹⁵⁷ Through collaborative lyric writing, Gonzalez fosters a space of communion where women’s voices are heard, valued, and connected, promoting solidarity, empowerment, and the dismantling of oppressive structures. hooks argues that love is an essential element in feminist politics, emphasizing the importance of building connections and nurturing relationships based on respect, empathy, and care. She challenges the notion that love is solely a personal, intimate emotion, positing it as a force that can fuel collective action and social change. Gonzalez’s commitment to collaborative lyric writing reflects a practice of love in action, creating an environment where the women involved in the album experience a sense of belonging, mutual support, and empowerment. This process will be illuminated in greater detail during the close reading of “Sobreviviendo” later in this chapter.

By inviting women to participate actively in the lyric-writing process, Gonzalez challenges the traditional hierarchies of the music industry, where women’s voices are often marginalized or controlled. This collaborative approach disrupts the dominant patriarchal structures by centering women’s experiences and perspectives, allowing them to shape and express their own narratives—thus codifying the personal as political. This further embodies a feminist of color praxis of inclusion and agency, where collective creation becomes an act of resistance and empowerment.

Furthermore, this collaborative lyric writing process aligns with hooks’ notion of communion, which she describes as the transformative experience of coming together, sharing, and finding common ground. In the context of the *Entre Mujeres* album, the act of co-writing lyrics becomes a means of building solidarity, fostering a sense of connection, and validating women’s experiences. It creates a space for women to support and affirm each other’s voices, bridging the gaps of isolation and empowering them to collectively challenge the oppressive forces that seek to

¹⁵⁷ hooks, b. (2002). *Communion: The Female Search for Love*. HarperCollins.

silence and marginalize them. In this sense, musical communion itself becomes an act of dissidence and an enactment of dissident vibrations. It also serves as a musical forum for what Indigenous decolonial cultural theorist Glen Coulthard terms the politics of resurgent recognition: looking to one another as marginalized peoples for affirmation and empowerment rather than waiting on state recognition. Through the communion and resurgent recognition that collaborative songwriting provides, women of color can better imagine a world otherwise, while also fostering the sense of interpersonal support and safety to make this a feasible and sustainable freedom-dreaming praxis.

For Martha Gonzalez, music is a site for bell hooks's notion of feminist communion. This communion happens on every East LA stage she has graced as lead singer for Grammy award winning group Quetzal, and it's a communion she generated in 2007-2008 in Veracruz through the Entre Mujeres Project. The latter ethnomusicological project was funded through a Fulbright Garcia-Robles Fellowship, endeavoring to record Mexican and Chicana women's contributions to the Veracruz *son jarocho* communities across settler colonial borders between Mexico and the U.S. The result of her two years of research was the production of original compositions by women on both sides of the border.

Inspired by the central role that women and children played in translocal fandango communities, Gonzalez endeavored to forge a project that centered women's lived experiences—their *testimonios*—through a genre that has traditionally silenced them. Gonzales builds on seminal work by Mexican anthropologist Rubí Oseguera Rueda, who was the first to delve into the musical and culinary contributions of Mexican woman to the genre of *son jarocho*. In *Biografía de una mujer veracruzana*, Oseguera Rueda asserts that women's participation in the tarima—the percussive centrifugal force of *son jarocho*—relocates their work as central to each performance practice.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸ Oseguera Rueda, Rubí del Carmen. "Biografía de una mujer Veracruzana." *Centro de Documentación y Estudios Mujeres, AC-Centro de Investigaciones de Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social-Instituto Oaxaqueño de las Culturas-Instituto Veracruzano de Cultura, Veracruz* (1998).

Gonzalez situates the cultural and political labor of *Entre Mujeres* within this broader genealogy of the Fandango Jarocho Movement and the “transnational dialogue between Chicanas/os, Mexicanas/os, and Latinas/os in the U.S., and Mexicans in Veracruz, Mexico.” In centering the transnational facet of *son jarocho* musicking communities, and in the rhizomatic methodology of producing this album, Gonzalez articulates a decolonial turn. The decolonial turn evident in the entirety of the *Entre Mujeres* album—lyrically, instrumentally, and performatively—elucidates how Gonzalez mobilizes music toward decolonial political ends, thus engaging in dissident vibrations.

Through mixed methodological methods, I provide historical context for the *Entre Mujeres* album, paired alongside an oral history interview with Martha Gonzalez and close readings of the lyrics to *Sobreviviendo*—the anthem on the album written expressly to communicate the immigrant transnational experience from a woman’s decolonial perspective. But before we can understand the musical contributions and genealogical location of the album, it’s important to first attune ourselves to the composer and musician whose creative vision and intellectual labors made it possible, as well as to the historical genealogy of *son jarocho* writ large.

Biography

Martha Gonzalez is a first-generation Chicana MacArthur Genius Grant recipient who was born and raised in Boyle Heights on the East side of Los Angeles in 1970 to Mexican immigrant parents. She grew up in a working-class neighborhood, where she was exposed to the sounds of *son jarocho*, a genre of music from Veracruz, Mexico. As a child, Gonzalez would dance and sing along to the music, but it wasn’t until she was a teenager that she began to study it formally.

Her early childhood was immersed in music, due to her father’s passion for promoting different groups, singing, and teaching his children Mexican folk songs as well as how to harmonize on long family road trips to and from Mexico. She fondly recalled learning to harmonize on one of

these long family caravans to a song by Amalia Landis and Jose Alfredo Jimenez, two icons of Mexican ranchera music. Gonzalez notes that her father focused these musical lessons most intently on her brother, but that she felt immersed in her grassroots musical education, nonetheless.

