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Constellations of the Abject:

Brown, Queer, and Feminist Punks in Los Angeles

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Chicana and Chicano Studies

by

Adriana Silvestre

2022

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Constellations of the Abject:

Brown, Queer, and Feminist Punks in Los Angeles

by

Adriana Silvestre

Doctor of Philosophy in Chicana and Chicano Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2022

Professor Maylei S. Blackwell, Chair

Constellations of the Abject: Brown, Queer, and Feminist Punks in Los Angeles significantly contributes to queer, feminist, Latinx cultures by examining expressive cultures and placemaking in Southeast Los Angeles by queer and feminist Chicanx/Latinx punks. My work moves beyond expected places Latinx cultural production to show how spatial, affective, and sonic practices shape the process of placemaking for communities that often feel out of "place." Drawing on the theories of space (Handhart 2013), sound (Vargas 2014, Vazquez 2013), and abjection (Alvarado 2018), this dissertation explores how punks use the shared affect of abjection to create community as an alternative form of placemaking in Southeast Los Angeles. Centering Southeast Los Angeles (SELA), CA as the nexus, a community that is defined by the scarcity of jobs, lack of opportunities, bad air, and perceived lack of beauty. Yet, embracing the very qualities that are

made abject and pathologized by gendered, racialized, classed politics of respectability is precisely what brings together queer and feminist punks in SELA to produce new forms of belonging affective communities.

Taking up the task of tracing brown queer and feminist punk genealogies of SELA, through the use of oral histories, ethnography, participant observation, archival research, and visual analysis of performance to answer the following: how does the affect of abjection and unintelligibility form communities? How do archival practices work to preserve the disaffected and excess of marginalized punk communities of SELA? What insights might we gain about queer and feminist punk communities by paying attention to space and sound? Lastly, how do intergenerational collaborations produce knew knowledges of gender, sexuality, and brownness for punks from Southeast Los Angeles? My focus on Latinx punk placemaking centers how queers and feminists Chicanx/Latinx punks collectively create communities through sound by precisely embracing the undesirable qualities of living in neglected neighborhoods. Through community formation queer and feminist Latinx/Chicanx punks contest gentrification, form community.

The dissertation of Adriana Silvestre is approved.

Joshua Javier Guzman

Kyungwon Hong

Gaye T Johnson

Maylei S Blackwell, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2022

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Acknowledgements

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VITA

ADRIANA SILVESTRE

EDUCATION

2019	C.Phil Chicana/o and Central American Studies, University of California Los Angeles
2017	M.A. Chicana/o and Central American Studies, University of California Los Angeles
2010	B.A. Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, California State University, Long Beach

PUBLICATIONS

Peer-Reviewed Articles

Castañeda, A., Miranda, M., Moreno, M., Rojas Durazo, A., **Silvestre, A.**, Zepeda, N. 2014. "Ending Heteropatriarchal Institutional Violence in Chicano Studies: A Reflection on Our Path." *Chicana/Latina Studies: The Journal of MALCS,* 13 (2), 104-117.

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Book Chapters

Silvestre, A. 2020. "Me Vestí De Reina: Trans and Queer Sonic Spatial Entitlement." In *We Are Not Dreamers: Undocumented Scholars Theorize Undocumented Life in the United States,* edited: Leisy J. Abrego and Genevieve Negrón Gonzales, 259-290. Durham: Duke University Press.

GRANTS, AWARDS, FELLOWSHIPS

2021 – 2021	Gold Shield Fellowship
2021 – 2022	Ford Foundation Dissertation Fellowship, *Honorable Mention List*
2020 – 2021	UC President's Pre-Professoriate Fellowship
Summer 2020	UCLA, Graduate Council Diversity Fellowship for Summer 2020
2020 – 2021	Ford Foundation Dissertation Fellowship, *Honorable Mention List*
2019 – 2020	Institute for American Cultures Dissertation Grant

SELECTED ACADEMIC CONFERENCES

2022	Panelist. "Latinx Queer Femme Futurity." Latino Studies Association. South Bend, IN.

2020 Panelist. "Punk and Intergenerational Collaboration in Southeast L.A." *Forever Young: Popular Music and Youth Across the Ages,* MoPop Conference. Seattle, WA.

2019 Panelist: "SCUM: Queer Punk in East LA." *National Women Studies Association.* San Francisco, CA.

Panelist: "Me Vestí De Reina: Trans and Queer Sonic Spatial Entitlement." *National Women Studies Association.* San Francisco, CA.

Panelist: "La Luz de la Esperanza: Latinx Queer Femme Futurity." *National Women Studies Association.* San Francisco, CA.

Panelist: "Tactile Memorability in Brown Queer and Feminist Punk Archives." *Association Jotería Arts, Activism Scholarship.* Portland State University. Portland, OR.

INVITED TALKS & PRESENTATIONS

2021 Book Talk Roundtable: *We Are Not Dreamers: Undocumented Scholars Theorize Undocumented Life in the United States*. Brown University.

Guest Lecturer: Me Vestí de Reina, California State University, Los Angeles Chicana/o Dept. Speaker Series. Los Angeles, CA.

Book Talk Roundtable: We Are Not Dreamers: Undocumented Scholars Theorize Undocumented Life in the United States. California State University, Long Beach.

2020 Roundtable: We Are Not Dreamers: Undocumented Scholars Theorize Undocumented Life in the United States. California State University, Monterey Bay.

2016 Plenary Speaker: "Chicana Feminist Praxis: Tactics to Transform Heteropatriarchal Universities Through Community Accountability." *National Association of Chicana and Chicano Studies.* Denver, CO.

2017 Keynote: "Laintx? Hispanic? Chicano? Exploring Community Labels." Latinx Celebration Month: Past, Present, and Future Generations. Glendale Community College, Glendale, CA

2012 Plenary Speaker: "MALCS Decolonial Work: Naming and Undoing Institutional Violence, From SB 1070 to Chicano Studies." *Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social Summer Institute*, University California, Santa Barbara, CA.

Introduction

On a Friday night during my junior year in high school I attended my first local punk show. I don't remember details of band names because I was too nervous and excited. I didn't know what to expect. But I remember afterschool trying on way too many outfits before my friend picked me up and we joined the rest of our friends. We eventually made it to Our House, and 18 and under venue in Lynwood, California. Once the bands started, the mosh pit began to swirl and the current of bodies moving in unison pulled my body in. I remember going into the pit my friend and we held onto each other for dear life. Initially, I was scared but after the song ended, I felt confident and jumped back in. Being inside the pit and moving my body felt liberating—until I was groped. Initially, I was in shock and disbelief. I thought maybe it was an accident—but deep inside I knew that wasn't the case. In that moment I felt conflicting feelings—on the one hand I felt freedom and agency over my body, on the other, I felt angry that the freedom was immediately taken away. The band ended their set and I shared with my friends what had happened and they asked if I knew who groped me. I did not. Being new to the scene, I was unaware of what is informally called "pit revenge" where young women looked out for each other and if someone "got handsy" they might be shoved a little harder in the pit. This sense of a feminist politic based on support and camaraderie alongside informal forms of accountability shaped my understandings of gender dynamics in punk, how women supported each other, and a longing for sexist free community. My dissertation is haunted by this memory and desire for more. Maria Cotera, Maylei Blackwell, and Dione Espinoza (2018) write about *movidas* as a political praxis of Chicana feminism. They write that movidas, "destabilize normative practices and ideologies insofar as these practices and ideologies enact relations of subordination, inequity, or invisibilization" (Cotera et al., 2018, 3). Movidas also remind me of the literal movement in

the mosh pit, the movement of bodies following the rhythm of the music. It also brings to mind Latina/x punk "movidas" such as "pit revenge" that subvert racialized gendered norms in punk and in broader communities. This dissertation is also a Chicana feminist queer punk movida: an elbow to the face of patriarchy, racism, homophobia and erasure.

Constellations of the Abject: Brown, Queer, and Feminist Punks in Los Angeles examines cultural productions and placemaking in Southeast Los Angeles (SELA) by queer and feminist Chicanx/Latinx punks. I foreground Southeast Los Angeles as a geographical space that exists in the periphery of Los Angeles. Southeast Los Angeles is located 20 minutes south of downtown Los Angeles that experienced white flights in the 1970s as deindustrialization closed or relocated factories and decreased union jobs. Following white flight, Latinos/as moved into the area. Most scholarship on Southeast Los Angeles centers on environmental injustices, deindustrialization, and white flight. This dissertation intervenes by offering an insight into the cultural productions of queer and feminist punks in Southeast Los Angeles and neighboring communities or what I call Latinx punk placemaking—which is how SELA queer and feminist Chicanx/Latinx punks collectively create communities through sound by grappling embracing the undesirable qualities of living in neglected neighborhoods as a powerful way to reclaim and rework them. Through theoretical frameworks that incorporate spatial, affective, and sonic practices, I illuminate how experiences of growing up in disenfranchised communities inform punk placemaking. Tracing brown queer and feminist punk genealogies of SELA reveals how abjection facilitates the formation of communities; that archival practices work to preserve the disaffected and excess of marginalized punk communities of SELA; and that intergenerational collaborations produce new knowledges of gender, sexuality, and brownness for punks from Southeast Los Angeles. Abjection as a feeling is usually thought of as an individual experience but abjection here is

about the communal and a community making process. In doing so, queer Latinx punks challenge mainstream LGBTQ narratives of leaving home to be queer by performing punk placemaking in their communities and ultimately disrupt neoliberal discourses of upward mobility.

To take up the task the process of tracing Latinx punk placemaking, I ask the following questions**:** how can the affect of abjection and unintelligibility form communities? How does the practice of the archive work to preserve the disaffected and excess of marginalized punk communities of Southeast LA? What insights might we gain about queer and feminist punk communities by paying attention to space and sound? Lastly, how do intergenerational collaborations produce new understandings of gender, sexuality, and brownness? To answer these questions, I draw on twenty oral histories, ethnographic fieldwork, participant observation, and analysis of archival objects and ephemera. I center my research on Chicas Rockeras South East Los Angeles (CRSELA), a summer rock camp for girls, trans, and non-binary youth hosted in Southeast Los Angeles and Club Scum, a monthly queer punk party organized by Ray Sanchez and Rudy Garcia held at Club Chico in Montebello, California. Additionally, I focus on the punk digital archives I co-created with queer and feminist punks who participate in CRSELA and/or Club Scum. Together the two research sites and the digital archive offer insight into different practices of Latinx punk placemaking in Southeast Los Angeles. This introduction will outline the literature and theories that inform the dissertation. However, I first provide a brief overview of the history of Southeast Los Angeles. The history of Southeast Los Angeles is important in understanding why punks decidedly organize placemaking in their communities. After, I situate varied strands of punk scholarship to understand the genealogies that inform and

inspire the queer and feminist punks I interview. I then move on to consider the theoretical framework that informs the formation of Latinx punk placemaking.

My theoretical contribution is what I call Latinx punk placemaking as a way to describe how feeling like an outsider (abjection) and Latinx soundscapes produce specific places of gathering for queer sexualities that inexplicitly are in direct conversation with state governance. Placemaking was first used by scholars in Urban studies to address the need for space to be accessible to communities and that communities participate and have a voice in the shaping of their neighborhoods (Jacobs 1961). Placemaking is about collective decision making in reimagining public spaces to best serve the community. Latina/o scholars in urban studies have taken up the concept of placemaking to describe how Latina and Latino communities participate in the shaping of their neighborhoods in ways that are culturally and economically specific (Lara 2018). For example, small local restaurant owners engage in placemaking or what Natalia Molina (2022) refers to as place-makers. Molina's use of place-makers describes how marginalized communities create meaning and establish networks that are "sustained by countless small acts of everyday life that build and sustain affective relationships in a particular time and place" (Molina 2022, 9). She centers racialized and marginalized communities who affirm their belonging and place against hegemonic public space that is hostile to them. My use of placemaking is informed by this literature while also drawing from Latinx scholars in sound studies and queer studies. More specifically, my use of placemaking it to examine how queer and feminist punk decidedly and explicitly create space in their community.

Latina/o scholarly engagement with placemaking has primarily explored the role of cultural belonging through mainstream ideas of Latinidad. To expand I draw from discourses of abjection to inform my articulation of Latinx punk placemaking. First, abjection describes

feeling like an outsider and existing in the fringes of society. Race, gender, class, and immigration status informs notions of belonging or exclusion. However, an embracement of living in abjection has the potential to move away from expected social norms that shape the everyday lives of minoritized communities to create potential alternative strategies (Alvarado 2018). Art historian Leticia Alvarado further explains that "abjection not as empowered desired to be included and be normal but as a resource geared toward an ungraspable alternative social organization, a not-yet-here illuminated by the aesthetic" (2018, 11). Gesturing to the not-yet-here work of Jose Esteban Muñoz, Alvarado locates "queerness a theoretical root of abjection" (2018, 60). The work of queer theorist Juana Maria Rodriguez (2014) similarly shares a vision of the queer potentiality in abjection to center a different set of goals and possibilities that reveal the limitations of assimilation and politics of respectability. Secondly, abjection suitably speaks to temporality and space, particularly how minoritized communities gather and disperse due to larger structural inequalities that dictate the everyday. Temporality signals to the precarity of the ephemeral as its momentary and the instability of placemaking of minoritized communities under hegemonic threats of gentrification, capitalism, and neoliberalism. Abjection for placemaking indicates how affect informs the gathering and creations of placemaking.

Sound also informs my articulating of Latinx punk placemaking as it has the potential to tell us about the histories of our communities. To begin the dissonant growls in punk, give voice to queer Latinx punks in a world that otherwise silences their place in it. The affective registers that punk generates creates collectivity of the abject through sound building the longing to be in community. Thus, sound informs community formations based on a shared soundscape that speaks to minoritized sexual practices. I consider how sound informs Latinx punk placemaking by engaging with the work of Gaye T. Johnson (2013) who reminds us that unlike white punks,

Latinx punk is informed by the parent the culture and has the potentiality to build coalitions across racial divides. Sound offers tools for understanding race relations but also tells us about gender and sexuality. My consideration to Latinx punk placemaking is informed by the foundational work Frances Aparicio (1998) research on salsa to considered gendered reinterpretations and cultural negotiations. I am equally in conversation with Michelle Habell-Pallan's (2005) important research on how punk provided Chicana's "as a place where they re-imagined the world they lived in, it was a place where they saw themselves as empowered subject" through the rebuilding of sound (49). Aparicio and Habell-Pallan offer an entry point to discourses of gender and sound and the work of Alexandra T. Vazquez (2013) and Deborah R. Vargas (2012) offer the concepts of sonic idiosyncrasies, details, or dissonance that reveal the inner workings of neoliberalism. Centering Latina sound studies as a theoretical lens situates the possibilities of Latinx punk placemaking for Latinx queer and feminist punks who are drawn by the dissonance of punk to abjectly reconfigure gender and sexuality in Southeast Los Angeles.

Punk is analogous to abjection as it speaks to the misfits, those that quite don't belong and creates a sound that is dissonant, crude, irreverent that visibly and audibly jolt its audience. Punks anti-establishment and anti- authoritarian attitude blends well with placemaking practices that center the communal. And while punk appeals to the nonconformist its DIY practices are inviting to placemake anti-assimilationist communities. Considering Latinx punk placemaking I am in conversation with Jose Esteban Muñoz's (2013) punk commons as "actively attempting to enact a commons that is not a pulverizing, hierarchical one bequeathed through logics and practices of exploitation" (96). Muñoz lingers in negative affects to find utopian possibilities to "demand for something else" (98). For queer Latinx punks operates to imagine possibilities

outside of the heteronormativity of punk and Latinx communities and homonormativity that permeates mainstream LGBTQ spaces.

History of Southeast Los Angeles

The abjection of Southeast Los Angeles is based on long histories of segregation, violence, class oppression, environmental degradation and political corruption. Los Angeles is widely recognized as a vast urban city, where the surrounding "glitz and glamour" of Hollywood create a limited and superficial idea of who lives in the city. This superficial view of Los Angeles obfuscates the material experiences of racialized and marginalized communities. Southeast Los Angeles (SELA), California is part of Los Angeles County and it is geographically located 20 minutes south of downtown Los Angeles. SELA divided into 26 cities that widely range in socio-economic status, education levels, home ownership, and age. The cities that make up Southeast Los Angeles are often referred to as "gateway cities" given their proximity to the Pacific Ocean and seaport cities that serve as hubs for trucking and rail traffic moving goods up through the Los Angeles and Long Beach ports, which are the largest ports in the United States. SELA is gridded by the Interstate 110, 105, and the 710 and 5 freeways. The cities centered in this research are those which primarily run along the I-710 freeway corridor including Bell, Bell Gardens, Cudahy, Huntington Park, Lynwood, South Gate, and Montebello.

Southeast Los Angeles is part of Los Angeles that often goes unnoticed because it is primarily a working-class and largely immigrant community that began to set roots in the late 1970s. Affordable housing had attracted migrants from Mexico and Central Americans who were fleeing civil wars and U.S. intervention in their home countries (Vértiz 2017). The new wave of residents shifted the culture of SELA. These changes parallel the ongoing Latinization of South Los Angeles, as Black residents have been pushed out. Much of their cultural contributions have

been ignored. Queers also form part of the community of SELA and have also made meaning and space for themselves. In the 1970s, the group Unidos from Huntington Park formed with the goal to inform others of their existence (Chavoya, Frantz, and Gomez-Barris 2017). The work of Chicana scholar Wanda Alarcon captures vivid recollections of the sound of 1980s new wave that swept SELA and how it created space for queer subjectivities.[1] Poet Raquel Gutierrez grew up in Huntington Park, to Salvadoran and Mexican parents, they also trace histories of queerness, brownness, punk, and riot grrrl in their work (Gutierrez 2022). As someone who grew up in SELA in the 1990s, it felt as though no one was visibly queer or feminist. It felt isolating. In college I learned about the work of Raquel Gutierrez through the Butchlalis de Panochtitlan and would eventually learn of others. Many who are unfamiliar with Los Angeles either do not know the geographical location of SELA or assume it is part of East Los Angeles and shares the same history. Below I offer a historical overview of the historical formation of Southeast Los Angeles.

Much of the history of SELA often begins with the story of settler Antonio Maria Lugo, however, before settlers arrived the Gabrielino/Tongva were the primary inhabitants of what we now refer to as Los Angeles. The Gabrielino/Tongva were displaced through colonization by the Californios and Spanish settlers who violently disposed Indigenous communities from their lands (Cherkoss Donahue 2012, 85). Antonio Maria Lugo became a Spanish soldier and in 1810 he received the land grant for Rancho San Antonio. The ranch was a 29,514-acres lot and it was his compensation for his military service and participation in the forced removal of Indigenous communities through the establishment of the Franciscan Missions in California. Antonio Maria Lugo's ranch sits on what we now call Bell Gardens, Bell, Maywood, Vernon, Huntington Park, Walnut Park, Cudahy, South Gate, Lynwood, and Commerce. Antonio Maria Lugo divided his

[1] Wanda Alarcon, "New Wave Saved My Life," *Sounding Out*, January 31, 2011, https://soundstudiesblog.com/2011/01/31/new-wave-saved-my-life/.

estate among his children who sold off the land to non-family members such as Michael Cudahy a Midwestern meatpacker who subdivided the 2,800-acre in one-acre lots to form Cudahy. In 1874, Lugo's great-granddaughter Francis Rains married Henry T. Gage, a lawyer from Michigan who received twenty-seven acres of Rancho San Antonio. Gage's adobe home is still standing and is one of the oldest standing homes in Bell Gardens. In the late 1800s, California experienced two shifts in national sovereignty. The first, in 1821 when Mexico won independence from Spain. The second shift took place in 1848 with the Treaty of Guadalupe. After the Treaty of Guadalupe, Mexican and Spanish landowners lost their land to Anglo settlers who contested land deeds and took over their properties (Cherkoss Donahue 2012, 86). The end of the 19th century also experienced the growth of Mexican population as they were recruited to work in the railroads, mines, and agriculture. During this time American settlers of European decent also moved to Los Angeles and began to build small cities (Cherkoss Donahue 2012, 86). Those settling in Southeast Los Angeles had to build their home from the ground up. Becky Nicolaides traces this history and the development of the city of South Gate. Nicolaides refers to many of these Anglo settlers as independent, resourceful, frugal, and self-reliant as they had to labor to build a roof over their heads (2002, 11).

As South Gate continued to be settled more Anglo migrants moved west after the Dust Bowl in the 1930s. SELA began to take shape and influenced how the area is currently structured. Nicolaides (2002) states that residents and city developers "envisioned a double identity for the suburb: residential and industrial" (14). Anglos were attracted to move into the area because it was affordability, racially segregated, and it was in close proximity to downtown Los Angeles and the harbor (Nicolaides 2002). The "double identity" of residential and industrial invited manufacturing plants to move to Southeast Los Angeles such as General Motors,

Firestone, Rheem Manufacturing, and Purex (Nicolaides 2002, 22). This combination set up the potentiality for Anglos to economically prosper through land ownership. South Gate was dubbed the "Detroit of the Coast" due to the amount of manufacturing plants (Nicolaides 2002, 25). While Anglos benefited from access to employment and homeownership, Blacks, Asians, Mexicans and Latinas/os were excluded to accessing the same resources. From the 1890s to 1920s African Americans migrated West to escape the racial violence of the South and in pursuit for economic opportunities (Rosas 2019). Yet, as they arrived in Los Angeles, they encountered red lining and other racist housing policies that restricted them from buying home in certain neighborhoods (Rosas 2019). Other racialized communities also lived and congregated in Central Avenue. East Los Angeles was home to Japanese, Mexican, and Jewish communities (Sanchez 2021). Alameda street became to symbolize the dividing line between Anglos in South Gate and Blacks and Mexicans in Watts (Nicolaides 2002, 158). Racism in Southeast Los Angeles was masked under the guise of protecting homeownership value. Yet, Ku Klux Klan chapters were alive and active during the 1920s in South Gate, Maywood, and Lynwood.

The Great Depression furthered racism and exclusion creating anxieties about Brown and Black bodies in Southeast Los Angeles. The New Deal set forth by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in response to the Great Depression affected resident of Southeast Los Angeles differently based on who was eligible to receive loans based on redlining practices. Nicolaides notes that South Gate was flagged but not redlined meaning that some residents received support but neighboring Bell Gardens was redlined (2002, 180). Support from the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) in 1934 made it possible for white homeowners to buy property. Due to covenants Black and people of color had very limited options and by 1945 only 3% of Black people owned their homes. Anglo residents of these communities welcomed governmental

support because they viewed themselves as hard working Americans that deserved a "hand up" (Nicolaides 2002, 181). Racialized policies made it possible for South Gate and Huntington Park to set themselves up as aspirational white suburbs. Redlining and housing policies around the New Deal solidified tensions between white Anglos and communities of color creating a stronger racial and economic divide. Furthermore, federal interventions during World War II made it possible for cities like South Gate to become full-fledged suburbs through industrial growth that promoted economic stability primarily enjoyed by white Anglos. In essence, the federal government reinforced white supremacy and hegemony through economic gains for some and not others.

In the 1960s, industrialism grew in Los Angeles, with a focus on manufacturing. The city of Vernon exemplifies that growth, that is still primarily comprised of industry and less on residential spaces. Despite the economic gains, economic and demographic changes were coming to Southeast Los Angeles. In 1963, in the case of Jackson v Pasadena City School District, the California State Supreme court rules that segregation of any form violated the state constitution. That same year the Americans Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) filed a lawsuit against the Los Angeles Unified School District on behalf of a student over segregation. The schools in question were Jordan High School, an all-Black student populated school, and South Gate High school an all-white school. Those opposing integration argued that it wasn't a matter of integration but rather an issue over the potential decrease in property value. In 1964, the Civil Rights Act passed outlawing segregation. The following year in August 11 of 1965, the Watts Riots erupted when Marquette Frye was arrested in South Central for driving under the influence. Frye's family heard of the incident and went to the scene but soon after were met with violence from the police. A crown gathered and witnessed the injustice and police brutality and it

incited a five day riot, with 34 deaths, 1,032 injuries, 3,428 arrests, and over $40 million in property damage. A report commissioned by at the time Governor Pat Brown found that the riots were a response to structural inequalities through substandard schooling and living conditions, high levels of unemployment, and overall inferior treatment experienced by the Black community. [2] Structurally, little changed to improve the living conditions of Black people in South Central. However, what did change was their neighbors as white people living in South Gate and Huntington Park began to move to the suburbs.

Aside from racial tension, deindustrialization began to take place throughout the US due to neoliberal policies that led to shop flight and free trade. While it did not reach Los Angeles until the 1980s, signs of change where present when Firestone and General Motors closed in the early 1980s. The repercussions of deindustrialization went beyond the loss of factory jobs. It also affected the closing of small business, it decreased property values and tax-revenue declined. Demographics shifted in South Gate as large number of middle-class and working-class Latinos moved into the city (Nicolaides, 194). Additionally, the closing of factories affected organized labor unions and as their power dwindled, so did a living wage. The economic restructuring that took place in the 1980s replaced well-paid unionized employment with jobs that relied on non-union, low wage, immigrant labor. In the 1980s, Mexico was also experiencing economic instability with the peso crisis and Central America was experiencing years of civil wars and US intervention. Economic and political instability in Mexico and Central America bolstered the number of people who migrated to the US in search of economic opportunities. As white flight was taking place in SELA it opened up affordable housing for Latinas/os.

[2] Governor's Commission on the Los Angeles Riots, *Violence in the City—An End or a Beginning: A Report by the Governor's Commission on the Los Angeles Riots,* 1965.

By the 1990s neoliberalism was in full force, the so-called "war on drugs" disproportionately criminalized Black and communities of color, and xenophobic rhetoric was rampant. The "war on drugs" increased tension and distrust between the community of South Central and the LAPD. Tensions when in March of 1991, Rodney King led police on a high-speed chase and when he was finally stopped as he was ordered out of the car, four LAPD officers beat him up with batons for fifteen minutes. King sustained injuries to his skull, broken bones and teeth, and permanent brain damage. A year later, the four police officers were found not guilty, and the verdict resulted in an uprising by the community of South Central. Similar to the riots of 1965, unresolved tensions and structural and economic inequalities prompted such response. The riot last five days, with over 50 reported deaths, 2,000 people injured, 6,000 arrested, and over 1 million in property damage. While media attention largely focused on tensions between Korean and Black community members, Latino participation in the uprising was widespread if less commented on by the media.

The 1990s was a decade in California that explicitly targeted immigrants. First, Proposition 187, a ballot initiative that aimed at denying undocumented people from accessing public services, such as education, healthcare, and emergency services, passed in 1994. California voters voted in favor of the proposition, but it was overturned by the California Supreme Court. Two-years later in 1996, Proposition 209 outlawed affirmative action in college admissions and in 1998, Proposition 227, eliminated bilingual education. These propositions caused irreparable damage in creating unequitable conditions and casting immigrants as scapegoats. During this era, republican governor Pete Wilson also opened used anti-immigrant prejudice and racial animosity as a tactic to mobile the vote in his favor. Alongside the history of

unequal access to housing, disinvestment, economic precarity, and animosity the community of Southeast Los Angeles dealt with environmental injustices which I discuss below.

