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Latinas for Housing Justice:

The Fight for Rent Control in Unincorporated East Los Angeles

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Master of Arts

in Chicana and Chicano Studies

by

Kimberly Ivette Miranda

2020

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Latinas for Housing Justice: The Fight for Rent Control in Unincorporated East Los Angeles

by

Kimberly Ivette Miranda

Master of Arts in Chicana and Chicano Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2020

Professor Gaye Theresa Johnson, Chair

The hyper privatization of housing and gentrification in Los Angeles has dramatically shifted the racial, class, and cultural landscape of aggrieved neighborhoods. The timely need to address housing injustices—eviction, landlord harassment, and drastic rent increases in gentrifying neighborhoods is needed to further address mechanisms of capitalism that dehumanize and commodify housing. In this thesis, I analyze how Latina Mothers transform moments of housing injustices into empowerment and activism. Focusing on LA County's rent control campaign led by local Los Angeles tenant coalition, Unincorporated Tenants United (UTU), I highlight the role of the Latina Mother canvassers. It was witnessed and analyzed that the Latina Mother canvassers enacted forms of placemaking, which I describe as *homemaking* while engaging with vulnerable tenants facing different forms of housing injustices. Informed by previous housing trauma, the Latina Mother canvassers displayed forms of homemaking, that I describe as: *testimonio* sharing, *comadriando* (gossiping), and (re)imagination of community through housing justice activism. Applying a homemaking framework to Woman of Color (WOC)

Mother activism in aggrieved communities then allows for a nuanced analysis of social order, mechanisms of dispossession that influence local organizing, and collective community care that sustains a movement.

The thesis of Kimberly Ivette Miranda is approved.

Eric R. Avila

Genevieve Gonzalez Carpio

Gaye Theresa Johnson, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2020

DEDICATION PAGE

I dedicate this work to the Latina Mother canvassers of Unincorporated Tenants United—Blanca Espinoza, Maria Leon, Carolina Rodriguez, Alicia Ortiz, Leticia Andrade, and Martha. *Todas ustedes me han enseñado todo lo que sé sobre la participación comunitaria. Les dedico este trabajo. Gracias por compartir sus historias con migo—* and for all those who are struggling with housing insecurity in unincorporated Los Angeles.

Y para mi familia, quien cruzó fronteras y encontró su camino en el este (no incorporaado) de Los Ángeles.

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A NOTE ON TERMS

Barrio

Appropriate to describe cultural, historical, and regional environment of unincorporated East Los Angeles. Also used to label smaller neighborhoods within a neighborhood. I ground the use of barrio in this thesis under what David Diaz defines as, “the reaffirmation of culture, a defense of space, and ethnically bounded sanctuary, and the spiritual zone of Chicana/o Mexicana/o identity. It is a powerful, intense space that has defined the independence and resistance of a culture that predates Euro-American influences on city life and urban form (Diaz, 2004, pg. 3).”

Rent burdened

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) define rent burden as tenants who pay over 30 percent of their income on rent. HUD also notes that tenants falling under this category have difficulty affording additional necessities, like, food, transportation, and medical care.

Severely rent burdened

Similar to being rent burdened, being severely rent burdened signifies those that pay over 50 percent of their income on rent.

Housing injustice

For the purpose of this thesis, I identify a housing injustice to include any form of violence (physical, symbolic, and/or structural) that disrupts the wellbeing of one’s livelihood. Such examples are antagonistic housing policies, eviction, landlord harassment, skyrocketed rent increase without proper notice, animosity that comes from contested gentrifying neighborhoods.

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I am particularly grateful to my advisors in the Cesar E. Chavez department of Chicana and Chicano Studies, Gaye Theresa Johnson, Genevieve Carpio, and Eric Avila. I wish to express my gratitude to Leisy Abrego for facilitating a fruitful writing seminar and providing insightful feedback. A very special thank you to scholars outside my department and institution who helped me workshop this thesis in its early stages, Christine Vega, Alfredo Huante and Erualdo Gonzalez.

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A final, but not least—thank you to the community organizers and tenants who fight for housing justice and tenants' rights on the daily. This work would be non-existent without you and your commitments—I am indebted to all of you. ¡Pa'lante!

INTRODUCTION

“Lo que sí sabemos es que luchamos por nuestra libertad y que nos toca ahora luchar para defenderla, para que la historia de dolor de nuestras abuelas no la sufran nuestras hijas y nietas” -EZLN

Community activists, housing organizations, local residents and tenants rallied in front of Kenneth Hahn’s Hall of Administration on September 11th 2018 chanting—*¡Un techo es un derecho!* (A roof is a right!) Demanding the need for rent control in unincorporated Los Angeles, this day would determine the implementation of a temporary county ordinance that would cap rent increases at three percent for six months. Granting tenants across Los Angeles county with rent control and just cause¹ was the beginning of what would be a two-year fight to make this temporary ordinance a permanent one. This action was spearheaded in 2017 by Carolina Rodriguez, a mother and longtime East Los Angeles resident—who received a \$750 rent increase and was experiencing landlord harassment. She emphasized the dire collective need for tenant protections that September morning:

Wow, a lot of people showed up! That’s good! In my situation, I initiated coming here in 2017 to ask Hilda Solis that we need rent control because I received a rent increase from \$1,250 to \$2,000! We’re here today because I want civil cases, I want my federal court, and I want to leave a message that even though I lived under not having rent control, I was still able to stay in my home. We can do it if we put our minds together, our communities together! So let’s stay and fight and let everyone know that we need rent control! We need some peace!

¹ Provision that grants stability and limits landlord on forcing tenants to leave their tenancy, unless eviction is justifiable (ex: failure to pay rent, substantial repairs or renovations, owner-move in, illegal sublet, permanent withdrawal from rental market, and relocation assistance).

Carolina's *testimonio*² was reflective of the many rent burdened tenants across the county who are forced to navigate a restrictive housing market. Determined to fight her eviction case, Carolina was successfully able to stay in her *home*. This experience that motivated her to continue to fight for her fellow neighbors, and with the help of local housing organizations³, she was able to manifest a rent control campaign.



Figure 1 Carolina at the Rent Control Rally, September 11, 2018.

The rent control canvassing campaign that was led by the local tenant coalition, Unincorporated Tenants United (UTU) was active for four months (March 2019-June 2019), door knocking on buildings that qualify for rent control⁴. Focusing on unincorporated East Los

² Spanish for testimony. I use the Spanish spelling for conscious reasons that stem from “exposing brutality, disrupts silencing, and builds solidarity among women of color” (Anzaldúa) as Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, and Carmona (2012) describe *testimonio* as a methodological and pedagogical tool.

³ Los Angeles Center for Community Law & Action (LACCLA), Unión de Vecinos, Eastside local of the Los Angeles Tenants Union, and Unincorporated Tenants United (UTU),

⁴ Qualifications for rent control on a unit must be constructed before 1995 with two or more units, buildings do not include condos or residential hotels.

Angeles (UELA), I center the Latina Mother canvassers of UTU and highlight their use of *testimonios* while engaging with tenants. This campaign, which I describe in great length throughout this study, chronicles an important and timely analysis that highlights the role Latina mother canvassers had in politically engaging with their neighborhood on rent control for LA county. Further, it contains important lessons about the complex types of knowledge that are created and shared between the canvassers and tenants.

Latina Mother activism is often ignored—their role as public figures and leaders in the home and *barrio* are rarely ever validated (Ruiz 1998). More recent scholarship on Chicana Feminism and M(other)work (Espinoza, Cotera, Blackwell 2018; Caballero, Martínez-Vu, Pérez-Torres, Téllez, and Vega 2019) highlight the multiple intersections of motherhood, activism, feminism, and the *home*. In trying to relationally analyze these facets, I bridge the work of previous and current scholarship around Chicana and Latina Feminism with community engagement and activism. I contribute to the scholarship of Mary Pardo (1990) and Gaye Theresa Johnson (2011) to consciously contextualize community political influence through Latina Mothers in the *barrio* to understand how they navigate and reimagine UELA’s landscape and politically influence their community. I later describe these moments as a specific form of placemaking that Polakit and Schomberg (2012) describe as *homemaking*.

Employing an interdisciplinary approach, I expand scholarship on Chicana/o Studies and racial geographies to analyze how the Latina Mother canvassers engage with rent burdened tenants and how that destigmatizes housing injustice experiences. This study highlights how the Latina mother canvassers interact with and inform with tenants in the UELA neighborhood through the use of *testimonio*. I argue that this tactic informs placemaking in the *barrio* that I describe as homemaking. Using mixed methods, such as participant observation, ethnographic

field notes, personal video footage of housing actions, and interviews, I was able to answer the following research questions: What *compromisos* (commitments) do the Latina Mother canvassers of UTU have to their *barrio*? How does *homemaking* expand our understanding of *the home*? And lastly, through the implementation of rent control, how do the Latina Mother canvassers display forms of care and reimagine their community?

My positionality as a current unincorporated East Los Angeles tenant, canvasser, and academic allows me to offer an in-depth analysis of the community environment and engagement during the contentious fight for rent control. Cognizant of the state and its antagonism to aggrieved communities, I am aware that until the system is dismantled, housing is de-commodified, and *everyone* is housed, we cannot be free of this “housing crisis”. It is for this reason that I situate this project under the realm of what critical geographer, Ananya Roy (2019) calls, research justice. Concerned with scholarship that centers the need for structural transformation, research justice is “the refusal to participate in the dispossession of knowledge (Roy, 2019, pg. 17).” Centering the voices and experiences of the Latina Mother canvassers offers direct insight of contested space and place in the *barrio*. The *compromiso* that was witnessed throughout and after the rent control campaign chronicles what Diaz (2005) calls—urban Barrio *luchas* to write and document the central role the canvassers played in influencing, informing, and mobilizing tenants. More significantly, I center the often invisible and untold stories about the Latina Mother canvassers who fought for tenant protections and help win rent control for L.A. County. Ultimately, I argue that this work, through Mother of Color socio-spatial activism, proposes a right to space and home with dignity.