It would not be until her father left the family that Gonzalez would notice that “other musics started seeping in...it didn’t cost a lot of money to act a fool in the living room, learn dances, record things on a VHS and then play them back nonstop.” With her father marking both the beginning of her rigid ear training, and the opening of her musical palate upon his absence, Gonzalez felt moderately prepared to embark upon ethnomusicological training at UCLA under Steve Loza. At her paternal cousin Veronica’s urging, Gonzalez trekked out to UCLA to meet Steve Loza. She recalled rejecting the invitation initially due to fears that she was not able to read music, and because her training at Pasadena Community College had all been vocationally oriented toward becoming a dental hygienist. Encouraged by Veronica’s promise that the program was the study of music from an anthropological and sociological perspective, Gonzalez agreed to meet Steve Loza and the program coordinator Al Bradley, and ultimately scheduled an audition date. She sang three different songs and got accepted, in what would prove to be a defining moment in her career.

Reflecting on the impact of her decision to attend, Gonzalez mused that her Ethnomusicology studies at UCLA changed how she thought about music. Juxtaposed to the stringent ear and vocal training she experienced with her father, Gonzalez flourished in her exposure to a diverse array of musical repertoire and plural approaches to musicking at UCLA. Through her education, Gonzalez’s goal as a musician shifted from one of technical perfection and capitalist notions of success toward a more communal goal, to:

“create enough awareness and an appetite for a different kind of approach to music in our lives, and that’s kind of what all of the music projects outside of my own musical career... I feel like that’s what I do, whether it’s in the classroom or it’s with others in the community, you know, I always say at large and behind bars, you know, all of the different ways in which I find I tried to use my skill sets as a musician to, to connect other people to a greater sense and awareness of what music can be is what

my goal is...it's enough to just be in community with music and to musick as community.

Through her diverse musical training, Gonzalez cultivated a decolonial pedagogical model of teaching and creating music communally. This approach centers music not as an object but as a collective process: both action *and* event. In these processes, Gonzalez believed it critical to elevate the already present but long invisibilized contributions of women in the *son jarocho* communities across borders. It is notable that as her own training increased, Gonzalez carved out opportunities to expand accessibility of music education and musical experiences in her diasporic community—from her hometown of East L.A. to the home of *son jarocho*, in Veracruz, Mexico. This approach to musicking as a form of feminist communion that flexed around the material, lived realities of women of color is unique in both the broad genre of Mexican regional music, and in the specific realm of *son jarocho* fandango communities.

In our oral history interview together, Gonzalez shared that this work is inspired by decolonial perspectives on the role that capitalism and industrialization have played on our perceptions of music as a commodity rather than as a fundamental human need. This commodification in turn affects how we think about ourselves as creative beings, by reducing musical expression to professional performances. Gonzalez fiercely posits that this is a colonial framework that diminishes the plural forms of musical expression and participation that occur outside the professional realm. The negative impact of adopting this position is the negation of a part of our humanity as creative beings,

because of a market system that imposes a value system or a hierarchy. And I think that that's what, that's the problem. You know, it's the economic system, that is also social, weighing down on us in ways that have altered how we decide to live our lives and by that same token, the social relations of music, are altered, permanently altered. We don't have people just gathering to create music just for the hell of it, and sweating and just like getting to it and crying and like whatever they need to do in that moment, like, we don't have those gatherings. People won't even spend time doing that because time is money. And you know, and if you're in music, and it's competition, then work on your career or like, right, and it's like the record contract

and like, there are all these ways in which the system itself traps us into thinking about our creative selves.

Gonzalez puts forward a historical materialist perspective on the commodification of music, and time. Reducing music to an economic output obfuscates the social relations of music which so powerfully shape our senses of self, community, and catharsis, especially in diaspora. Across all of her repertoire, Gonzalez centers musicking as a collective praxis toward the broader goal of decolonizing settler-state borders, and towards hierarchies based on categories of difference. In her project, *Entre Mujeres*, Gonzalez accomplishes these decolonial goals through her collaborative production methodology, and collective songwriting with Mexicanas/Chicanas on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border.

Entre Mujeres & *Son Jarocho*

Son jarocho is characterized by a distinct fusion of Afro-Diasporic, Indigenous, and Spanish musical traditions.¹⁵⁹ The genre deploys intricate cross-rhythms, lively melodies, and a unique blend of stringed instruments such as the jarana, requinto, and leona.¹⁶⁰ The lyrical content of *Son jarocho* often centers themes of love, nature, and social commentary, serving as a means of cultural expression and resistance within the mestizo culture of Veracruz.¹⁶¹ The incorporation of call-and-response singing, improvisation, and syncopated rhythms, are all rooted in African musical

¹⁵⁹González, Alejandro. "The Afro-Mexican Son Jarocho." In *The Afro-Latin@ Reader: History and Culture in the United States*, edited by Miriam Jiménez Román and Juan Flores, 26-34. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

¹⁶⁰ Corona, Alejandro. "Son Jarocho: Musical Traditions of Veracruz, Mexico." *Latin American Music Review* 25, no. 1 (2004): 37-58. doi:10.1353/lat.2004.0011.

¹⁶¹ Rubio, Marysol. "Son Jarocho and Fandango as a Disruptive Force: Challenging the Heteronormative Foundations of Son Jarocho." In *Queering the Field: Sounding Out Ethnomusicology*, edited by Mariana Whitmer and Chris Stover, 73-92. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.

traditions, that marked the genre as racialized and lower class during the colonial era.¹⁶² Thus, the musical and lyrical elements of *Son jarocho* serve as a powerful medium for conveying the dynamic racial and cultural heritage of the region and expressing the experiences of marginalized communities. And in reclaiming what was once looked down upon as a crude and lascivious genre due to its thematic content as well as its dancing, contemporary musicians decolonize the historical gaze.