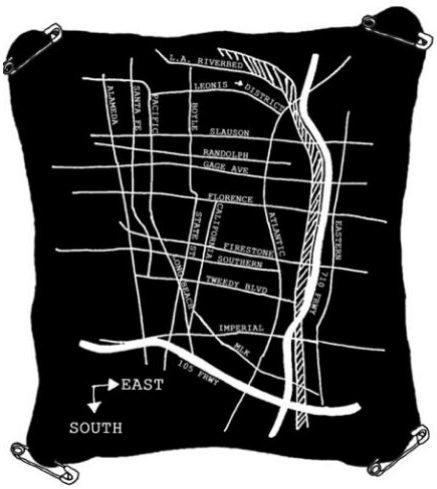

Figure 1 Southeast Los Angeles, By Vikki Gutman for CRSELA

Environmental Injustices

Southeast Los Angeles was partly designed for industrial manufacturing plants, which has had detrimental environmental consequences to the community. In 1922, the A.R. Mass Chemical Company set up in South Gate and produced 70% of chemical used in the film industry in processing plants (Nicolaides 2002, 25). That same year Exide Technologies set up its plant in Vernon. In the 1970s and 1980s re-industrialization began to take place in Los Angeles including SELA. This coincided with globalization and migration of people from Mexico, Central America, and Asia who then became low wage workers in manufacturing plants and the service industry. The new round of industrialization did little to change or address any environmental concerns continue to affect SELA and the neighboring community of East Los Angeles.

In 1993, the city of Huntington Park approved Aggregate Recycling System (ARS) to open a 5 1/2-acre lot in South Alameda Boulevard. The function of ARS was to store concrete

and materials from the road and to then crush the material and resell it. Initially ARS promised to be environmentally responsible and keep concrete mountains at no more than 8-feet-high. However, this all shifted after the 1994 Northridge earthquake with a 6.7 magnitude and death toll of 57 people. The earthquake caused major structural damage including the collapse of portions of the Santa Monica freeway. Los Angeles city officials wanted to quickly rebuild to avoid some of the delays that the Bay Area had experienced after the Loma Prieta earthquake. The contractor C.C. Myers Inc. won the bid to rebuild the Santa Monica freeway and would need a company who could take the concrete rubble. ARS stepped in promising to remove the rubble from the freeway and taking it to their location in Huntington Park. The mountain of rubble soon grew to over 80 feet tall and the street became filled with lines of trucks that would linger into the night (Fulton, 2001). ARS was operating at all hours of the day and night processing the cement rubble. That same year Communities for a Better Environment (CBE) moved from Venice to downtown Los Angeles to work with cities along the Alameda corridor and hired Carlos Porras.

The people who lived in Huntington Park and in close proximity to ARS immediately felt the effects of increased noise level, dust, and soon began to feel sick (Fulton 2001, Drury 2008, Anner 1999). Residents began to experience chronic nose bleeds, sinus headaches, difficulty breathing, and asthma attacks (Drury 2008). Children were no longer allowed to play outside, and residents kept their doors and windows closed even during the hot summer days (Drury 2008). Linda Marquez contacted Carlos Porras at CBE to ask for support in bringing attention to the harm ARS was causing (Drury 2008). ARS stood across the street from the apartment complex where Marquez lived and the view outside her window was and 80-foot-high concrete mountain. Before reaching out to CBE, community members had previously reached out to city

council who asked residents to provide evidence that their health issues were cause by ARS. Under the leadership of Porras, CBE, formed Los Angeles Comunidades Assembladas y Unidas para un Sostenable Ambiente (LA CAUSA). The solution city council offered was for ARS to install a screen to stop the dust from blowing into the neighborhood, but the screen did very little to protect residents. With the support of CBE, the formation of LA CAUSA, and under the leadership of trusted community activist Alicia Rivera the residents successfully declared ARS a public nuisance that would force the company to clean up the rubble. However, this process was lengthy and included a long legal court battle. ARS owner Sam Chew eventually filed bankruptcy stalling the clean-up process for seven years (Drury 2008). In 2002, the clean-up of La Montaña began and was completed in 2005. The city secured funding and turned the location of ARS into a park and a school named Linda Esperanza Marquez High School.

Neighboring Huntington Park is the industrial city of Vernon that prides itself on being "the first exclusively industrial city in the Southwestern United States." Since the 1950s, Vernon has been a place of entry for immigrants due to its proximity to employment opportunities. Vernon is five miles away from downtown Los Angeles with a population of under 130 people and more than 1,800 business that employ around 55,000 people. As a city that prides itself on supporting businesses it should come to no surprise that Vernon is consistently listed as a highly toxic and polluted city. Vernon is also home to Exide Technologies plant which is responsible for lead poisoning of the surrounding communities (Pulido, Sidawi, and O Vos 1996). While most battery recycling plants have moved to other parts of the world due to the increased regulations in the US. The Exide plant in Vernon is a lead-acid battery facility that can recycle over 25,000 batteries a day. At Exide car batteries are disassembled to separate the lead from the casing. Exide then melts the casing to create new batteries and lead is reused for batteries.

However, during the incineration process some of the ashes spread to the surrounding communities. Since the 1980s, the California Department of Public Health was aware of the unsafe conditions that Exide operated under but did not further investigate. Community members affected by Exide began to organize and in 2007 they launched a complaint to the city (Johston and Hricko 2017). It was found that toxicity levels 66% higher than the allowed levels of exposure. In 2013, a report concluded that 250,000 residents faced chronic health hazards from exposure to lead and arsenic that settled into the soil (Johnston and Hricko 2017). The report and its findings were made possibly because the community organized and pressured city officials to produce the report. However, it would take the department of justice to intervene for Exide to admit that they illegally disposed of, stored, and transported hazardous waste. This prompted Exide to close and pay $50 million to clean-up the area in exchange for criminal charges. Soon after many of the surrounding homes were cleaned-up but community members felt it was inadequate.

Criminal charges are what finally stopped Exide from causing further irreparable damage. Unfortunately, Exide was able to continue its operations for many years despite their many federal violations because they were able to obtain a temporary permit. In 2013, a report by the South Coast Air Quality Management District concluded that around 250,000 residents faced chronic health hazards from exposure to arsenic. The exact damage that Exide has caused to the surrounding community is unknown because communities have been undertested. In 2019, USC published the Truth Fairy Study, that found lead in the teeth of baby and higher levels of lead in the soil than previously reported. They gathered 50 baby teeth from 43 children from the cities of Boyle Heights, Maywood, East Los Angeles, Commerce, and Huntington Park. In 2019, 2,500 homes in a 1.7-mile radius of Exide were listed as priority cleanups and classified as toxic but

only 788 homes had been cleaned up. After Exide was found responsible in 2015 the company filed for bankruptcy in Delaware leaving the state with a $650 million cost to clean-up. Most recently, in 2020, bankruptcy judge Christopher Sontchi, in Delaware ruled “no imminent" threat posed by Exide's abandonment of the plant.” This ruling leaves taxpayers to pay for the clean-up and community members of South and East Los Angeles waiting while they live in contaminated homes.

Political Corruption in SELA

The political corruption of Southeast Los Angeles has informed the importance of community formation and placemaking because of the many years of disenchantment from city officials. Southeast Los Angeles has been named the “corridor of corruption” as over a dozen officials have been convicted of corruption from the cities of Bell, Cudahy, South Gate and Lynwood. City official have taken advantage of a community that is primarily comprised of poor and/or immigrant community with a low voter turnout. In 2010, the *Los Angeles Times* published an exposé on city official from Bell that had inflated salaries, illegal taxes, and lending of city funds. The article revealed that city officials in Bell received some of the highest salaries in the nation despite serving one of the poorest cities in Los Angeles County. In 2012, City Manager Robert Rizzo along with seven other former city leaders were arrested and charged for misappropriating $5.5 million from the small city of Bell. Rizzo was sentenced to serve 12 years for his wrongdoing. The city of Cudahy also made headlines in 2012 with their own city council scandal that involved the FBI when three city officials were accused of accepting $17,000 bribes from businesses.

In 2006, the then Mayor of the city of Vernon Leonis Malburg, and his wife Dominica Malburg, were charged with voter fraud. The Malburg’s claimed to live in Vernon but they

actually lived in Hancock Park. Malburg's ties to Vernon are generational as he had served the city for over fifty years and his grandfather John Baptiste Leonis was the founder of Vernon. Leonis' himself faced similar fraud charges of voting fraud for casting votes in Vernon while also residing in Hancock Park. Essentially, the family wanted to maintain control over the city. In South Gate, Al Robles a city council member, mayor, treasurer, and city manager served ten years in federal prison after looting $20 million from the city for his own personal gain and funneling money to his family and nearly bankrupted the city. The city of Lynwood in 2012 learned that two of its council members were living large "on the working-class city's dime" by receiving stipends, billing trips, and spending city funds for their own leisure while doing very little for the city. This scandal surfaced only six years after former South Gate Mayor Paul H. Richards II was convicted "of steering city contracts to a front corporation he secretly owned" and managed to gain $500,00 he was sentenced to 16 years in prison. Maywood like the other "gateway cities" has also experienced its fair share of corruptions, first, the police department made headlines as it was exposed that they routinely hired police officers who were pushed out from other departments due to participating in crimes or serious misbehavior. For example, the police chief at the time had been convicted of physically abusing his girlfriend. In 2010, Maywood disbanded their police department as they city could not secure insurance partly given the "excessive number of claims filed against the Police Department." In 2018, Maywood was once again under scrutiny when council members, companies, and a city activist were charged with soliciting and receiving bribes, misappropriation of public funds, and embezzlement. Community members after many years of experiencing betrayal from city officials have grown to distrust them moving away to instead create their own publics that takes into account their abject positionality.

The political scandals alongside the environmental injustices experienced by the community of Southeast Los Angeles occlude how Latinas/os have participated in their own forms of placemaking. This includes shopping centers such as La Pacific, street vendors, and restaurants that speak to the economic and cultural needs of the area. Latina/o scholars have written about the importance of community formations and claims to belonging through the lens of cultural citizenship[3] (Rosaldo 1994) or Latino citizenship[4] (Rocco 1999). Both concepts center inclusion into the national fabric of the U.S. through diversifying or expanding notions citizenship instead of calling citizenship into question. These forms of inclusion reinscribe neoliberal ideologies of civility, respectability, and economic stability. My dissertation is also interested in ways that communities form, however, I am interested in how queers and punks from Southeast Los Angeles are not interested in notions of belonging through citizenship. This work follows community members who despite structural disadvantages find beauty, culture, and meaning in Southeast Los Angeles. I am inspired by the writing and poetry of Vickie Vertiz who grew up in Bell Gardens and captures the deep history of the area from El Pescador to beauty pageants.[5] Despite the many city scandals it was amazing to witness cities in Southeast Los Angeles declare themselves as "sanctuary cities"[6] admits the xenophobia rhetoric. This historical

[3] Renato Rosaldo came up with the term cultural citizenship as a call to expand the idea of citizenship and who can claim it to include marginalized communities and account for cultural differences that differ from mainstream society in the U.S., Renato Rosaldo, "Cultural Citizenship in San Jose, California," *Politics and Identity in the Americas,* Vol. 17, No. 2, (November 1994): 57-63.

[4] Latino citizenship also seeks to expand meanings of citizenship based on how Latinos have been racialized and excluded. Raymond Rocco, "The Formation of Latino Citizenship in Southeast Los Angeles," *Citizenship Studies,* Vol. 3, No. 2 (November 1999): 253-266.

[5] For more Vickie Vertiz wisit her website https://vickievertiz.com/ or her series on Southeast Los Angeles on https://www.kcet.org/people/vickie-vertiz.

[6] In 2007 Maywood declared itself a sanctuary city. Ten years later Cudahy followed. Vivian Wick, "How A Tiny City In Southeast L.A. County Became An Unlikely Battleground In The Sanctuary City Debate," *Los Angeles Times,* June 13, 2017 https://laist.com/news/cudahy-sanctuary; Ruben Vives, "This Tiny California Town's Battle

overview of Southeast Los Angeles serves to set up context for what queer and feminist punks experienced growing up and how that informed their political consciousness to form community and engage in practices of Latinx punk placemaking.

Literature Review

I situate my research and analysis of Laitnx punk placemaking within Latina/x sound studies specifically within feminist and queer scholars who engage in an intersectional listening practice to consider what sound tells us about race, class, gender, nation, and sexuality. The formidable work of Frances Aparicio (1998) examined gender and class within Salsa music to importantly disrupt discourses on listening practices by centering how working-class Latinas negotiated and re-configured the lyrics for self-empowerment. In paying attention, the dissonant, Deborah Vargas (2012) paid attention to Chicana/Tejana singers and musicians disrupted "la onda" or presumed heteronormativity in the music industry to push the boundaries of belonging, nation, and family along the borderlands. Dissonance as "interruption or disruption of the heteronormative and cultural-nationalist limits" is important to my project as queer and feminist punks in Southeast Los Angeles sonically, aesthetically, and in praxis continue to unsettle dominant ideas of gender, sexuality, and culture through dissonant sounds (Vargas 2012, xiv). I also draw from the intentional listening practices in the work of Alexandra T. Vazquez (2013) who specifies the importance of "listening in detail" as a practice that gestures towards sonic elements that evoke histories of diasporas. Similar to Vargas, Vazquez is interested in the disruptions or idiosyncrasies, or the grunts made by performers and these details are significant because they can induce a sonic memorability to particular places, spaces, histories (2013, 29).

Over 'Sanctuary City' Status Started Long Before Trump," *Los Angeles Times,* February 20, 2017 https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-maywood-sanctuary-city-20170203-story.html.

Importantly, these details keep us connected not only to places but also to communities. I consider what does it mean to "listen to details" against economic instability, environmental injustices, and heteronormativity in Southeast Los Angeles and what that might reveal about disassociated punks. Along a similar mark, Ines Casillas (2014), interrogates the importance of sound through Spanish radio to working-class and/or immigrant Latinas/os in the US. Casillas (2014) argues that radio shows importantly affirm the experiences and existence of Latinas/os in the US amidst xenophobic rhetoric that continually seeks to erase them. Importantly, Casillas also examines how Latina listeners experience and negotiate radio shows that on the one hand create sonic memorability's belonging while simultaneously reinforcing gender roles. Listening to the details of Spanish radio reveals how these sonic frequencies anchor Latinas/os to the US while also maintaining connections to their home country. Ties to culture and home countries play an important role in immigrant community of Southeast Los Angeles.

If sound shapes memories to places and people, sound can also reconstitute space. Gaye T. Johnson's concept of "spatial entitlement" directly speaks to how marginalized people make meaning and community by claiming right to space that speaks to optimism (2013, 124). The right to space or what she calls spatial entitlement speaks to what she also calls spatial immobilization which speaks to how Black and Latinx communities are socially, culturally, and economically subjugated and denied full citizenship. Historically, spatial immobilization takes form in different ways such as residential segregation, hyper-policing of communities, and immigration. Johnson specifically, addresses how punks in Los Angeles used spatial entitlement as "remedy for exclusion from their own communities was to create and belong to a "Culture within a subculture" (2013, 133). My use of Latinx punk placemaking importantly builds on the work of Johnson to consider how "spatial immobility" has been slightly reclaimed in the sense

that the punk communities I write about specifically are interested in creating spaces for their queer and feminist subjectivities in the communities that they have been confined too. Thus, there is an element in finding beauty in confined spaces through a punk subjectivity. While sound offers alternative potentialities, we must also keep in mind the way that sound is used to police marginalized communities by occluding its racism under the guise of the aural. Jennifer Stover (2016) writes of the ways that sound and race are intimately tied resulting in the suppression of certain voices and sounds in the interest of white supremacy. The sonic color lines also make evident the how white aurality is designated as natural while "other" sounds mark people as unbelonging. These white hegemonic ways of listening and reinforcing white supremacy have real life and death consequences for Black and communities of color. Considering hegemonic listening practices that exclude emphasize the importance for marginalized communities to create their own sonics, soundscapes, and sonic memorability's.

My work also draws on emergent feminist punk scholarship. In 2016, at the American Studies Association Annual Conference, the panel "Sounds Like Home: Mapping Chicana Mexicana/Indigena Epistemologies in Sonic Spaces" propelled a new generation of sound studies scholars interested in addressing the erasure of women of color in scholarship and as music producers. Michelle Habell-Pallan (2017) calls this method and practice a "Feminista Music Scholarship." This panel was followed by a series of publications in *Sounding Out!* The series featured a piece by each of the panelist Wanda Alarcón, Yessica Garcia Hernandez, Marlen Rios-Hernandez, Susana Sepulveda, and Iris C. Viveros Avendaño. Each address music from distinct perspectives to move forward the field of sound studies by bridging an "intersectional, decolonial, and gender analysis" to incite new forms of listening strategies and community formations. The work of Alarcón, Rios-Hernandez, and Sepulveda, speak to Latinx

punk placemaking in specific ways. Rios-Hernandez traces the screaming in Alice Bag's to create a lineage of empowerment and resistance for "unruly Chicana punks" who found themselves in the trenches between the Chicano movement, second wave feminism, and the punk by tracing the wailing to La Llorona.[7] Notably, Rios-Hernandez argues that Bag's is responding to "the homogeneity of white suburban beach punks who had infiltrated the scene."[8] This speaks to Bag's claims that women and queers were and have been part of punk. The work of Sepulveda (2017) focused on hardcore punk, a subgenre of punk that arose in the 1980s with faster tempos and aggressive lyrics and vocals.[9] Sepulveda is interested in how Chicana punks from Los Angeles through hardcore "address issues of gender, racial, and environmental violence; and resonate with Chicana feminist critiques."[10] Specifically, Sepulveda is reimagining hardcore to signify home and possibilities for Chicana punks. Both Rios-Hernandez and Sepulveda situate Chicana punks in a Chicana feminist theoretical genealogy from La Llorona to Gloria Anzaldua. I build on their insights to inform Latinx punk placemaking by centering queerness as a politic and identity in the case studies I examine.

Wanda Alarcón signals to flashbacks in Chicana feminist literature as site to listen or "remembering this music is mediated by the Chicana lesbian storyteller's perspective who keenly tunes into these sounds and signs of alternative music and gender from East Los Angeles." [11] The

[7] Marlen "If La Llorona Was a Punk Rocker Detonguing the Off Key Caos and Screams of Alice Bag," *Sounding Out,* March 20, 2017 https://soundstudiesblog.com/2017/03/20/if-la-llorona-was-a-punk-rocker-detonguing-the-off-key-caos-and-screams-of-alice-bag/.

[8] Ibid

[9] Susana Sepulveda, "Hardcore as Home an Etymology of Core Through Chicana Punk," *Sounding Out,* September 4, 2017 https://soundstudiesblog.com/2017/09/04/hardcore-as-home-an-etymology-of-core-through-chicana-punk-sound/

[10] Ibid.

flashback in the literature operates as "decolonial feminist listening praxis" to remember a more capacious Chicana spaces. Tracing queer Latinx histories of displacement is found in the work of Eddy Francisco Alvarez Jr. (2021) who follows the work of Vazquez (2013) to listed to the "queer details to hear with queer ears, or to listen queerly, to the sonic archive of memories, music and background 'noise.'"[12] He calls this method jotería listening, a practice that allows one to hear for loss, feelings, community building, and memories of places lost in the process of gentrification.[13] The scholarship in Chicana and Latina sound studies informs my use of Latinx punk placemaking to continue the practice of interrogating the role of sound in the lives of racialized genders and sexualities. Particularly, like Sepulveda I am interested in considering what does it mean when queer and feminist punks engage in creating space at home through the dissonant sounds of punk and like Alvarez, I am interested in jotería listening. Punk is at the core of my research, in the sense that it is the catalyst that informs and inspires practices of Latinx punk placemaking in Southeast Los Angeles.

Punk

There is something to be said about punk and how it continually pulls academics interest influencing books, articles, conference, and museum exhibits (Ensminger 2011; Duncombe and Tremblay 2011, Hebdige 1979; Habell-Pallán 2005; Nault 2017; and Spencer 2005;). Yet, mainstream narratives of punk situate the musical and artistic genre within the confines of a white boy suburban rebellion or a "white riot"[14] (McNeill 1996; Blush and Petros 2011; Rollins

[11] Wanda Alarcon, "Oh How So East Los Angeles: The Sounds of 80s Flashback in Chicana Literature," *Sounding Out,* September 10, 2017, https://soundstudiesblog.com/2017/09/10/oh-how-so-east-l-a-the-sound-of-80s-flashbacks-in-chicana-literature/

[12] Eddy Francisco Alvarez, "Jotería Listening: Sonic Trails and Collective Musical Playlist as Resistance to Gentrification in Silver Lake," *Journal of Popular Music Studies,* 33 (4): 126–151.

[13] Ibid.

1994). Punks and scholars have demystified this narrative by writing about how racialized punks influenced the genre (Avant-Mier 2010; Bag 2011; Cruz Gonzalez 2016, Ginoli 2009; Grace and Ozzi 2016; Habell-Pallán 2005). For example, scholars have traced proto-punk to Latin American bands like Los Saicos of Peru and the Mexican American band Question Mark and the Mysterians (Avant-Mier 2010; Habell-Pallán 2005). Avant-Mier (2010) writes about the influence Eduardo Arturo Vega had on punk. Vega was born in Mexico and migrated to the US and eventually would become the artistic director for The Ramones creating the bands iconic eagle logo. The mainstream history of punk in Southern California has focused on specific geographic emergence of punk scenes such as Orange County or the Hollywood punk scene. Focused on placed based scene formation in punk unintendedly overshadowed contributions and participations of racialized punks who live outside the demarcated geographies. The documentary, *The Decline of the Western Civilization* (1981) captures the punk rock scene of Los Angeles in 1979 and 1980. In the documentary we witness the scintillating performance of The Bags, fronted by Alice Bag, with Pat Morrison on bass, Craig Lee and Rob Ritter on guitar. Alice Bag's performance stands out and has been noted as an early influence of the hardcore punk movement. What also distinguished Bag in the documentary is that she was a Chicana from East Los Angeles. Most recently, the historical contributions of the East Los Angeles punk scene have taken momentum trailing behind the Chicano movement of the late 1960s and connected through the avant-garde at collective ASCO.

Punks from East Los Angeles, similar to their Anglo counterparts, were responding to political and economic repression but as racialized minoritarian communities. In East Los Angeles the punk scene emerged in the mid 1970s with bands like The Stains that formed in the

[14] White riot is the title of The Clash's fist-single released in 1977.

mid 1970s, the Undertakers in 1977, followed by The Illegals and The Brat. This cohort of bands had its own style and sound that created their own scene that was partly informed by the racism they experienced while performing. The Stains recall that while opening for Black Flag the audience would yell racist epithets at them (Vargas 2012). Teresa Covarrubias singer of The Brat also shared that rancheras and folk art was expected from them because they were from East Los Angeles. Covarrubias is quoted saying what her band and others were "trying to do is break it. To be bands without stereotypes" (Habell-Pallán 2005b, 198). As the scene formed it became obvious that a space where they could perform, outside of backyards, would also be needed. In 1980, the Vex, an all-age's venue opened at Self-Help Graphics in East Los Angeles.[15] Willie Herron (singer of *Los Illegals* and founding member of ASCO) and Joe Suquette (Joe Vex) with the support of Sister Karen Boccalero made it happen and soon began to book the local punk bands that were excluded from playing at the Hollywood venues (Gunckel 2012). Although, some East Los Angeles punk bands felt excluded from the Hollywood scene—bands from various scenes played at The Vex such as the band X or Black Flag. Over the years many reiterations of The Vex have emerged but in sum the short-lived venue became an important site for visual artists and bands to have a space that facilitated community formation and collaboration and create early iterations of what I call Latinx punk placemaking (Alvarado 2012; Gunckel 2012, Vargas 2012). Although the Vex closed in did not mean the end to the East Los Angeles punk scene.

In the 1980s a hardcore, metal, punk scene was emerging from the new generation of backyard shows in East Los Angeles. These backyard shows drew bands and audience from Huntington Park, Whittier, El Monte (Alvarado 2012, 174). The 1990s also witnessed a new

[15] Self-Help Graphics is a community arts center in East Los Angeles, for more information visit https://www.selfhelpgraphics.com.

formation and generation of bands and venues including The Boulevard in East LA and bands like Union 13 and Teenage Rage (Alvarado 2012, 178). Historian Jorge N. Leal research builds on East Los Angeles punk scholarship to write about the Rock en Español scene in Southeast Los Angeles in the 1990s, centering what he calls "ephemeral forums" to describe how spaces were improvised to create short-lived venues (2020). Leal's research importantly speaks to disinvestment and the lack of access to space for youth in Southeast Los Angeles and how they improvise. In the late 1990s, in Lynwood, part of Southeast Los Angeles, Our House emerged as a 13-18 ages venue for the youth. Bands from different genres including punk, ska, metal, and Rock en Español played at the venue. After, Our House closed the same producers re-opened The Allen in South Gate as a music venue. The Allen was a single-screen movie theater that first opened in 1924. Films continued to be shown into the 1980s. The theatre remained idle until the early 2000's when it re-opened as a punk rock venue it was also short-lived and closed in 2007. Our House and The Allen, like the Vex, created space for community formations through art and music.[16] Yet, the closures of venues that appeal to youth have made it so that there is a return to "ephemeral forums" as city ordinances limit who can have music permits for live music.

The history of punk in the East side did not end with the closure of venues and in fact a missing component of the literature is its attention to gender and sexuality. Michelle Habell-Pallán's publication *Loca Motion: The Travels of Chicana and Latina Popular Culture* (2005a) importantly considered gender and sexuality in Chicana/o punk. Habell-Pallán (2005a) importantly connects punks with Chicanas—not as an idiosyncrasy—but as confluence between punk and Chicana/o culture to create subjectivities that reveal their experiences. Specifically, Habell-Pallán (2005a) argues that punk was a space of liberation "where the lines between

[16] Café Kashmere neighbored The Allen theatre and also provided a space for youth to congregate, play music, and to show art.

gender and race were easily, if temporarily, blurred" (2005a, 156). The grittiness of punk made it possible for gender to be rearticulated, for example, Alice Bag, though sound and aesthetics "rejected the equation of femininity with victimization and passivity" (2005a, 158). Thus, making space for Chicana/Latin punks to reconfigure music, identity, sexuality, and gender roles while sonically and aesthetically responding to economic disenfranchisement, racism, gender-based violence, and access to reproductive rights. In 2008, Colin Gunckel and Pilar Tompkins co-curated *Vexing: Female Voices of East L.A. Punk* a historical exhibit centering the women at the forefront of the scene through music, art, culture, and politics. Their goal was "to synthesize the many components that surround a vigorous moment when women stood out against the confines of prescribed stations rooted in ethnicity, gender, and class, and examines music as a central force in defining an image of self" (Tompkins and Gunckle 2008, 7). The exhibit generated a lot of dialogue about the 1970s punk scene in East Los Angeles and inspired the "Dossier: Chicana/o Punk in East Los Angeles" in *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicana/o Studies* (2012). Jimmy Alvarado (2012) and Dan Vargas (2012) were both part of the East Los Angeles punk scene and both were dissatisfied with *Vexing,* as it did not capture the totality of the scene. Vargas published as essay he penned 30 years earlier in attempts to capture the short-lived scene and specifically notes that bands from East Los Angeles were ignored (Vargas 2012, 185). *Vexing* did not claim to completely overview the punk scene but rather center how women in punk pushed against narrow gender roles.