Figure 2 Unincorporated Tenants United Members on the Final Vote meeting, September 10, 2019.



Figure 3 Unincorporated Tenants United (UTU) Logo

BACKGROUND: UNINCORPORATED LOS ANGELES & THE LATINA MOTHER CANVASSERS

In order to understand the importance of these subverted histories, we need to look at how Los Angeles is organized. The distinction between City of Los Angeles and Unincorporated Los Angeles is often times inaccessible, especially when understanding policy implementation. In 1852, the state Legislature created the County of Los Angeles' governing body, dividing unincorporated areas of Los Angeles into five districts. Today, Unincorporated Los Angeles, also known as Los Angeles County, encompasses 120-125 areas for about 10,441,080 residents outside the city of Los Angeles (lacounty.gov). Prior to the provisional rent freeze in September 2018 that temporarily protected renters, LA county lacked tenant protections that prevented unjust evictions and displacement. This resulted in the danger of tenants falling under two categories: rent burdened and severely rent burdened. Populated with the largest number of tenant households (Public Counsel and the UCLA School of Law Community Economic Development Clinic, 2019) and governed by Hilda Solis, UELA falls under the 1st district. Nearly 60% of tenants in UELA are rent burdened and forced to navigate a restrictive housing

market. Highlighting the role of gender, a recent report titled “Priced Out, Pushed Out, Locked Out” (2019) states that female tenants (not including peoples that identify as gender non-conforming) are 22% more likely to live in *severely* rent burdened households than male tenants across LA County (Public Counsel and the UCLA School of Law Community Economic Development Clinic, 2019). Making the case that rent control brings about sustainable profits for both landlord and tenant (Public Counsel, UCLA School of Law Community Economic Development Clinic, Eastside LEADS, and Unincorporated Tenants United 2019), studies have identified rent control as a marker to alleviate some of the financial burden and well-being of tenants. Rent control opponents have described this pro tenant ordinance as “communistic” — further stigmatizing that it would bring about public housing (Katz, Chesney, King, and Vestal 2018). The urgency to demand action has gradually happened, especially since Los Angeles’ 16% increase in the houseless population in 2019 (Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority). Analyzing gentrification mechanisms, such as rent increases alongside policy implementation with community influence like rent control and mother canvassers informs gaps in gentrification scholarship (Brown-Sarancino 2016) that aim to critically assess neighborhood change and community activism.

Urban planning and Chicana/o Studies scholars, David Diaz and Rodolfo Torres (2012) confront the history of discriminatory practices in largely populated Latino areas, like Los Angeles. They, the authors, call for “appropriate policy measures” that reflect the socioeconomic changes one lives under. The “voices of ethnic others” (Diaz and Torres, 2012) is then needed to justify the need for resources. Reflective of the data in “Priced Out, Pushed Out, Locked Out” (2019), UELA is a strategic research site from which to study in order to highlight forms of placemaking that speak to housing instability, trauma, and empowerment through the Latina

Mother canvassers. The urgency for rent control in UELA would prevent unjust housing situations for numerous of tenants and slow down gentrification that is traveling further east from downtown Los Angeles. With the hopes of alleviating financial relief and housing security for vulnerable families across LA county, the Latina Mother canvassers created and upheld the integrity of the rent control campaign for tenants. Centering the role that the mother canvassers had with tenant engagement speaks to democratic counterpaces that were created through forms of activism and placemaking. Public Counsel and the UCLA School of Law Community Economic Development Clinic (2019) further state that between 2010 and 2018, there have been more than half a million court evictions filed countywide, signaling that one hundred thousand people were evicted per year. The number of families undergoing eviction has exacerbated over the past decade, demonstrating the continuum of racist housing policies in the United States.

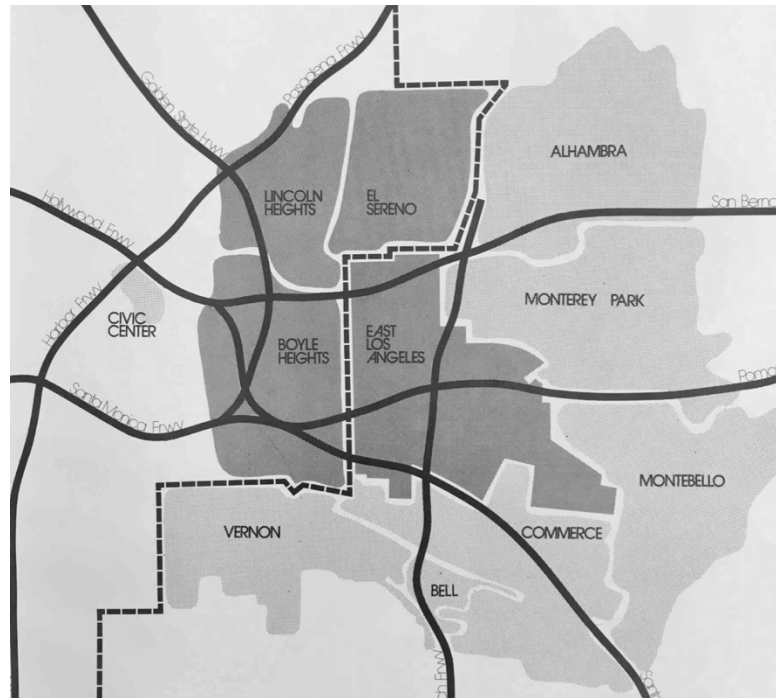


Figure 4 Barrio Planners Incorporated. (1973, September). *Nuestro Ambiente: East Los Angeles Visual Survey and Analysis*. The Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

UTU was founded upon Carolina’s eviction case and was responsible for bringing local housing advocates together for the canvassing campaign. UTU defines themselves as “a coalition of tenants, legal advocates, and community organizations fighting for tenant rights in Unincorporated Los Angeles (2018, December 18).” The collective effort of those who worked the rent control campaign by canvassing and who I identify as the Latina Mother canvassers, exemplifies community activism at the local level and how everyday life experiences with housing injustices are navigated and turned into moments of solidarity and empowerment. Similar to Carolina’s case, these *señoras* share the common goal of fighting for just housing in their community. Figure 1.3 depicts Carolina on the far right with Los Angeles Center for Community Law & Action (LACCLA) members at the Board of Supervisor’s headquarters, requesting to speak with Hilda Solis to assure no loopholes were implemented moving forward in trying to make rent control permanent for LA county residents. The mothers pictured in figure 1.3 display the mothers waiting outside of Solis’ office, ready to share their personal experiences

with, what was at the time, a provisional rent control law, and the importance and benefits it was currently serving. As a LACCLA member and previous employee of UTU, I participated in multiple housing meetings and rallies, where I witnessed a majority of tenants that organize were and are women, Latina, and oftentimes mothers. Although this thesis focuses on the mother canvassers and their activism, I acknowledge the stories and actions of the mothers that did not work the canvassing campaign as important key figures in this housing justice movement that continue to shape the socio-political landscape of Los Angeles' eastside.



Figure 5 Los Angeles Center for Community Action (LACCLA) members waiting outside of Hilda Solis' Office, March 27, 2019.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In a neoliberal economy, housing is understood to be a profit-making instrument. In such a context, the “housing crisis” does not reflect a broken system, rather, it reveals precisely how the system was intended to work (Madden and Marcuse 2016). The magnitude of *barrio* housing injustices historically and presently stems from the dominant private market institutions (Warner 2012) that demonstrate the continuum of racial banishment (Roy 2018) across major cities. Los Angeles’ growing population of rent burdened tenants has called for scholarship that focuses on policy and socio-economic factors (Brown-Sarancino 2016) that could alleviate conditions for tenants, while also focusing on socio-spatial activism. The lack of cohesive literature that focuses on policy, activism, and racial-spatial studies (Neely and Samura 2011) prevent for a nuanced analysis of resistance groups involved with tenant organizing and political influence. Analyzing housing policies alongside social movements, such as housing justice and anti-gentrification groups, allows for a distinct analysis that requires scholarship across disciplines and community involvement in order to center a conscious research approach that centers agency and justice for those at the margins of these injustices. Policy, economics, and discriminatory ideologies have been used in the past and present to segregate Los Angeles (Gibbons 2018) and that further displace aggrieved communities. This literature review expands current housing justice ideologies that reflect today’s political climate and urgency towards housing policies that support tenants and tenant centered activism in Los Angeles. Drawing across disciplines, I bridge bodies of literature that interrogate: gender, activism, culture, policy, and housing in order to examine how Latina Mothers in the *barrio* inform and influence, pro-tenant policies. In addition, I include literature on racial geographies to contextualize how race, class, gender, and motherhood status inform the current hostile housing market in unincorporated East Los Angeles and describe how

the Latina Mother canvassers created place-based sensibilities that I refer to as, homemaking. Moreover, I incorporate spatial analysis I later in this thesis define the Latina Mother canvassers. The Latina Mother canvassers I thematically outline this section as follows: Women of Color (WOC) Mother activism and socio-spatial resistance in the neighborhood and racial geographies.

WOC MOTHER ACTIVISM AND SOCIO-SPATIAL RESISTANCE IN THE *NEIGHBORHOOD*

Unincorporated East Los Angeles (UELA) has been used as the dumping grounds of unwanted and hazardous facilities since industrialization. A racialized landscape encompassing a large working-class, undocumented, Latino population—UELA continues to be a *highly* segregated and environmentally unjust *barrio* (Pulido, Sidawi, and Vos, 2013). Mary Pardo's ethnographic work on the Mothers of East Los Angeles (MELA) documented the experiences of Latina mothers in East Los Angeles who were active in community issues, specifically with environmental socio-spatial injustices. Pardo illustrates "the process of creating better relationships that empower people to unite and achieve common goals" in the *barrio* (Pardo 1990, #), MELA's influence in the neighborhood invites us to relationally think about gender, motherhood, and activism in the *barrio* that addressed the successful halt of a county prison and toxic waste incinerator that was set to be built in Boyle Heights in the late 1980's. This history also signifies a successful victory that came out of a collective struggle across mothers in the Eastside and South Central.