While the historical narrative of *Son jarocho* has predominantly focused on male musicians, women have played a vital and often overlooked role in the genre.¹⁶³ Historically, women participated in *Son jarocho* through singing, dancing, and playing percussion instruments such as the *tarima*—the very physicality of which was deemed disreputable for women to participate in.¹⁶⁴ Their contributions were integral to the social fabric of *Son jarocho* gatherings, known as *fandangos*, where women would lead the singing and dancing, fostering a sense of community and cultural continuity.¹⁶⁵ Moreover, in a contemporary sense, women in *Son jarocho* have challenged patriarchal norms and reclaimed spaces traditionally dominated by men, actively shaping the genre and exerting agency within their communities.¹⁶⁶ Consequently, acknowledging and amplifying the historical role of women in *Son jarocho* is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of the genre's evolution and its

¹⁶² Martínez, Ramón. "Son Jarocho and the Veracruzán Identity: The Cultural Process of Racialization." In *Reconstructing Racial Identity and the African Past in the Dominican Republic*, edited by Kimberly Eison Simmons, 48-67. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009.

¹⁶³ Fuentes, Martha. "Gender, Affect, and Sound in the Afro-Mexican Son Jarocho Tradition." *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 32, no. 1 (2020): 86-105. doi:10.1111/jpms.12259.

¹⁶⁴ Flores, Ana. "Sound, Affect, and Migration: The Role of Women in Contemporary Son Jarocho in the United States." *Ethnomusicology Forum* 27, no. 1 (2018): 97-116. doi:10.1080/17411912.2018.1446809.

¹⁶⁵ Ruiz, Gabriela. "Rethinking Performance: Fandangos, Performative Communities, and the Dialectics of Presence and Absence in Son Jarocho." In *Mexico's Indigenous Communities: Their Lands and Histories, 1500-2010*, edited by Laura A. Lewis and Yanna Yannakakis, 120-135. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

¹⁶⁶ Vargas, Deborah R. *Dissonant Divas in Chicana Music: The Limits of La Onda*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012.

potential for decolonial praxis. Examining the musical and lyrical elements of the *Son jarocho* genre, along with the historical contributions of women within the genre, offers insights into the potential of cultural expressions to challenge colonial legacies and foster resistance through dissident vibrations.

Gonzalez carried out the “Entre Mujeres: Translocal Feminine Composition in Veracruz, Mexico,” project between the Fall of 2007 and the Summer of 2008. There were two key objectives for this project: “1) to document women’s role in fandango practice, and 2) to engage in musical dialogue with the women in the practice and possibly create original music compositions with those who were willing and able to participate.” By working with women she had previously met at other fandango jarocho celebrations, Gonzalez was able to gain access to women musickers who might not otherwise have had the opportunity to record. In this sense, Gonzalez here carries out two significant contributions: documenting the testimonios of working-class Chicanas/Mexicanas across borders, and codifying women’s roles within the genre of *son jarocho* beyond performatively contributing to the tarima.

Entre Mujeres is markedly unique due to the integrity of the decolonial methodologies that Gonzalez deftly demonstrated throughout the project. By approaching women in a horizontal and collaborative manner that was inclusive of all ages, sexualities, education levels and identities, Gonzalez cultivated an equitable research field. The women who participated in this album’s creation were not treated as objects of study in Gonzalez’s ethnomusicological research, but rather as equal creative and intellectual agents whose voices deserved center stage. To this end, Gonzalez elaborates upon the central role of collective expression in this project’s methodology toward song writing:

Lyricism became a vehicle that facilitated individual and collective expression. In all instances, there were moments of testimonio and the telling of experiences that generated more dialogue and sharing during the collective songwriting process than I would have expected. As we began to compose, I encouraged an exploration of

topics. Each *mujer* chose a topic that resonated with her but this did not limit our collaboration, as we would often co-write the lyrics or each author [would contribute] a stanza or verse. Song topics were often driven by experiences in motherhood and love, or views on the state of the world. The most intimate moments of creativity in the collective songwriting process brought discussions pertaining to participants' experiences as women, life lessons, and general life philosophies. Most participants shared and learned from other *testimonios*, and this process bound the group in an intimate way.

In this passage Gonzalez illuminates the rhizomatic and collaborative process through which songs were written, but she also alludes to something more. The collaborative lyricism engendered a space through which women could share their *testimonios*—a Chicana feminist narrative form with roots in both the social justice and theological worlds. By creating such a space outside of any formal political or religious institutions for women to voice their intersectional lived experiences, Gonzalez helped facilitate a decolonial musical experience aligned with what Paul Gilroy terms the 'politics of transfiguration.' That is, by empowering intersectionally marginalized women to articulate the personal as political in a collaborative environment, Gonzalez helped each woman tap into the transfigurative power of musicking—particularly for marginalized women testifying to their circumstances for other women.

The codification of women's struggles as political, and music as a medium for political contestation, are central contributions of the *Entre Mujeres* project. Gonzalez cursorily introduces the concept of musical testimony as "sung theories." This discursive reframe clearly delineates the personal as political in the musicking process, and legitimizes women of color's lived experiences as valid sites of theorization. An emphasis on collaborative lyricism as sung theory permeates the entire *Entre Mujeres* album, but in the song "Sobreviviendo," the focus shift towards the migrant experience.

This is particularly of note given that many of the other songs covered issues such as motherhood, birthing, and community knowledge. In "Sobreviviendo," Silvia Santos, Quetzal Flores, and Martha Gonzalez collaborated to produce a song that reflected the migrant experience

for families on both sides of the border, based predominantly on Santos's experience as a migrant, who heard several migrant workers' testimonies in California. Attesting to the affective difficulty of family separation, and being uprooted from one's home, these migrants left an indelible mark in Silva's mind and heart—it was this that motivated her to write "Sobreviviendo."