The contributions of Habell-Pallán (2005a) and Gunckel and Tompkins (2008) are significant because their research offers an intersectional approach to punk via Chicana and Latina punks whereas "official" punk histories and scholarship focus on one identity. For example, in the 1990s, gender and punk was explored through the Riot Grrrl scene a movement

that brought feminism to the forefront. Riot Grrrl has been heavily critique for its lack of class and race analysis and for primarily centering issues affecting young middle-class, white women.[17] Outside of Riot Grrrl, Lauraine Leblanc's *Pretty on Punk: Girls', Gender, Resistance in A Boys' Subculture* (1999) primarily centers the experiences of young white women in punk. She argues that punk prioritizes masculinity resulting in young women having to negotiate the "costs and rewards" of embodying masculinity (13). Essentially, policing over punk authenticity emerges through masculinity as the "ideal" aesthetic and sound of punk. In Leblanc's findings "'doing gender' in punk means negotiating a complex set of norms, reconciling the competing discourses of punk and femininity" and subvert gender through a juxta positioning of dress such as a pink vinyl skirt with a tough attitude (1999, 140).

Differently, scholarship on Chicana and Latina punks consider self-fashioning and visual art as important contributions to punk. Fashion was an avenue through which punks expressed their dissatisfaction with the larger culture, Chicana and Latina punks took fashion as another way to contest heteronormative gender roles. ASCO founding-member Patssi Valdez prompted a Chicana punk aesthetic that also borrowed from a Pachuca style and merging with mod, glam, and punk, consequently creating a look that contested modest perceptions of Chicanas and Latinas (McMahon 2011). Valdez utilized her skills in fashion and beauty to create specific styles drawing the attention to ASCO. Fashion within punk is not regarded as frivolous when someone like Sid Vicious utilizes as a counternarrative but when women used fashion it was often viewed as trivial and superficial. Resulting in, "the omission of Valdez from histories of Asco reminds us that self-fashioning,[18] is often considered the domain and site of the female

[17] I delve into the history of Riot Grrrl in the second chapter.

[18] Self-fashioning highlights the intersections of dress with bodily performance and the possibility of these sites in the negotiation of gendered and racialized ideologies (McMahon 2011, 25).

body and not a legitimate art form.. It also reminds us of the importance of reading subcultural styles outside of a binary model of resistance/affirmation" (McMahon 2011, 43). Similarly, Alice Bag also used fashion to push boundaries of gender during performances. Michelle Habell-Pallán (2011) traces the ways that punk and chola/o aesthetics merge with punk through the self-fashioning of Teresa Covarrubias singer of The Brat. Habell-Pallán calls this style the "punkiffied version of the homeboy and homegirl aesthetic" (2011, 338). Differently, from Leblanc (1999), McMahon (2011) and Habell-Pallán (2011) demonstrate that Chicana punks did not shy away from femininity, instead, drew inspiration from the cholas to create a punk aesthetics that "aligned with Pachuca/o youth attitudes of distortion and refusal" (Habell-Pallán 2011, 345). While Valdez and Covarrubias drew inspiration from chola/o culture not all Chicanas expressed their fashion through cultural aesthetics for example Alice Bag recalls that her glam rock inspired outfits singled her out in East Los Angeles. Through glam rock or punk cholas fashion within punk speaks to a rebellion against the social and economic disinvestment experienced in working-class neighborhoods and a reconfiguration of gender expression. Chicana and Latina punks continue to draw inspiration from punk and their communities to continue a specific aesthetic of punk.

The exhibition *Axis Mundo: Queer Networks in Los Angeles* (2017), similar to *Vexing* offers insight into how art, and community collided with various social movements such as the Chicano movement, gay liberation movement, the women's movements, the AIDS crisis, and cultural formations such as punk from the 1960s to the 1990s (Chavoya, Frantz, and Gomez-Barris 2017, 23). The exhibit centers Edmundo "Mundo" Meza who was born in Tijuana, Mexico in 1955 lived in Huntington Park and East Los Angeles. He died in 1985 due to HIV/AIDS related complications. Mundo's art was the catalyst that holds the various networks

that connected the artists exhibited (Chavoya et al. 2017, 25). In creating an exhibit based on constellation and not networks, the curators seek to contest traditional curatorial practices to make connections within different but overlapping networks. Another goal of the exhibit is to recover losses from the AIDS epidemic through a praxis of recovery dependent on what loved ones saved (Chavoya et al. 2017, 35). This important exhibition connected punk, queer, Latinx and art and their continual contestation of boundaries of gender, sexuality, art and musical practices.

Queer and punk inherently speak to each other as both in similar and distinct ways disrupt normative societal values. Scholars have pointed out the importance to recognize how racialized queer punk feminist and non-normative genders and sexualities have been instrumental to punk and advocate obfuscating canonical accounts (Ngô and Stinson 2012; Halberstam 2005; Nyong'o 2008; Nguyen 2012; Ngô 2012). To address the muddling, I begin with Cathy Cohen's (1997) noteworthy essay, "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?" where she is calling for a capacious return to a queer politic that offers an intersectional analysis for those who sit outside heteronormative practices, including punks. Tavia Nyong'o (2005) builds on the work of Cohen to trace the origins of the word punk by moving beyond the common use "of "punk" as black vernacular for "faggot" or 'queer'" (23). Instead, what Nyong'o finds is that punk has been historically used to refer to the aberrations of blackness within histories of sexual violence that are spurred by white supremacist society (2005, 23). This revelation importantly offers a different point of entry into punk that is separated from its inherent attributions to white subcultures and instead directly points to how sex, race, and gender are fundamental to punk. Jack Halberstam (2005) mediates temporality alongside punk and queerness to unhinge the idea that participation in subculture is reserved for

youth—specifically white, cis-gender, young men. Instead, Halberstam suggest that queer subcultures are significant in producing alternative temporalities that reject values of mainstream culture and gay and lesbian culture. Speaks to the importance and continual work of queers to create spaces or engage in practices of Latinx punk placemaking such as Club Scum.

Punks' imbrication with sexualities and genders as previously explored is visible through fashion. For example, Dee Dee Ramone was known to be a sex-worker whose fashion influenced the look of his band The Ramones. Or perhaps a more apparent connection is the store SEX opened by Vivienne Westwood and Malcom McLaren in 1974. In line with punk sensibility of shock and awe Westwood and McLaren drew from gay culture and iconography to create looks. The trends of using sex as subversive caught on and was visible primarily through women in punk like Siouxsie Sioux. However, the use of gay subcultures was an act of rebellious and not necessarily a call for gay rights. Despite the appropriation of subcultures for self-fashioning purposes, non-normative sexualities and genders were very present in punk. In the late 1970s, Jayne County, fiercely identified as a woman, she is said to be the first openly trans singer of rock. County surfaced during the gay liberation movement and the rise of punk. Her fierce performance would inspire punk and the fashioning of glam rock (Nault 2017). Unfortunately, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia marked County's experience in punk when she was assaulted in New York at CBGB and was left to defend herself without support from others (Nault 2017, 54). County now a legend in her own right offers a glimmer into the queer potentialities of punk. In Los Angeles Darby Crash from The Germs, Phranc from Nervous Gender, Alice Bag from the Bags and Vaginal Cream Davis sonically and aesthetically influenced the formation of the punk scene. Jose Esteban Muñoz (2013) captures the mythology that revolved Crash and his band, specifically, he was interested in how The Germs generated

what he calls a "punk rock commons, a being with" (99). For Muñoz the punk commons were specific to a historical and economic time, place, and synergies that yearned "for more in the face of scarcity, which does more than simply reject negation, but instead, works through it to imagine a being-in-common within the negative" (2013, 109). Muñoz through Darby Crash meditates queerness or "being with" as a politic against conformity that seeks for potentialities.

Differently, Nervous Gender, continued contestation of boundaries of gender, sexuality, art, and musical practices. Nervous Gender formed in 1978 in Los Angeles, California. It included band members Gerardo Velasquez, Edward Stapleton, Phranc, and Michael Ochoa.[19] The sound of Nervous Gender was considered too eccentric even amongst punks' non-conformity, they distorted keyboards and synthesizers, to create a new sound or what would be known as synth punk. Gunckel notes that their performances at the Vex received negative reception revealing the tensions around gender and sexuality that emerged in the East Los Angeles punk scene (2017, 277). Despite the reception they received, their performance engaged in "constant (re) definition hinged on a discursive relationality to art and queerness, just as these concepts were inextricable from the parallel social and creative networks central to punk's cultural position in Los Angeles" (Gunckel 2017, 271). I also read their dissonant sounds as queer noise that disrupted melodic traditional song formations. Phranc's participation in the bands Nervous Gender, Catholic Discipline, and Castration Squad and later their folksongs are important to the queer punks genealogies. Phranc describes herself as "the All-American Jewish Lesbian Folksinger …. performer and visual artists whose work uses both humor and anger to interrogate traditional gender perspectives."[20] When Phranc left the punk scene in the 1980s it

[19] The lineup of the band has changed over the years.

[20] For more visit http://www.phranc.la.

was a time when women and queers were being pushed out and she continued performing folksongs and even opened for mainstream artists like The Smiths. Phranc's departure from the punk scene did not mark an end to their presence in punk. For example, Phranc was embraced by Queercore, the band Team Dresch[21] has a song titled "Uncle Phranc." Although Phranc in not Latinx they the networks referenced in *Axis* Mundo but more so their affinities between music movements positions her as a bridge from punk, folk, queer core, riot grrrl, and future generations through their volunteerism at Chicas Rockeras SELA.

Another important figure is the legendary Vaginal Cream Davis, a performer, visual artists, and writer who emerged into the LA punk scene in the 1970s with her first art-punk, Afro Sisters. Davis repertoire extends from publications of zines such as Fertile La Toya Jackson, or Cholita! a band they formed with Alice Bag. The work of Davis in the punk scene and artworld has been impactful and is still unfolding. I would be remiss if I did not mention Jose Esteban Muñoz, who used the term "terrorist drag" to describe how Davis explored and critique how they were "othered" through an in-your-face punk approach (1999). The recent publication *Provisional Notes for a Disappeared City* by photographer Reynaldo Rivera, shares correspondence between Rivera and Davis that offer a glimpse into the Los Angeles of a different time. Rudy Garcia, who I write about in chapter 2 and 3 was deeply influenced by Davis who took him "under their wing." Alice Bag, Darby Crash, Phranc with Nervous Gender, and Vaginal Cream Davis made it possible for queercore or homocore to transpire. Jose Esteban Muñoz reminds us to "resist the impulse to simple queer an object, phenomenon, or historical moment and instead attend to it with an understanding of lines of queer genealogical connectivity as something other than tautological" (2013, 96). The lineage of these aforementioned artists

[21] Team Dresch are a punk/ Queercore band who formed in the 1990s (https://www.teamdresch.com/bio-1).

significantly pushed against assimilationism that took over punk and although queercore would not officially emerge until 1985 their work forms part of queer punk genealogies.

In 1985, queercore officially originated in Ontario, Canada with the publication of the queer punk zine *J.D.s.* Queercore, can be described as a queer, punk, and artistic scene that responded to heteronormativity (the assumption that everyone is heterosexual) and homonormativity (the assumption that queer people want to assimilate into normative institutions such as marriage) within punk and the broader LGBTQ community (Nualt 2017, Ciminelli and Knox 2005, du Plessis and Chapman 1997, Spencer 2005). In 1985, G.B. Jones and Bruce LaBruce published *J.D.s* to capture the sentiment of dissent against all conventions to foster an imagined queer punk scene. Jones and La Bruce first used homocore and then used queercore giving a name to the scene (Spencer 2005). Queercore spoke to the broader conventions and norms in mainstream culture while simultaneously critiquing the punk scene and its turn towards a more exclusive environment, particularly in and through hardcore punk. Hardcore punk emerged as a subgenre of punk in the early 1980s. The essence of hardcore punk is fast, raw, gritty, sonics paired with aggressive lyrics and slam dancing (du Plessis and Chapman 1997, Goldthorpe 1992, Blush 2010). Queercore similarly took on these sonic elements and mixed them with in-your-face sexuality that was part of punk to promote a queer anti-establishment politic. In hardcore punk, the default is the "angry young white men," and in queercore, while perhaps a more inclusive scene, it also centers white queer people (Nault 2017). Following hegemonic historicizations of cultures of queercore and hardcore negated the experiences of minoritized communities such as women, queer, and trans Black and people of color.

Queercore made its way to Los Angeles and San Francisco, for example, we can locate Davis as part of the Los Angeles scene and the band Pansy Division from the bay area. Davis

and Pansy Division inspired Rudy Garcia to start his zine Scutter in the early 2000s. Scutter zine was a platform for Rudy to express his queerness, punkness, and being a Latino.[22] The success of Scutter fest led Garcia to then organize Scutter Fest in 2001, his own festival. He first began to organize shows that booked mostly queer bands, for example, he booked successful shows at Mr. T's Bowl in Highland Park, and they were successful. Taking a DIY approach, he just wrote to bands asking if they'd be interested in participating and some agreed, then he called venues, and relied on his punk networks to finalize details. The first Scutter Fest was a three-day event with each day held at different venues (Mr. T's Bowl, The Smell, Fais Do Do, and Luna Soul Cafe). The festival featured bands, discussion panels, poetry and film screenings. Notably, Garcia booked bands like Pansy Division, Los Super Elegantes, screened *Mas Alla de Los Gritos* (1999) by Martin Sorrondeguy and shorts by Bruce La Bruce, the panel featured Molly Newman from the Riot Grrrl bands Bratmobile and The Frumpies, and deejay sets from Raquel Gutierrez and Molly Newman. In the early 2000s, Garcia organized a total of three festivals, in the process he connected genealogies of punk, feminism, and queerness through his Latinx identity on a shoestring budget and with very little production experience. However, this experience would be one of many events produced by Garcia that would shape the Los Angeles alternative scene where punk, queerness, and Latinidad coalesce into Latinx punk placemaking.

Methods

Constellations of the Abject relies on interdisciplinary and collaborative approach to understand how Latinx punk placemaking forms in Southeast Los Angeles. I use ethnographic fieldwork, participant observation, oral histories, alongside visual analysis of ephemera and performances. My involvement in the punk community of Southeast Los Angeles began when I

[22] Rudy Garcia, Personal Interview, June 15, 2020.

was in high school and has continued, thus, fostering relationships of trust. The stories, pictures, and ephemera shared with me belong to the community; it is their story. Although, I benefit from researching and writing about punk placemaking in the form of an advanced degree, I am committed to sharing the rich and essential histories of brown, queer, feminists from SELA.

I first began my research in 2016 by attending the monthly night queer punk party Scum and volunteering every summer with Chicas Rockeras Southeast Los Angeles (CRSELA). In 2017, CRSELA welcomed new core-organizers or comadres as they like to identify. Given my positionality as a researcher I was hesitant to transition from volunteer to a comadre as I had kept research and community organizing spaces as separate. My primary concern was power dynamics and privilege as an academic that might cloud my participating. Navigating power dynamics continued as my research continued and it is something I am always interrogating particularly when conducting oral histories. Secondly, I was concerned about the "insider/outsider dilemma"[23] of researching my own community and how I would navigate that as someone who was now in the place of decision making particularly with CRSELA. I attended an informational meeting for prospective comadres and learned more about their non-hierarchical organizing practices and center the needs of the community in decision making. Organizing as a collective ensured that everyone's voice is heard made it, so I felt at ease about my role as a researcher and organizer. Retrospectively, I reflected on my own insistence to create a divide between academia and community work. Chicana feminist Michelle Tellez writes, "If we are committed to issues of social justice and inclusion in the community outside the ivory tower, then we cannot justify abandoning that commitment as academes: the paths to both are

[23] Patricia Zavella, Patricia. "Feminist Insider Dilemmas: Constructing Ethnic Identity with Chicana Informants," *Frontiers* (1993) 13, no. 3: 53-76.

one and the same." (2005, 55). Thus, I realized that both could co-exist when the goal is a commitment to social justice while also maintaining a relationship to my community.

Once I had a deeper understanding of both Scum and CRSELA I identified organizers and decision makers who I interviewed. I proceeded with oral histories a method that aligns with my commitment to social justice, feminist, and critical community engagement that is consistently attuned to the various power dynamics in the process. More so, oral histories facilitate a collective process to produce knowledge, said differently, Maylei Blackwell reminds us that, "oral histories recuperate subjugated knowledges and uncover genealogies of resistance, and they transform the landscape of meaning and discursive fields in which that knowledge is produced" (2011, 15). Thus, I center queer and feminist Latinx punks it offers a different perspective in the history of Los Angeles punk, riot grrrl, and queercore, and queer nightlife in Los Angeles. I conducted twenty oral histories. I first interviewed the co-founders and comadres of CRSELA, Mayra Aguilar, Vikki Gutman, Tina Mejia, and Noel Lozano.[24] I also interviewed Mainé Mejia and Marí Barron who volunteered at CRSELA but most importantly form the decorations committee. Lastly, I interviewed volunteers who were former youth participants at CRSELA. For Club Scum, I interviewed Rudy Garcia, Ray Sanchez, Taco, and Lady Forbidden. In addition, I interviewed other queer Latinx punks who participated in both Scum and CRSELA. Interviewees initially were conducted in person at a location of their choosing in order to create a comfortable environment. However, due to the global pandemic of Covid-19 in 2020 many interviews were conducted over zoom. Shifting to an online platform created unique challenges. Some people were unfamiliar with zoom, others had unstable internet connection, and some seemed nervous by the video recording although I assured that I would only use the audio.

[24] Two additional members left the organization before I began to gather the oral histories

Consequently, as I conducted the oral histories what also began to emerge was the importance of the ephemera such as flyers, zines, buttons, t-shirts, posters, etc. Thus, the emergence of a digital archive transpired. My process to creating a digital archive was guided by of Dr. Maria E. Cotera co-founder of Chicana Por Mi Raza (CPMR), a digital memory archive. In 2016, I was introduced to Dr. Cotera and learned digitizing guidelines from the Smithsonian. I contributed to CPMR by digitizing photographs and documents while maintaining a database of the private collection. The training for CPMR mirrored that of skill-sharing practices in DIY and punk spaces where the goal is for people to access knowledge. Skill sharing also embodies a practice of making learning accessible and affordable while fostering community building and can include intergenerational exchange of knowledge. Thus, merging the practices of CPMR with a DIY ethos and skill-sharing practice during the summer of 2019, I began to create a communal digital archive of privately held documents including photographs, CD and tape inserts, zines, and flyers photographs, and buttons that belonged to Rudy Garcia and Mayra Aguilar. To date, I have digitized over 2,500 photos and documents. Although, I digitized a large number of ephemera, Covid-19 also disrupted the process of digitizing and moving forward with the project. Yet, my proximity, positionality, and investment as a scholar, punk, and community organizer raised is SELA has allowed me access to voluminous personal archives are accessible to me based on intimate ties to queer and feminist punks from SELA and East Los Angeles. The experience in working with oral histories and digital archives provided invaluable experience and confidence to merge oral histories and digital archives methodologies and apply them to my research. Lastly, I visually and sonically analyze performances, personal digital archives, and visual aesthetics. These digital archives alongside and in conversation with in-depth oral histories and performances form the methodological foundation my study draws from, reveal

how queer feminist punks respond to disinvestment, environmental injustices, political corruption, and threats to gentrification by enacting in Latinx punk placemaking.

Chapter Outline

My dissertation brings together a children's rock camp, a queer punk club, and personal archives that are connected through a shared admiration of punk music, feeling like outcasts, and the desire to provide and create spaces in their neighborhoods. Drawing from experiences of growing up in disenfranchised communities like SELA queer and feminist punks necessarily center their experiences that emerge from migration, exploitation, residential and educational segregation, resource extraction, environmental injustices, and economic inequalities. Growing up in a doom gloom community forms an abject positionality that is emphasized by their affinity to queerness, punk, and feminism one that is not interested in becoming productive neoliberal subjects. In other words, their outsider positionality as a subculture within a subculture situates them in an outsider positionality that becomes a productive site as it sets forward the purpose behind Latinx punk placemaking. Disidentifying (Muñoz 1999) from their Chicana/o and Latina/o cultural traditions forces feminist and queer punks to create strategies to negotiate and transform feelings of alienation into Latinx punk placemaking drawing from punk and their culture (Johnson 2013).

The first chapter of the dissertation, "Y Lla Llego Nuestro Tiempo," focuses on Chicas Rockeras South East Los Angeles (CRSELA), a rock camp for girls, gender-expansive, and LGBTQ youth. In 2015, CRSELA [25] is organized by a group of punks that call themselves "las comadres" and meet year-long to plan the week of camp. For this chapter I pay attention to the camp's aesthetics and soundscapes through what I call tactile memorability to illustrate

[25] https://www.chicasrockerassela.org/.

disruption to the institutionalization of the school campus, while also paying attention intergenerational practices of skill sharing, to understand how gender is reimagined and renegotiated.

The second chapter "Latinx Punk Placemaking: The Queer Soundscapes in Los Angeles" foregrounds Club Scum, a monthly queer punk party in Los Angeles, to exemplify the generative potentialities of queer placemaking that are counterintuitive to the neoliberal project of assimilation. I examine placemaking, sound, and performances to consider the practice of Latinx punk placemaking in a dive bar on the outskirts of Los Angeles.

The concluding chapter, "Tactile & Sonic Memorability in Archives" centers the process of how brown Latinx punks engage in documenting themselves through new technologies and social media. I explore the practice of queer and feminist punk archives through DIY (do-it-yourself) ethos, practices, and rasquache as a way of capturing localized histories. This is important given the ephemeral nature of punk and queer nightlife where bands, venues, and scenes continually shift. The archives offer insight into how archiving is a form of Latinx punk place making that historicized the ever-changing community.

My contribution is to create both brown queer and feminist genealogy of punks through an analysis of abject communities formed by multiple disidentifications to consider how space, sonic, and temporalities that inform the process and production of space, that wrestles with the constraints of neoliberalism such as gentrification and a binary understanding that communities are either resistant or assimilating in larger cultural norms to explore how feeling like an outsider creates placemaking

Chapter 1: Chicas Rockeras: Y Ya LLego Nuestro Tiempo

Introduction

In 2016, on a hot summer Los Angeles morning, I made my way to Huntington Park to the volunteer orientation for Chicas Rockeras Southeast Los Angeles (CRSELA),[1] a local rock camp for girls, trans, and gender expansive youth. I was commuting from West Los Angeles to Southeast Los Angeles (SELA), a 13-mile drive that can take upwards of two hours. Although I grew up in SELA, my time on the west side coupled with the rise of charter schools had shifted the landscape of schools in area. The summer camp took place at Aspire Ollin University Preparatory Academy, and I remember feeling lost and unsure as to the exact location of the school. Aspire Ollin is a charter school located off Pacific Boulevard in Huntington Park. Pacific Boulevard, known colloquially as "La Pacific," is a popular shopping destination for the community of SELA where you can find anything from shoes and quinceañera dresses to appliances, banks, restaurants, and more. Aspire Ollin sis is located off Pacific Blvd. and 58th street, a stretch of La Pacific that connects the cities of Huntington Park and Vernon. Vernon is an industrial area with warehouses, factories, and meatpacking plants and a small population. 58th is a small street that can be easily missed, and the school blends in with the other industrial facilities in the area. I drove past Ollin, made a U-turn, and saw in the distance a black sandwich board with the CRSELA logo signaling the entrance.

Despite google maps telling me I had arrived at my destination, I still felt uncertain. I made my way to the door, where I saw a small table covered in a Mexican tablecloth, volunteer badges, and a sign-in sheet. Behind the table, two giant banners covered the bright orange school

[1] CRSELA at the time described itself as a rock camp for girls throughout the years it has updated it mission to include gender expansive and trans youth.

lockers. The first was a banner made from a bed sheet that read "Y Lla llego nuestro tiempo"[2] in old English letters. The second was a vinyl banner with the CRSELA logo designed by visual artist Cristy C. Road. At the time, I did not know what "Y Lla llego nuestro tiempo" referenced, but any hesitancy or doubt I had was gone. As I made my way to the Multipurpose Room (MPR) where the orientation was being held, I caught a glimpse of the brightly decorated hallway adorned in colorful paper streamers hanging across the ceiling and bulletin boards covered in posters. The loud punk music and visuals created a sensorial overload.

The MPR was similarly brightly decorated, with hanging Taco piñatas and colorful papel picado. A stage in the middle of the room was framed by an accordion garland made of bright colorful tissue paper, streamers, and paper flowers. The speakers also had different color streamers flowing down, creating a vibrant cascade. Bright pink plastic tablecloths covered the tables arranged in half-circle of along the back of the room, that framed the "friendship pit." The walls of the MPR were also lined up with orange lockers and again the bright and colorful accordion garlands streamed across them.

Little did I know, those bright and colorful decorations that captivated me that first day of CRSELA would become vital to understanding how Chicana and Latina punks in Southeast Los Angeles engage in Latinx punk placemaking. In this chapter, I focus on the relationship between decorations at CRSELA's camp and Latinx punk placemaking. To review, Latinx punk placemaking describes how queer and feminist punks respond to the disinvestment and deindustrialization of Southeast Los Angeles. These experiences of disinvestment generate feelings of abjection and unbelonging. Thus, I argue that feelings of unbelonging alongside punk produce spaces such as CRSELA, where alternative genealogies and non-hegemonic

[2] Translates to "our time has come."

subjectivities for young girls and teens materialize. The visual aesthetics at CRSELA's rock camp play a key role in Latinx punk placemaking, the disruption of the institutionalism of schools; the decorations are also connected to issues of environmentalism, the gendered division of labor, and economics. In essence this is a chapter about DIY and anti-capitalist punk practices. In order to engage Latinx punk placemaking, I will first lay out the theoretical frameworks that guide this chapter. Secondly, I will provide an overview of the history of the Riot Grrrl movement to address how it influenced working-class queer Latinx punks to organize a camp. Lastly, I analyze the decorations alongside oral histories, to exemplify how visual aesthetics perform the task of Latinx punk placemaking.

Figure 2 Anel "Y Ya Llego Nuestro Tiempo" Photograph by CRSELA AV Club

Neoliberal Excess

The aesthetics and decorations of CRSELA disrupt the classroom setting specifically to undiscipline campers and release any inhibitions. French philosopher, Louis Althusser (2001), identifies schools as part of the state "apparatus" that institutionalize children to reproduce hierarchies with the goal of preserving hegemonies. Through a social justice lens, decorations at CRSELA disrupt the state apparatus's goal. Roderick Ferguson (2012) similarly thinks through

the role of educational institutions that reproduce neoliberal ideas of incorporation for minoritized subjects. In alignment with the discourse of empowerment and confidence that is included in CRSELA's mission statement, the decorations at CRSELA simultaneously performing the task of disrupting hegemonies while also denying assimilation. I examine here the visual aesthetics of CRSELA through these tensions that are informed by a capitalism and neoliberalism.

In Southeast Los Angeles, white flight and deindustrialization shaped the uneven development of the area. Southeast Los Angeles's entanglement with racism, neoliberalism, and globalization have shaped the community and those who live in the area.[3] In the 1970s, neoliberalism emerged as a "political economic theory" (Harvey 2005, 2) that has shaped and dominated the end of the twentieth century in the U.S. and globally. Neoliberalism calls for the deregulation of the market and advocates for privatization, while also decreasing the funding of public services. Thus, neoliberalism creates precarious social and economic conditions for marginalized communities, who must then rely on improvisation for survival. The shift from manufacturing jobs to the service economy, or what is known as the Rust Belt, experienced across the nation was different for Los Angeles. In the 1980s, migration from Mexico and Central America provided an exploitable labor pool as union power decreased. This dynamic made way for the Latinoization of the global economy and the assembly line, which was unique to Los Angeles. Low wages, an economic recession, and decreased funding for social services made living in Los Angeles difficult. This includes the circumstances that informed the Latinx punk scene of the time, but also the conditions under which future punks grew up. Saskia Sassen[4]

[3] In the introduction I address white flight, deindustrialization, environmentalism, and forced migrations of Mexico, Central and Latin American and how they shaped the settler community of SELA.