In fact, mothers have played important roles in international social movements. In Argentina, for example, Education scholar, Hernández centers the radical work of mothers in Argentina during the dictatorship of 1976-1983 by closely analyzing with what she calls—their "pedagogical function" that offered an alternative view of the state. Hernández further describes

the conversations she had with mothers that were demanding justice for their murdered and missing children as, “they began articulating a political discourse that, at the same time strengthened solidarity, and launched them into ever-growing concerns for the disarticulation of the dictatorial regime and the re-establishment of democracy” (Hernández, 1997, p.61).

Although not in the context of Los Angeles, Hernández provides an early example of how motherhood roles extend outside of the *home*. Through public actions, writing letters, interrupting government meeting, to the media—the mothers displayed a number of roles that influenced social transformation at the time. These pedagogical practices that the mothers displayed and acted on inform public and democratic spheres. The fact that mothers were taking up space is foundational in understanding oppression under military repression. The position of mothers is important to note because it is known that mothers, throughout history have been leaders of social movements across time and space. This provides insightful context to how the role of mothers extends outside of the home and into the public sphere. The work that aggrieved mothers have played historically sheds light on how social movements are led and whose labor is being exhausted for the sake of survival and justice.

Recent scholarship (Espinosa, Cotera, and Blackwell 2018) has highlighted the historically ignored and invalidated labor of women in the Chicana movement. Although the *mujeres* that I include in this thesis do not identify as Chicana, they do demonstrate the continuation of history that Espinosa, Cotera, and Blackwell (2018) historicize when they state,

Women played significant roles in the major mobilizations and organizations that coalesced into what is now understood historiographically as the Chicano movement era, including both well-known movement formations—like the United Farm Workers, the Crusade for Justice, the land grant movement, and La Raza Unida Party—and what numerous regional and national initiatives.

Moving across sites, time, and space, the authors center the stories of Chicana activism that demonstrate what they describe as a, praxis of resistance. Framed under liberation practices, I highlight the Chicana/Latina genealogy to contextualize the timely need to document the experiences of the Latina Mother canvassers who fought and advocated for vulnerable tenants in Los Angeles County.

Continuing the work of mother centered activism is the work of Ruth Wilson Gilmore. Gilmore (2007) writes that Mothers Reclaiming Our Children (ROC) informed prison abolition efforts and shed light on the multi-layered responsibilities and burden mothers experience with their children being incarcerated. Mothers ROC stemmed from the ever-growing crisis on Black and Brown men being targeted for incarceration in 1993. Gilmore writes, “In the process of cooperative self-help, the mothers transformed their caregiving or reproductive labor into activism, which then expanded into the greater project to reclaim all children, regardless of race, age, residence, or alleged crime” (Gilmore 2007, 183). Refusing the state and ongoing criminalization, Mothers ROC is another example of how mothers of color have historically fought against socio-spatial injustices while in *crisis*. Gilmore speaks on the labor Mothers ROC undertook towards community outreach, such as leafleting outside of markets, prisons, churches, and more in order to engage with fellow mothers about how the system works. Critical of the state and its mechanisms that further dispossess and continue to burden aggrieved communities, Gilmore highlights Mothers ROC for their Third-World activist politic that confront the geography of “capital accumulation in California” (Gilmore, 2004).

The work documented by scholars like Pardo and Gilmore, demonstrates how central aggrieved Mothers have played a role in organizing efforts in their respected community. Cultural historian Eric Avila writes about the federal highway system in Los Angeles and how

targeted communities of color, specifically in East Los Angeles and Boyle Heights were affected. Focusing on Boyle Heights and San Diego's Chicano park, Avila offers a comparative urban history through cultural interpretation on the spatial changes and (dis)placement that resulted in the *barrio* across time and space. The federal highway system is one of the many developments in the eastside that involuntarily (dis)placed working-class, undocumented residents of color. Described as "the conquest of East Los Angeles by public infrastructure" (Avila 2014), Avila sheds light on how the politics of motherhood shaped political mobilization with what he calls, the *freeway revolt*. Illustrating the dynamics of race and class with motherhood activism towards freeway construction, Avila discusses how mothers have been at the forefront of confronting historic patterns of spatial injustices. Analyzing how mothers of color were not praised for their organizing efforts like their white suburban mother counterparts, Avila writes, "Yet even more hidden within this "hidden history" of women in the freeway revolt are women of color, who expressed their community's resentment in the very shadow of the freeway itself...their children, however, raised in the dust of highway construction, were more willing to speak out" (Avila 2014, 87). The hidden history of women of color, specifically Latinas in Los Angeles are often ignored and invalidated across mainstream avenues, as Avila reminds us.

In addition, the relationship between motherhood, gender, and socio-spatial injustices, Black and Brown relations critical scholar—Gaye Theresa Johnson addresses unfair living conditions in the Pueblo del Rio apartments by capturing the *freedom dreams* (Kelly, 2002) of women of color residents through their captured stories on tenant injustices. Illustrating a "radical redefinition" around housing justice organizing and overall housing discourse (Gilmore and Heatherton 2012), Johnson and community members visited the Pueblo del Rio apartments

in South Central to interview current residents. The conversations and *freedom dreams* that they were able to capture, reflect what Johnson (2012) described as, “a locus of empowerment” — acknowledging how the Pueblo del Rio tenants are resilient and have had to navigate socio-spatial injustices. More significantly—the interviews captured for this analysis reflect “LA’s racist housing and urban development policies [that are] strongly reflected in Pueblo del Rio” (Johnson 2012). Capturing stories of women of color residents at Pueblo del Rio, Johnson illustrates the different types of racialized and gendered mechanisms that aggrieved tenants face. Similar to the Latina Mother canvassers, I situate their personal *testimonios* as “freedom dreams” and overall collective goal to have rent control for their neighborhood. The Pueblo del Rio apartments that Johnson (2013) and community activists wrote about also illustrates how residents in South Central—falling under district 2 in LA county, define their housing experiences. There was much overlap with the Pueblo del Rio residents and tenants that were encountered while canvassing with the Latina Mother canvassers.

Where scholars have written about burdened mothers of color fighting social-spatial injustices (Pardo 1990; Gilmore 2007; Johnson 2013; Avila 2014), there is common knowledge that mothers of color have historically extended their role as mother outside of the household. I then use the literature to ground the legacy of Women of Color Mother activism in Los Angeles. I aim to add to this growing body of literature to shed light on the continued untold stories of WOC Mother activism in unincorporated East Los Angeles. There is still much that is unknown about the everyday epistemologies by WOC Mother activism that shape the socio-political landscape of the *barrio*. A close analysis of WOC Mother activism not only challenges the erasure of WOC informing socio-spatial and political activism in Los Angeles, it provides insight on labor, empowerment, and place-making strategies. Their positionality as mothers, Latinas,

and longstanding residents with shared experiences of housing injustice, offers insight on exemplified embodied understandings of gentrification and displacement processes. Further, the fact that the Latina Mother canvassers that they experience as elders, *mujeres*, and mothers.

RACIAL GEOGRAPHIES & PLACEMAKING IN AGGRIEVED COMMUNITIES

Incorporating a racial analysis to the contested area that is unincorporated East Los Angeles is foundational to understanding how systemic forces have and continue to disinvest and aggrieve tenants. George Lipsitz (2006) reminds us that whiteness has a cash value, being further linked with property and the means of accumulation that are kept from others. The history of spatial inequality operates systemically, through what he calls—the *white spatial imaginary*. Described as being “augmented and extended in recent years by new tax and zoning policies that favor construction of planned-unit developments, condominiums, cooperative apartment houses...etc.” (Lipsitz, 2011, p. 28), the white spatial imaginary demonstrates how segregation and further socio-spatial injustices are systemically created and maintained. While Lipsitz provides us the critical lens that illustrates systemic mechanisms that disinvest and displace aggrieved communities, Polakit and Schomberg (2012) offer a specific analysis on how gender and citizenship add to the multifaceted forms of dispossession and how such actors make sense of their environment through homemaking.

Polakit and Schomberg (2012) unpack how racialized planning practices have dictated the way marginalized groups influence homemaking practices as a result of placemaking. Focusing on undocumented Guatemalan women in Lake Worth Florida, Polakit and Schomberg define the three foundational human ties to *home* and offer a gender, socio-cultural critique on placemaking through what they call—homemaking. Beyond the material form of “house”, homemaking “[encompasses] larger spatialities of home as well as immaterial aspects, such as

memory, and imaginative and symbolic meanings ascribed to both the materiality and spatiality of home” (Polakit and Schomberg, 2012, p. 144-146). Spanning across social interactions, everyday mobility, and collective sense of security, these homemaking practices represent a transnational emotional attachment to a lived environment, Polakit and Schomberg discuss homemaking practices by Guatemalan immigrant women in a suburban community.

Homemaking in this sense is explained as a way to facilitate possible strategies for urban planners to prevent community tensions and understand “a more diverse pool of residents (Polakit and Schomberg, 201, pg. 142)” in suburban areas. Further distinctions of homemaking expand our understanding of “home”, stressing the importance that “home” has connotations of belonging. Homemaking as a framework offers an analysis on racial geographies and migration studies that provides a nuanced understanding of mobility and the interconnected notions of home from aggrieved and undocumented peoples. We can measure mobility and the everyday navigation of people of color through what racial geographer, Genevieve Carpio (2019) describes as, “an active force in racialization over the twentieth century, one that has operated alongside “place” to shape regional memory and belonging in the multiracial communities” (Carpio, 2019, p. 3). Power relations can then be mapped out through forms of placemaking and mobility to measure how aggrieved peoples and housing activists, like the mother canvassers, navigate and engage in dialogue with tenants. Urban planner, James Rojas (2012) describes a culturally relevant vernacular that I situate under the theme of racial geographies and placemaking to better unpack homemaking through the mother canvassers’ work.