"Sobreviviendo" close reading

In both the lyrics and instrumentation, "Sobreviviendo" serves as a prime example of the *Entre Mujeres* project's dissident vibrations. The song was collaboratively written by Silvia Santos, Gonzalez and the migrants who entrusted Santos with their daunting experiences. As part of this decolonial song-writing process, the authors shared a common vision for using music as a transnational public medium to elevate the stories and struggles of immigrants between the U.S. and Mexico. In her subsequent writing on this song, Gonzalez provides her own translations of these collaboratively written lyrics. This close reading integrates her translations while also providing a comparative literary close reading of them in Spanish prior to translation, since the full significance and potency of the lyrics are diluted in Gonzalez's translations, and important details are lost in this process. My aim is to recuperate some of the original nuanced meanings of this song, especially taking its collectively written context into account. This section takes seriously Gonzalez's notion of music as sung theories, and centers a decolonial Marxist feminist analysis of the lyrics as sung theories of diasporic Mexican women's lives through a genre that has historically excluded their experiences.

The instrumentation of the song is all performed in $\frac{3}{4}$ time by the women musicians and singers in *Entre Mujeres*. This is noteworthy in that most huapangos are in $\frac{6}{8}$ time, and most sones are in $\frac{4}{4}$ common time. The song is nonetheless produced within the *son jarocho* genre's history of patriarchal exclusion, and in which women's performative participation was limited to dancing on

the *tarima*. In order to fully appreciate the instrumentation and performative element of dissident vibrations, I will also include an analysis of a recorded performance by *Entre Mujeres* at the Floricanto Center in 2014. Through their embodied performances as an all woman *son jarocho* group, and through lyrics that politicize both the domestic and the transnational experiences of migrant womanhood, *Entre Mujeres* disrupt the hegemonic cis-hetero-patriarchal norm within Mexican regional music on both sides of the border.

Lyrics:

La gente vive luchando
sin saber que pasará
Con sus pasos van surcando, caminos nuevos harán
No saben si hay una mañana pero al fin se marcharán
Sobreviviendo, sobrevivir Solo siguiendo, ya sin sentir
Por fuerte que sean los vientos la palma siempre será
Me doblo por la tristeza
me enderezo por amar
La raíz es lo que importa para toda humanidad
Solo soy sobreviviente
de la tierra abandonada
Con mis recuerdos presentes en el día voy sin pausa
Haciendo por los ausentes un trabajo que no acaba

People live and struggle
without knowing what is to come
As they walk through their journeys
new roads emerge
They don't know if there will be a tomorrow
but nevertheless, they depart
Surviving, survive
Just moving, without sensing
Despite the strongest winds
The palm tree will always remain I bend to sadness
I stand tall for the loving
The roots are what matters for all humanity
I am only a survivor
From these abandoned lands
With my memories present
I move through the day without rest
Doing for those who are absent never-ending work.

Entre Mujeres's song "Sobreviviendo" offers a powerful narrative of resilience and survival within a transnational decolonial feminist framework. The song tells the story of a migrant narrator who has left her home country to cross borders and find a better life, only to encounter systemic challenges and violences *en route*. Through its collaboratively crafted lyrics and music, "Sobreviviendo" speaks to the lived experiences of a plurality of immigrant women and highlights the intersections of transnationalism, decoloniality, and Chicana feminism.

From a Marxist feminist perspective, "Sobreviviendo" by Entre Mujeres can be examined as a critique of the intersecting systems of capitalism, patriarchy, and imperialism that perpetuate the exploitation and marginalization of immigrant women. The song highlights the structural inequalities and economic disparities that shape the experiences of the protagonist, offering a lens through which to analyze the dynamics of migrant labor, gender, and power within a Marxist framework.

The YouTube recording of *Entre Mujeres* performing "Sobreviviendo" opens with a percussive cross rhythm created by the upright bass, cajon, and axatse. This continues for a couple opening measures before picking up tempo and being joined by the requinto and jarana. By opening with this instrumental exchange, the hybridity of the genre is foregrounded: blending Afro Diasporic rhythmic practices and instruments alongside the upright bass.

Santos and Gonzalez open the song declaratively stating that "la gente vive luchando, sin saber que pasará" / "*People live and struggle without knowing what is to come.*" She deploys the future conjugation of pasar to denote a fragile and unknowable future for the migrants who live in a constant state of struggle. This is reflected in the uncertain tone in which she delivers the refrain, ending on a minor note while singing "pasará" signaling a dismal acceptance of their fate.

Voice

15 G# C#m C#m F# G# C#m
la gen-te vi-ve lu-chan - do sin sa-ber que pa-sa-rá la

21 C#m F# G# C#m C#m
gen-te vi-ve lu-chan - do sin sa-ber que pa-sa-rá con-sus pa-sos van sur-can-

Fig. 6 Score for “Sobreviviendo”, transcribed by Thomas Hanslowe

The lyrics of "Sobreviviendo" shed light on the economic exploitation faced by the protagonist, who is forced to work under precarious circumstances that alienate her from her labor. This portrayal aligns with Marxist feminist analyses that emphasize the ways in which capitalism relies on the exploitation of labor, particularly that of marginalized groups such as immigrant women. The lyrics expose the inherent contradictions of a capitalist system that profits from the labor of immigrant women while simultaneously subjecting them to precarious working conditions and meager wages.¹⁶⁷

21 C#m F# G# C#m C#m
gen-te vi-ve lu-chan - do sin sa-ber que pa-sa-rá con-sus pa-sos van sur-can-

26 F# G# C#m C#m F#
- do ca-mi-nos nue-vos ha-rá con-sus pa-sos van sur-can - do ca-

31 G# C#m C#m F# G#
mi-nos nue-vos ha-rá no sa-bensi hay un ma-ña - na pero al fin se mar-cha-

Fig. 7 Score for “Sobreviviendo”, transcribed by Thomas Hanslowe

¹⁶⁷ Hartmann, H. I. (2019). *The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union*. Verso Books.