[4] Sassen, Saskia, *The Global City*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001

describes this as the hourglass economy, where upper-class employment is stable, the middle class is dwindling, but there is growth in low skill jobs to support the elite. The decreased spending on public services made way for non-profits to step in and provide needed services. The non-profit sector has been problematized, through what is descried as the non-profit industrial complex, which speaks to the bind between the state, philanthropic foundations, the wealthy, and non-profits. The non-profit industrial complex framework emphasizes how the funding process for non-profits shapes its operational structure to answer to philanthropic foundations and governmental agencies who curtail radical and structural change.[5] In other words, non-profits are curtailed from engaging in transformational political change and addressing community needs, as they must comply to the conditions set by founders. As neoliberalism continues to cut funding to public services and shape the operation of non-profits, what becomes evident is that free-markets do not make social equality a possibility; instead, those considered to be unproductive subjects are actually condemned to reduced life chances and an increased proximity to mass incarceration and deportations (Spade 2015). Further, the idea of a free market occludes the existence of racism as everyone is presumed to have the same economic opportunities. In Southeast Los Angeles, the continuing disinvestment and environmental injustices that reduced life chances are particularly felt by the community.

To examine aesthetics, I engage with the work of Jillian Hernandez (2020) and Deb Vargas (2014). Specifically, I build from how they reframe excess as abundance that works against the grain of respectability politics. Minoritized communities that do not adhere to the neoliberal logics of "pulling themselves up by the bootstraps" or helping themselves via the "free-market" are marked for premature death, and/or as surplus bodies. These surplus bodies are

[5] Inctie! Women of Color Against Violence, *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex,* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017).

needed to serve as the underpaid workforce or as bodies incarcerated in prisons or detention centers. Finding richness in excess as non-productivity disrupts the attempted erasure of marginalized communities that are marked as surplus. Excess then is visibility without asking for legibility or as Hernandez writes, "excess as setting neoliberal discourse ablaze by revealing the class, gender, sexual, and racial differences it occludes. One of the powers of sexual-aesthetic excess is that it makes class burn" (2020, 18). The work of Hernandez is focused on embodied practices of excess of Black and Latina young girls and women. Differently, I focus in this on young Latinx punks and how they create excess through decorations. In essence I am interested in how decorations "set the classroom ablaze."

Decorations are primarily used to improve an object, person, or space by adding something may seem as unnecessary. Thus, decorations are often undervalued because they are not essential to the task at hand. The use of decorations ranges from self-adornment, interior decorating, events, and parties to name a few. My focus is on party decorations as they intertwine with the decorations at CRSELA. While decorations are deemed as nonessential, the party supply industry in 2021 reached a $12.1 billion.[6] This multi-billion-dollar industry ranges from lavish event planners to discount stores and small owned businesses. The cost of party decorations and planning has resulted in many websites and books dedicated to cutting expenses by crafting your own décor. The concept of DIY (do-it-yourself), or rasquachismo, has been instrumental to surviving or making do with the available resources. In working-class, immigrant, Latinx communities, parties are often hosted in backyards, front yards, or driveways. These parties are often decorated around a theme with a specific color scheme that is primarily orchestrated by the mothers and women in the families. While decorations may seem as

[6] Party Supplies Market: Global Industry Trends, Share, Size, Growth, Opportunity and Forecast 2022-2027

inconsequential at CRSELA, they not only disrupt the monotony of the classrooms, but also inspire and educate. Art Historian Julia Bryan-Wilson's (2017) notion of textile politics is useful to consider how crafting decorations subverts scholastic institutions. Textile politics consider "how textiles have been used to advance political agendas, but also to indicate a procedure of making politics material" (7). Textiles at CRSELA are a form of Latinx punk placemaking as they are literally used to demarcate ties to a geographical location and histories of queers. Latinx punk placemaking emerges at CRSELA by merging DIY practices learned in punk, rasquachismo, and traditions of placemaking through party decorations. In the following section, I will provide a historical overview of Riot Grrrl, Lady Fest, and Girls Rock Camps to understand the various influences of CRSELA's rock camp.

Figure 3 CRSELA Letters Image by Author

Riot Grrrl

The Riot Grrrl movement and scene of the 1990s called out sexism in punk and society at large (Rosenburg 1998). Riot Grrrl[7] was a movement, a music scene, an art practice, and a punk

[7] Riot Grrrl was coined by a play on words by Allison Wolfe and Molly Newman, both members of the feminist punk band Bratmobile; Tobi Vail, member of the feminist punk band Bikini Kill, and Jen Smith from Washington D.C.

feminist politic. Through their own interpretation of the slogan the "personal is political," borrowed from the feminist movement of the 1970s, Riot Grrrl brought issues of sexual assault to the forefront, formed feminist consciousness groups, participated in skill sharing practices, and reclaimed girl culture. Feminism and punk both informed Riot Grrrl's emergence, with the use of the word "girl" in reference to the confidence girls experienced during childhood, alongside the sound of a growl to express disaffection (Kooch 2006, Rosenburg 1998 and Schilt 2003). Zines[8], concerts, workshops, and festivals would create space to address these goals of Riot Grrrl and eventually make it possible to create space for "Grrrl Love." The demise of Riot Grrrl is largely attributed to mainstream media attention received that dismissed the politics of the Riot Grrrl movement. Another factor that splintered the movement was unaddressed race and class issues. The message of Riot Grrrl was centered on the experiences of white and middle-class women. However, the presumption that all Riot Grrrl's had the same experiences meant that differences were inadequately unaddressed. Despite the shortcomings of Riot Grrrl, the movement has continued to influence Chicanas and Latinas.

Race Riots & Riot Grrrls

Riot Grrrl's failure to address race differences within the scene is in misalignment with the fact that the movement was partly inspired by xenophobic and racist attitudes that prevailed in the early 1990s. Specifically, they were inspired by the Cinco de Mayo Riots[9] in Washington DC; the riots against police brutality emerged after an immigrant Salvadoran man was shot (and

[8] Zines are homemade publications, example of Riot Grrrl zines are Jigsaw by Tobi Vail, Girl Germs by Alison Wolfe, and Grunk by Dasha notably explored racism in punk.

[9] The riot lasted a little over two days resulting in 230 arrests and the damage of 60 police cars, 21 busses, and 30 businesses.

survived) by a Black police officer.[10] News of the police shooting quickly spread, and Black and Latinx community members gathered in the street to protest the police and soon began rioting. The response from the Latinx community of Mount Pleasant was an accumulation of marginalization, hyper-policing, being ignored by politicians, and distrust of the police. What momentarily emerged was solidarity between immigrant and working-class Latinx and working-class Black communities, who also experienced discrimination and police brutality (Scallen 2020). When Jen Smith[11] shared the news of the race riots with other Riot Grrrl's, she said, "now we need a grrrl riot" (Don't Need You). Latinx Riot Grrrl's in Los Angeles also experienced race riots in the 1990s, with the Rodney King uprising, deindustrialization, and sexism. When Riot Grrrl made its way to Los Angeles and bands like Bikini Kill performed in Montebello, they spoke to feelings of frustration and exclusion that continue to inform Latinx punks. In the next section I provide an overview to Ladyfest and how Latinxs punks reimagined the D.I.Y. festival.

LadyFest

The first LadyFest[12] took place in Olympia, Washington in 2000. Ladyfest was organized and co-founded by people who were involved in the Riot Grrrl movement and music scene, and who felt that there was still a need for women in rock to have their own festival.[13] Allison Wolfe

[10] Emily Friedman, "Mount Pleasant Riots: May 5 Woven Into Neighborhood's History," *WAMU,* May 5, 2011 https://wamu.org/story/11/05/05/mount_pleasant_riots_may_5_woven_into_neighborhoods_history/; Police officers were strolling the neighborhood of Mount Pleasant, they came across a group men who were drinking in public. Language barrier between the police and the men intensified tensions, resulting in Daniel Enrique Gomez, an immigrant from El Salvador, getting shot by one of the police officers.

[11] A Riot Grrrl from Washington D.C.

[12] Ladyfest, as "a non-profit, community-based event designed by and for women to showcase, celebrate and encourage the artistic, organizational and political work and talents of women. It will feature performances by bands, spoken word artists, authors, visual artists and more!!! It will include workshops, panels, and dance parties. This is a woman-run event but all are welcome to attend." Ladyfest.org.

[13] In *Don't Need You* (2006) Allison Wolfe lead singer of the riot grrrl band Bratmobile, felt that spaces were needed after Riot Grrrl fizzled in a conversation with Corin Tucker, singer of the Riot Grrrl Sleater-Kinney.

then suggested a festival where women controlled every aspect of the event, but "more independent" than Lilith Fair. Eventually, they decided to host Ladyfest, and instead of trademarking the title Ladyfest, organizers encouraged people to name their own festivals in their hometowns. Following the ethos of punk and Riot Grrrl, the choice to make festival organizing accessible to others rejected capitalist and institutional hierarchical practices. Ladyfest had musical performances, art exhibits, discussion panels, film screenings, and workshops. Much like Riot Grrrl, Ladyfest was started by some of the same cis, white, and middle-class feminists, thus, potentially excluding non-binary and trans folks. The name itself, Ladyfest, centers a particular type of femininity that has historically been reserved for white, middle-class women and off-limits for women of color. This dynamic speaks to the larger feminist politics of the time, or what is called the third-wave of feminism, with which Ladyfest aligns. Third wave feminism dominated the 1990s, and centered girlhood, femininity, and the experiences of women under the age of 40. Elizabeth K. Keenan points to the "tensions in attempting to balance a redefinition or reclamation of femininity with ever-present concerns that a hegemonic, patriarchal, mass (pop) culture will remove alternate meanings, reduce the transgressive potential of, and ultimately reabsorb new or alternate femininities" (2008, 378-79). Once again, notions of white femininity were reclaimed through Ladyfest, while the experiences and feminist theories from Black and women of color were ignored.[14] Despite the shortcomings of Ladyfest, many young feminists across the country and world organized festivals in their own hometowns — including in Los Angeles.

Ladyfest comes to Los Angeles

[14] Importantly, musicians like L7 and Hole rejected the idea of a "Lady" and instead embraced "messiness" through fashion by having smeared make-up or seemingly not caring about fashion as white women they could perform versions of messy femininity.

In 2002 Los Angeles hosted its first Ladyfest.[15] It was a four-day festival and tickets sold for $60, profiting the East LA Women's Center.[16] Performers for Ladyfest Los Angeles included Exene Cervenka from the legendary Los Angeles punk band X; Phranc folk singer and former bandmember of Nervous Gender; and queercore rock band Team Dresch.[17] The panel discussions centered questions of gender and specifically trans exclusion that occurred at the Michigan's Women's festival. Dr. Kristen Schilt was a graduate student at UCLA in 2002 and wrote a review of Ladyfest highlighting that there were two panel discussions about women of color, but the conversations were unfocused, and attendance was low. I found very little documentation of Ladyfest Los Angeles 2002, but it appears as though race tensions were still not adequately addressed in this grown-up version of "Girl Love."

Fast-forward to seven years later, Ladyfest Los Angeles would re-emerge but this time through the vision of Latinx punks. The 2009 Ladyfest Los Angeles vastly differed from the 2002 festival. The festival was free to attend and was hosted at Chuco's Justice Center,[18] a community space in South Central. Ladyfest Los Angeles 2009 hosted workshops, band performances, and DJ sets. Noticeably, the flyer for Ladyfest Los Angeles noted a discussion regarding "sexual assault & machismo in the punk scene." In 2013 Ladyfest Los Angeles was

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[15] Susan Carpenter, "The Gloves Are Off," *Los Angeles Times,* November 7, 2002 https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2002-nov-07-wk-alt7-story.html; Katie Mitchell, "Women Celebrate with art, poetry in Ladyfest," *Dialy Bruin,* November 7, 2002 https://dailybruin.com/2002/11/07/women-celebrate-with-art-poetr; https://kristinasherylwong.com/about/fannie-wong/; https://www.grassrootsfeminism.net/cms/node/103

[16] East LA Women's center is a non-profit organization that supports survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

[17] Other performers included Deerhoof and Pleasant Gheman.

[18] Chuco's Justice Center is home to the Youth Justice Coalition, an organization is working to build a youth, family, and formerly and currently incarcerated people's movement to challenge America's addiction to incarceration and race, gender and class discrimination in Los Angeles County's, California's and the nation's juvenile and criminal injustice systems. The Chucos Justice Center serves as a community center and resource space for community and local organizers. The space is dedicated to all the youth lost to the streets, prisons, police violence and deportation. It is named after Jesse "Chuco" Barrera a community organizer whose life was lost at the young age of 24 due to senseless violence.

organized again by Latinx punks from working-class and immigrant communities. They specifically described Ladyfest as a "DIY festival made by and for queer, punx, migrant families, working class womyn and gender non-conforming artists and activists."[19] At the time, Vikki Gutman was an organizer for Ladyfest Los Angeles 2013, and she remembers that the description for the festival was intentionally written to explain the concept of the festival but also to move away from the concept of "lady." This signifies how working-class Latinas did not fully identify with Ladyfest, but still borrowed elements and refashioned Riot Grrrl and Ladyfest to make their own version that spoke to their material experiences.

Modifications to the elements of Riot Grrrl, Ladyfest, and DIY again took place when Chicas Rockeras South East Los Angeles hosted its first rock camp. The first camp originated in 2001, when Misty McElroy a student at Portland State University created the idea of a Rock 'n' Roll Camp for Girls as part of their Women Studies senior thesis. At the Rock 'n' Roll Camp for Girls, campers were encouraged to play music, take self-defense classes, and make zines (Dougher and Keenan 2012). Since 2001 girls rock camps have emerged all over the U.S. and the world, using a variation of names that are usually associated with the city or country such as Girls Rock Las Vegas or Girls Rock Dublin. The majority of rock camps for girls follow the template where in one-week, campers form a band, write a song, attend workshops, and perform at a showcase. Girls rock camps were broadly designed to empower young girls to play music and combat the gender disparity in the music industry. They are largely inspired by a DIY ethos in punk and the Riot Grrrl movement. DIY is an important tenant of rock camps because it

[19] Ladyfest Los Angeles social media accounts Facebook, https://www.facebook.com/LadyfestLosAngeles/; https://www.instagram.com/ladyfestlosangeles/?hl=en; https://mobile.twitter.com/ladyfestla,

encourages the idea that anyone can organize a rock camp in their hometown, and that anyone can learn and play an instrument.[20]

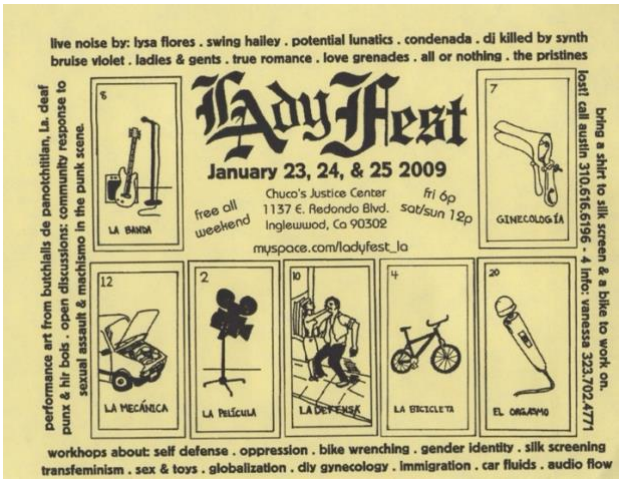

Figure 4 Ladyfest LA 2009 Flyer Courtesy of Mayra Aguilar

CRSELA

In Los Angeles, two girls rock camps are in operation. Rock N' Roll Camp for Girls Los Angeles was founded in 2010 by local musicians and activists[21] in the Westlake neighborhood that borders downtown Los Angeles. Three years later, CRSELA was founded by las comadres, the core organizers that co-founded the camp. CRSELA was envisioned in 2013 by five self-described punks, Vikki Gutman, Noel Lozano, Tina Mejia, Mayra Aguilar, and Marin. Las Comadres have all been part of the local punk scene and Southeast Los Angeles and the majority had volunteered at nearby girls rock camps. After volunteering, they were inspired to bring "rock camp magic" to the young girls of Southeast Los Angeles but also to showcase the beauty and history of the community. Rock N' Roll Camp for Girls Los Angeles importantly paved the way for CRSELA but remained inaccessible to working-class communities including the Southeast

[20] While there is not an official entity that oversees all the rock camps, the Girls Rock Camp Alliance (GRCA) was formed to build a network of support for rock camps across the country and globally.

[21] www.werock.la

Los Angeles community. Las Comadres envisioned a rock camp that was geographically accessible, affordable, and culturally relevant. First, the geographic expansiveness of Los Angeles coupled with heavy traffic and unreliable public transportation make the four miles a difficult commute. Secondly, they identified tuition cost as another barrier, as most rock camp tuitions cost anywhere from $200 - $500.[22] Lastly, Las Comadres wanted a rock camp that was culturally relevant to the predominantly Latinx, working-class, immigrant community of SELA. Alongside these goals, Las Comadres also wanted to create a socially conscious camp.

With these goals in mind, in the summer of 2015, las comadres hosted their first CRSELA camp. The logistical structure of camp followed other rock camps where in one week, campers attend workshops, learn an instrument, form a band, write a song, attend lunch time performances by local bands, and perform at a showcase. From the initial stages of planning CRSELA, it was important for las comadres to remove as many obstacles as possible that may have prevented camper participation. As previously mentioned, tuition cost and transportation where two major identified obstacles. However, it was also important to provide any materials needed for camp, that food be provided, for communication be bilingual, that programing be culturally relevant, and that most volunteers reflect the demographics of the community of Southeast Los Angeles. These identified needs were informed by their own experiential knowledge of growing up in the area and familiarity with the economic demographics of SELA. In an interview, Tina with me shared that even if a camp like CRSELA existed when she was a child, her mom, a single parent, would not be able to afford the tuition cost. However, meeting all these needs was not easy feat. Finding a location itself was difficult given the small budget they had and the requirements they needed to meet. The location would have to accommodate

[22] Some rock camps offer tuition assistance. For example, Tuition at Rock N' Roll Camp for Girls Los Angeles is $450 for one week., recently they began to offer sliding scale tuition.

the many rooms needed, be accessible to public transportation, and affordable. The difficulty in securing funding and a space speaks to the lack of support and access community organizations have to recreational spaces. Las comadres turned to charter schools outside the Los Angeles Unified School District, as the district imposed administrative and costly barriers. These multiple factors fostered a partnership between Ollin and CRSELA. At Ollin, las comadres found a supportive school principal who supported the vision of CRSELA, was excited about the camp, and waived fees instead of reserving for slots for Ollin students.

In popular culture, summer camps generate images of children being dropped off by their parents as they are whisked away from the suburbs to spend time in nature where they will craft and partake in outdoor activities. A rock camp hosted in Los Angeles vastly varies from this picturesque wholesome image of children in nature. CRSELA summer camp is not hosted in cabins, but in a charter school near industrial factories. The sterile environment of the surrounding area and the campus itself is transformed sonically and visually with instruments and decorations that explode in a burst of colors. This section arrives at the decorations and aesthetics as they perform the task of transforming a sterile educational setting, and calls attention to the devaluation of feminized labor. More so, I am interested in how these decorations perform the task of Latinx punk placemaking by tying genealogies of women of color in music, punk, and craft making.

Another World is Possible

Walking into CRSELA's rock camp you are instantly hit with a sensorial overload as music is loudly playing and the overwhelmingly bold colors of the decorations match the sonic energy. Momentarily you almost forget that you are in a school as there is a stage with a garland of glittery stars dangling in the background. The boldness of music and decorations intentionally

create an inviting atmosphere for the campers to shift the atmosphere of the campus and create an inspiring space where young girls and gender expansive youth can be themselves and release the behavioral expectations of a school. The decorations for rock camp were not initially included in the planning of camp it wasn't until Vikki's best friend and roommate, Marí Barron, expressed interest in supporting the planning of camp. However, at the time her father was gravely ill, and her availability was restricted. Her limited schedule prompted her to support CRSELA by planning decorations for camp with Vikki outside of the "official" meeting. In an interview with Marí she shared that her passion to decorate came from her mother who always took the time to add a banner or a balloon to mark special occasions. A year later in 2016, Mainé Muñoz Mejia joined CRSELA as a volunteer and helped with decorations. Maine grew up in South Gate and was part of the local SELA punk scene. Mainé and Marí both don't play any musical instruments so she asked herself, "what can I bring to the table?" After seeing the decorations from the first year she knew that is where she could contribute. Maíne, Marí, and Vikki would make up the unofficial CRSELA decorations committee.

Both Marí and Mainé's parents migrated from Mexico and settled in Southeast Los Angeles. Marí's parents moved to Bell Gardens after experiencing displacement from Venice, CA as it was undergoing gentrification. Mainé's parents migrated from Michoacán, Mexico and moved into South Gate, she is the eldest daughter in her family and identifies as a first-generation queer femme. They both continue to live in Southeast Los Angeles and the affective labor devoted to decorations at CRSELA's rock camp comes from their experience of growing up in the working-class community. Marí shares, "growing up here, like in Bell Gardens … it wasn't the nicest neighborhood, you know … my parents, our house was always like nice, we had plants and, you know, my parents were thoughtful and like the space that we had… like

having that safe haven … [and] why I always like to have my space nice." The investment, time, and care that her parents placed in beautifying their home continues to inform and shape how she understands notions of care in contrast to the disinvestment by city officials of Bell Gardens. Similarly, Mainé in speaking to the importance of the decorations she shared, "this [is a] new space for them [campers] that they're not they're not getting in their everyday lives." Marí and Mainé both gesture to their understandings of growing up and living in a community that is disinvested. Both share an embodied knowledge and awareness that resources often don't make it to the community through the witnessing of family and friends experience of hardships.[23] This drive of feeling neglected and forgotten informs the care and commitment that volunteers like Mainé bring to camp by visually offering new possibilities to campers and showing them that they matter and cared for by their community.

A banner made out of a bed sheet with the phrase "Y Ya Llego Nuestro Tiempo Vamos A Cambiar Nuestro Mundo" in Old English font greets campers as they enter the campus. The banner immediately sets the tone for what is about to take place. When Marí, Mainé, and Vikki visualize and make the decorations for camp they keep in mind what campers will first see and hear. Mainé shared two reasons why this is important, first she said, "it's not like they [campers] are walking in and they are right away playing music at the door, it's like what's the first thing we want them to see?" The first visual cue campers see is a banner that boldly proclaims that they have the power to create their own world is such an important and empowering message. Vikki who made the banner shared she sourced the floral bed sheet from a thrift store and was excited to create something bold and "attention grabbing" drawing inspiration from the use of Old English font in punk but also from her family who owned and customized their lowriders. She

[23] In the introduction I address the corruption experienced in Southeast Los Angeles.

used projector to enlarge the font and outlined the letters that she then painted with acrylic paint to fit the 80 inches by 90 inch bed sheet. The Old English font conveys a recognizable signifier familiar to the youth as the font is used in hood/chola/o/x cultural iconography and self-adornment as the font is used in t-shirt, name plates, hats, tattoos, to name a few. Visuals play an important role at camp, Mainé shared why she felt it was important to decorate the campus, she said, "[we wanted to] create this world, the space … You want it to look a certain way. You want it to feel a certain way. You want it to sound a certain way. You know, it's like you're, you're touching all the senses, almost, visually, emotionally, touching like everything, right?" The banner in culturally relevant ways speaks to the campers and their families, calling for urgency and necessity to change the status quo in Southeast Los Angeles a change that is possible with the support from their community.

Figure 5 "Y Ya LLego Nuestro Tiempo" Image by Author

Secondly, it is important to disrupt the dullness of schools, as Mainé identified, "when the kids come [to camp] on their summer break and they get dropped off at a school. They don't want to come back to school, they just left school. So how are we going to transform this. So, they come to this this magical world that is this whole different place." Shifting the ambiance of

the school was a sentiment shared by Vikki, but she also spoke to the importance of finding ways to inspire and introduce campers to musicians and social justice activists. The banner for example was a way to cover up some of the dullness of the school lockers while offering encouragement. The corkboard bulletin boards in the hallway and classrooms needed to be livened up. To bring the bulletin boards to life Vikki drew inspiration from her bedroom as a teenager to fill up the boards with posters and pictures of musicians that inspired her. She shared that the first year of camp she brought every poster from her home and used them to decorate. Vikki said we are "wanting to transform the campus … to inspire them to be like oh, "look at all these like non dude musicians," … and to like, maybe expose them to different kinds of music." Vikki's feminist intervention into the local music scene and industry drives her passion to create bulletin boards that are exciting and uplift the voices and musicianship of women, queer, and trans artists. Vikki shared that the images on the bulletin board are important because visibility matters in efforts to not re-inscribed social conventions of gender, race, and class in music. She mentioned, "it's not just about Selena because they [campers] know her already." The focus on posters were to find independent musicians and musicians that vary in physical appearances in efforts to move away from Eurocentric conventional norms of beauty, and to highlight local musicians. For example, volunteers are encouraged to have lunch with campers so that they see adults eating without shame around food. In different ways campers are encouraged to feel good about themselves. Additionally, Vikki shared, "it's cool for campers to see their band coaches on the walls." Positioning volunteers in the bulletin boards does more than inspire campers it creates an ephemeral genealogy of Latina/x punks that isn't available in the history books. The bulletin boards are part of Latinx punk placemaking of local histories of women and queers Latinx in Southeast Los Angeles. The decorations affirm campers while informing a different type of

subjectivity to femininity and racial norms. Where they can be loud, rowdy, and don't have to adhere to gender roles. While decorations are informed by abjection they transform the school and campers and in the process tells histories of Latina punks and marking Southeast Los Angeles and the community as a place that matters and deserves beauty.

Figure 6 CRSELA Hallway Photograph by CRSELA AV Club

Budget Friendly Environment

The first year las comadres hosted camp they were working with a small budget of $5,000 that had to be carefully allocated. Camp was possible due to the support from friends, family, and community members who donated their time, loaned out their instruments, and assisted wherever they could. This process of coming together reflects the familial practices of comadres support. The minimal budget was used to cover basic needs leaving no funding for anything deemed unnecessary including decorations. Vikki recalls, "[we] made stuff by hand, you know that we just pulled [money] from out of pockets… her sister donated $40." Marí and Vikki both grew up with a rasquache and DIY ethos of making do with what one has and using their ingenuity to make the most out of limited resources. With limited funding Marí and Vikki carefully thought of what they could make to create a welcoming atmosphere. Vikki shared,

> I remember Mari had the paper lanterns. We used a lot of paper products, we were like, OK it's a party. So we went to like the Dollar Tree, and [the] 99 cent store, the little party stores around, and also pulled from our own personal party box … after the first year we saw how much trash we created from the decorations, we're like, OK, we need to start thinking about this differently because, you know, it's a little ridiculous to throw away all this stuff, especially if our plan is to do this every year.