Speaking to the changing demographics of a high number of Latinos in American cities, James Rojas (2012) identifies a specific type of Latino vernacular to make sense of Latino neighborhoods. I situate what Rojas (2012) describes as “Latino urbanism”, to contextualize

cultural labor the mother canvassers engaged that I argue extend one's understanding of home that extends beyond materiality. Although Rojas' description of a Latino vernacular analyzes cultural relics, like the use of the Virgin of Guadalupe, recycled objects like tires and cans to describe intentional placements of most aggrieved Latinos, a Latino vernacular provides context to cultural labor and production in the *barrio*. Rojas describes this as,

“Every change, no matter how small, has meaning and purpose. Bringing the sofa out the front porch, stuccoing over the clapboard, painting the house vivid colors, or placing a statue of the Virgin of Guadalupe in the front yard, all reflect the struggles, triumphs, and everyday habits of working-class Latinos. A bastion of two architectural vocabularies, Latino homes create a new language that uses syntax from both Latin American and US forms (Rojas, 2012, pg.42).”

I expand on Rojas' work to support how notions of “home” extend beyond infrastructure and how majority of the time, the labor behind the Latino vernacular is gendered. For a nuanced understanding of these gendered roles and cultural monikers within the eastside, I also incorporate Ethnic studies geographer, Juan Herrera's rendering of place, memory, and community care.

Herrera's analysis of cartographic memory (Herrera, 2015) allows for a spatial and cultural critique on racialized geographies, while also focusing on notions of care. Often invalidated and gendered, concepts of care that the mother canvassers demonstrated through the campaign are best contextualized through what Herrera describes as a “meshwork of social relations that helped to constitute a uniquely Chicano community in Fruitvale in relationship to other spaces deemed predominately Black or white (Herrera, 2015, 57).” Although Herrera focuses on Fruitvale, a historically Black and redlined neighborhood, his analysis on space, memory, and care help uncover counterspaces and labor that operates democratically and for the greater good of aggrieved communities. Describing the social relationships as *comadrazo* and *compadrazo* (Herrera, 2015) to name the “political kinship networks” that were established

through the Chicano movement in Fruitvale, I expand one's understanding of preventative and collective care to include a cultural and gendered analysis through the mother canvassers labor and concepts of care to fulfill the gap within housing justice activism and aggrieved mother of color epistemologies that I categorize under *conviviendo* and *sobreviviendo*. Further, an understanding of daily interactions, identified as “hidden transcripts” (Scott 1990) that inform the politicization of a community can best be understood as what Anthropologist, James Scott and further interpreted by historian, Robin D.G. Kelly (1994)— *infrapolitics*.

Applying Scott (1990) and Kelly's (1994) analysis on infrapolitics to homemaking practices provides a critical rendering of how everyday acts, which I describe in great length in the following sections. The “hidden transcripts” that are then expressed are radically defined by Kelly when he echoes Scott (1990), “The veiled social and cultural worlds of oppressed people frequently surface in everyday forms of resistance— theft, foot-dragging, the destruction of property—or, more rarely, in open attacks on individuals, institutions, or symbols of domination. Together, the “hidden transcripts” created in aggrieved communities and expressed through culture, the daily acts of resistance and survival, constitute what Scott calls “infrapolitics” (Kelly, 1994, pg. 8).” Making the case that politics is defined by “*how* people participate rather than *why*” Kelly emphasizes the importance of analyzing resistance in order to grasp a complex understanding of social order. Infrapolitics allows for a nuanced understanding of what is often omitted and, in most cases, invalidated in a white heteropatriarchal society. An understanding of infrapolitics as a mechanism of Homemaking then weaves together complex notions of home, belonging, and gender in aggrieved communities. Johnson (2013) in her theorization around space and race relations illustrate a similar form of placemaking by analyzing interracial congregation as a discursive, known as *spatial entitlement*.

Johnson (2013) reminds us that *space* has social meaning and an even more significant impact on women of color. Recounting the work of two women of color, Luisa Moreno and Charlotta Bass, Johnson reveals the Black-Brown alliance that was fostered during the 1940s and 50s through their leadership and activism. Describing their commitment to community empowerment through housing and immigration rights, Johnson states, “The parallel and mutual activism of Bass and Moreno produced a politics of spatial entitlement with important gendered dimensions (Johnson, 2013, 18).” Moreno’s and Bass’ labor and activism is then defined through the multifaceted forms of responsibility that relied on experiential knowledge of oppression that ultimately expand the sphere of politics. Spatial entitlement then describes what Johnson defines as mobility and containment that many aggrieved peoples, specifically Black and Brown people in Los Angeles endured and effectively strategized against. Johnson then states that through Moreno and Bass, one understands the sense of entitlement to basic human necessities and “citizenry”. Similarly, I highlight the role the mother canvassers had during the rent control campaign with homemaking tactics, that in many ways are contextualized through Johnson’s spatial entitlement.

The literature mentioned in this section vary across disciplines, each contributing to overlapping themes of socio-racial and gendered processes of space, place, and social order. More specifically, scholars approach issues of racialized and gendered dispossessions by highlighting unconventional forms of resistance, but offer innovative perspectives in understanding of race, geography, gender, and culture. This interdisciplinary approach contextualizes my argument on Latina Mother housing activism, a further understanding of home, and forms of care that I define under two categories, that ultimately fall under homemaking.

THEORETICAL FRAMERWORK

LEGAL VIOLENCE

Drawing on theories of structural and symbolic violence to describe the justified forms of violence undocumented Central Americans experience under immigration laws, Menjivar and Abrego (2012) coined the term *legal violence*. The authors use the categorization of *legal violence* to analyze the “normalized but cumulatively injurious effects of the law” Central Americans experience in their everyday lives. Legal violence lends the opportunity to investigate the effects of the law, its intensification in extractive labor, and how it ultimately excludes immigrants from different forms of capital that benefit the wellbeing of upward mobility and socioeconomic security. Although focused on status and the ways that Central Americans in “tenuous legal statuses” navigate everyday life under restrictive immigration laws, I argue that *legal violence* is also relevant to address aggrieved tenants, whom are often undocumented, are left to navigate antagonistic housing policies that do not account for tenuous situations like experiencing rent gouging⁵, just cause, and landlord harassment.

Examples of legalized violence can then be seen with the limited resources aggrieved peoples are left to survive on, further creating and maintaining a systemic burden. Employing legal violence as a framework allows for a thorough examination of what society diverts from in regards to housing—systems that have a history of racism that leave, in this case, vulnerable Latina Mother tenants to endure an antagonistic housing market that lack tenant protections. In this instance, legal violence is reminiscent of the number of obstacles that vulnerable tenants are forced to encounter, which ultimately become normalized experiences for rent and severely rent

⁵ Describes the 30 or 60 notice of rent increases that is often times too little time to pay the difference of the increased rental payment.

burdened tenants. In the upcoming section I highlight the experience that Alicia, Latina Mother canvasser describes while encountering a family packing up their belongings due to an unjust eviction. This example, along with others that I mention, highlight how rent gouging, just cause, and landlord harassment are highly present in gentrifying neighborhoods, which further illustrates the legality of unjust housing experiences. The lack of tenant protections, such as rent control and just cause protections, a law that limits landlords on evictions, is an explicit example to how housing injustices were treated as normal within county jurisdictions. The legality of tenant harassment and no controlled rent motivated mother and tenant, Carolina Rodriguez to spearhead rent control and tenant protections in unincorporated East Los Angeles. Similar to Rodriguez, the Latina Mother canvassers upheld this momentum while engaging with tenants and sharing their personal experiences, which I call homemaking. This approach allows us to further understand how motherhood status, past housing injustices, and local community ties demonstrate forms of empowerment and community care.

HOME-MAKING MOVIDAS

Chicana Feminist scholars such as Dionne Espinosa, María Cotera, and Maylei Blackwell (2018) in *Chicana Movidas: New Narratives of Activism and Feminism in the Movement Era* speak to the different forms of *movidas* (strategic moves) that either describe economic, gendered, racial, and cultural forms of explicit and indirect forms of resistance. The authors open the anthology with the explanation of the different forms of *movidas* they use to describe the range of liberation practices by Chicanas—all who have been under historicized in the Chicano movement. Defined as “mapping *movidas*”, this approach frames how the Latina Mother canvassers, “tracked and negotiated multiple scales of power within their homes, communities, organizations, social movements, and dominant society (Espinosa, Cotera, and Blackwell, 2018,

pg. 11).” I draw on what the authors describe as “Home-Making *Movidas*: Building Chicana Aesthetics, Spaces, Projects, and Institutions” to contextualize and expand on the existing literature and analysis of Chicana/Latina activism. Home-making is grounded in two logics, explained as, “...not only illuminates the invisible labor that Chicanas often undertook to ensure the success of various movement initiatives (community service, popular education, political organizing, print media), it also reveals the rich history of Chicana-led social spaces, cultural initiatives, and institutions (Espinosa, Cotera, and Blackwell, 2018, pg. 15-16).” Acknowledging the continuation of Mother of Color activism within aggrieved communities speaks to identifying trauma as a motivating factor behind Latina Mothers committing to the housing movement and reveal forms of homemaking. These two forms of analysis follow with what I conclude this thesis in, housing futurity in the *barrio*.