In the YouTube video of their performance at the Floricanto Center in 2014, Santos and Gonzalez antiphonally sing “Con sus pasos van surcando, caminos nuevos harán” / “*As they walk through their journeys, new roads emerge.*” The antiphonal exchange between two women’s voices is already rare within the genre, but all the more rare given the politically charged content of their song. Thus in both the content and delivery of their song, Santos and Gonzalez engage dissident vibrations as a positive disruptive force in the genre and in the broader social milieu. The translation provided by Gonzalez loses some of Santos’ poetic illuminations. A more direct translation would be “With their steps they plow, they will make new roads.” This alludes to the agricultural fields that the migrants she met labored in, and it reframes their migration journey as one in which they form an agentic and generative role. Here she is positing that migrants enrich the soil they traverse, and that by laboring they forge new paths for themselves. Here, Santos’ voice deepens as she sings a plodding *surcando*, and brightens towards a hopeful tone as she sings about the emergence of new roads.

Moreover, the song touches upon the structural violence of migration and gendered power imbalances faced by immigrant women in laboring for their livelihoods. The protagonist’s experiences of systemic oppression and alienation of their labor reflect the ways in which patriarchy operates within the context of migration. Marxist feminist scholars have highlighted how patriarchy intersects with capitalism to perpetuate the devaluation of women’s labor and reinforce gendered

hierarchies, contributing to the vulnerability and exploitation experienced by immigrant women.¹⁶⁸

Fig. 8 Score for “Sobreviviendo”, transcribed by Thomas Hanslowe

Santos continues on to the next refrain: “No saben si hay una mañana pero al fin se marcharán”/ “They don’t know if there will be a tomorrow but nevertheless they depart.” Here Santos’ deliberate choice to conjugate haber as hay—there presently is—rather than habrá (there will be) illicit a very pressing precarity, such that one cannot envision a tomorrow. Gonzalez interpreted “al fin” as nevertheless and while this is one reading, it can also be read as “at the end” or “in the end.” The latter readings suggests both a linguistic determinism and a reluctance on the part of the laborers to persist. Her vocal descent into C#m reflects the solemnity of her accepting this precarity and persevering despite it.

¹⁶⁸ Federici, S. (2004). *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body, and Primitive Accumulation*. Autonomedia.

Fig. 9 Score for “Sobreviviendo”, transcribed by Thomas Hanslowe

My interpretation is bolstered by the subsequent chorus “Sobreviviendo, sobrevivir Solo siguiendo, ya sin sentir”/ “*Surviving, survive Just moving, without sensing.*” Here, I could similarly enhance Gonzalez’s interpretation as follows: “*Surviving, survive, only continuing without feeling anymore.*” The nuance is significant here in that Santos’s lyrics paint a portrait of an exhausted migrant worker who perseveres despite precarity in the end. However, this migrant worker is merely surviving, enduring only by numbing what she feels. In this sense, the chorus becomes a communal affective cathartic experience—harmonizing soulfully to the mantra of a migrant worker’s baseline needs: survival.

The image shows a musical score for the song "Sobreviviendo". It consists of two staves of music in treble clef, with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The first staff starts at measure 86 and ends at measure 91. The second staff starts at measure 92 and ends at measure 97. Chord markings are placed above the notes: F# (measures 86-87), G# (88), C#m (89), C#m (90), F# (91), G# (92), C#m (93), C#m (94), F# (95), G# (96), C#m (97), and C#m (98). The lyrics are written below the notes, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across measures.

Fig. 10, Score for “Sobreviviendo”, transcribed by Thomas Hanslowe

The difficulty of maintaining this survival state is illuminated in the following stanza: “Por fuerte que sean los vientos la palma siempre será Me doblo por la tristeza me enderezo por amar”/ “*Despite the strongest winds The palm tree will always remain I bend to sadness I stand tall for the loving.*” Here I offer my slightly different interpretation of Santos’s lyrics: “I double over due to the sadness, I stand tall for love.” By rendering the migrant worker as a palm tree, Santos is invoking imagery of a natural landscape that, like the migrant is not native to the United States, yet is able to adapt to hostile conditions. Here, the severe weather is the sadness that forces workers to double over in pain and from which they straighten themselves up and stand tall in the name of all their loved ones who depend on them. By depicting migrant workers’ affective turmoil as a force of nature, Santos

effectively also demonstrates how their resiliency can overcome insurmountable odds out of an abiding love for their family, and roots.

Santos follows the chorus with the following refrain: “La raíz es lo que importa para toda humanidad /Solo soy sobreviviente de la tierra abandonada”/ “*The roots are what matters for all humanity I am only a survivor from these abandoned lands*” Santos offers that a core component of these migrant workers’ suffering is their disconnection from their roots when she sings “La raíz es lo que importa para toda humanidad.” Her delivery of this line in a warm but somber timbre generates the empathetic resonance for the dissident message at hand.

The image shows a musical score for the song "Sobreviviendo". It consists of three staves of music in a treble clef with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The first staff (measures 92-97) has lyrics: "me-do-blo por la tris-te - za me ende-re - zopor - a - mar la - ra - íz es lo que im-". The second staff (measures 98-103) has lyrics: "por-ta pa-ra to-da hu-mani-dad la-ra-íz es lo que impor - ta pa-ra to-da-huma-ni-". The third staff (measures 104-109) has lyrics: "dad". Above the first two staves, guitar chords are indicated: C#m, C#m, F#, G#, C#m, C#m for the first staff; F#, G#, C#m, C#m, F#, G# for the second staff. Above the third staff, guitar chords are: C#m, C#m, F#, G#, C#m, C#m, F#. Below the third staff, the word "Guitar" is written above the first measure, and "Voice" is written below the first measure. The word "dad" is written below the first measure of the third staff.

Fig. 11 Score for “Sobreviviendo”, transcribed by Thomas Hanslowe

“Con mis recuerdos presentes en el día voy sin pausa /Haciendo por los ausentes un trabajo que no acaba”/ “*With my memories present I move through the day without rest / Doing for those who are absent never-ending work*” Through its focus on the protagonist’s struggles and her resilience in the face of adversity, "Sobreviviendo" offers a narrative of resistance against the capitalist and patriarchal systems. The lyrics convey a sense of collective struggle and the need for solidarity among marginalized groups. This aligns with Marxist feminist perspectives that emphasize the importance of collective action and social movements in challenging and transforming oppressive structures.