In the multipurpose room of the campus the vibrant color paper streamers were twisted and lined horizontally to create a backdrop behind the stage. Above the stage, paper lanterns in shades of pink, green, blue, yellow, and orange were gathered created a chandelier effect. Bright papel picado also hung in the ceiling to creating a festive environment. In reflecting, Vikki points to the resourcefulness that was needed that first year given their non-existent budget and the limitations they faced. The restrictions faced by Vikki and Marí speak to larger economic, environmental, and sustainable issues that affect disinvested communities like Southeast Los Angeles. Many poor and working-class neighborhoods across the country are proliferated with dollar stores. Several research reports argue that dollar stores have negative impacts on the communities they infiltrate as they aggravate food deserts,[24] exploit the precarious economy, and contribute to environmental racism. [25] The opening of dollar stores curtails the opening of

[24] Food deserts are defined as which are defined as communities with limited access to affordable and healthy food. Hunt Allcott, Rebecca Diamond, Jean-Pierre Dubé, Jessie Handbury, Ilya Rahkovsky, Molly Schnell, "Food Deserts and the Causes of Nutritional Inequality," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Volume 134, Issue 4, (November 2019), 1793–1844, https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjz015.

[25] Rachel Siegel, *As Dollar Stores Move Into Cities: Residents See A Steep Downside*, February 15, 2019 https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/as-dollar-stores-move-into-cities-residents-see-a-steep-downside/2019/02/15/b3676cbe-2f09-11e9-8ad3-9a5b113ecd3c_story.html; Nathanial Mayersohn, *Dollar Stores Are Everywhere: That's A Problem for Poor Americans*, July 19, 2019 https://www.cnn.com/2019/07/19/business/dollar-general-opposition/index.html; Joe Eskenazi, *Dollar Stores are Thriving But They Ripping Off Poor People?* June 28, 2018 https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/jun/28/dollar-store-ripping-people-off-poverty-inequality.

groceries stores and contribute to food deserts by cutting access to fresh and affordable food (Reese 2019). These stores primarily sell non-perishable food items that are package in smaller quantities to meet the price point thus they are less cost effective to the consumer. Dollar stores also push out small mom and pop stores that offer fresh food to the community. The negative economic impacts are various as not only they sell goods at a higher price, but they employ less people than a grocery stores.[26] For example, in Bell Gardens where Vikki and Marí live there are only three chain grocery stores, a handful of small-owned grocery stores, and over five-dollar stores.

Figure 7 CRSELA MPR Photograph by CRSELA AV Club

Environmental concerns are important to las comadres who are aware of the long history of environmental racism in Southeast Los Angeles. The first year of camp it was important to them to have a workshop at camp by Communities for a Better Environment (CBE) [27] to share the history of environmental racism with the campers. Las comadres had to negotiate a limited

[26] Ibid.

[27] The mission of CBE is to build people's power in California's communities of color and low-income communities to achieve environmental health and justice by preventing and reducing pollution and building green, healthy and sustainable communities and environments. www.cbecal.org.

budget and environmental impact of camp and resorted on buying from dollar stores. According to the report "A Day Late and A Dollar Short: Discount Retailers Are Falling Behind on Safer Chemicals"[28] found that dollar stores carry products that have high levels of toxins, adding to the already exposure to hazardous toxins from nearby facilities that produce them. These chemical toxins have been linked to causing cancer, birth defects, and other health issues. Although, the paper decorations that Vikki and Marí bought were not listed among the products with high levels of toxicity in the report proximity to other toxic products is still a concern.[29] The economic decisions that Las Comadres and Marí must make are shaped by the continual disinvestment of poor and working-class communities like Southeast Los Angeles. Latinx punk placemaking here is also informed by the grasp that dollar store and inexpensive party supply stores that proliferate Southeast Los Angeles. Vikki, Marí, and Mainé draw from their mothers' practices to decorate family parties.

DIY, Rasquache, and Repurposing

For Mainé, Vikki, and Marí it was intuitive to organize and decorate camp by drawing from DIY and rasquache sensibilities. Having participated in the local punk scene along with their upbringing shape how they approach making the decorations for camp. Taking inspiration

[28] The report was published by the Campaign for Healthy Solutions, Coming Clean, and The Environmental Justice Health Alliance for Chemical Policy Reform. The campaign seeks to work with discount retailers (dollar stores) to help them protect their customers and the communities in which they operate, and grow their own businesses, by implementing corporate policies to identify and phase out harmful chemicals in the products they sell. Coming Clean, a national environmental health collaborative that unites community organizers, scientists, advocates, business leaders, communications specialists, and diverse issue experts in common work to transform the chemical and fossil fuel industries so they are sources of health, economic sustainability, and justice rather than of pollution, disease, and planetary harm. Visit www.comingcleaninc.org. The Environmental Justice Health Alliance for Chemical Policy Reform, a network of grassroots organizations throughout the country, supports diverse movement towards safe chemicals and clean energy that leaves no community or worker behind. Visit www.EJ4All.org.

[29] According to the report the following items were listed as high in toxin levels: pans and cookware, microwave popcorn products, store receipts from all retailers, products with flexible PVS, electronics, flame retardants, and other products containing including antimony compounds, organotins and bromine.

from family parties where a lot of crafting and customization is involved Marí decided to make succulent center pieces for the tables using recycled El Pato tomato sauce cans and planting succulents. El Pato is a spicy tomato based sauced that is traditionally used to cook meals with such as Mexican rice. El Pato tomato sauce is a well-known and inexpensive brand, at approximately eighty-nine cents a can that could be found in any grocery store. The small three-inch cans are easily recognizable as the cans are in bright yellow, red, and green with bold letters and duck in the center of can. The brand is also part of Los Angeles culture and history as it is a family-owned business that dates back to the 1900s with its manufacturing plant in East Los Angeles.[30] Although Marí, is unfamiliar with the history of El Pato sauce she knew to use the cans because they are visibly recognizable. Every time she made a meal that called for a can of El Pato she saved the can and eventually secured the quantity she needed. As camp neared Marí went to the flower district in downtown Los Angeles and bought small succulents for 50 cents each. The final result of the plants resulted in brightly and lively planters with succulents in various shades of green and shapes. In making the center pieces for the tables Marí drew inspiration from her community as she shared, "[SELA] is like a huge Latinx community … I thought that would be like, a really nice scene, welcoming [with] like things that people are familiar with and feel like kind of safe in because it was recognizable for everybody... also its something very easy to do." Decorations serve as placemaking practices that draw from histories of rasquachismo with the purpose of creating a sense of familiarity for campers and their families.

Just as important as lessons learned at home—lessons learned in the streets through punk are central to CRSELA. A guiding pillar and inspiration to creating decorations for CRSELA is

[30] Evan Kleiman, "Uncovering the LA roots of El Pato Hot Sauce," *KCRW,* May 21, 2021. https://www.kcrw.com/culture/shows/good-food/netflix-kitchens-veggies-hot-sauce/farley-elliott-el-pato.

to make crafts that anyone can recreate at home and that are inexpensive to make. Vikki shared, "I think the inspiration comes from that, just DIY, and something that we could all do. That we could go home, that the kids could go home. And make these things and not like, not feel like oh I need money to buy this." Taking into consideration the socioeconomics of SELA but also instilling an anti-capitalist ethos from DIY inspires Mainé, Vikki, and Marí. The desire to create a sense of belonging emerges from feelings of abjection that were partially informed by growing up in Southeast Los Angeles and identifying as queerness, being into punk, and feminism. These multiple identities may have initially made Mainé feel like an outsider but now inform her process. Both Mainé and Vikki expressed that after the waste created from the paper decorations the first year shifted their approach. Mainé said, "We wanted to have things with like sustainability, things that we could repurpose, re-do … like our own families." Vikki shared, "show kids that yeah, we made all this stuff, you know, and … we made it by hand, and you could too. This is literally cardboard that we saved to make this stuff. And all you need is like some glue or tape or staples." In this quote Vikki is point out that not only are decorations economically accessible but also with the aims to embolden campers to make their own at home. As the interview continued with Vikki, she also mentioned the importance of customization, "we want a green guitar. Well, I don't see a green guitar hanging or a blue bass hanging at someone's like pinata shop. So, we also know how to make it … I have a guitar. So, I put my guitar on cardboard, and I traced it." At rock camp instruments cords and camper badges are color coded for organizational purposes for example green is used for guitars, blue for bass, pink for vocals, red for drums, and yellow for keys. The instrument piñatas Vikki created are life-size and constructed with recycled cardboard, hot glue, tissue paper, and metallic gift-wrapping paper. The green guitar is a replica of an electric guitar that includes a bridge, a pick-up, a volume

knob, and tuning knob. The body and peghead of the guitar are wrapped in green holographic wrapping paper and a second layer of strips of clear green cellophane paper make up the frays of the piñata. The green and gold create a contrast to signify the different parts of the guitar. The instrument piñatas were initially created to fill up the ceiling of Multipurpose Room (MPR) creating a dynamic atmosphere while also a teaching tool for the campers to remind them of the color coding. The construction of the piñatas is a labor-intensive process due to the intricacy in creating a sturdy cardboard guitar and the delicate strips of paper that are carefully cut and layered to achieve the desired look. Although creating the piñatas is a labor of love it is a process that takes time and patience and as Vikki mentioned it is not something that can be store bought. There is something significant in how Vikki, Marí, and Mainé pay attention to detail but in creating pieces that are custom—a tradition that comes from a working-class family party ethos. They are informed by traditions learned in their childhood and tying it with punk culture to re-create, re-work, and re-imagine a party for girls and gender-expansive youth.

The affective labor of decorations to create a safe and welcoming space for camper's gestures towards labor that is often gendered and feminized. It may even be perceived as trivial because it is often described as cute. However, decorations do more than create a festive atmosphere. For children from disinvested communities, decorations signal investment and care, this was important for Marí as she remembered her experience in schools. She shared, "you know your teacher was going to be really cool when they took the time to decorate their classroom." Mari equates beautiful space with care and the positive impact it can have on a young impressionable child. The first year of camp Marí decided to make papel picado for camp as she had just learned how to make it. To create the papel picado Marí bought bright tissue paper in the colors of fuchsia pink, a bring orange, yellow, blue, and green. She then created

stencils for the two designs she created. The first has the word SELA in the middle to pay homage to her community and the second has a microphone in the center to signify camp. Marí primarily kept all traditional design of paper picado which includes an elaborate pattern that resembles lace or a lattice pattern that often includes flowers and scalloped edges. The center is the only part that deviates from "traditional" paper picado and instead draws on punk aesthetics with a stencil style font that is reminiscent of DIY punk logos. Marí recalls the intensive labor of making papel picado she shared, "I would put the tissue paper and I would just cut the stencils and, oh my God! My hand would hurt. But we made a bunch. . . and it took a while to make them. I remember it like it was already like crunch time and I just did them all, like a bunch one night. But it came out really cute and you just you would just string them." Again, like the piñatas this is labor that is intensive, takes a lot of time, and it is delicate work given the medium they are working with. Due to globalization coupled with cultural appropriation, papel picado can be purchased as it is mass produced and made from plastic to last longer. Marí was opposed to buying the pre-made papel picado because it was important that it was personalized for CRSELA and also mentioned economic reasons. When I asked Marí, Vikki, or Mainé why not just buy decorations instead of making them they all shared a similar sentiment that they wanted decorations to be personalized for camp. Marí specifically mentioned that decorations needed to speak to the community, attention to detail in decoration and the visual is what in fact makes CRSELA stand out amongst other rock camps, and again she emphasized the importance of showing care and love to her community through aesthetics, "because when something's done right and thoughtful, like it takes time." Vikki in addition to wanting decorations to be specific to camp she also mentioned that even though the budget has increased over the years as CRSELA has secured more grants the budget for decorations remains minimal. She said, "are we going to

spend a thousand dollars on it [decorations] when we could spend a thousand dollars buying ten $100 gift cards for people to buy food?" For Vikki, there are priorities that las comadres must consider in what will most benefit the community. At CRSELA camp breakfast, lunch, snacks, and all materials are provided. Relating back to the socioeconomics of the community many campers receive free or reduced meals at their schools and attending camps is another place where they can secure a meal. Given the limited budget of camp and needs of campers' decorations are not economically prioritized but Marí, Vikki, and Mainé make efforts to prioritize them by making it a beautiful as possible.

Figure 8 Papel Picado, Image by Mainé Muñoz Mejia

Gender and Labor

Gendered division of labor is important to explore decorations at CRSELA. Crafting decorations is time consuming from drafting an idea, sourcing inexpensive re-usable materials, and keeping in mind a particular color palette. Then the assemblage of decorations themselves require repetitive manual labor. The process is culminated by placement of decorations. Vikki, Marí, and Mainé take on the labor of crafting decorations as previously mentioned that are unique and meet their aesthetics on a strict budget. Although las comadres, Marí, and Mainé all agree on what are the priorities for camp tensions sometimes do rise along the devalument of

decorations. For instance, Marí shared the laborious process of making the papel picado, “like the fucking cutting the papel picado, going up and down the stairs ... Like I don't think people, they don't see it, because it is the invisible work. Like its feminine in like, oh, somehow mom just made the dinner, blah, blah, you know what I mean? That type of shit that things that just you just thing appear.” Marí shared frustrations of sometimes not feeling prioritized at camp and equates it to the invisible labor that mothers take on at home. The tensions in feeling valued are based on heteropatriarchal hegemonic ideals that make themselves present in a feminist and queer space. Mainé similarly shared,

> because you're femme, so you're just like, oh my God, yeah, I just want to like put glitter on everything all day, every day. You know. No. There is like there's like intention that goes behind it and purpose. And then the manual labor that it takes to cut paper and sit there for hours and with [an] exacto knife just like to cut papel picado for hours and once it's done, it's beautiful. Right. And it's colorful…There's a lot a lot of labor that comes behind it.”

Vikki who is both a comadre and forms the decorations committee shared that one of las comadres was shocked when they learned that they have meetings to plan out the decorations. In subtle ways decorations and those that produce them are somewhat devalued as their work is not considered technical like setting up instruments or working the sound board. Yet, punk is not about the technical one could argue that punks have consistently challenged norms through the visual and knowing how to play an instrument is somewhat secondary. Marí, Mainé, and Vikki did receive support from las comadres and other volunteers to hang decorations the devalument of creating something extra of excess like decorations, that “serve no purpose” or “are not necessary,” speaks to neoliberal ideologies of what femme labor is productive and unproductive

that generate these feelings of frustration and abjection to the feminized labor that grandmas take on in creating things for the family. It is almost as if the decorations are so magical that people forget that a lot of labor goes into producing and arranging them. While camp can operate without decorations it wouldn't evoke the same feeling of care, affirmation, and chaos that is generated through the decorations.

The visual aesthetic of the decorations speaks the intent of las comadres in creating a place that affirms campers but also an embracement of DIY/rasquachismo that ties into TacoxCore the mantra of CRSELA. TacoxCore was coined by volunteer Erica, from Girls Rock Austin, loosely signifies a "you can do it" attitude at camp. During camp if someone makes a mistake, camper or adult, the mistake is encouraged and celebrated as part of the process and part of the performance. For example, if a camper fumbles on a note, both campers and volunteers chant tacoxcore and during the chant the camper may find the next musical note and will feel encouraged to do so or to even make one up. Both the decorations and the mantra of tacoxcore create an intentional and inclusive space for both campers and volunteers who witness the impact they have on campers while generating a sense of community.

Figure 9 tacoXcore Image by CRSELA

Further disruption of the school campus is evidenced by guided intention to create a space that fosters a feeling of belonging, a place where one could be daring, a place of mutual love and support where one is visually and sonically inspired. In contrast schools are designed to discipline students. Another goal of the decorations is to inspire campers as Mainé notes, "we want the instrument rooms to look like a party while they're playing, the workshop room, we just want to have tons of inspiration in the walls or things hanging in the ceiling. When the kids are there writing lyrics, they could just look up and get inspiration from different colors or things on the walls. You know, just. Yeah, all those different places." The werkshop room for example is decorated with images of community organizers and leaders both local and national such as Silvia Rivera but in a punk style and attitude that encourages the campers to embody confidence.

Figure10 Werkshop Room Image by Author

Panchanga!

Mainé's intuition to shift the intended purposed of the school is affirmed by songs written by campers. The theme of camper songs often centers the excitement of summer vacation, dreading doing homework, and wanting to play with their friends, or issues that are important to them. For instance, in 2017 at the CRSELA showcase, the camper band "Las Pachangas" "Kill Homework" a cumbia-punk inspired song. The name of the band is in not necessarily in reference to Pachanga the musical genre but instead it references the colloquial reference to a

rowdy party. The lyrics are short and to the point in the style of punk that quickly and easily conveys their message of disavowal for school and homework. The song beings with a simple cumbia beat and the singer enters by shouting the lyrics, more so than singing them. At about 40 seconds into the short song there is a short beat break with the drums to transition into a heavier two-beat punk/rock sound.

Cuando Le echo ganas / me salen canas

Me Regañan / Pero quiero las pachangas

Me duele la espalda / por sentarme en la silla

Kill homework

Burn homework /Make it go away

The singer continues to sing the lyrics in the same style repeating the song lyrics until the short song ends with all the band members shouting the chorus and the singer ends with a scream.

The sonics of Las Pachangas seems to emulate the vibe of CRSELA's camp which includes a mixture of genres that range from punk to mariachi, to hip-hop. More so, Las Panchangas reflect the above quote from Mainé when she mentions that she wants rooms to emulate a party. Las Pachangas took inspiration and applied to their band name and logo to the sound of their song, and importantly in their self-fashioning. For the showcase the band wore a metallic pink party hat that matched their band logo that consisted of a pink piñata. The simplistic stylings of the music composition along with the lyrics of Las Pachangas reflect how CRSELA cultivates space for the campers to express their dissatisfaction with school and homework in a style that is reflective of their surroundings and community.

Figure 11 CRSELA Showcase 2016 Image by CRSELA

Conclusion

The decorations at CRSELA may seem inconsequential but they tell the story of a community that is disinvested and suffers from environmental injustices. Yet, the decorations perform the task of Latinx punk placemaking by creating ephemeral genealogies of Latinx punks in Los Angeles. Decorations create a party atmosphere in classrooms that are meant to discipline. In the process the young campers are offered the possibility to explore alternative gendered subjectivities that don't adhere to the gender binary and traditional gendered expectations. They are allowed to express themselves visually and sonically while maintaining an anti-capitalist ethos of punk. In the following chapter I will continue to explore Latinx punk placemaking through Scum a monthly queer and punk party in Montebello, California.

Figure 12 CRSELA Camp 2018 Photograph by CRSELA AV Club

Chapter 2: Queer Latinx Placemaking: The Punk Soundscapes of Los Angeles

Introduction

This chapter continues to consider Latinx punk placemaking, a framework that encompasses sound, space, punk, and affect to understand place-specific community formations. Here, I examine how queer Latinx punk reveals structural inequalities and politics that mark racialized brown bodies as abject. I do so through a discussion of a monthly event produced by queer Latinx punks, which emerged at a geographic locale filled with challenges and possibilities. Specifically, I focus in this chapter on Club Scum, a queer punk party at a bar called Club Chico in Montebello, California. Through an analysis of performance, sound, and space, I draw from queer Latinx scholars (Alvarado 2018; Muñoz 2009; Rivera-Severa 2012) to theorize Latinx punk placemaking at Scum. Club Scum exemplifies the ways in which queer Latinx punk placemaking counters dominant narratives within mainstream LGBTQ culture that claim queer youth must leave home to be gay. This narrative is projected onto Latinx communities, which are framed as more homophobic than white families. I argue that the multiple sounds comprising the soundscape of Club Scum at Club Chico — a locale distant from the mainstream LGBTQ rights movement's neoliberal goals of inclusion and incorporation — signal the potentiality of the "then-and-there" and the "not-yet-here" of queer Latinx punk placemaking.

This chapter begins with an overview of queer geographies in Los Angeles, to situate how racism and spatial inequalities marginalize racialized queer communities. I then focus on the now defunct Club Scum, which was produced by Rudy Garcia and Ray Sanchez and held at Club Chico on the last Friday of the month from 2016-2020. Throughout my analysis, I consider how punk sound and sensibility catalyzed the collaboration between Garcia and Sanchez, who employed a punk approach to organize Club Scum. Punk is a rich subculture bounded by sound,

art, fashion, print, and photography. Prevailing narratives of punk and its history focus on white, cisgender, straight, and middle-class men (Hebdige 1979, McNeill 1996; Blush 2010; Rollins 1994). This narrow version of punk has been contested by artists and scholars to highlight that Black and people of color, women, and queers not only participated in the scene but were instrumental in shaping punk (Avant-Mier 2010; Bag 2011; Cruz Gonazalez 2016; Duncombe and Tremblay 2011; Habell-Pallán 2005; Leblanc 1999; Marcus 2010; Russo 2017). In this chapter, I frame punk as an abject positionality for queer Latinxs.

Queer of Color Nightlife Geographies of Los Angeles

In Los Angeles, the West Hollywood area has been historicized as the gay enclave of the region. West Hollywood is about eight miles northwest of downtown Los Angeles and is a predominantly white, middle-class, gay neighborhood. West Hollywood was developed as a safe place for the gay community according to the economic and political interests of wealthy white gay men (Faderman and Timmons, 2006). Today, West Hollywood continues to safeguard white gay men while excluding LGBTQ communities of color. Under neoliberal logics of incorporation that favor homonormative subjects with access to mobility and wealth, it makes sense that West Hollywood is nationally situated as a prominent gay neighborhood. However, positioning West Hollywood as the center of gay culture in Los Angeles obscure's other locations and bars in the city that historically served and protected minoritarian sexual communities. Bars, nightclubs, and parties outside of West Hollywood, including Club Scum at Club chico, have endured the many transformations and displacements of LA.

For example, the Black Cat was a gay bar in Silver Lake, six miles east of West Hollywood. In 1967, the Black Cat was the site of a demonstration against LAPD police brutality, predating the iconic 1969 Stonewall Riots in New York City. Yet, the Black Cat's

historical significance is widely unknown. The Black Cat eventually became Le Barcito, a gay bar that catered to the gay Latino community before Silver Lake became gentrified in the late 1990s.[1] Now, the Black Cat is an upscale gastropub. While West Hollywood has cemented itself as the gay destination of Los Angeles, gentrified Silver Lake and Echo Park have also been marketed as queer-friendly communities with bars and businesses that cater to a younger, LGBTQ, affluent, white clientele. More recently, the revitalization of Downtown Los Angeles has included a few LGBTQ bars. However, queer Latinx gay bars continue to exist outside, in between, around, and away from West Hollywood and gentrified neighborhoods.

One such bar is Plaza, which sits off La Brea Boulevard near Pinks Hotdogs, a Hollywood institution. Plaza serves working-class Latinx LGBTQ clientele who may not feel in abjection and like they belong in West Hollywood. Bars like Club Chico and Plaza that cater to working-class, immigrant, and Latinx communities operate on the abject periphery of designated gay enclaves like West Hollywood, the Castro in San Francisco, or Boystown in Chicago, Illinois. These bars on the margins are significant in facilitating community formations and informal or formal political activism. As performance studies scholar Ramon Rivera-Servera (2012) reminds us, these night clubs serve as an imperfect refuge from the everyday social inequalities and discrimination that marginalized queer communities experience in broader Latina/o communities and LGBTQ communities (Rivera-Severa 2012; Roque Ramirez 2003; Vargas 2014). In Los Angeles, many of these bars on the fringes have significantly contributed to the social lives of racialized sexual communities.

[1] For more on Le Barcito see Eddy Francisco Alvarez, "Jotería Listening: Sonic Trails and Collective Musical Playlists as Resistance to Gentrification in Silver Lake," *Journal of Popular Music Studies* (December 1, 2021), 33 (4): 126–151, doi: https://doi.org/10.1525/jpms.2021.33.4.126.

Significantly, queer Latinx bars importantly remain in Latinx communities to refuse the idea one must leave home to experience queer socialities. For example, in the late 1950s, Redz bar opened in the East Los Angeles neighborhood of Boyle Heights. Nancy Valverde, a Butch Chicana icon from East Los Angeles, recalls that Redz initially was not a lesbian bar, but the owner hired a lesbian waitress that shifted the clientele.[2] The bar catered to the working-class immigrant community of Boyle Heights and primarily attracted Chicana and Latina lesbians. Over the years the name changed from Redhead to Reds to Redz (Faderman and Timmons 2009). Most recently, Redz in 2016 renamed itself as Redz Angelz Bar and continues to cater to the predominantly surrounding Latinx community.[3]

In 1963 the Silver Platter opened near MacArthur Park and according to the *Los Angeles Times*, "is the oldest gay bar" in the area.[4] MacArthur Park is situated about three miles west of Downtown Los Angeles and is part of the Westlake / Pico-Union district. Since the 1980s, the area has been inhabited by Central Americans who fled civil wars, genocides, military governments, natural disasters, and economic instability in their home countries. The original owner of the Silver Platter, Rogelio Gonzalez, died in the 1990s but the bar has remained with the Gonzalez family. Gonzalez left the bar to his brother, Gonzalo Ramirez, and over the next decade the Silver Platter became widely known as a safe place for trans Latinas. When Ramirez passed away in 2010, his boyfriend and sister fought over ownership of the bar. Eventually the courts ruled Ramirez's sister the legal owner. During the 2010s, artist Wu Tsang and DJ Total Freedom began hosting a weekly party called Wildness at the Silver Platter. Tsang also joined

[2] Excerpt on Nancy from Eastside Clover that is part of the documentary *L.A. A Queer History* 2021 https://player.vimeo.com/video/128379329.

[3] https://www.laconservancy.org/locations/redz-former.

[4] "Outfest: Wu Tsang's 'Wildness' Documents the Silver Platter Scene," *Los Angeles Times,* July 13, 2012, https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/la-xpm-2012-jul-13-la-ca-wu-tsang-20120715-story.html.

with legal scholar Dean Spade to organize La Prensa, offering support to Silver Platter patrons with their immigration cases and other legal issues. Wildness would later become the subject of a documentary (directed by Tsang and Roya Rastigar) by the same name.

Jose Esteban Muñoz (2009) wrote about *Wildness* and the tensions that arose between Wildness attendees and some of the Silver Platter's regular clientele. Regulars from the Central American immigrant and working-class community of Westlake / Pico-Union felt neglected on Tuesday nights when Wildness took place, but the owner welcomed the party since it brought money into the bar. For Muñoz (2009), *Wildness* exemplifies the disjointedness of community formations as an example of what he called "brown commons."

The Covid-19 pandemic and spring 2020 shutdowns in Los Angeles have negatively impacted the Silver Platter in ways specific to the bar's regular clientele and location near MacArthur Park. After the shutdown, trans women sex workers who had conducted their businesses at the Silver Platter were forced to relocate to MacArthur Park and have consequently endured gang violence. The pandemic has made hyper-visible the many violences that trans women experience, in particular those who are Black, Latina/x, poor, and/or undocumented. This history and present of the Silver Platter point to the importance of community spaces, including bars, that function for racialized queers as refuge from xenophobia and transphobia in the outside world.