Historian, Rosie Bermudez (2018) tells the resilient story of Alicia Escalante, a resilient mother, activist, and founder of the East Los Angeles Welfare Rights Organization (ELAWRO), whose life and work I take as an example of home-making *movidas*. I highlight Bermudez’s chapter in *Chicana Movidas* (2018) under the theme of “Home-making *movidas*”. Through Alicia Escalante’s oral history, Bermudez weaves the powerful narrative of racialized, economic, and gendered forms of dispossession that ground ones understanding of Chicana and Latina Mother activism in Los Angeles. Espinosa, Cotera, and Blackwell (2018) define these examples reflecting a “multigenerational urban poverty”, which I argue, falls under a larger genealogy of Mothers and Women of Color activism in Los Angeles. Following this lineage of Mother of Color Activism in Los Angeles, I situate Carolina Rodriguez—who inspired the housing movement for Los Angeles County as a current example of this intergenerational struggle, as well as the labor of the Latina Mother canvassers. Home-making in this regard demonstrates,

what Bermudez describes as “a collective struggle for women’s rights”, which she highlights in Escalante’s oral history that challenge notions of motherhood, family, and stigma around poverty, more specifically, being on welfare. Bermudez writes, “I argue that Escalante’s history of coming of age and activism reflects a Chicana feminist consciousness that is rooted in her own and others’ lived experiences/ her experiences and those of many other Chicanas living in poverty have served as a grassroots source of a feminist consciousness that has gone unrecognized (Bermudez, 2018, pg. 136).” I utilize Bermudez’s framing of Escalante’s activism under home-making *movidas* to then reflect what she argues is a, *Chicana feminist consciousness*, to understand the impact the Latina Mother canvassers had in embodying housing injustice experiences, like trauma, and then politicizing their personal experiences as vulnerable tenants. This analysis of home-making *movidas* then informs my implementation of homemaking in Los Angeles’ Eastside *barrios*. This framework further provides a grounding for a gendered, racial, class, and social movement analytic that is often compartmentalized and not studied relationally.

METHODOLOGY

I heard about the opportunity to canvass for LA County's rent stabilization ordinance⁶ (RSO) at an Eastside Local: Los Angeles Tenants Union⁷ meeting in February of 2018. This canvassing initiative was being led by local tenant coalition, Unincorporated Tenants United and asked each of their participating coalition members to hire a few people from their organization. Participants met at the Unión de Vecinos office each day to begin the canvassing that would take place every Saturday and Sunday from 9am to 2:15pm (with one 15-minute break) and meet at the Unión de Vecinos office each day. Aside from informing tenants about the current RSO, the goal was to build a larger base for each of the participating coalition organizations. Canvassers would be door knocking in unincorporated East Los Angeles, an area with a 96% Latino⁸ population within a 7.47 square mile⁹ radius. Because they needed bilingual members with reliable transportation, I thought canvassing would be a good opportunity for me to become more informed about rent control while getting the chance to talk to local tenants about their rights. I did not know what to expect of the overall experience, except that I would be helping with outreach and spreading awareness about rent control.

It wasn't until after my first weekend working and being paired with Blanca Espinoza, who would later be my usual canvassing *compañera*, that I realized how Blanca and the majority of the *señoras* hired, had previous canvassing experience and were involved with other campaigns as well. As we worked the weekends, I was occasionally paired up with other the

⁶ Local law that limits rent increases and extends eviction protections. The RSO went into effect December 20, 2018 and underwent a three-part series of meetings to determine if the ordinance would be replaced with a permanent one. On April 16, 2019, the Board of Supervisors voted to extend the temporary ordinance, and it is in effect from May 16 to Dec. 31, 2019 (Los Angeles County Consumer & Business Affairs).

⁷ Now known as Unión de Vecinos Eastside Local-LA Tenants Union

⁸ 2010 United State Census

⁹maps.latimes.com

other mother canvassers. It was then that I recognized how each canvasser had their own greeting technique, in order to gauge a conversation around rent control and tenant rights, but shared one thing in particular. How they always drew from their personal experience with eviction and/or landlord harassment to relate to the tenant. It was through these encounters with the canvassers and tenants that I picked up on patterns of responsibility, community care, and empowerment that became the center of my analysis. After gaining trust over our work together, I got to follow up on these short conversations of housing injustice experiences through interviews.

DATA COLLECTION

My collected data consists of participant observation, field notes, personal video recordings and photographs I took at actions that pertained to this rent control campaign, and interviews. I interviewed six canvassers, asking them questions about their experiences with housing injustices, their current activism around housing, and past involvement with community activism. The canvassers, who I identify as the Latina Mother canvassers, spoke of previous housing injustices and how that has shaped their current participation with housing justice activism. Witnessing them give their *testimonio* while canvassing created a natural bond between us. It was also moments like commuting to site, figuring out directions on foot, and *comadreando* (gossiping) over lunchtime on local politics, that I was able to build and foster a relationship that created trust. All long-time residents of the larger eastside area, the *señoras* were currently active canvassers and community organizers with local housing non-profits. The interviews took place at either location—La Monarca coffee shop on Cesar E. Chavez in Boyle Heights or the Unión de Vecinos office, also in Boyle Heights. With the exception of one, all interviews were conducted in Spanish. Upon transcribing and translating the Spanish interviews,

I noticed the English translation did not account for descriptive language often associated with cultural *dichos* in Spanish. For this reason, I include the Spanish and English transcript.

In addition, I took field notes as supplementary data to document the current local political climate during the rent control campaign. My field notes focus on the four major Board of Supervisor meetings pertaining to the RSO that took place throughout September 2018 to September 2019, the Mothers for Tenant’s Rights¹⁰ event, and every weekend that we worked (March 2019-June 2019). These notes helped me piece together and construct the larger narrative around major events that took place during the canvassing campaign.

METHOD OF ANALYSIS: THEMATIC CODING

The following discussion illustrates a significant moment for LA County residents and how the Latina Mother canvassers of UTU—through their use of *testimonio*, (re)imagine their barrio—a collective *home*, by advocating and winning a county wide ordinance. I describe these instances as creating a “locus of empowerment” (Johnson 2011) that center intergenerational experiences, familial/*barrio* responsibility, and “homemaking” practices in their neighborhood. For this reason, I thematically code my findings in three sections—housing trauma informing *barrio* activism, Latina mother homemaking in UELA through *testimonio* and forms of infrapolitics, and lastly—Housing Futurity in the *barrio*. These themes help us further unpack how this ‘housing crisis’ is a continuum of racist socio-spatial history and highlight community care through the role of Latina Mothers.

¹⁰ Hosted by Unincorporated Tenants United. All coalition members were invited to this event that took place at Casa del Mexicano in Boyle Heights, this past May 2019—to honor mothers in the housing movement.

FINDINGS

From the duration of April 2019 to June 2019, I was employed by Unincorporated Tenants United to work as a canvasser. Every weekend, we met at the Unión de Vecinos (UdV) office in Boyle Heights. Walking towards the office from my usual block or two away parking spot, one can expect to be greeted with local residents having yard sales, vending food, and local youth sport games at the nearby park. The bright orange house that is the Unión de Vecinos' office is a well-known location to local residents and community organizers. Having the radical history of facilitating rent strikes and tenant mobilizing, UdV was the meeting location over the following weekends. I was usually greeted by Chris—community organizer and supervisor of the canvassing initiative sitting by the desk, working on last-minute details on the day's maps, and the rest of the canvassers assembling flyers and chitchatting at the nearby tables. Aside from the mother canvassers that I interviewed, 4 of us, including myself, were younger¹¹ and bilingual. Identifying the mother canvassers with motherhood status and being the age of 45, marked the rest of us, a small handful outside of the group, with “non-motherhood status”.

We usually got started around 9:35am. Chris, assembled groups that consisted of 2-3 people, making sure there was a least one bilingual speaker and driver per group. After groups were assembled, we made sure we had our clipboard that had the list of home addresses, tote bag of canvassing materials, and water bottles before heading out. On our first day, I was paired with Blanca Espinosa. This was likely because we were sitting near each other when Chris was breaking us out into groups. I do not consider our pairing to be a coincidence—she would later become my canvassing partner for the following weekends and inspire this thesis. Shortly after knocking on a few doors together, I was drawn to Blanca's canvassing technique. She knew how

¹¹ Under the age of 30

to gauge a conversation the minute she greeted you. I learned valuable practices around meeting tenants where they are at politically and socially through her engagement. This was challenging of course when we got the occasional defensive and reactionary landlord or witnessing the fatigue and anxiety around tenants' living conditions. Picking up on patterns where she often drew from her personal housing experience with eviction proceedings, Blanca always brought it back to joining the housing movement because it was what saved her from getting evicted. It was a fairly similar experience with the rest of the mother canvassers¹². I was convinced that the Latina Mother canvassers were transforming ways of community engagement through canvassing and notions of preventative and collective care.



Figure 6 Blanca (on the left) Engaging with Tenant, April 20, 2019.

¹² There were the occasional days that Blanca and I did not get paired or a third canvasser would join our group, often times another mother canvasser.

HOMEMAKING: LATINA MOTHERS MAKING HOME

Through our work, participant observation, and interviews, I was able to build trust and be in conversation with the mother canvassers. We spoke of their personal housing trauma, family, community organizing, and visions for the future of their *barrio*. Through these experiences, I unpack the multilayered forms of housing injustices to demonstrate racialized and gendered mechanisms of dispossession for aggrieved mothers, but also highlight moments of creativity, dignity, and unity under such circumstances. The Latina Mother canvassers demonstrated forms of placemaking, which I argue expand on traditional notions of home, Latina Mother activism, and community care. Homemaking, which I expand from previous works (Polakit and Schomberg, 2012), is a specific form of placemaking that can be applied to community organizing in aggrieved neighborhoods. Similar to Herrera's (2015) notion of cartographic memory, a vehicle that contextualizes the "political remaking of urban geography" (Herrera, 2015, p. 51), homemaking (re)imagines forms of activism and acts of the everyday to fall under a culturally aware and intentional form of placemaking. These forms of placemaking, I argue are complex. Homemaking, in many ways like *infrapolitics* analyzes moments of the everyday as politicized acts and resistance, or as Kelley (1994) has stated, to understand how power operates. I characterize moments of the everyday under a culturally relevant description of *sobreviviendo* (surviving) and *conviviendo* (living together). I argue that these moments are central in understanding racial and gendered geographies of Los Angeles' eastside under a contentious housing landscape. Through *sobreviviendo* and *conviviendo*, we begin to understand community engagement, housing beyond tenancy, and collective community care.