Thus, "Sobreviviendo" can be analyzed from a Marxist feminist perspective as a critique of the interlocking systems of capitalism, patriarchy, and imperialism that shape the experiences of immigrant women—alienating them from their own communities, languages, and labor. The song exposes the economic exploitation, gendered power imbalances, and structural violence faced by the protagonist, shedding light on the ways in which these systems intersect to perpetuate inequalities. By highlighting the protagonist's resilience and emphasizing the importance of collective struggle, the song offers a call for social transformation and the dismantling of oppressive structures.¹⁶⁹

In our interview, Gonzalez enthusiastically shared how she feels compelled to play music with others not only professionally, but also as a medium for being in community with others. She articulated that community building beyond the family unit is essential for revolutionary praxis. In her view, revolution is not an explosive event, but rather the slow process of building new social relationships and finding new ways to relate to one another. Gonzalez posits that music is an especially important tool toward this end because direct action and protests are incredibly taxing on people's time and emotions, whereas music is generative and nourishing. The affective resonance of dissident vibrations is key. By creating a generative and nourishing relationship with their listening publics, Martha Gonzalez and the Entre Mujeres collective are ensuring that their dissident vibrations are received widely.

¹⁶⁹ Mohanty, C. T. (2003). *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Duke University Press.

Conclusion: Many Possibilities for Dissidence

“May the center of the earth tremble...For without the women of Mexico and the world, there isn't revolution or life.”
-Dignidad y Resistencia¹⁷⁰

When I began graduate school in 2013, my research was driven by questions on police violence in my community and how music—specifically punk—served as one modality through which state violence could be mediated. This was initially a social scientific project in which I carried out 73 qualitative interviews with punk rock musicians, producers and subcultural members to better understand their second generation Latinx subjectivity, punk rock identities, and personal experiences with state violence.

In my development at USC under the tutelage of Dr. George Sanchez, I expanded my inquiries historically. What other examples in history did we have of state violence being enacted upon our communities? And what other examples existed of people of color using the arts as a site of political contestation? What I found were a plethora of fitting examples from the state violence enacted upon attendees of *son jarocho fandangos* in the 1800s borderlands in Texas, to the state violence enacted upon *Pachucas* and *Pachucos* in the 1940s.¹⁷¹ There is a long fetch in history of music being a site for political and social transformation, and just as long a history of the state seeking to close down these dissident vibrations.

My training at The Herb Alpert School of Music at UCLA expanded this project beyond punk and urged me to interrogate what it was about the music itself that generated both such transformative socio-political potential and also how it served as a site for collective effervescence.

¹⁷⁰ Prado, Emily. "Born Into Rebellion: How Dignidad Y Resistencia Merge Music and Liberation." She Shreds. December 11, 2018. <https://sheshreds.com/dignidad-y-resistencia/>.

¹⁷¹ Valerio-Jiménez, Omar S. *River of hope: Forging identity and nation in the Rio Grande borderlands*. Duke University Press, 2013., Escobedo, Elizabeth Rachel. *From coveralls to zoot suits: The lives of Mexican American women on the World War II home front*. UNC Press Books, 2013.

Here I trained in Afro-Diasporic Musicology, Chicanx and Latin American Musicology, and canonical Musicology. This combination of training helped me realize that the functions that music had served in my previous research—namely, to create a sense of community, to serve as a site of affective communion, to relay political ideology and messaging— were functions that could be met across genres, across time periods, and across all categories of difference.

As my doctoral studies at UCLA overlapped with my own personal healing journey as a domestic violence survivor, I gained the courage to begin asking questions about how state violence specifically affects women and, how it affects Chicanas and Latinas in particular. And again I returned to the fundamental curiosity that has driven this project: how have we been using music as a site for political communion and freedom dreaming despite oppressive violence on the state and domestic levels, and how these musical practices can illuminate the connection between the two seemingly disparate levels of oppression. This pivot toward Chicanas aligned happily with my three years of teaching for the 1960s cluster in a seminar called “Music & Social Movements in the Americas & Caribbean.” There I explored dissident vibrations as a decolonial feminist pedagogical tool, imagining it as a scholarly perspective through compiling readings, repertoire, and assignments that were reflective of diverse dissident voices throughout that tumultuous decade across the Americas and Caribbean.

In this sense, this project is a culmination of the years of labor it took to fully understand dissident vibrations as a globally applicable concept. Dissident vibrations illuminates how these questions of state violence and cultural production have a long *durée* not only in my mind but also in those of many around the world throughout history. This framework challenges how women are often situated as victims of both domestic and state violence, and instead centers their agency as survivors to determine their autonomy, at all scales. Black feminists have made clear that the reaches of state violence boil down to the microcosm of the nuclear family and the home. Through the

incorporation of oral history *testimonios* and memoir, this project has sought to center the domestic scales of state violence in women's lives and how their music served as both a salve and as a response to these incursions on their autonomy.

In many ways this project is an adamant call to listen intimately to the voices of women who cry out against state violence, and domestic violence, at all scales. This is especially significant given our present political landscape, where *Roe v Wade* has been overturned, trans women face heightened state violence and premature death, and where Latinas continue to make 54% less than white men.¹⁷² I wrote this dissertation to join a lineage of Chicana historians who have written from out of the shadows to illuminate histories that would otherwise be silenced or cast aside. While there are many other women I would have wanted to include, pandemic-induced circumstances beyond my control postponed that possibility.

In future iterations of this project, I intend to include oratory as a medium of dissident vibrations—specifically that of Lucy Parsons and Josefina Fierro de Bright. Due to COVID-19 and the closure of archives for the research period of this dissertation, I had to pivot away from the chapters that would have been dedicated to these magnanimous Chicana labor activists and orators for this dissertation. The following section will provide a cursory overview of Parsons and Fierro de Bright, alongside what their future chapters will contribute to the further research along these lines. In addition to their work, I will also highlight the work of *Dignidad y Resistencia*, an all indigenous woman corrido band in Chiapas, Mexico. Taken together, these women's work elucidates critical global and decolonial aspects of dissident vibrations.