Another place that forms part of this genealogy of racialized queer bars is the Plush Pony. The Plush Pony opened in the working-class community of El Sereno[5] in the 1960s and catered

[5] The Plush Pony was documented in Lillian Faderman and Stuart Timmons, *Gay L.A.: A History of Sexual Outlaws, Power Politics, and Lipstick Lesbians* (New York: Basic Books, 2006). It is also listed in bar guides found at ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives at the USC Libraries. The blog "Lost Womyn's Space" notes that the bar was open in 2008 but that is not confirmed http://lostwomynsspace.blogspot.com/2011/05/plush-pony.html. Raquel Gutierrez in June 18, 2018, wrote about the Plush Pony in *The New Inquiry,* "A Vessel Among Vessels: For Laura Aguilar" https://thenewinquiry.com/a-vessel-among-vessels-for-laura-aguilar/. Carolina A. Miranda for the *Los Angeles Times*, on November 2, 2017, wrote "Stories of the Plush Pony: Artist Laura Aguilar portraits capture a lost

to Latina and Chicana lesbians until it closed sometime in the 2000's. For my generation, millennials who were under 21 when the bar closed, the Plush Pony feels like a myth that was somehow passed down from one lesbian generation to the next. Similar to Redz bar, Plush Pony connects my generation to those who came before us and have contributed to our queer lesbian Chicana/x and Latina/x understanding of ourselves. I remember first hearing about Plush Pony from a friend when I was an undergraduate student. My friend knew so much more about queer Latinx and Chicanx spaces than I did. Soon after, I learned about the amazing work of queer Chicana photographer Laura Aguilar and was fortunate enough to meet her and hear her speak. I remember she walked into our classroom with a 7-11 Big Gulp cup and carrying an art portfolio. She very humbly and shyly spoke about her photography as she pulled out the images and gently laid them on the table. Her images were so powerful and striking they almost didn't require an explanation. Aguilar guided us through each of her series as she took sips from her Big Gulp cup. Then, when she finally came to the Plush Pony series (1992), I was in disbelief because up to that point I didn't know if the Plush Pony was a real bar. I immediately felt connected to the images of women who seemed so familiar—they felt like my distant tías, those that we don't talk about. Aguilar's Plush Pony Series made visible the multitude of Latina sexualities in Los Angeles.

In 1973, ten years after the Silver Platter opened near MacArthur Park, Jewel Thais Williams opened the nightclub Jewel's Catch One. [6] Thais Williams founded the club after experiencing discrimination as a Black lesbian in West Hollywood. At the time, Jewel's Catch One was the only Black disco in the country. At the height of Catch One, celebrities like

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era at a working-class bar" https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/miranda/la-et-cam-plush-pony-laura-aguilar-vpam-20171102-htmlstory.html

[6] *Jewel's Catch One* (2016)

Madonna, Donna Summer, and Sylvester made appearances. During the AIDS epidemic of the late 1980s and 1990s, Catch One became an important place to gather community and hold fundraisers. Two years after Thais Williams opened Catch One, Circus Disco opened in 1975 in West Hollywood and catered to gay Latino men. In 2015 Circus Disco closed and a year later Thais Williams sold Catch One, cementing the end of an era.

In 2020 photographer Reynaldo Rivera published *Reynaldo Rivera: Provisional Notes for a Disappeared City.* The book features 200 of Rivera's photographs documenting a Los Angeles of the 1980s-1990s that no longer exists. By capturing the subcultures of Los Angeles bars, clubs, and parties that catered to minoritized sexualities, Rivera documented how these bars and parties provide space and community for Latinx queers that don't fit into heteronormative or homonormative nightlife. *Provisional Notes* also documents the friendship between Rivera and performance artist Vaginal Cream Davis through letters they wrote to each other. In their correspondence, Rivera and Davis reminisce on a "city *disappeared."* These letters alongside the beautiful photographs read as a love letter to the people who make the and refuse a sanitized and glamorized version of Los Angeles.

Rivera writes to Davis, "Remember when gay bars in WeHo would ask for three pieces of ID to keep out women, femmes, Latinos and Asians? So much for being open" (Rivera 2020, 237). Rivera's letter documents the racism and misogyny that was and is experienced in LGBTQ spaces of sociality and why bars like Redz and Plaza are important. Muñoz wrote in *Cruising Utopia* (2009) about the work of another photographer, Kevin McCarty, who captured queer night club stages including Plaza. McCarty's photographs, said Muñoz, capture what is "about to belong, on the cusp of materialization" (Muñoz 2009, 108), what he called the horizon. While McCarty's photography is about the potential for what is about to happen, Rivera's work offers

intimate and glamorous photography of those who set foot on stage. In Davis and Rivera's letters, we are reminded why documentation is important. Rivera, says that documentation "is an attempt to leave a record that we were here, since we tend to get erased and leave our neighborhoods without any traces" (2020, 227). This quote captures the precarity of racialized communities that are pushed to edges of the city, forgotten, and then are discarded or gentrified to make room for the next trend.

In addition to LGBTQ bars, single-night parties also contribute to queer Latinx placemaking. Single-night parties signal an alternative sonic mapping of queer night life outside of West Hollywood, where it is safe to gather. One important party was Mustache Mondays, a weekly party that took place every Monday for almost ten years before the revitalization of downtown Los Angeles before in the 2010s.[7] In 2007, Mustache Monday was created by Danny Gonzalez, Ignacio "Nacho" Nava, Dino Dinco, and Josh Peace as an in antitheses to everything that West Hollywood represented. The party centered community and featured a sonic kaleidoscope that mixed genres such as underground hip-hop, indie, cumbia, R&B, and soul. Mustache Mondays also included performance artists, drag, ball room, and choreographers to offer a unique experience. The party started in Crash Mansion, moved around to other bars, stayed for a period at La Cita Bar,[8] and finally ended at the Lash. Mustache Mondays ended in 2018 but its legendary longevity is in partly due to the vision of Nacho who wanted to "bring

[7] Marke B., "Celebrating Ten Years of Mustache Mondays, LA's Iconoclastic Party," October 20, 2017, *Redbull Music Academy,* https://daily.redbullmusicacademy.com/2017/10/mustache-Mondays.

[8] Samantha Helou Hernandez, "La Cita Aas Operated in Los Angeles for Over 60 Years," *KCET,* October 17, 2017, https://www.kcet.org/shows/the-migrant-kitchen/how-mexican-themed-bar-la-cita-bridges-l-a-s-diverse-communities

back some of the excitement of the great punk and arts institutions that had disappeared from downtown."[9]

Mustache Mondays was an incubator for up-and-coming artists such as DJ Diplo and the musician Arca. It also developed a celebrity following by artists like Kelela, Maluca, Yoko Ono, Robyn, and Florence Welch. Nacho's foresight to create a party that rejected mainstream gay bars appealed to those that did not fit in and in the process, he created a community, and influenced popular culture in significant ways that remain yet to be examined. Nacho's generosity and love extended to those inside and outside his queer community, and Mustache Mondays drew misfits to a place that affirmed their existence. For example, in 2008, Nacho learned about the murder of teen Latisha King from Oxnard California.[10] King was 15 years old when they asked a teenager to be their Valentine and in response a few days later the teenager shot King. Nacho and Dinco attended the funeral and noticed that the family omitted King's queerness. At the next Mustache Monday, Nacho asked attendees to wear King's favorite color blue. Throughout the night pictures of King were broadcasted on the TV monitors and they also had a moment of silence in the middle of the party.[11] The untimely death of Nacho in 2019 was devastating to so many in the queer underground community. It indeed felt like the party was over before the doom of the Covid-19 global pandemic.[12]

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[9] Marke B., "Celebrating Ten Years of Mustache Mondays, LA's Iconoclastic Party," October 20, 2017, *Redbull Music Academy,* https://daily.redbullmusicacademy.com/2017/10/mustache-Mondays; Mustache Monday was a segment of KCET Artbound series https://www.kcet.org/shows/artbound/episodes/mustache-mondays.

[10] "California Teen Admits Killing Gay Student, to Serve 25 Years," *CNN,* November 21, 2011, https://www.cnn.com/2011/11/21/justice/california-gay-student-killing/index.html; For more on King see Gayle Salamon *The Life and Death of Latisha King: A Critical Phenomenology of Transphobia,* (2018) New York: NYU Press.

[11] *Artbound* "Mustache Mondays" Aired November 17, 2021 https://allarts.org/programs/artbound/mustache-mondays-jhbyes/.

[12] Gustavo Arellano, "Ignacio 'Nacho' Nava Jr., L.A.'s LGBTQ Nightlife Icon, Dies at 42," *Los Angeles Times,* https://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-nacho-nava-mustache-mondays-20190131-story.html

Figure 13 Map of Los Angeles by Author

Club Chico

Some of bars, nightclubs, and parties that I mention have in one way or another survived the ever-changing landscape of Los Angeles. Club Chico — where Club Scum takes place — belongs within this family of LGBTQ bars continuing to create community on the fringes of West Hollywood. On the eastside of Los Angeles in November 1999, Marty Sokol and Julio Licon opened Club Chico. Licon, who was familiar with the Southeast Los Angeles community, suggested to Sokol that they open a bar in Montebello. [13] A small dive bar with go-go dancers and inexpensive drinks that regularly plays top 40 songs, Club Chico has been significant in creating community space through sound for marginalized queers.

Club Chico sits in a strip mall at the intersection of Beverly Boulevard and Garfield Boulevard in Montebello, a city in Los Angeles, California. Montebello is eight miles east of Downtown Los Angeles, neighbors East Los Angeles, and forms part of the Gateways cities that make Southeast Los Angeles. In the early 1970s, Montebello was one of the first Los Angeles suburbs with a majority of Mexican residents,[14] thus, earning it the nickname "the Mexican

[13] Hilary E. MacGregor, "In Montebello, Producer Puts Down Roots at a New Breed of Gay Bar" *Los Angeles Time*s, May 23, 2001, https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2001-may-23-cl-1314-story.html.

Beverly Hills" (Gonzalez 2017, 22). Montebello is also home to Armenian and Japanese communities. Beverly Boulevard and Garfield Boulevard border the Chicana/o neighborhood of East Los Angeles. Club Chico is nestled between a dry cleaner and a flower shop. In the same strip mall there is a barbershop, a security guard training center, and a CPR First Aid training center. Across the street is the family grocery store chain *Super A Foods*. Club Chico easily blends into the shops of the strip mall as it does not stand out or offer any LGBTQ signifiers such as the rainbow flag posted outside of businesses. Instead, you see a simple sign with white letters that spell out CHICO with a purple background. If you drive by too fast, you can easily miss the bar.

Since opening in 1999, the bar has offered a space for gay Latino men from the surrounding working-class communities. The men who frequent Club Chico reflect the fashion styles of the neighborhood. Richard T. Rodriguez (2006) identifies the style of Club Chico patrons as "the homeboy aesthetic," which he describes as "an assemblage of key signifiers: clothing (baggy pants and undershirts are perhaps the most significant), hair (or, in the current moment of the aesthetic, lack of hair), bold stance, and distinct language" (127-128). Rodriguez goes on to explain that the aesthetic is visible in the streets of working-class Latinx Los Angeles and draws from a "working-class sensibility and a marker of cultural difference" that simultaneously evokes admiration and fear (Rodriguez 2006, 128). Club Scum, however, disidentifies with homeboy aesthetics and sonics through queer punk Latinx sensibilities — an in-your-face queerness and "punkiffied"[15] version of chola/o aesthetics to reconstitute expressions of gender and sexuality through self-fashioning and placemaking.

[14] Mike Sonksen, "On Location: Montebello," *KCET,* May 22, 2015, https://www.kcet.org/history-society/on-location-montebello.

[15] Habell-Pallan 2011

Figure 14 Chico Mall Strip Image by Author

Punk Maricones

When Rudy Garcia and Ray Sanchez first met, they had no idea that they would soon host a queer punk party in their hometown. In 2015 Rudy Garcia, a long-time night life producer and member of the Maricon Collective, found himself in the middle of a controversy. “Por Vida,” a queer mural by the Maricon Collective in the Mission District of San Francisco, was defaced. During this time, Ray Sanchez was creating a zine called “Noche de Jotear.” Friends suggested to Sanchez that he share his zines with Garcia, as their work was in conversation. Sanchez reached out to Garcia on social media, but Garcia did not immediately respond. Sanchez reached out to Garcia again. When Garcia finally had time to read the zines, he was reminded of various projects he had been a part of and asked Sanchez to meet.

Figure 15 Ray Sanchez and Rudy Garcia by Daniel Jack Lyons for the New York Times

Garcia is no stranger to queer nightlife; they have produced events in Los Angeles for over twenty-years. He was born in East Los Angeles to immigrant parents and always had an interest in pop culture, art, and music. This passion led Garcia to host his own birthday parties with a carefully curated playlist and films to set the ambiance. His ability to create mixtapes led to producing notable events and collaborating with visual artists and musicians.[16] Some of the parties he produced are Outré, La Polla Loca, and Spunk. He was in the bands $3Puta and Hot N' Heavy, formed part of the Maricón Collective, and produced a zine and festival under the name of Scutter.

When Garcia and Sanchez finally met in person, they learned how much they had in common. Garcia shared,

> I literally was looking at a xerox of myself 10 years ago…we both grew up in the same area. We both [were] introduced to music in similar ways. We both kind of had like a mixed group of friends. But we're still very much like punk, you know, even though not all our friends were in all the things we are going to.[17]

Sanchez remembers meeting Garcia at Astro Burger in Montebello: "we were just so tripped out, well he was like tripped out, you know? We were just so different in age, but yet there was so much like the similarity or commonality and, you know, our life experiences. So, we just started like chatting and [knew] the same people or the same places and just really vibing, you know?" Garcia and Sanchez are about ten years apart in age, yet they found commonality in liking punk,

[16] Garcia has collaborated with artists such as Shizu Saldamando, Rafa Esparza, Joey Terrill, Martin Sorrondeguy, and Alice Bag to name a few. From 2015-2017 he produced RuPaul's DragCon Los Angeles for World of Wonder and produced the first New York edition in 2017.

[17] Rudy Garcia, Personal Interview, May 21, 2020.

identifying as queer, growing up in a working-class neighborhood, a positionality that influenced the positioning of Latinx punk placemaking.

When Garcia met Sanchez, he was hosting and deejaying "Mixtape Queer Bust" a Sunday happy hour party at Akbar in Silver Lake. Akbar was opened in 1996 by Scott Craig and Peter Alexander, who were both involved in the punk scene and wanted a place where their friends could gather. They opened Akbar after many of the gay bars in Silver Lake began to close.[18] At the time, housing in Silver Lake was affordable. The community was made up of Latinx/a/o immigrant families that moved into the area in the 1970s, as well as by the LGBT community. In 1980, the music festival Sunset Junction was first organized by community leaders to bridge and ease tensions between the LGBTQ and the Latinx/a/o communities.[19] Affordability, however, also drew musicians, writers, and artists, leading to the gentrification of Silver Lake.

Garcia decided to invite Sanchez to DJ at "Mixtape." Sanchez had never deejayed before and was hesitant, but with Garcia's encouragement he agreed. The opportunity to DJ was very exciting for Sanchez and he decided to include drag queens from the Tea Party scene he was involved in. Garcia recalls,

> He [Sanchez] made posters, like posters for Miss Martin, but they said Mixtape on them and stuff… And then there was a sound issues at one point, but once the party got going it was really fun and really crazy… I mean it was the birth of Scum I mean if you've been at Akbar it was in the front, the front room not in the back. And so it was packed like the

[18] Juliet Bennett Rylah, "20 Years of Akbar, Silver Lake's Gay Bar for Everyone," *LAist,* July 27, 2016. https://laist.com/news/entertainment/akbar-history.

[19] Nathan Masters, "A Brief History of Sunset Junction: Street Cars, Gay Rights and its Namesake Festival," *KCET,* August 25, 2011, https://www.kcet.org/shows/lost-la/a-brief-history-of-sunset-junction-street-cars-gay-rights-and-its-namesake-festival.

> whole place was like insanely packed … I have videos of that day and it's so funny when I look at them you know like because we had like a contest and we're giving shirts away and stuff. And I just remember like playing I don't know what hip hop song and all these people were twerking like crazy and just like all these, like punk girls twerking … And we were both just like, wow, this was so much fun."[20]

Sanchez's DJ debut at Akbar was such a success that patrons were asking about the next party. After Mixtape Garcia and Sanchez reconnected, and realized they wanted to throw a punk party — and Sanchez wanted the party to take place at Chico.

Ray Sanchez grew up in East Los Angeles and later moved to Montebello due to the homophobia he experienced in middle school. Sanchez recalls, "we would pass it [Chico] walking home. I remember, 'oh, you're a fucking faggot, you live at Chico like, here's your fucking house' or, you know, some joke. And for a long time, I tried to stay as far away from Chico as I could because I already knew what was coming." As Sanchez grew older, he realized that it was important to reclaim Chico and felt proud that there was space for gay men in Montebello. Garcia and Sanchez both felt it "appropriate" to have Scum at Chico, as "opposed to going to West Hollywood or staying at Akbar because I mean, I never kicked it in Silverlake."[21] At the time, Garcia was minimally involved in Cha Cha, another party at Chico, and was in contact with Chico's manager. When Garcia asked Alex (the manager) if they could host Club Scum at Chico, the initial response was no. But Garcia did not take no for an answer, and instead shared the success of Mixtape at Akbar. He recalls telling Alex, "I really want to do this party, and we're going to do it on this side of town. And I would hate for it to happen, and it'd be

[20] Rudy Garcia, Personal Interview, May21, 2020.

[21] Ray Sanchez, Personal Interview, May 7, 2021

successful somewhere else, because this is where we wanted to do it at. And then he was like, all right, let's try it." Club Chico's rich history in Montebello and East Los Angeles as a long-standing Latinx gay club is precisely why Garcia and Sanchez wanted to host Club Scum there. The connection Sanchez and Garcia have to East Los Angeles impacted their intention to produce a queer punk Latinx party — a form of Latinx punk placemaking.

When Garcia and Sanchez first envisioned Club Scum, they had two essential considerations: the first was location and the second was affordability. The location was significant because they wanted a venue in their neighborhood rather than a mainstream LGBTQ venue in West Hollywood, Silver Lake, or Downtown Los Angeles. It was important to have Scum in their hometown. The 16-mile distance between West Hollywood and Montebello is a barrier for those who may not have their own car and rely on public transportation. Even those with access to a car still must endure Los Angeles traffic, and traveling such distances can easily take two hours. This of course does not include the cost of parking, cover charge at the door, and the ever-increasing costs of gas.

Hosting Club Scum in East Los Angeles would accomplish Garcia and Sanchez's goal of bringing talent (Drag performers, DJs, and bands) to the eastside; the Montebello location would address traffic and the lack of reliable transportation for queer punks. They felt that it was easier for folks from the area to catch a ride with a friend, walk to the venue, or take a short Lyft/Uber ride. In short, the goal was to host Club Scum in a venue where "queer punks don't have to leave their neighborhood to see their favorite drag performers or punk bands,"[22] this idea of staying close to home is an important factor for Latinx punk placemaking in Chico. Garcia and

[22] A "Palitca: Angry Queer Punk Lives from the Eastside" by LA Plaza Cultura y Artes, June 14, 2018, https://m.facebook.com/events/la-plaza-de-cultura-y-artes/platica-brown-punk-angry-queer-punk-lives-from-the-eastside/2013847025533697/.

Sanchez's second consideration were cost — affordability was just as important as location — and they expressed that adding a cover charge to the party could potentially deter those with a limited income. For most of its duration, there was no cover charge at Club Scum.[23]

Figure 16 Club Scum 3rd Year Anniversary courtesy of Rudy Garcia

Club Scum soon garnered local and national media coverage from *The Los Angeles Times, The New York Times, Razorcake, Remezcla, The Advocate,* and other media outlets in its short four-year existence.[24] Garcia and Sanchez were very careful about who they granted access to Club Scum and who they would grant interviews. Garcia shared that when it came to media coverage, he was very protective of Club Scum. He did not want to be misrepresented, but also was cautious about who was invited to East Los Angeles. Garcia and Sanchez also wanted their

[23] Eventually management at Club Chico enforced a $5 cover charge that included a drink ticket. The $5 cover charge is still affordable in comparison to cover fees at other venues that start at $10.

[24] Stephanie Mendez, "Club Scum celebrates three years of championing the LGBTQ Latinx community" *Los Angeles Times,* March 30, 2019 https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/music/la-et-ms-club-scum-20190330-story.html; Daniel Hernandez "The Nightlife Outlaws of East Los Angeles," *New York Times,* October 19, 2019 https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/19/style/the-nightlife-outlaws-of-east-los-angeles.html; Ever Velasquez and Daryl Gussin, "Club Scum" December 3, 2018 https://razorcake.org/razorcake-107-despise-you-club-scum-la-tuya-west-oakland-punks-with-lunch-patrick-cowley/; Christopher Harrity, "19 Photos Celebrate the Beauty of SCUM," *The Advocate,* June 2019 https://www.advocate.com/photography/2019/7/11/19-photos-celebrate-beauty-scum; Hugo Cervantes, "East LA's Club sCUM Hosts the Spanish-Language Queer Punk Party of Your Dreams," *Remezcla,* July 7, 2019 https://remezcla.com/features/music/la-club-scum-latin-queer-punk-party/.

collaborators to be featured in the media. When possible, they shared photographs of people who attended Scum, such as queer photographer Amina Cruz. Garcia and Sanchez included Cruz in the process, which provided an opportunity for exposure as well as allowed for pre-screening of the images. The popularity of Club Scum and the media attention it received provided Garcia and Sanchez with speaking engagements at museums across Los Angeles, and the opportunity to collaborate with other promoters and venues. They took Club Scum to New York, San Francisco, Las Vegas, and Mexico City, Mexico.

Garcia and Sanchez's experience of identifying as queer, punk, from East Los Angeles, and sense of feeling marginalized as gay Latinos brought them close. This connection transpired from feelings that labeled Garcia and Sanchez as outsiders in the punk scene, in the mainstream gay culture, and in "traditional" Latinx communities. They both shared a sense of frustration at "being too punk for the gay scene and too queer for the punk scene." This sentiment was echoed by many of Club Scum patrons. Latinx punk placemaking can be traced to this feeling of being an outsider, of not belonging — of abjection — in West Hollywood and the straight punk scene. This feeling of abjection also fostered an intergenerational collaboration that resulted in community building.

No One Under 21 Allowed!

On a Friday night when Club Scum takes over Chico, the parking lot visually and sonically offers a different vibe from the regular clientele. Scum party goers hang outside the club before entering the small club. You can smell the cigarette smoke along with fumes from the exhaust of cars that drive up and down the boulevard. The outfits at Scum range from band t-shirts, ripped fishnets, colorfully dyed hair, wigs, safety pins, patches, studs, leather belts, chains, bold make-up, and jewelry that are inspired by punks, drag, BDSM, glam, androgyny, and the

punkiffied homeboy/homegirl aesthetic with sharp wing eyeliner, dark red lipstick, and short hair—creating a visual kaleidoscope. Fashion in punk lends itself to blur the lines of gender and sexuality opening the possibilities for attendees to put on their best outfits and be the star of their fantasy. Sonically, we are serenated by the sounds of the city with the vroom from mufflers, sirens from a police car, ambulance, or firetruck. You also hear chatter, laughter, and glass beer bottles falling to the ground. Sonically the bass from those who are drinking inside their car is heard. Every now and then we hear the sound that escapes the bar every time the door opens and closes. The parking lot outside of Chico operates as another space of sociality for its attendees creating its own scene before one even entering the club.

The first night of Club Scum was enough of a success that the manager agreed to having the party once a month. Garcia remembers that by the fourth month Scum had quickly grown, and he credited social media with the success since it helped circulate flyers and build a following. Scum's social media following grew so quickly that it even drew the attention of queer punk youth who weren't old enough to attend Scum. In the following, I share the story of a queer punk youth as an example of how Latinx punk placemaking evades restrictions. This queer punk youth learned about Scum through social media, but was under the age of 21. However, they were determined to be part of the party one way or another. They decided to dress up and hang out in the parking lot as people made their way inside Chico, including drag performers and DJs. The insistence of this young queer punk speaks to LGBTQ queer socializing that is reliant and limited to clubs and bars. Moreover, the story demonstrates the determination and ingenuity of this particular queer youth, who took a DIY approach and created their own version of Scum in the parking lot. Interestingly, Garcia had a similar experience in the late 1990s when he was under 21 and would hang outside the Garage (now the Virgil) during Club Sucker, a party

thrown by Vaginal Cream Davis. Garcia and Davis would eventually develop a friendship that inspired many of Garcia's future projects. These DIY formations of Latinx punk placemaking are possible because of the space a strip mall provides with parking lots in the front. In the process, the parking lot becomes an important site of intergenerational community building and queer survival through Latinx punk placemaking. This form of placemaking is in conversation with Black and Latinx youth who hang out in parking lots or in front of liquor stores. What this reveals is the neoliberal disinvestment in social services, and lack of spaces available to marginalized youth.

Figure 17 Outside of Chico on Scum Night courtesy of Rudy Garcia

Red Velvet Rope at the Strip Mall

The decision to host Club Scum at Chico for Garcia and Sanchez was intentional as they considered economics and geography accessibility, but also because the bar was historically important to them. Sanchez shared, "I never had money to go see half of the people that guest deejayed for us."[25] Garcia and Sanchez's positionality as working-class queers from East Los Angeles who experienced economic difficulties prevented them from affording leisurely activities such as a concert. In an interview with the *New York Times*, Sanchez shared in reference to drag performers, DJs, but also friends who would travel to Montebello for Club

[25] Ray Sanchez, Personal Interview, May 7, 2021

Scum, “It’s been nice to bring people to our gay bar, in the hood, where we grew up.” Sanchez’s comments gesture towards a sense of pride in sharing his community and history with those who are from other parts of Los Angeles, and perhaps with locals who had never visited Chicos.

The shift in clientele at Club Chico did not go unnoticed by the regulars who would unknowingly arrive at the bar only to find a drastically different crowd. Scum is an intergenerational, predominantly Latinx, queer, and punk party, and attendees’ range in education, socioeconomics, and generation. Some of the Chico regulars would stick around to see what Club Scum was about, while others left. Sanchez shared with me,

> Chico was very hesitant like about us doing Scum because they’re like, I don't know if it’s going to work, like the music. So, we kind of like lied, I don't know if Rudy shared this, but he was like we’re going to do flashback 80s [night]. And we probably did that for like I don't know, an hour. And then we just fuckin’ full on went into it and their regulars kind of hated it. People were talking shit, but our people felt like it was the best fucking thing that ever existed, you know? And that's all that matters.

The tensions between the regulars and the new Scum crowd were drowned out by 80s flashbacks and fast beats of three cord punk songs. Sanchez was clearly excited and relished in the affect that Scum produced. This moment highlights the tensions and differences within the LGBTQ community to reconsider unintended consequences of Scum, and how regulars make sense of Scum nights.

As the popularity of Club Scum increased, patrons would have to arrive early or risk not making it inside the bar. One Friday night, friends and I waited in line making our way into Club Chico. As we got closer to the front of the line, the person ahead of us, an older Latino, asked the security guard in Spanish what was going on that night and why there were so many people. The

security guard answered that it was a sort of "noche de como espantos, como de spooky"[26] and that it was a lot of fun and that he should stay and check it out. Hesitantly, the regular entered. After the interaction my friend and I looked at each other and wondered how one would describe Club Scum. This exchange exemplifies the popularity of Club Scum, while the long lines it created at Chico prompted the regular client to wonder what was going on.