I characterize moments of *sobreviviendo* to broadly include effects of racial and gender capitalism. Specifically, in this thesis, *sobreviviendo* centers the obstacles that aggrieved Latina

Mothers in Los Angeles' eastside are forced to navigate. A housing injustice in this case includes, but is not limited to—landlord harassment, unjust eviction, and significant rent increase. These three examples were quite prevalent among the mother canvassers and tenants. I analyze the mother canvassers' past housing experiences and engagement with tenants to further unpack their activism and notions of community care that was inspired through their housing experiences. Further, I state that such experiences inform a culturally aware approach towards burdened tenants. In addition, moments of *conviviendo* include Kelley's understanding of cultural labor and Bailey's (2013) notion of discursive labor. Focusing on instances of laughing and joking over lunch and engaging with cultural production (song, dance, and theater) unpacks how sentiments of community care are enacted by the mother canvassers. Expanding on notions of emotional labor and "traditional" roles of motherhood, together I analyze these encounters and argue that moments of *conviviendo*, as well as *sobreviviendo* are central in placemaking because it reconstitutes notions of gender, family, and home. Instead, *home*, which I ground in the context of an *urban barrio lucha* (Diaz 2004), is driven and maintained through collective memories that include joy and struggle, crafting and exchanging cultural currency, and more notably, radical hope to house *everyone*. Expanding on notions of Home-making *movidas* (Espinosa, Cotera, and Blackwell, 2018), I observed and define moments of *sobreviviendo* and *conviviendo* as forms of homemaking.

Homemaking then falls under what Johnson (2012) broadly describes as, "new democratic imaginaries", which I argue, is illustrated through the mother canvassers' experiences of *sobreviviendo* and *conviviendo*. As a framework, homemaking exposes the multilayered gendered roles and responsibilities the mother canvassers held and currently hold as active housing activists, mothers, and women. Homemaking redirects us from deficit and absolute

notions ascribed to racialized geographies. It provides an alternative and radical reading of aggrieved people who live, survive, and thrive in highly racialized and contentious geographies, it redirects us to understand relationship building and collective community empowerment. The role of a canvasser in the following sections are also challenged, as one will note that the mother canvassers went beyond their job description of politically engaging with tenants and enacted forms of care and emotional labor.

SOBREVIVIENDO (SURVIVING) HOUSING TRAUMA

This section centers how past housing experiences motivated each of the mother canvassers to join the housing movement and how moments of *sobreviviendo* took place. Over interviews, I asked each mother canvasser what their experiences with housing injustices were and how it affected them and their family. Focusing on difficult moments, they recalled feelings of severe stress and anxiety. Not wanting other families or tenants to experience such traumatic events, the mother canvassers felt a sense of responsibility and commitment to join the housing movement in order to inform and empower fellow tenants. I highlight two key themes in this section to demonstrate moments of *sobreviviendo*: 1. how past traumatic housing experiences inspired leadership and commitment to housing justice organizing 2. how experiential housing injustices inform a culturally aware approach to community engagement under an antagonistic housing market, like bearing witness to unfortunate housing situations and holding space for tenants that voiced their concerns and distress. Additionally, “holding space”, which I characterize as validating and being emotionally present, was also embedded within the canvassing. The following details specific housing experiences that I categorize under *sobreviviendo*.

“¡Buenos Días!, Tenemos información sobre el control de renta” says Letty, as she’s knocking on a tenant’s door. Most times, tenant’s answer the door and listen to our script, that was usually something like,

Hola, mi nombre es Letty, y esta es mi compañera Kim. Somos parte de Unincorporated Tenants United. Estamos aquí para informarle sobre una nueva ley que protege a los inquilinos como usted. ¿Sabes qué es el control de renta?

Hi, my name is Letty, and this is my partner Kim. We are part of Unincorporated Tenants United. We are here to inform you about a new law that protects tenants like you. Do you know what rent control is?

Letty, like the rest of the mother canvassers were always ready to converse with tenants, wanting them to know about local housing organizations they would possibly be interested in joining.

Leticia “Letty” Andrade, 50 years old, currently lives in El Sereno, with her daughters and grandkids. As an eastside community resident, she is a part of the board of directors at a local housing non-profit in Boyle Heights. Having undergone housing injustices in the past, Letty describes her experience being very difficult and therefore relates to tenants that choose to stay quiet about housing issues,

Nos afectó física y emocionalmente. Tener que mirar un apartamento a otro, estar en el autobús y navegar por las diferentes direcciones recuerdo que pasaron meses en buscar un lugar y estar tan físicamente cansada, y mentalmente también porque perdí mucho tiempo solo buscando un lugar. Y también experimenta el engaño de no tener su solicitud aprobada.... incluso mis hijos tuvieron que ayudarme a buscar un nuevo lugar, y perdieron tiempo en la escuela debido a esto. Ha sido muy difícil, así que entiendo por qué [los inquilinos] preferirían quedarse callados y vivir con las injusticias, especialmente si no aumentan la renta, pero no arreglan nada. También otra gran parte es porque ya hay relaciones con la comunidad construidas donde vives. Entonces, tener que buscar un nuevo lugar donde no conoces a nadie y eres el nuevo en el bloque, te afecta mentalmente y a tu bienestar en general.

It did affect us, physically and emotionally. Having to look from apartment to apartment, being on the bus and navigating the different directions...I remember there was months that it took for me to look for a place and being so physically tired. And mentally too because I lost so much time just looking for a place. And also experiencing the deception of not having your application approved. And even my kids had to help me look for a new place to rent, and they missed school because of this. It’s been very hard, so I

understand why [tenants] would rather stay quiet and live with the injustices, especially if they're not raising the rent, but not fixing anything. Also another big part is because there's community relationships already built where you live. So having to look for a new spot where you don't know anybody and you're the new one on the block, it does affect you mentally and your overall well-being.

The obstacles that Letty revealed while apartment searching—relying on public transportation, navigating the language barrier, and inaccessibility of certain apartment applications, were also quite common with the experiences of other tenants we spoke with. The experiential housing trauma that is recalled through Letty—tenants deciding to tolerate unfair living conditions, is reminiscent of limited housing options for vulnerable tenants—especially single mothers with large families. Similarly describing her housing experience, Blanca shared,

fue muy traumático, física, mental y emocionalmente porque nunca pensé que me encontraría en una situación como esa. Estaba muy feliz en mi departamento cuando recibí el aviso de que me estaban desalojando. Me sentí muy frustrado, aunque conocía mis derechos y estaba protegido, fue devastador para mi familia porque hubo momentos de inestabilidad, pensando que no iba a vivir en el mismo lugar de mi comunidad donde tenía tanta vida. muchos años, con la comodidad de la lavandería, la escuela, el mercado, los autobuses. Y mis hijas también, pensando que podríamos tener que movernos, fue un trauma psicológico que recuerdo haber tenido ...

it was very traumatizing—physically, mentally, and emotionally because I never thought I would find myself in a situation like that. I was really happy in my apartment when I got the notice that I was getting evicted. I felt very frustrated, even though I knew my rights and that I was protected, it was devastating for my family because there were moments of instability, thinking that I wasn't going to live in the same place in my community where I had so many years, with the convenience of the laundromat, school, the market, the busses. And my daughters too, thinking that we might have to move, it was a psychological trauma that I remember having...

The burden of navigating a discriminatory housing market was reflected in the experience of children tirelessly looking for an affordable apartment, mental health, and losing community ties. Understanding how difficult those moments were for the mother canvassers, they nonetheless transformed these experiences into notions of empowerment that ultimately influenced their

commitment to activism. The pattern of disclosure, about unfair living conditions and unjust power relations between tenant and landlord created moments of trust and solidarity between canvassers and tenant. These moments are reflective of what Johnson (2012) describes with her visit to the Pueblo del Rio apartments—describing how women wanted to have their histories validated and create strong bonds. Indeed, this is also reflective with the Latina Mother canvassers. Additionally, I highlight that these moments of exchange—*testimonio* sharing and dialogue between mother canvassers with fellow mother tenants and aggrieved folk, revealed multiple tasks. For example, the interchange of personal accounts while spreading awareness around rent control presents two things: 1. accessibility of housing policy and tenant rights 2. sentiments of collective community care. Having the ability to translate policy jargon, Letty and Blanca, like the rest of the mother canvassers were able to translate the importance of how rent control would benefit tenants in the long run and possibly grant them a 3 percent rent cap and just cause protections.

Later in the conversation, Letty described how landlords are becoming highly selective about who they lease to, asking for a minimum of three people occupancy—impeding the opportunity to lease to a larger family. Although it is illegal to discriminate against family size, these instances of having an additional obstacle for large families was also prevalent among some of the tenants we spoke with and majority of the mother canvassers. I argue that the following stories of housing injustices demonstrate a gendered and racial mechanism that informs trauma to aggrieved tenants, specifically mothers of color.



Figure 7 Letty at an Anti-Landlord Harassment Action, June 2, 2019.

Following up on Carolina's housing history with eviction and landlord harassment, she described a moment where she was stressed because she could not find a place for her big family and large enough space that could accommodate her.

I didn't know if we were going to be able to stay or if I was going to get kicked out and go live under a freeway or who was going to take me in with six children and me. It was impossible for someone to take us, even though they wanted to. I'm a big family and there was no way for us to fit there, you know, and I was just like scared in reality.