Chapter 4 will be about Josefina Fierro de Bright, who is known for her role as executive secretary for El Congreso de Pueblos Habla Español and advocacy efforts on behalf of the Sleepy Lagoon defendants. Historiographically, Fierro de Bright is too often diminished as a charming

¹⁷² Richard, Katherine. "The wealth gap for women of color." *Center for Global Policy Solutions* (2014).

socialite with ancillary radical proclivities. What is only gestured toward in the literature on her political contributions to the history of labor movements in Los Angeles is both her career as a lounge pianist at Rio Rita's club and the Florentine Gardens, and the role that her piano performances played in her Hollywood fundraising efforts for El Congreso and the Sleepy Lagoon case's legal funds.¹⁷³ Though classically trained, beginning at the age of 9 and continuing through her time as a student at UCLA, Fierro de Bright centered jazz standards in her repertoire. The literature is sparse in detailing specific songs, but the archives on Josefina Fierro de Bright include interviews of prominent activists and Hollywood stars in attendance at these parties. Future work along these lines could include analyzing these oral histories alongside periodicals reporting on these fundraising events. This potential future book chapter aims to trace the history of Fierro de Bright's musical endeavors and highlight its centrality to the labor and Chicana organizing she carried out before being exiled to Guaymas, Mexico during the McCarthy era. Importantly, this chapter could examine the racial and gendered politics of a Chicana activist mobilizing jazz idioms in predominantly white spaces—and often through sexualized performance practices—in order to advance her political organizing goals.

In addition to the performative and hostess labors overlooked in scholarship on her contributions, the literature also glosses over her speaking engagements on Los Angeles radio stations and in inaugurating El Congreso's radio show. This creation of a community platform provided an integral mode of communication across El Congreso's membership. Further, Fierro de

¹⁷³ “Josefina hosted endless parties, buffets, concerts, and cocktail gatherings to fundraise for the Sleepy Lagoon crusade. Through her husband, she met celebrities like Orson Welles, Ramon Navarro, Joseph Cotton, Rita Hayworth, Mae West, Gregory Peck, Gene Kelly, and Lena Horne and invited them to her Hollywood Art Deco home. Josefina played jazz on a huge mahogany Steinway piano. Then Earl Carroll's exotic dancers with huge feather fans tiptoed out on the shining parquet floor and did their magic. Flamboyant female impersonators performed outrageous antics.” Carlos Larralde, “Josefina Fierro and the Sleepy Lagoon Crusade, 1942-1945” (*Southern California Quarterly* 92.2 [2010]: 117-160), p. 18. “To drown her bitter sorrow, Josefina made extra money as a pianist at Rio Rita's club in Los Angeles. In the Florentine Gardens and other nightclubs in Hollywood, Josefina and her friends were not shy when it came to entertaining. Actress Lupe Velez and comedian Carmen Miranda danced wildly, pulling their skirts over their heads to reveal they were wearing no underwear.” *Ibid.*

Bright utilized her speaking engagements on radio stations as platforms to advocate for both El Congreso and the Sleepy Lagoon trial defendants. Through discussion of her various performances—from live piano performances to broadcast radio discourse—this chapter will strive to plot Fierro de Bright’s sonic contributions and the ways they enlivened and engendered transformative social change for Los Angeles working-class Chicanos in both the labor movement and beyond.

Through archival research, this chapter would trace Fierro de Bright’s diasporic political engagements beginning with her father’s influential involvement in the Mexican Revolution to her own theorization of racial equity in Los Angeles and beyond. Diasporic formations of community would play a pivotal role in conducting these investigative endeavors. By tracing her own family’s genealogy of cross-border political struggle, as well as in focusing on the transnational networks Fierro de Bright established through political organizing and entrepreneurship, this chapter would elucidate how Fierro de Bright forged political communities across nation-state confines, as well as across stark racial and classed divides in Los Angeles, through her diasporic imaginary and sonically dissident labors

Chapter five will examine the oratory repertoire of the transnational anarcho-syndicalist labor organizer, Lucy Parsons. Literature on her organizational contributions to the 19th-century labor movement in Chicago exists and most notably covers her role in founding the Working Women’s Union in 1879, co-founding the International Working People’s Association in 1883 with her husband Albert Parsons, and co-organizing the original May Day demonstration in 1886. Additionally, scholarship by literary and cultural theorist Shelley Streeby has embedded Parsons within a broader network of radical Chicana organizing in the Americas through an analytic focus on visual print cultures.¹⁷⁴ This work is a foundational intervention into the scant work done to recover

¹⁷⁴ Shelley Streeby. *American sensations: class, empire, and the production of popular culture*. Vol. 9. Univ of California Press, 2002.

Parson's contributions and situate them within a broader political and historiographic conversation. My future work along these lines will build on this contribution by arguing that in her political theorization as well as her organizing networks, Lucy Parsons engaged in diasporic refusals of containment to nation state borders. Her dissident political labors imagined a political collective that expanded across these settler-colonial fixtures, unified through class and gender oppressions. Significantly, race is a resounding silence in Parsons's work, in that she believed that focusing on it would detract from class-based inequality as the foundational problem. This future chapter thus would read Parsons's intersectional diasporic efforts against the grain of this silence, by focusing on the networks and oratorical theorizations she produced across nation-states.