The security guard's description of Scum as a "spooky night" gestures to the sounds, aesthetics, and performances at Club Scum. Many of the drag performances provided a raw misfit vibe mixed with glam that sometimes ended with fake blood splattering everywhere. Perhaps spooky referenced how these performances were weird, eerie, and disturbing in comparison to mainstream drag performances. Furthermore, "una noche de espantos" also speaks to the common misconceptions that Latinx communities do not participate in subcultures like punk and therefor adds to the allure of the weird, mysterious, and unknown that was Club Scum to outsiders.[27] Sanchez shared a similar anecdote from a friend who lives down the block from him and who is from Mexico City. This friend described Scum as "la noche de las dragulas…it's crazy there," which loosely translates to "Dracula night." The interaction between the security guard and the regular client also problematizes the notion of utopia in queer night life by starkly highlighting how sometimes communities are displaced, if even for only one night, to make space for another queer community.

[26] Loosely translates to "a spooky night."

[27] A "spooky night" also summons a caricatures of goth subculture, for example, the YouTube viral video "Hola Soy Darks" was published in 2011 by Mauricio Diamante a non-binary make-up artist from Monterey, Mexico. In the video Diamante presents themselves as Verónica Rodríguez de la Luz del Topo or La Elvira and declare just how "dark" or goth they are. In an interview, Diamante shared that the video was made to "challenge the elitism of goth culture in Mexico." But the video struck a nerve because of how easy it is to parody goth people or any subculture, like punk, that uphold a certain level of authenticity as important to the subculture https://remezcla.com/features/music/yo-soy-darks-playlist-halloween/.

Garcia recalled that both him and Sanchez were very conscious of who they invited to Scum and in extension into the community. This was particularly important to them as neighboring city of Boyle Heights has experienced accelerated gentrification in recent years. Scum has been accused by some in the community of contributing to gentrification. While Scum may not automatically be conducive to gentrification, I would be remiss if I ignored such possibilities as Jin Haritaworn (2015) warns that no queer positionality is outside gentrification. Garcia did take these accusations into consideration and was in fact very observant of attendees for multiple reasons. For Garcia the issue of safety was also important, given the 2016 mass shooting at Pulse night club in Orlando, Florida. He also noticed that DJs would draw different crowds, some were predominantly Anglo but most would return. Lastly, whenever Garcia spoke about Scum in public and in the media, he would always mention that everyone was welcomed but to respect the space and the neighborhood. He felt that people were conscious of their positionality and as a result the bar never had a major issue or fight break out.

On the other side of the Red Velvet Rope

We have now made it inside Club Chico, where the smell of stale beer and the artificial smog machine immediately hits you. Punk, industrial, and goth songs fill up the dimly lit small dive bar. One side of the space has small wooden benches attached to a wall covered in dark red paisley-like wallpaper and flyers announcing future events at Club Chico. Along the same side of the wall, there is one seating booth near the stage. On the opposite side of the venue is the bar area that seats approximately ten people. Where the bar ends, the small dancing area begins. The dance area is in between the booth and a wall with a long mirror, a wooden ledge for drinks, wooden benches, and a few cocktail tables. In the center of the dance area, a tiny stage, made of a wooden platform, is adorned by sheer fabric in the colors of the pride flag hanging from the

ceiling to the wall—lit up with white Christmas lights. The stage fits no more than three crowded people at a time. The wooden platform has CHICO painted in bold yellow uppercase letters. Once the clock strikes 10:00 pm, attendees begin arriving, and by midnight, it is nearly impossible to get inside the bar as everyone is standing shoulder to shoulder. Midnight marks the start of the drag show at Club Scum, and drag performers of all skill levels, genres, and expressions often combine performance art and drag.

Figure 18 Chico State Image by Author

DJ Cue That Song

The soundscapes of Club Scum are just as important as the location. As previously mentioned, Garcia and Sanchez did not set out to find any gay club that played top 40 songs; rather, they explicitly wanted a to create a party that merged their queer, punk, and Latinx identities, in a working-class and immigrant community. It was essential to feature punk, goth, and industrial music, while mixing them with the Spanish songs they grew up listening to. In an interview with *The New York Times*, Garcia and Sanchez expressed that "the mixture has worked," referencing the music played at Club Scum. Garcia and Sanchez take turns DJing at Club Scum alongside invited guest DJs. The sonic tone that Garcia and Sanchez set are the

foundation for Scum. Taking us through take a sonic journey that includes songs they grew up listening to with their parents and at family gatherings while referencing their own musical taste. As the songs play, they evoke a visceral reaction through dance. For example, the night might start with 80s rock such as Siouxsie and the Banshees to warm up the crowd and mark the transition of the night to Club Scum. "I Can't Do Anything" by the 1970s punk band X-Ray Spex follows—mixed into the song "La Culebra" by the Mexican regional group Banda Machos. Then we are hit with hardcore punk, with a song by the trans hardcore band G.L.O.S.S. (which stands for Girls Living Outside Society's Shit). Set lists include Spanish pop songs from groups such as Alaska y Dinarama and Riot Grrrl bands such as Sleater Kinney and The Gossip. These artists very little in common musically and perhaps even evoke a sonic dissonance. However, the "mixture" works because it speaks to the sonic sensibilities of the Club Scum attendees who, like Garcia and Sanchez, predominantly come from working-class immigrant communities. The Spanish songs in particular allowed attendees the opportunity to dance to these songs with their lovers without feeling judged or shamed, while also enjoying punk. The soundscapes of Scum are essential to Latin punk placemaking, as it evoked a visceral reaction that kept people returning to Scum.

The Queen of Scum

At the stroke of midnight, the dancing and moshing stops as Lady Forbidden, host of Scum, makes her way to the stage to announce the beginning of the drag performers and create space on the dance floor for the drag performers. The small platform makes Lady Forbidden appear larger than life as she takes the stage wearing a black one piece leotard with rhinestones and ripped fishnets. Her electric blue hair and rhinestones adorning her face and nails make her outfit glimmer in the darkness and smokiness of Club Chico. On this night in 2019, Forbidden

announces that but this is no ordinary drag show, as it's the first round of the drag pageant for the title of the Queen of Scum. To commemorate the third anniversary of Scum, Garcia and Sanchez hosted drag pageant competition. The pageant was judged by San Cha, a local songwriter and musician; Abhora, runner-up and contestant of season two of *Dragula*; and Heather Jewett, a comedian, writer, and former band member of the electroclash band Gravy Train.

The first round of the pageant kicked off with drag performers Mia Dosin, Barbara Wyre, Blaisa Discoteca, Vicky Jean Mochi, Dusk, Krystyna Clown and Charlie Galin. Drag performers at Club Scum vary in aesthetics, sounds, and ethnicity, as not all identify as Latinx or Chicanx. On many occasions, first-time performers outshined seasoned performers. Drag at Scum departs from the style of drag that has become mainstream and popularized by the reality show *RuPaul's Drag Race (RPDR)*.[28] The style of drag in *RPDR* primarily consists of very polished and professionally designed looks where gay cis men imitate hegemonic ideas of femininity.[29]

Barbara Wyre, a Latinx drag queen, enters the dancefloor wearing a long black vinyl coat and taking her place on stage. Her performance begins with the song "Mooo!" by singer and songwriter Doja Cat (Amala Zandile Diamini). [30] The slow tempo of the song gives Wyre the time to seductively grant the audience a sneak peek into what is under her coat—a cow costume.[31] Wyre lip syncs to the irreverent lyrics, "Bitch I'm a cow /Bitch I'm a cow / I go moo /

[28] *RPDR* is a reality show and competition where contestants compete to become America's next drag superstar, the show initially aired on the Logo channel and moved to VH1 2009 and it has also been made available for stream on Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime.

[29] Ru Paul has been criticized for transphobic comments and since has included trans contestants and season 14 features a contestant who self identifies as a straight man who dresses in drag.

[30] In 2014, DoJa Cat released an EP but the release of "Moo" which became a viral sensation through social media elevated her platform.

[31] Beat for Mooo! was sampled from Wes Montgomery's song "Polka Dots & Moonbeams"

I go moo / Bitch I'm too smoooooth / I'm not in the moooood /trying to make moves."[32] As the song continues, Wyre begins to slowly remove her jacket revealing the entire cow costume accentuated by utters that cinch her waist. Wyre steps off the stage only lip synching to about 30 seconds of the song and in the final "trying to make moooves," the song ends and is followed by a loud moo as Wyre leans her body forward onto the audience. With this short intro, Wyre captures the attention of audience who giggle at the absurdity of the song, performance, outfit, and in anticipation for what comes next.

The loud moo marks a transition to the next song, "Brown Cow Stunning" by Monique Heart,[33] a season ten contestant of *Ru Paul's Drag Race*. Heart coined the phrase "Brown Cow Stunning" after a challenge where she dressed as a cow, but her print was more giraffe-like—when questioned by a judge, Heart responded that she saw the fabric and thought it was "brown cow stunning." Wyre lip-synchs to about one verse and 20 seconds of the song. The upbeat tempo of the song allows Wyre to pick up the energy by dancing faster and shaking her utters when appropriate. "Brown Cow Stunning" serves as a sonic placeholder and bridge to the next song. The transition is marked by another loud "moo."

Wyre's final song selection is "La Vaca" (The Cow) by Mala Fe, a merengue song that is often played at Latinx family parties. Merengue songs typically focus on the rhythm and the lyrics operate as irreverent or illogical word formations that are sexually suggestive.[34] For example the lyrics "Puiri, puiri, papidodo, piudodo / Puiri, puiri, papidodo / La vaca, ¡mu! / La

[32] "Doja Ca "Mooo!" Official Myrics and Meaning Verrified" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=atgEfJIWpBY Doja Cat for *Vulture* explained that the song was inspired by a cow print shirt she was wearing with long ruffled sleeves. The sleaves were so distracting to Doja Cat that she decided to make a humorous song and video.

[33] Heart followed many *Ru Paul's Drag Race* contestants who turned catchphrases into pop dance songs.

[34] Merengue originates from the Dominican Republic, specifically *merengue de orquestra*, is the most popular and contemporary style, which is a fast pace syncopated rhythm that includes a horn section, piano, timbales, hi-hat, backup singers, a conga, a bass, saxophone, and a güira.

vaca, ¡mu!”[35] connote sexually suggestive or socially taboo subjects. As soon as the song registers with the audience and the energy is palpable as they go wild dancing and singing along with Wyre to the “moo” portion of the song. Noticeably, San Cha the only Latinx judge, recognizes the song and shares the crowd's enthusiasm. Her attunement to Latinx working-class and immigrant sensibilities show up as she is familiar with the song and points to the limitations of the other judges who may not have that insight. Abhora and Heather Jewett bring their own drag and punk expertise but are limited in catching the nuances of Latinx punk, culture, and placemaking. With this song, Wyre drastically turns up the energy as her dance moves keep up with the fast beat of the music.

Figure 19 Barbara Wyre Image by Author

Can the subaltern cow speak?

I am interested in Wyre's performance for three reasons. The first is Wyre’s refusal to perform to any punk or alternative songs. Her refusal of conventional understandings of punk and performance make her the most punk. Secondly, I am interested in how the audience

[35] Mala Fe, “La Vaca” *Con Su Locura,* April 11, 2000.

responds to her performance. The performance resonates with the audience because it's absurd to take a cow and create an entire routine around it. The audience, made up of primarily Latinx queer punks, immediately connects to the song La Vaca. They hype up Wyre by clapping to the beat of the song and singing along the chorus, "Moo La Vaca" as its one of the few legible lyrics of the song that are easy to follow and sing along too. Wyre taps into the sonic "mixture that works." Lastly, I'm interested in Wyre's failure of a performance, one that is far from perfect. Her "failed" performance goes hand in hand with her aesthetic. Wyre's costume is not about realness. It is made up of an inexpensive cow costume and a black coat. In ballroom culture, (pageant competitions that were created by Black and Latinx LGBTQs in response to racism they experienced), realness is part of the vocabulary. Realness is an "adherence to certain performances, self-presentations, and embodiments that are believed to capture the authenticity of particular gender and sexual identities" (Bailey 2013, 55).[36] In other words, realness refers to an ability to execute a flawless performance of the archetypes of the gender binary with such precision as to pass in the outside world. Wyre, however, is not trying to execute a perfected version of femininity. Instead, she is dressed up as a cow and comedically sexualizes the cow by shaking and emphasizing the utters. During the three-minute performance, Wyre dedicates two minutes to "La Vaca." This no small feat as even the most seasoned dancers at family parties struggle to keep up—Wyre gestures towards that impossible need of stamina. While performing to "La Vaca," Wyre appears visibly tired as she adjusts her wigs, loses energy, and struggles to keep up with the song. She takes a minute and sits on the stage to catch her breath. The audience also struggles to keep up with the song. Right when both her and the audience seem to give up,

[36] Bailey further writes that there are two functions to realness, the first, creates a rubric for participants to use and perfect their performance to win trophies. Secondly, they "enact their realness performances to create the illusion of gender and sexual normativity and to blend into the larger heteronormative society to avoid homophobic discrimination, exclusion, violence, and death" (2013, 55-56).

Wyre draws everyone back in with her comedic timing to the irreverent lyrics and absurd animal noises in the song. The song finally ends. Wyre exits the stage as the crowd cheers for her. Despite being a crowd favorite, Wyre does not win. Yet for three minutes she shifted the soundscape of Club Scum, in some ways falling in line with a regular night at Club Chico. The song's familiarity, absurdity, and queering through Wyre's performance allow for a sonic disidentification that is made possible through this sonic code-switching and aligns Garcia and Sanchez's vision for Club Scum.

Wyre's performance, specifically her lip synching to "La Vaca," elicits abject histories of the working-class and immigrant community of SELA and East Los Angeles. Farms no longer operate in the area, but the meat packing plants in nearby Vernon haunt the area through the putrid smell that hovers over the city. The smell serves as a constant reminder of the labor that it takes to survive capitalism. Wyre's comedic performance embodies the politics of abjection through cows and the hard labor required to consume them. Cows operate in the abject, they are not cute but instead smelly. The milking process and slaughterhouses are all dirty tasks assigned to "strong men" who embody patriarchal ideas about masculinity and virility. Wyre's irreverent performance of cow drag brings masculinity to its head—as she disrupts the sexually suggestive lyrics by shifting patriarchal ideas about gender and sexuality, she expands the sonic register of queer Latinx punks. In refusing to have an extensive performance, Wyre enacts the politics of abjection by creating an entire routine around something trivial while calling attention to the larger histories and politics of Los Angeles. Wyre's sonic journey also offers a performative sonic return to "home" in East Los Angeles and Southeast Los Angeles for the many queer Latinx who frequent Scum. Through Latinx punk placemaking, Scum signifies the possibilities of enacting queer desire and joy in Latinx communities far away from the false promise of

inclusion in mainstream LGBTQ communities. The return home signifies the possibilities of enacting queer desire and joy in their communities far away from the false promise of inclusion that West Hollywood offers. Further, expressions of queer Latinx joy in neighborhoods like East Los Angeles and Southeast Los Angele is counterintuitive to white and mainstream LGBTQ narratives of leaving home to be gay. Wyre's performance represents how queer Latinx punk disidentifies with heteronormativity in Latinx cultures, and how in response to the disaffection of living in a neglected deindustrialized city, intergenerational sonic layering and sonic code-switching inform Latinx punk placemaking.

To conclude, I want to bring to attention the impact Scum had not just in greater Los Angeles but also across the country and outside of the US. Garcia and Sanchez were invited to host Scum to New York, San Francisco, Las Vegas, and Mexico City, Mexico. The soundscapes and aesthetics of Scum registered to Latinxs across the country and outside of the US. Scum was set to return to Mexico City in 2020, but plans were halted due to the global pandemic of Covid-19. The pandemic brought to light the many injustices experienced by minoritized communities including LGBTQ nightlife. Many bars held gofundme fundraisers to stay afloat and survive the stay-at-home order. Wyre's performance at Scum is an ephemeral moment shared in a space together. The precarity of queer nightlife for racialized communities is more present than ever and points to the importance of documenting these fleeting and ephemeral moments of queer Latinx punk placemaking. In the next chapter, I will build on the concept of Latinx punk placemaking through digital and sonic archives of queer punks in Los Angeles.

Chapter 3: Tactile & Sonic Memorability in Punk Archives

Introduction

Traditional archives kept inside institutions have historically omitted the histories of minoritized communities, thus legitimizing certain narratives and histories while simultaneously erasing others. Many in minoritized communities are well attuned to the institutional erasure and theft of their cultures and have a fraught relationship with institutions. Through creative interventions, however, these communities have found ways to keep their histories alive through oral traditions, food, culture, and music. More recently, access to technology has created alternative possibilities for minoritized communities to archive themselves and share their histories outside traditional institutions. Keeping in mind these broad tensions of archival practices, I engage in this chapter three personal archives that document localized punk histories. These archives are informed by a DIY ethos, practice, and rasquache way of knowing. Further, they offer insight into another way in which queer and feminist Latinx punks perform Latinx punk placemaking in Los Angeles. Given the ephemeral nature of punk and queer nightlife — where bands, venues, and scenes continually shift — I am interested in the ephemeral residue that punk produces. In other words, its lingering effects and affects.

Performance studies scholar Ramon Rivera-Servera (2014) writes about the joy of queer Latinx socialities. While joy is certainly present in queer Latinx punk spaces, I focus in this chapter on abjection, or negative feelings. In centering abjection, I chart formations of DIY Latinx punk archives that record histories not only of those who feel like outcasts within their already marginalized communities; the archives in this chapter also document the lives of queer and feminist Latinx punks who feel ostracized from patriarchal and hetero-dominated punk scenes. In this chapter, I explore the following questions: What does it mean to create and

catalog archives outside of formal institutions? Moreover, how do archival practices work to preserve the disaffection and excess of queer Latinx punk communities in Southeast LA? To answer these questions, I develop a theory of what I call *tactile memorabilities*. I argue that dispersed, archives tell us about how the histories and communities of queer and feminist Latinx punks have been marginalized.

These questions are critical, due to the accelerating gentrification of marginalized neighborhoods in Los Angeles and specifically Southeast LA, where galleries, breweries, and Tesla charging stations have appeared within the last five years. Historically, Southeast Los Angeles experienced drastic white flight in the 1960s, a subsequent shift in population demographics from white to primarily working-class immigrants, disinvestment, and corrupt city officials. I am interested in thinking through the negative affective registers the historical and current conditions of Southeast LA have produced for queer and feminist Latinx punks. These abject modes of sociality formed through disaffection create alternative collectivities and alternative archives. The questions guiding this chapter are in part inspired by my experience cataloging and digitizing the personal archives of Rudy Garcia. A queer Chicano punk, Garcia has curated and organized queer and punk events in Los Angeles for over twenty years. I also discuss the archives of Mayra Aguilar, a punk feminist and community organizer from Southeast Los Angeles. Lastly, I discuss the archives of Cindee, a queer feminist dyke from South Central who participated in the Los Angeles punk scene. Cindee has also volunteered with Chicxs Rockerxs South East Los Angeles (CRSELA) and has attended Club Scum (I discuss Club Scum in Chapter 2). Finally, I explore how CRSELA created an archive of band t-shirts.

It is important to mention that I did not initially seek to create a digital archive. As I began to conduct oral histories, however, interviewees often referenced punk show flyers and other

objects to accompany their storytelling. The repeated references to these objects highlighted the significance of these objects within marginalized histories.[1] Experiencing my three interviewees' oral histories alongside flyers, buttons, posters, zines, and pictures illuminated how punk is a multiformat genre that lends itself to collecting. This turn in my research towards the archives and ephemera is informed by my previous my involvement in digital archives. In 2016 I was introduced to Chicana Por Mi Raza (CPMR), a digital memory archive started in 2009 by Dr. Maria E. Cotera and Dr. Linda Garcia-Merchant. The objective of CPMR is to digitize personal archives not only for preservation purposes, but also to make them available for public and academic use. The archive holds oral histories and digitized documents from Chicanas, Latinas, and allies.

CPMR constructed its digital archive by following a grass-roots model of relying on volunteer work and student support. Cotera and Merchant draw from Chicana praxis to "re-envision the ARCHIVE as a site of encuentro and exchange in which new "constituencies of resistance" (in Chela Sandoval's words) are created and nurtured." This re-envisioning of an archive creates a digital meeting space to broaden the histories of the Chicano movement. My involvement with CPMR was to assist Chicana feminist theorist and activist Anna NietoGomez in digitizing her archive. Through this process, I learned digitizing guidelines and the upkeep of metadata. My familiarity with oral histories, paired with training in digital archival methodologies, has provided me with the skills to support queer and feminist punk community members in digitizing their archives. Having a DIY attitude and the support of Cotera, who enthusiastically offered advice and additional training when asked to help, gave me the confidence to move forward in digitizing and cataloging archives.

[1] Rudy Garcia was the only person who from the onset wanted their archive digitized and catalogued for his own personal uses.

Tactile Memorability

In this chapter, I take up what I call *tactile memorability* to think through personal archives and the process of digitizing these archives. Specifically, I am interested in how tactile memorability informs Latinx punk placemaking. Due to limited resources, many punk bands often make limited edition posters, buttons, and stickers that later become collectibles. These tangible items activate *tactile memorability*, a term which describes how touching an object stimulates consequential memories that offer details about times, places, sounds, and feelings. Without these ephemera, names, dates, and band details can easily be forgotten. There is something significant about spending time with a tangible item, the close examination, the smell, and the texture of the item that differently stimulates memories. These memories are essential because while an individual can tell us about their life, they also perform the task of piecing together the histories of their community (Hirsch Smith 2002). In Los Angeles, tactile memorability reveals localized punk histories and offers a glimpse into the larger structural issues affecting the community — such as the lack of space made available to the youth. Thus, textual and tactile archives formed by flyers, buttons, posters, zines, and pictures stimulate memories that tell us about collaborations in the Los Angeles punk scene and queer Latinx punk placemaking.

I come to tactile memorability through Diana Taylor, Ann Cvetkovich, and Horacio Roque Ramirez, as their work considers archives and memory. First, Taylor's (2003) notion of the repertoire points us towards embodied memory in the ephemeral as a valued site of knowledge-making and sharing. I am interested in the repertoire for this chapter through the voiced and gestures in oral histories. Taylor (2003) emphasizes the importance of the telling and not just writing of a story, “the memory passed down through bodies and mnemonic practices.

Memory paths and documented records might retain what the other 'forgot.' These systems sustain and mutually produce each other, neither is outside or antithetical to the logic of the other" (Taylor 2003, 35-36). Like Taylor, I am interested in the in-betweenness of the archive and the ephemeral, and how they inform each other in the context of the growth of the digital age. Second, Taylor explains that "embodied memory, because it is live, exceeds the archive's ability to capture it" (Taylor 2003, 20). Punk performances live on through oral traditions and gain legendary status.

Cvetkovich's attention to how archives of feelings, memory, oral histories, and public cultures coalesce offers important insight into minoritized cultural formations. First, Cevetkovich is concerned with how in addition to documents, oral history is a critical method to record histories of what she calls "public cultures" (2003, 166). Oral histories, she argues, evidence the ephemeral and are "testimony to the fact that it existed" (2003, 166). Oral histories also capture affect, or archives of emotions. Furthermore, Cvetkovich writes that personal memory makes a document significant (2003, 243). I take up this idea to think through how queer punk ephemera exists in various formats, not just in live queer performance. Lastly, an archive of feelings speaks to the intimacy of oral histories and personal archives — of entering homes and going through love letters, candid polaroid's, flyers, and posters; these archives not only offer a glimpse into the personal but how it tied to broader histories of space (Cvetkovich 2003, 244-345).

Differently, the work of Roque Ramirez (2005) speaks to the precarious histories of queer working-class Latinxs. Roque Ramirez (2005) proposes the term "living archives" to analyze white hegemonic archival practices and heteronormativity of Latinx histories. Living archives speak to the difficulties experienced by queer Latinos and those living on the periphery (Roque Ramirez 2005, 116). Aligned with Taylor and Cvetkovich, Roque Ramirez explores how oral

histories speak and points to the limitations of archives. Roque Ramirez is interested in the affect of archives, in that they produce histories of survival alongside "community loss, pain, and death" (2005, 126). In this chapter, I focus on the in-betweenness of oral histories and unofficial, tangible archival documents, to think about how they produce tactile memorabilities both outside and inside institutions.

I also build from the work of Maria Cotera (2018) and Eddy. F. Alvarez Jr. (2016), to theorize Latinx punk placemaking through tactile memorabilites. Cotera and Alvarez both examine non-traditional archives, including documents gathering dust, scraps of paper, and articles, significant objects that may otherwise go unnoticed. Archives expose themselves through material objects that can easily be missed to the untrained eye. Cotera (2018) theorizes archives as an "archipelago of closets, basements, attics, and home offices." These are rich collections that affirm and evidence Chicanas' participation in the cultural nationalist Chicano movement. Through a similar thread, I am interested in the archipelago of punk archives that tells us about queer and feminist presence in the punk scene of Los Angeles. Meanwhile, Alvarez emphasizes the importance of the quotidian moments and how they inform queer radical possibilities of community formation and care.[2]

Additionally, I expand tactile memorability to consider the digital as a format for preserving ephemera while also addressing the inherent loss in digitizing practices. Paying attention to loss through multiplicities, I consider how documents preserve memories of lost loves ones as well as minoritized communities' lost histories, resources, and spaces. Loss is a constant park of punk culture, as makeshift venues close or bands form and disband. Lastly, I am also considering loss through the switch from paper to digital. Tactile memorabilities speaks to

[2] Robb Hernandez similarly examines scattered documentation as "ephemeral remainders" as "a queer detrital analysis grasps at that "something else" in the visual field" (2019, 75).

expanding minoritized histories by searching through the scattered, tattered, and digital remnants.

Tracing Queerness in SELA

The cultural archival footprint of Southeast Los Angeles (SELA) is sparse. Growing up in the region and having attended public school, it was not until I was in high school that I became politicized through punk and Howard Zinns' *A People's History of the United States.* These events shifted my political consciousness, but as I learned about the cultural ethnonationalist movements of the 1960s, it all felt so distant from Southeast Los Angeles. Even though many historically important events in the Chicano movement occurred in nearby East Los Angeles, it still felt removed from my community. I remember feeling as though nothing significant happened in Southeast Los Angeles. This feeling was reaffirmed when people asked me where I was from. When I answered that I grew up in Huntington Park and Bell Gardens, I often had to name surrounding areas to give the person an idea of where I lived. Eventually, my interest in punk and my feelings of wanting and expecting more out of SELA would lead me to create a digital archive of queer and feminist punks in Los Angeles.

In 2011 I attended a conference where Wanda Alarcon delivered a paper titled "New Wave Saved My Life."[3]Alarcon began her paper by sharing that she grew up in Huntington Park in the 1980s; this immediately caught my attention. She shared landmarks only recognizable to those familiar with the area, and weaved in how new wave alternative culture shifted ideas about sexuality, race, and class in SELA. She shared, "queer desire … flowed into my childhood home through the sturdy Zenith television." Alarcon noted the "multiple crossings" of new wave, explaining how "music also crossed a race and a class line, however precariously treaded."

[3] Wanda Alarcon, "New Wave Saved My Life," *Sounding Out,* January 31, 2011, https://soundstudiesblog.com/2011/01/31/new-wave-saved-my-life/.