The threat of becoming houseless left Carolina with uncertainty for her and her family. Housing affordability for larger families is inaccessible in Los Angeles. There are many instances where 2-3 families occupy a single unit. Aggrieved tenants are not just experiencing a shortage of units, but confined space to live in. These often-overlooked barriers when navigating tenancy in an overpopulated city and county produces fatigue and impacts one's well-being. This does not even begin to account for access to basic necessities like: health care, education, transportation,

and healthy food markets. As Los Angeles' eastside experiences gentrification traveling further east from Downtown, longtime local businesses that serve as foundational small deli's, that usually provide local sustenance within a neighborhood are being priced out. Carolina, similar to Letty, were left to navigate an antagonistic housing system that not only limited them as working-class Latinas, but mothers as well. Motherhood status in this context is identified as an undesirable fit to be a tenant. As burdensome as it was for Carolina, she further describes how her experience with eviction and landlord harassment inspired her participation with the canvassing campaign. She states,

...it gives me power. Like every time I go knocking on doors, I get very excited. It's not like those days when you don't want to go to work or you don't want to go to school. There [are] tenants that are willing to hear you out and what you're here for and [then] there's tenants that close the door on you and that's it. It's sad because you don't know if they're going to need that help

With similar sentiments, María Leon, 53 years old, single mother and longtime UELA resident was one of the mother canvassers I got to know very well. María has a parallel experience of becoming politicized through her unjust housing experience. She describes her dedication to her community through housing activism when she shared,

No quiero que nadie pase por lo que yo pasé, porque era algo que nunca deseo para la gente. Ninguno. Especialmente para aquellas familias que tienen pequeños—los niños. Estos niños que viven en una sociedad necesitan un techo, comida y todo lo que abarca las necesidades básicas. Así que cuando hay una injusticia, es algo que me dio valor para involucrarse en esto

I don't want anyone to go through what I went through, because it was something that I don't ever wish for people. No one. Especially for those families that have little one—, the children. These children that live in a society where you need to provide a roof, food, and everything that encompasses basic needs. So when there's an injustice, it's something that gave me courage to get involved in this

Sentiments of care are present within María's response. Fighting for children and their basic necessities that are inaccessible to aggrieved peoples, care is illustrated through her

willingness to be involved with education and housing organizing. I connect these sentiments that María describes, as well as what the mother canvassers depict, as forms of preventative care that require emotional labor. These methods of preventative care, in the following section are associated to what I identify as homemaking practices. Although canvassing is a form of physical labor that requires one to travel on foot and engage with residents, I argue that the mother canvassers transformed ordinary forms of canvassing to include experiential characteristics that go beyond awareness of tenants' rights and rent control. This was demonstrated through what I describe as forms of care. These forms of care offer space for vulnerability, but a culturally aware politic that one knows from first-hand experience. For example, the act of bearing witness and being able to intervene in situations that can prevent eviction and/or landlord harassment.

Working alongside the mother canvassers, I realized how their role as canvassers extended beyond what one usually thinks of just collecting signatures and providing information on a political candidate or local ordinance. Canvassing is not for everyone, it definitely takes patience and courage to knock on some stranger's door and want to engage with them on housing rights, especially when we know from statistics that so many tenants are struggling economically to remain in their homes. The few times tenants felt comfortable with us presented opportunities to bear witness to the physical living conditions they were living under. Very stressed, tenants would point to missing glass on their windows, describe rat and insect infestation, to poor roofing conditions that would let in rain water. In extreme cases, canvassers witnessed families packing up their belongings. Mother canvasser Alicia describes a time that canvassers witnessed a family packing up their belongings while door-knocking,

Oh si, es muy triste! Llamamos a una puerta donde el inquilino estaba en la puerta, y ella estaba empacando cajas y su hijo, "Mira, estamos empacando porque el propietario no

nos quiere aquí. Honestamente viniste del cielo, porque mira, estamos empacando porque el arrendador no nos quiere. No sabemos si lo van a vender o alquilar a nuevas personas. Honestamente caíste de los cielos ”Y sí, vinieron ese mismo sábado a la reunión. Esa familia se salvó al venir a buscar ayuda ... y luego hubo otro caso en el que esta mujer ya tenía todas sus cosas, estaba llorando. Maria y Alex [los otros encuestadores] la encontraron en la calle y hablaron con ella. Descubrieron que no había comido en 2-3 días, que había estado llorando en la calle. También iba a llover muy mal ese día. Todas sus cosas estaban allí con ella, y estoy pensando para mí, eso es tan injusto. Por eso luchamos en la lucha, por la justicia. Así que no hay más desalojos para las familias.

Oh yes, it is so sad! We knocked on a door where the tenant happened to be at the door, and she was packing up boxes and she recalled telling us, “look, we’re packing because the landlord doesn’t want us here. You honestly came from heaven, because look, we’re packing because the landlord doesn’t want us. We don’t know if they’re going to sell it or rent it out to new people. You honestly fell from the heavens” and yes, they came that Saturday to the meeting. That family saved themselves by coming to get help...and then there was this other case when this woman had all her things out already, she was crying. Maria and Alex [the other canvassers] encountered her on the street and spoke with her. They found out that she hadn’t eaten in 2-3 days, that she had been crying out on the street. It was going to rain really bad that day, too. All her things were there with her, and I’m thinking to myself, that’s so unjust. This is why we fight in the struggle, for justice. So there are no more evictions for families.

Alicia’s reflection on engaging with tenants signifies how women have been affected, but also how misinformed tenants and landlords are on current housing policies. Recalling on the woman packing up her things and feeling the sense of relief that an active local rent control ordinance would be able to protect her and halt her eviction is testament to the impact the Latina Mothers employed while engaging with tenants. The feeling of providing resources, as Carolina mentions above, are cherished moments for the Latina Mother canvassers because they are able to help. As mentioned in the beginning, residents that either fall under rent burdened and severely rent burdened, are nonetheless forced to live under burdensome conditions within county lines.

These highlighted experiences demonstrate what Bermudez (2018) calls a Chicana consciousness—confronting the often-multilayered forms of oppression that often come with being a woman, non-white, undocumented, *poor*, and mother. The overwhelming amount of

overlapping forms of discrimination have become common experiences for working-class, undocumented, mothers of color navigating affordable housing. Letty, Blanca, Carolina, Maria, and Alicia exemplified how previous housing experiences inform their current participation and dedication to the housing movement. Echoing from Letty's experience, experiential knowledge from housing insecurities and navigation become debilitating for those with limited resources. Keeping children in mind and not wanting to leave existing community ties from a neighborhood, the mother canvassers were able to personally attest to such sentiments and offer affirmations and resources while tenants faced detrimental experiences. More significantly, the Latina Mother canvassers displayed forms of communal preventative care as they shared their *testimonio*, provided tenants with their rights and accessible rendering of the rent control ordinance and on occasion bore witness to vulnerable housing situations occurring while door-knocking. These actions are what distinguish the Latina Mother canvassers' labor and mission within the housing movement. The experiences mentioned above also disrupt notions of motherhood and *home*, highlighting resiliency and commitment to families, neighbors, and community members. The Latina Mother canvassers, like previous fierce Mother of Color organizing, are leading and maintaining the housing movement across Los Angeles' eastside in a radical manner that spreads awareness and care.

Applying legal violence (Abrego and Menjivar, 2014) as a framework is appropriate here to contextualize the normality of violence that has been enacted on the mother canvassers and some of the tenants they encountered. Additionally, the mother canvassers recall their own traumatic housing experiences and do not want other tenants, especially children, to undergo what they did. The political act of committing to housing advocacy then is rooted in preventative community care. I argue that this form of preventative care requires an experiential perspective

on housing injustices, in order to consciously engage with burdened tenants. More significantly, moments of *sobreviviendo*, as was illustrated with the mother canvassers, demonstrate the emotional labor and intentionality of their activism.

CONVIVIENDO: CULTURAL LABOR IN LOS ANGELES' EASTSIDE

In addition to understanding the mother canvassers' housing experiences and commitment to housing advocacy, it was evident that culture, gossip, and laughter were central in building relationships and connecting with others during the campaign. The following section includes an analysis of joking, moments of walking on foot while canvassing, and an analysis of a Mother's Day event that took place during the campaign. Identifying these instances under *conviviendo*, I characterize these moments under homemaking. Although formally used to describe a party gathering or living amongst each other, *conviviendo*, for the purposes of this study, explores the relationship building and fostering of a community through what Kelley (1994) describes as "cultural labor". Similar to infrapolitics, *conviviendo* centers "daily confrontations" that range beyond commercialized culture, it is a relationship—a mechanism for communal connections among communities. Supporting this argument, I specifically analyzed instances where Blanca and I were on foot and the Mother's for Renters Rights event on Mother's Day to illustrate how Latina Mothers redefine housing advocacy and political empowerment.

Blanca would often make comments on our surroundings to make small talk when we commuted on foot to our home addresses. The conversations ranged a great deal, anything from community gardening, where the best bargains were located (we often walked by them), to guessing how much units or homes were being rented or sold for when coming across "Now Leasing" or "For Sale" signs. I always enjoyed Blanca's sense of humor and quick wittiness,

especially when we encountered wooden fences on newly remodeled homes or apartments. *Oh si, esta ya se ve que ya esta gentrificada, verda?* (oh yeah, this one here looks like it's been gentrified, right?). These instances of identifying gentrification threats—wooden fences, “WE BUY HOMES CASH \$” signs, and remodeled apartment complexes that would open up discussions around displacement and gentrification. It also signified how long-time eastside residents, like Blanca, were hyper aware and were able to identify gentrification and displacement monikers in their community. Blanca, from first-hand experience, knew how large housing corporations would change the neighborhood and treat long-standing tenants. Her story was familiar to a lot of tenants we spoke to—a corporation buying out apartment units and immediately evicting tenants to remodel units and ultimately rent for 2-3 times as much. With a hopeful ending, Blanca always emphasized the importance of rent control and its benefits, like being protected with *causa justa* (just cause) because it helped her stay in her home. Briefly mentioned above, “just cause” is a legal term to describe the law that allows for legal evictions for reasons stated under the law. As canvassers, we were trained to stress the benefits of the local ordinance. I noticed how the mother canvassers would go about adding their personal touch to the process, emphasizing their personal housing situation and assuring tenants that they are not alone. Other canvassers' witness of and motivation by Blanca's passion as she engaged with landlords who were opposed rent control often unexpectedly gave rise to moments of resiliency through joking and laughter.