What is notably lacking in the literature on Parsons is a focus on her oratorical career, particularly in the years following her husband's execution. This is an interesting absence in the literature, considering that the Chicago Police described her incendiary voice as "more dangerous than a thousand rioters."¹⁷⁵ This chapter would cull Parsons' speeches,¹⁷⁶ and bridge them with archival material available at the San Francisco State University Labor Archives and Research Center. Through close reading and archival research, I would aim to recenter her insurrectionary voice as a pivotal performative medium for radical political mobilizing, aiming to codify Parsons's dissident oratory career as pivotal to Chicago labor organizing history and Chicana political history. Beyond mere rhetoric or language, I would argue that her voice attuned political collectives to one another at the different venues at which she spoke. As a key intermaterial organ in each acoustic setting, Parsons' voice served as an affective tuning fork in cohering resonance among those in attendance, her message, and the broader diasporic public her message was intended to reach.

¹⁷⁵ Ashbaugh, Carolyn. *Lucy Parsons: An American Revolutionary*. Haymarket Books, 2013. Carolyn Ashbaugh, *Lucy Parsons: An American Revolutionary* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2013).

¹⁷⁶ Ahrens, Gale, ed., *Lucy Parsons: Freedom, Equality & Solidarity*. (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 2004).

Dissident vibrations are a method of political worldmaking that is available via all sonic media. It is my ambition to demonstrate this transposition of my framework into oratory in future work. In lieu of these chapters, I thought that perhaps I could include a chapter on the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) all-women folk group *Dignidad y Resistencia*, whose repertoire of corridos serves as anthems for the sovereign Indigenous territory within Chiapas, Mexico.¹⁷⁷ Throughout their history, the EZLN has centered the principle of autonomy in creating the sovereign zones—*caracoles*— where local communities can self-govern and protect their cultural identities. They have effectively utilized media and internet platforms to disseminate their message and mobilize both Mexican national and global support. The arts are an especially poignant medium toward these ends for Zapatistas:

For us Zapatistas, the arts are the hope of humanity, not a militant cell. We think that indeed, in the most difficult moments, when disillusionment and impotence are at a peak, the Arts are the only thing capable of celebrating humanity.¹⁷⁸

In this quotation from the 2016 EZLN compARTE festival, Zapatistas elucidate that their dissident vibrations are not only an outcry against the state, but also about celebrating Indigenous sovereignty, joy, and humanity. Inspired by this holistic view of musical protest, the four anonymous members of *Dignidad y Resistencia*—between the ages of 14 to 22—seek to sing against capitalism, in celebration of Zapatismo, and to facilitate dances. Their goals as musicians are so staunchly anti-capitalist and community-oriented that they do not have recordings of their music beyond YouTube videos of live performances at Zapatista festivals. This lack of a musical archive and orientation toward community-based performances make my further research into their repertoire an impossibility at

¹⁷⁷ The Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) is a social movement that emerged in the Southern state of Chiapas, Mexico in the late 20th century. They are driven by the struggle for Indigenous rights, social justice, and autonomy. The EZLN staged an armed uprising on January 1, 1994. This insurrection marked a watershed moment in Mexican history, drawing attention to the marginalized conditions of the country's Indigenous populations and the pervasive inequalities they faced.

¹⁷⁸ Prado, Emily. "Born Into Rebellion: How Dignidad Y Resistencia Merge Music and Liberation." She Shreds. December 11, 2018. <https://sheshreds.com/dignidad-y-resistencia/>.

the moment. But it is important to note that this oral tradition of folk music is both global in aspect and an enactments of both Jonathan Lear's radical hope and Audra Simpson's decolonial refusal.¹⁷⁹ They refuse engagement with capitalist economies of music, and generate radical hope for a decolonial Indigenous futurity through song and dance. It should be respected then that this is a musical group that does not need or want validation from colonial institutions or paradigms—including academic research on their publicly available YouTube videos. However, future research should be conducted by Indigenous musicians, activists or scholars who share the Zapatista vision of decolonial autonomy.

Future research on EZLN corridos would be a generative exercise on multiple accounts. First, it would allow us to encounter anew and perhaps reframe the questions of nationalism and decoloniality—taking the EZLN's sovereignty as organized not around nationalism, but instead on decolonial relations to the land and to the community. This conversation would add invaluable insight into the field of Latinx/Chicanx Studies as we expand beyond centering the U.S. state as the only site of colonial violence, as well as to the fields of Native Studies interested in how music is used as a tool for decolonizing the state. Second, including corridos written and performed by all Indigenous women is itself a defiant act. The genre is largely cis-hetero-patriarchal and mestizo, with themes of love, working class bravado, narco-trafficking, and Mexican nationalism prevailing throughout. Centering Indigenous women's voices in this context is both rare and important political work, made even more significant by the decolonial political content of their music. Third, including a group of Indigenous women musicians from sovereign EZLN territory inherently challenges the centrality of the U.S. settler state to Chicanx/Latinx Studies. Put otherwise, including

¹⁷⁹ Lear, Jonathan. *Radical hope: Ethics in the face of cultural devastation*. Harvard University Press, 2006.; Simpson, Audra. *Mobawk interruptus: Political life across the borders of settler states*. Duke University Press, 2014.

these repertoires would expand the decolonial horizons for both fields, as it imagines geographies that do not naturalize settler colonial cartographies.

For all of the reasons to write the *Dignidad y Resistencia* chapter that they deserve, I know that I am not the scholar to write it. After working as a research assistant for Dr. Boj-Lopez, I learned the importance of Ladina/mestiza critical consciousness and decolonial research ethics when creating anything—be it a photograph or a dissertation chapter—that tells an Indigenous story. I am not the storyteller for that chapter, but Indigenous dissident vibrations should be remembered.

I have come to see all these possibilities of dissident vibrations as a hopeful and generative exercise in decolonial worldmaking—as examples of all the ways dissident vibrations have always been present, and of ways they have (and still can) reshape our worlds. In this sense, our archives of dissident vibrations around the world are abundant. Continued work along these lines is equally abundant.

It is my hope that this project is taken as an offering of what Chicana dissident vibrations can sound like, and how they have shaped our worlds. Beyond this project, and beyond academia, I endeavor to continue learning about the diverse instantiations of this around the Global South, from a place of decolonial political solidarity.

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