On a Saturday afternoon, as we were walking on the last block on our list, we passed by a property where two men were on the lawn working on a car. One of them asked, *que venden?* (what are you selling?) in a joking way, assuming we were door-knocking in the neighborhood selling something, like most people assumed we as canvassers were doing. I respond, *¡control*

de renta! (rent control) in a joking way, wanting to make it explicit why Blanca and I were knocking on doors. One of the men laughed and responded, *ai no! No vengan aqui a hablar con mis inquilinos!* (oh no! don't come here to speak with my tenants). As we walk away, noticing that their building was not on our list of home addresses, Blanca says, *¿i Como que no!?* (what do you mean, no?!). At this point, towards the end of the campaign, Blanca and I, along with the rest of the canvassers, are aware of how hostile certain landlords, and in rare cases, tenants respond to pro-rent control discourse. A somewhat light-hearted interaction, compared to escalated heated arguments, we were able to walk away from the situation because it is unavoidable to come across those that are opposed to our cause. I am accustomed to hearing Blanca say, *como que no* (what do you mean, no?!) during our time together when we were met with opposition. Although seen as a subtle, but confrontational form of challenging anti-rent control disagreement at the moment, the fact that Blanca was able to laugh, while at the same time contest rent control, demonstrates informal ways of resistance.

In addition to analyzing moments of joking and laughter as subtle but prominent forms of resistance, I explore the Mother's Day event that UTU hosted, called "Mothers for Renters' Rights! *Madres a Favor de Control de Renta*". Taking place May 11th, 2019 at Casa del Mexicano in Boyle Heights, "Mothers for Renters Rights" was both a celebration and recognition of Mothers in the housing movement. In addition, UTU was commending the hard work that the mother canvassers and local community organizers have done to pressure the Board of Supervisors to extend, the then temporary rent stabilization ordinance until the end of 2019, oppose to ending in April 2019. A historical location, Casa del Mexicano was established in 1931 by the Mexican Consulate, under the name *Comite de Beneficencia Mexicana Inc.* (Bermudez, 2013). It is no coincidence that the location continues to serve as an important site

for community activism and congregation. Having food, music, and a play prepared for the evening, the mother canvassers, along with the numerous of women within local housing organizations came together that day to honor their labor of love for their family and community.

María, present at the Mother for Renters Right event felt inspired, when she stated,

Ese día me sentí muy motivado e inspirado, y también me sentí muy emocionado porque la mayoría de nosotras éramos mujeres. Mujeres, latinas, hispanas, que luchan por un futuro mejor, no solo por sus hijos, sino por toda su comunidad. Y para darle a la comunidad ese mensaje, todos tenemos que arriesgarnos. ¿Verdad? Todos tenemos que arriesgarnos para inspirar a nuestros hijos, y a nuestros hijos y a sus hijos, a que continúen con esta lucha porque esta lucha continúa. No debemos detenernos e inspirar a los jóvenes también, para que también puedan luchar por estos derechos porque si no, vivimos en una comunidad donde los ricos comen a los pobres, los peces más grandes se comen a los peces más pequeños. Y no podemos permitir eso, necesitamos tener justicia. Justicia para la vivienda, una justicia social que reconoce estas luchas. Más que nada para los niños y ancianos, que son los más vulnerables. Y eso es lo que me inspiró de esa noche

That day I felt very motivated and inspired, and I also felt very excited that day because a majority of us were all women. Women, Latianas, Hispanas, who are fighting for a better future, not just for their kids, but for all of their community. And to give the community that message, that we all have to take a risk. Right? We all have to take a risk to inspire our kids, and our kids and their kids that they continue with this fight because this fight continues. We should not stop and inspire the youth too, so they can also fight for these rights because if not, we live in a community where the rich eat the poor, the bigger fish eat the smaller fish. And we cannot permit that, we need to have justice. Justice for housing, a social justice that acknowledges these struggles. More than anything for the kids and elders, who are the most vulnerable. And that's what has inspired me from that evening

María described the evening as being an inspiration for her and for the youth that were present. In a similar manner, Letty describes,

Fue un reflejo de cómo vivimos todos los días. Así es como crecimos y así queremos que crezcan nuestros hijos, así que entiendo cuándo las personas tienen que mudarse a otra comunidad. Y es difícil porque tienes toda tu vida y cultura aquí. Entonces uno se siente seguro cuando está entre personas con las que creció y ve todos los días. Y me gustó que reconocieran que en el Día de la Madre

It was a reflection of how we live every day. That's how we grew up and that's how we want our kids to grow up, so I understand when people have to move to another community. And its difficult cause you have your whole life and culture here. So one

feels safe when you're among people you grew up with and see every day. And I liked that they acknowledged that on Mother's Day

Having acknowledged the multiple obstacles that aggrieved mothers face with housing insecurities, the Mothers for Renter's Rights event served as an affirmation and acknowledgement of the mothering that continues to foster the housing movement in Los Angeles' eastside. Although at times feeling like an isolated experience, the mothers that were present demonstrated a strong sense of unity and hope for future tenant protections and security for their family and community. Also reminiscent of this is Carolina's recollection of the evening when she shared,

Well it was exciting because mothers are always the ones that suffer because they're the ones that have to work 24-7 and there's people that don't appreciate that or don't take that into granted in the sense that a mother works to clean the house, to have food, to take care of their kids, to see if they've done their homework and make sure that she has to have her lunch ready for the next day and have everyone's, whatever they have to do the responsibilities. And she's the one that, that goes through a lot. And most of the pains, sometimes they don't let it out because they feel like they need to be strong for their children and their families and they take everything in. But deep inside, you know, you're hurting. So to me it's like, it was amazing in the sense, it was amazing that they appreciated the mother and they were celebrating rent control. It took us three years. It's not temporary, it's not permanent, but it's a, it's a start. It's an issue. So it's good to me it was awesome. It was amazing. I was excited. It was the best Mother's Day gift that they could ever give anyone

Carolina's sentiments of the evening also recognized the often-invalidated forms of labor the mothers performed in and out of the home. Feeling honored and a strong sense of solidarity, Carolina defined the space as giving her a sense of assurance that validated sentiments of hurt and trauma. In many ways, the event created and offered moments for healing and mending sentiments of housing injustices and further emotional support for burdened mothers. In addition to song, dance, and food, there was a play prepared for the evening. Blanca, also involved in a local theatre troupe, performed in the that evening called, *Mujeres Poderosas* (Powerful Woman). The play reflected aggrieved Latina Mothers and brought about themes of

independence, feminism, and self-love. I asked Blanca to describe what the play meant to her and how it was performing for the mothers that evening.

La obra se llamó “Mujeres Poderosas”. Éramos 10 madres, la obra se basó en nuestras experiencias cotidianas, fue personal y también un reflejo de cómo vemos la maternidad. Para mí, para conocer a 10 mujeres, cada una tenía una historia y cada una de nosotras nos conocíamos a través de nuestra historia. Estaba muy agradecido porque pude ver la necesidad que tenía cada madre y cómo todos pudimos relacionarnos. Creo que nuestro propósito era empoderar a las madres que estaban allí ese día. Recordarles que son fuertes, luchadoras, trabajadoras, guerreras ... para mí fue realmente especial porque todas las madres presentes ese día, somos poderosas y guerreras y a veces no lo sabemos

The play was called, *Powerful Women, We were 10 mothers*, the play was based on our everyday experiences, it was personal and also a reflection of how we view motherhood. For me, to know 10 women, we each had a story and each of us got to know each other through our story. I was so grateful for it because I was able to see the necessity each mother had and how we were all able to relate. I think our purpose was to empower the mothers that were there that day. To remind them that they're strong, fighters, hard workers, and guerillas...for me it was really special because all the mothers present that day...we're powerful and warriors and sometimes we don't know it.



Figure 8 Mujeres Poderosas Play at Mothers for Renters Rights Event, May 11, 2019.

Blanca's experience performing in the play was reminiscent of the feelings María, Letty, and Carolina felt that evening. Notions of home, in this section, under *conviviendo* are present and offered moments of affirmation and healing. I argue that *conviviendo*, demonstrated through the mother canvassers' interviews and play, support how ideas and feelings of home are linked to feeling validated and bring those that are undergoing similar circumstances together. *Conviviendo* is essential in any movement that hopes to foster collective community efforts, reinforcing relationship building and offering moments of celebration and recognition of labor. Similar to Herrera's analysis of *comadrazo* and *compadrazo* (Herrera, 2015), I argue that *conviviendo* in this section interrogated gendered components that, as we have seen, are foundational in community organizing.

CONCLUSION

The labor of love and work the mother canvassers advocated towards through the rent control campaign was ultimately rewarded when the Board of Supervisors approved a permanent rent stabilization ordinance the afternoon of September 10th, 2019. The rent control campaign the mother canvassers worked on alongside with local housing organizations is testament to moments of *sobreviviendo* and *conviviendo* under severe housing circumstances. Committed to the housing movement, the mother canvassers felt a deep sense of responsibility to prevent further disruption and displacements of families and fellow aggrieved tenants. More notably, through the mother canvassers, notions of home and care are redefined through their activism. Aside from outreach and rent control awareness, the mother canvassers went beyond their duties as canvassers to include moments of holding space for one another, validate and destigmatize instances of housing

injustices, and hold radical hope that includes justice for all families and tenants. Expanding scholarship on Mother of Color activism, cultural labor, housing justice, and racial geographies, homemaking as a framework helps unpack community relationships and gendered forms of dispossession that are often disregarded. Feeling overjoyed and emotional the afternoon of September 10th, Carolina stated, “We still have to organize to help other communities that don’t have rent control. It doesn’t stop until everyone has rent control (2019, L.A. Taco).” Carolina’s statement holds both hope and promise for the Latina Mother Canvassers, who in their respected housing organization, are continuing the fight to house everyone and secure stronger tenant protections.

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