Situating the conservative turn in both the United Kingdom and the US in the 1980s alongside the rise of the AIDS epidemic, Alarcon beautifully credits new wave as helping her, and many others, survive the decade. She concludes with, "Maybe the transgression is to survive. Furthermore, to remember." As I read Alarcon's closing remarks, I remember a wave of grief coming over me and not knowing why I felt so emotional. Upon reflecting on Alarcon's text, it is evident that her work represented many possibilities that I had never imagined. This piece not only pointed to queer futurities but, perhaps most significant to me, it showed me that queer people and queer women who were into alternative cultures existed in SELA, and that they had survived. Alarcon's essay then became my unofficial guide to piecing together fragments of SELA alternative queer punk culture—perhaps new wave also saved my life.[4]

Two passages from Maylei Blackwell's *¡Chicana Power!: Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement* (2011) have also influenced my research. The first is an anecdote of an unnamed Chicana who came out after her involvement in the movement, but unfortunately passed away before Blackwell could interview her. Blackwell reflects, "How do I tell her story when she was not out during the movement and without knowing how she would like to be remembered? Already we are missing part of the history. Her invisibility potentially has an impact on hundreds of young lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer Chicanas and Chicanos and other people of color who are looking for a way to see themselves historically in the struggle of their communities. Often queer activists have been or are lead organizers of labor, class-, and race-based movements (even in gender movements) but have not been recognized in their wholeness or remembered in this way" (40). Due to the limited representations of LGBTQ-

[4] I would learn of the work of Raquel Gutierrez and Vickie Vertiz, both writers and poets from Southeast Los Angeles. Karen Tongson's mention of Southeast Los Angeles in *Relocations* would also stand out. More recently, the work of Jorge Leal and Marlen Hernandez-Rios has expanded the scholarship of SELA and music.

identifying Chicanx in the Chicano movement of the late 1960s, this passage spoke to me and was essential to hold on to. The second passage was the story of Cecilia (Chicki) Quijano, who organized a walkout in Huntington Park High School, the only walkout in Southeast Los Angeles during the 1968 East Los Angeles Blowouts (Blackwell 2011, 185). Quijano's story was inspirational in that she organized outside East Los Angeles and brought together youth from different paths of life, including high school students, college students, and formerly incarcerated youth, to unite under one cause. Blackwell shares how Quijano initially did not identify as a feminist and was part of the group that walked out of the infamous Houston National Chicana Conference in 1971 to protest centering women's rights within the Chicano movement (Blackwell 2011, 187). Quijano would eventually go on to critique sexism. Quijano's stood out to me due to its geographical connections between the Chicano movement and Southeast Los Angeles. However, I was also interested in her initial resistance to a feminist politic. Her resistance reminded me of my own experience in high school and my early college years, where my feminist politics were questioned. Quijano's story was simultaneously inspiring and a reminder of how feminism is challenged. Despite the critiques of visibility, these stories in *¡Chicana Power!* signal the importance of continuing to write and document the histories of marginalized communities like Southeast Los Angeles.

Coming across *scraps* of queer histories from Southeast Los Angeles brings me to Robb Hernandez's archival research on Robert Legorreta and Edmundo "Mundo" Meza. While I am primarily interested in Mundo Meza and his geographical ties to SELA, it is almost impossible to speak about Meza without mentioning Legorreta. Legorreta's friendship with Meza and attention to his documents have helped to solidify the importance of Meza's contributions to queer Chicanx/Latinx art. Legorreta was born in El Paso, Texas, in 1952. He moved to East Los

Angeles and at an early age, would dress in ways that destabilized gender norms. He would bravely walk down Whittier Boulevard flirtatiously teasing men (Hernandez 2011). Legorreta would eventually meet Mundo Meza, and the two went on to get involved with social activism of the time. They also experimented with self-styling practices, calling themselves the "psychedelic glitter queens." These early trials of self-fashioning included performances that would inform both of their future artistic practices. In "Drawn from the Scraps: The Finding AIDS of Mundo Meza," Hernandez describes Mundo Meza as being born in Tijuana and raised in Huntington Park, "one of the most provocative young talents to emerge out of Southern California in the late 1960s" (Hernandez 2015, 70). Again, the geographic marker of Huntington Park alongside Meza's queerness caught my interest. In the essay, Hernandez works through what he calls a "queer detrital analysis" to explore "residues, margins, and parts," or "the queerness of paper scraps, fragments" (Hernandez 2015, 71). Hernandez thus offers a queer reading of the failure and incompleteness of archival collections that sit outside heteronormativity.

Hernandez's queer detrital aligns with my quest to find queer and feminist historical fragments in Southeast Los Angeles. I learned more about Meza and Legorreta in Hernanez's 2009 *The Fire of Life: The Robert Legorreta-Cyclona Collection.* Hernandez includes a quote from Legorreta, who says that before meeting Meza, he had heard him described as "a Chicano from Huntington Park who acted a little queer" (Hernandez 2009, 6). As Legoretta's and Meza's friendship grew, they befriended and collaborated with other artists. The two met Glugio Nicandro, or Gronk, before his involvement with ASCO, the avant-garde artists collective. Gronk would eventually ask Legorreta and Meza to perform in the infamous 1969 play *Caca-Roaches Have No Friends*. The play would be the debut of Legorreta as Cyclona, and it would be the first of many collaborations between the three (Alvarado 2018; Chavoya, Frantz, Gómez-

Barris, 2017; Hernandez 2019). Art historian Leticia Alvarado (2018) situates Legorreta and Meza as important influences for what would become ASCO. Thus, marking again the important role "a Chicano from Huntington Park who acted a little queer" had in the art world. Unfortunately, the 1982 series *Frozen Art* would mark the last time Legorreta and Meza would collaborate. Meza's life was cut short as he fell victim to the devastating AIDS epidemic and passed away in 1985. The relationship between Legorreta and Meza exemplifies the longing to create community, for queer utopia as a theory in practice (Rivera-Servera 2012).

Taking a deep dive into Meza's short life, I learned that he was born in 1955 in Tijuana, Mexico. When he was young, his family moved to Huntington Park in Southeast Los Angeles, and later to East Los Angeles. Meza attended the Otis Art Institute in 1973.[5] Meza's visual work was shown in group exhibitions such as *Group Show* at Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE) in 1978 and in 1981 at the *Fashion Mannequin* exhibit for Security Pacific National Bank in Los Angeles. When Meza learned about his HIV status, he did not want it to be widely known. According to Legorreta, Meza denied visitors as his health declined due to complications of AIDS. Meza passed away in 1985, only three months before he turned 30 years old.

In 1985, Otis Parsons Gallery in Los Angeles held a posthumous exhibit for Meza. His work would not be shown again until the 2012 exhibit, *ASCO: Elite of the Obscure: A Retrospective 1972-1987.* Most recently Meza's work was shown at the exhibit *Axis Mundo: Queer Networks in Chicano Los Angeles* (2017).[6] The exhibition was a capacious endeavor taken on by curators C. Ondine Chavoya and David Evan Frantz, with a focus on networks rather than

[5] Window dressing was a way that Meza could financially support himself and was an opportunity they took on after meeting the now infamous Barneys window dresser Simon Doonan (Hernadez 2019; Alvarado 2018).

[6] *Axis Mundo* was organized by ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives at the USC Libraries in collaboration with the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

art movement or medium. For Chavoya and Frantz, Meza was “the conceptual axis” bringing together 50 artists, groups, and bands for the “first historical exhibition ever mounted on LGBTQ Chicana/o and Latina/o artists” (Chavoya and Frantz 2017, 25). Chavoya and Frantz came across Meza’s work in Legorreta's archive during a presentation that was part of the exhibit *Cruising the Archive: Queer Art and Culture in Los Angeles 1945-1980*. When *Axis Mundo* opened, I was excited to see the multiplicities of mediums included — costumes, and photographs of punk bands such as Nervous Gender were exhibited alongside the ASCO postcards. I purchased the exhibit catalog and was enthusiastic to learn more about Meza and his connection to Southeast Los Angeles, but disappointed to find that the catalog omitted Meza's time in Huntington Park. However, I learned of a “gay Latin group!!” from Huntington Park, named Unidos (Chavoya and Frantz 2017, 26). The catalog notes that the mission of Unidos was to “Let them know we exist” (Chavoya and Frantz 2017, 26). For Unidos, documenting their queer existence in Southeast Los Angeles was and is important to the history of the community. Thinking through the personal archives of my three interviewees — Rudy Garcia, Maya Aguilar, and Cindee — I consider how personal archives are a form of “letting them know we exist” and inform Latinx punk placemaking. Fragmented stories and glimmers of queerness fabricate Latinx queer histories, and these archipelagos of memory tell us about moments of utopic community formations. Taking cues from Alarcon, Blackwell, and Hernandez's histories of queer survival, memories, activism, and friendship, this chapter remembers stories of queer and feminist communities of Los Angeles.

Social Media Archives

Social media archives are example of digital archives that create community formation and Latinx punk placemaking by documenting alternative cultures. For example, the Instagram

pages “Veteranas and Rucas” and “Map_Pointz” are curated by artist Guadalupe Rosales. In 2015 Rosales began the archival project documenting Chicanx and Latinx youth subculture in Southern California from the 1970s to 1990s, specifically the party scene. The account “Veteranas Y Rucas” is specifically dedicated to women; the bio on the page states, “Archivo para las mujeres de California. Reframing our past by sharing stories for better futures.” Differently, the page “Map_Pointz” is a “Community generated archive dedicated to the 90’s L.A. backyard parties, rave, and underground scene.” The goal of the pages is to offer an alternative narrative from mainstream media accounts of youth subcultures that were criminalized through local news media outlets.[7] The archive was first generated from Rosales’s own flyers and pictures. Soon after the accounts were created, they gained a solid social media following.[8] Part of the success of the pages is that followers can interact with Rosales and others who were part of the scene. Followers shared memories and reminisced on their own involvement in party crews and experiences attending parties. Later, Rosales began to crowd source images from followers to grow the collection and share other people’s stories. These digital forms of tactile memorability proliferate memories and serve as a reminder of specific community formations congealed by abjection. In sharing memories, ephemeral communities form online to tell a different story of Latinx youth culture. Rosales’s pages brought life back to an almost forgotten Latinx youth subculture. The comments and engagement the pages generate are significant because they enact a “collective healing” while simultaneously historicizing youth subcultures and combating historical erasure. While social digital archives are precarious due to

[7] https://www.veteranasandrucas.com/projects-1

[8] As of May 2022, both accounts are verified by Instagram, “Map_Pointz” has 51.9k followers and “Veteranas Y Rucas” has 271k followers.

the short-lived nature of social media platforms, Rosales also holds a physical archival component made up of her archive and items donated by her followers.

Rosales has inspired many to create their own social media archive accounts. For example, the account "Noche de Jotiar" is curated by Ray Sanchez, also the co-founder of Club Scum. Sanchez created the page to document T-parties in Los Angeles. T-parties were backyard parties similar to those documented in the pages curated by Rosales, but "Noche de Jotiar" documents queer Black, Latinx, and other queer communities of color. Another Instagram account is "Rock Archivo de L.A." by Dr. Jorge Leal. The focus of the page is on the rock en español scene of Southern California during the 1980s and 1990s. The "Rock Archivo de L.A." page is described as a "collective archive for the Rock Angelino & complicit genres." Initially, Dr. Leal shared pictures and flyers on Facebook. In 2017 Dr. Leal noticed the success and attention that Rosales's pages had on Instagram, so he shifted platforms. This coincided with Facebooks decline in popularity.[9] Like Rosales, Dr. Leal also welcomes submissions from followers to grow the archive and account. For Dr. Leal, it was essential to create a digital public histories project, like Rosales, where participants see themselves as active agents of history. Just as important is to make the archive accessible to those interested in youth cultures, so that followers can draw their own connections.[10] The significance of these social media archives is that they dignify Latinx working-class immigrant subcultures and communities in a way that does not appeal to respectability politics or the neoliberal logic of meritocracy.

[9] Marcos Hasan, "This Instagram Is An Archive of Rock en Español's Golden Years in Los Angeles" *Remezcla,* May 9, 2018, https://remezcla.com/features/music/rock-archivo-la-instagram/

[10] Ibid.

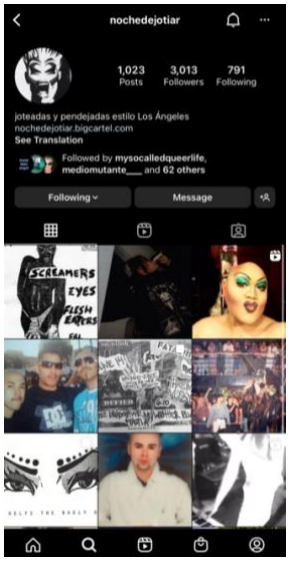

Figure 20 Noche de Jotiar Instagram Account

Technological advances such as smartphones have slightly democratized the digital divide, where almost anyone can access social media digital archives. However, it is essential to note that despite access to smartphones, the digital divide is still an ongoing issue in communities like Southeast Los Angeles and East Los Angeles. The global pandemic of Covid-19 amplified the digital divide for the immigrant working-class community of SELA, as students fell behind due to inadequate internet access or not having a personal computer at home.[11] Despite the digital gap that exists in SELA and East Los Angeles, public digital archives such those created by Rosales, Sanchez, and Dr. Leal are vital because they explicitly remove formal institutional barriers to accessing an archive. These public digital archives historicize the experiences of racialized youth cultures from Los Angeles who experience hyper surveillance and policing. Lisa Cacho's (2013) work helps to make sense of racialized youth in opposition to respectability politics. These archives of youth subculture are not necessarily interested in

[11] In Los Angeles, according to a study by the Pew Research Center, 59% of lower-income families reported their children would experience a digital obstacle https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/09/10/59-of-u-s-parents-with-lower-incomes-say-their-child-may-face-digital-obstacles-in-schoolwork/.

recuperating the culture, but instead in dignifying their existence. Cacho calls this "unintelligible ethics of deviance" (2013, 168). Here the irreverent sounds of Rock en Español, drag performances, and house music create sonic and digital archives of Latinx Punk Placemaking. Thus, I approach the archives of my three interviewees by considering the accessibility of the digital in relation to sound and the tactile, to understand placemaking by abject communities.

Archive of an East Los Queerdo

The first archive I digitized was that of Rudy Garcia, a self-described queer Chicano punk. I officially met Garcia when I attended Club Scum in 2016, although I had attended many events he organized. In 2019 Garcia was looking for support to organize his archive, so we met at a coffee shop to discuss his collection and goals. Garcia shared that he had a vast collection of posters, flyers, photographs, and pop-culture iconography and had finally arrived at a point in his life where it needed to be organized. Partly what inspired Garcia was advise he had received from his mentor and legendary punk Martin Sorrondeguy, singer of Los Crudos and Limp Wrist. In our meeting, Garcia and I agreed to meet once a week where I would interview him and digitize his archive. The first day I arrived at Garcia's house, I was nervous and excited. I brought hard drives, gloves, a flatbed scanner, a digital recorder and against all archival rules, two large black iced teas. Garcia lives in East Los Angeles, in a small open-style two-bedroom duplex. His home is only a couple of houses down from his parents' house, where he grew up. The walls of his living room are decorated with black and white photography of the 1970s Los Angeles punk scene. The only full-scale color image is a portrait of Garcia himself by Joey Terrill, *Mi Casta es Su Casta – Portrait of Rudy Garcia*, 2018,[12] hanging in a gold rococo style frame. A black bookshelf holding a vast record and book collection that tells the stories of queer and punk Los

[12] Acrylic and oil on canvas, 32 ½ × 38 inches (82.5 × 96.6 cm).

Angeles is guarded by a plastic Hello Kitty figurine. As I began to set up my equipment, Garcia brought out clear plastic storage bins. Although he had verbally shared an inventory of his collection with me, I was still surprised by how much he had collected over the years. These plastic bins tell stories of traveling with friends, hanging out at concerts, meeting punk rock idols, drag, parties, drugs, and many crushes. A wooden trunk chest also holds some of Garcia's most prized possessions, such as the recuerdos from his baptism, his baby clothes, and family pictures that form part of queer worldmaking.

Figure Scutter #4 Zine Flyer Courtesy of Rudy Garcia

Garcia's over twenty years of curating events in Los Angeles is reflected in the enormity of documents and ephemera he has. During interviews with Garcia, I was astounded by his memory. While some details may escape him, he often references flyers to paint the picture of who performed or was DJing for a specific night. His oral history and archive tell a deeper story of Los Angeles queer night life that exists on the fringes of the city. The flyers and shared stories casually historicize the origins of designers like Jeremy Scott or DJ Total Freedom, both of whom Garcia spent time with. Garcia's body of work also tells pieces of Riot Grrrl history, such as Bikini Kill playing in Montebello in the late 1990s. And the friendships he developed with Corine Tucker from Sleater Kinney or Beth Ditto from the Gossip. Or Garcia sharing how it felt the first time legendary punk singer Alice Bag DJed his party "Polla Loca." Another gem is his

friendship with performance artist Vaginal Cream Davis, who took Garcia under her wing after he shared his zine with her. Covid-19 disrupted the completion of digitizing Garcia's collection, but we were able to digitize over 2,000 pictures, flyers, documents, and other ephemera. Garcia's enormous collection is well beyond the scope of this chapter, and my focus here is on how tactile memorabilia, such seemingly unimportant old flyers stored in plastic bins, tell the cultural stories of minoritized communities. In sum, tactile memorability facilitates Latinx punk placemaking across Los Angeles.

Figure 22 Flyer of Scutter Fest courtesy of Rudy Garcia

For the love of Southeast Los Angeles

I first met Mayra Aguilar when I was a teenager, and she was one of the first people to share her love for Southeast Los Angeles and music. Aguilar is a community organizer and musician from Huntington Park, California and has been crucial to developing youth culture in Southeast Los Angeles and surrounding communities that began in her teens. My first interactions with her were through the local punk scene in Southeast Los Angeles. At the time she was in the band Bruise Violet. Throughout the years, I observed how much energy Aguilar poured into her community. First as an audio engineer for the local and now-defunct venue the

Allen in South Gate; then as an organizer for Clit Fest and Lady Fest; later she would go on to support the founding of Ovarian Psychos in 2010 and in 2013 co-found Chicas Rockeras SELA. Most recently, she was involved in 2018 with the formation of Skate SELA. Although I have known Aguilar for many years, it wasn't until I interviewed her that I learned more about her upbringing. Aguilar is the daughter of immigrants, who in the 1970s migrated from Mexico to the US. Prior to relocating, the Aguilar's father worked as a farmworker and in the canneries during the 1940s and 1950s. In Mexico, Aguilar's family lived in the rural countryside, and the move to Huntington Park was a big transition that would impact her upbringing. Aguilar recalls that her parents kept to the neighborhood and would find all their needs on Pacific Boulevard in Huntington Park, or La Pacific as it is colloquially known. Pacific Boulevard first emerged as a destination shopping center for the white working-class community of Southeast Los Angeles. It had department stores, car dealerships, and movie theatres. With the dawn white flight took in the 1960s, the upkeep of Pacific Boulevard deteriorated and shops closed (Fulton 2001). When immigrant and working-class Latinas/os moved into the area, they opened up shops that catered to their needs, thus participating in placemaking. The disinvestment in La Pacific by city officials after the white flight speaks to the abjection experienced by minoritized communities. Aguilar's upbringing differed from that of her siblings because she was the youngest child and was raised in the US. Her parents were strict and did not allow her to do much. It is in this context that Aguilar grew up to love and see the beauty in her community.

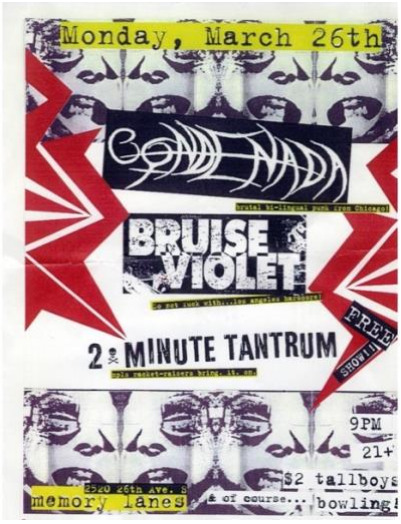

Figure 23 Bruise Violet Flyer Courtesy of Mayra Aguilar

Being the youngest child did have come with some positive experiences, such as Aguilar's older brothers introducing her to metal at a young age and encouraging her to learn how to play the guitar. This musical avenue made it possible for Aguilar to explore and find musical genres she liked such as grunge, nu-metal, and Riot Grrrl, to name a few. Although Aguilar learned about US culture from her siblings, her love of music can also be traced to her mom, who would make mixed tapes for every celebratory occasion. Aguilar saw her mother's effort and time in creating the tapes, which influenced her DIY practices. To fill her time as the youngest child with overprotective parents, Aguilar started taking pictures of her friends and creating photo albums. Years later these albums capture the alternative youth punk subculture of Southeast Los Angeles in the 1990s-2010s.

Aguilar and I had agreed to meet and digitize her flyers, photographs, and documents, but Covid-19 halted the plans to meet in person. In November of 2020, after isolating for two weeks, we met in person in to begin digitizing her collection and conduct interviews. Aguilar shared with me that she was interested in digitizing her documents because she had a goal to one day create a website with a timeline of events matching fliers with photographs and dates. She

described it as “a super simple website that is literally just a timeline, and it would kind of be divided [by] section you know kind of in years, but then like even in months and then just kind of like linked like the fliers to it.”[13] With this goal in mind, we began to digitize the flyers. Aguilar laid out the flyers on my table, organized in different piles representing different years or promoters. As I scanned Aguilar's collection, she would excitedly touch different flyers and share details she remembered. For instance, she picked up a set of flyers and enthusiastically shared how they represented the time when she was in high school and would attend a local punk show every weekend. Then she picked up a different set of flyers and noted the technological shift when computers became more accessible. Flyers were created on computers instead of the cut and paste style or hand-drawn flyers. These moments demonstrate how tactile memorability through tangible flyers offers details that could otherwise be forgotten. Although personal computers became more common during the 1990s for economically disadvantaged communities like Southeast Los Angeles, having personal home computers happened at a slower pace. To make up for the lack, Aguilar commented that some of her peers would take advantage of computer class at school to create flyers.

As we made our way through the documents, Aguilar shared how she and her friends would plan out their weekends by learning the patterns of policing in SELA. For example, based on the location of a backyard show and bands playing, they could predict whether a show would be broken up by cops and how long it would take them to arrive. Aguilar mentioned that backyard shows were organized around such uncertainties and precariousness. For example, bands were on standby and ready to quickly set up their instruments and play their set, knowing the possibility of the show being raided. Aguilar said, “a gig in South Gate would definitely be

[13] Mayra Aguilar, Personal Interview, November 16, 2020.

broken up by the cops, but if the backyard were in Lynwood, the sheriffs would take longer." Learning these patterns helped Aguilar and her friends make plans for the weekend with the hopes of also staying out of trouble. Tracing the patterns in flyers so many years later speaks to Latinx punk placemaking in the early 2000s.

Figure 24 Lynwood Flyer Courtesy of Mayra Aguilar

As I continued to scan the documents, we came across a flyer for a fundraiser for a friend of Aguilar's who passed away. She shared how a show was quickly organized to support the family with funeral costs. This flyer reminded her of "how a bunch of teens came together … damn did people show up. That was awesome!" This particular moment demonstrates how SELA youth organized using what was available to them to support their friends' parents. For Aguilar, picking up the flyer reminded her of the person who passed away. It also gave her a moment to reflect on her youth and be in awe of what a small group of teens could accomplish. Here tactile memorability offers a moment to recognize non-traditional efforts of community organizing taken up by the youth as a form of Latinx punk placemaking.

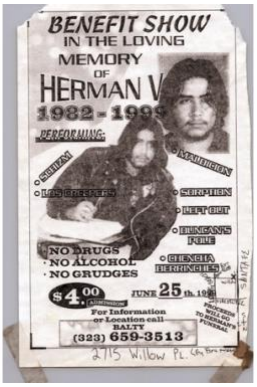

Figure 25 Benefit Show for Herman Courtesy of Mayra Aguilar

All-Girl Bands

Moving through the different sets of flyers, we came across some from shows Aguilar played with her bands. Holding and looking through the flyers resurfaced memories of sexism that Aguilar had suppressed. Aguilar, like many women musicians, was continually questioned over her knowledge of her instruments in ways that her male counterparts were not. While sexist treatment of women musicians is not new. What is interesting is that so many years later, Aguilar was finally able to share that she sometimes did not realize she was experiencing sexism. She sat with the uncomforting feelings until years later when she had the language to name it.

Tactile memorability sometimes operates in ways that offer a moment to reconcile unwanted experiences and forgive our younger selves. In her youth Aguilar was a fan of bands like L7, and her first band, Selvi, was intentionally made up of all women musicians. However, this meant that her band would only get booked with other bands that also featured women musicians — "all girl bands." Aguilar recalled that Selvi would always be compared to Civet, another local all-women band. Aguilar explained, "other people just try to pin people against each other, they will always say, like oh, you guys are better than Civet or Civet is better than you. And it was always like, who gives a shit?" Although Aguilar recognized that "all girl bands" being constantly compared was problematic, she also recalled that she did not question

the use of “all-girl show” on flyers. Instead, “all-girl” became an important signifier to the kind of shows that she wanted to attend. The coded flyers facilitated Latinx punk placemaking for Latina punks in SELA who looked for a scene that reflected their experience. Aguilar not only participated in “all-girl shows” with her bands, but also made flyers using the phrase.

In July 2001, Aguilar made one of three flyers for the “all-girl show” at Our House. The venue Our House, a now defunct space, opened in Lynwood, CA, in the late 1990s and operated through the early 2000s. Our House was an important venue for alternative youth culture of Southeast Los Angeles, South Central, and East Los Angeles. The shows at Our House were specifically organized for youth from the ages of 13-18. Old man John and his wife Corey were the promoters and founders of Our House. They booked local bands, touring bands, and up-and-coming bands to make shows economically and geographically accessible while also creating a safe space for youth from the surrounding communities. For the “all girl show,” three flyers were created, with the official flyer by the venue’s promoter. The band Civet made their version that was included in a newsletter they would mail out to their fans. Lastly, Aguilar made her own version, it was simple black and white, in the style of cut and paste. She printed a picture of Kat Bjelland from the alternative rock band Babes in Toyland. The image of Bjelland is centered in the flyer with handwritten details of the show and band names surrounding it. Aguilar also followed an important trend by including a hand-drawn map. Aguilar shared, “So we've definitely added maps … you wrote out directions, 710 North Exit West Imperial Highway, left on Atlantic, first oh first light after the overpass on the corner of Agnes and Atlantic, right hand across from Mikey D’s.” Although this flyer was made in 2001, not everyone in SELA had a computer at home and/or internet to search the address. Revisiting these flyers reminded Aguilar of changes in the community and helped preserve the memories of buildings that used to exist.

For example, she mentioned, “the American Legion in Walnut Park is now a junior high … I always laugh at that Social Distortion song … the story of my life. And there's one lyric that says, like some pool hall that they used to hang out is now a 7-Eleven.” While the popular song may seem like a cliché, the flyers historicize changes that take place in the community and speak to the practices of Latinx punk placemaking.

Figure 26 All-Girl Show Our House Version Courtesy of Mayra Aguilar

Interlude to All-Girl Shows

I take a moment to break from Aguilar’s archive and share the story of Drew Arriola-Sands, trans singer of the hardcore punk band Trap Girl. Arriola-Sands grew up in South Gate, a neighborhood in Southeast Los Angeles. During an interview with Arriola-Sands, she shared with me the impact the local punk scene had on her. She specifically recalled a show that stood out to her. It happened to be the 2001 “all-girl show” at Our House, where Aguilar played with her band Bruise Violet. Arriola-Sands recalled that in 2001, a friend from Orange County came across flyers for the “all-girl show” at Our House. Arriola-Sands was so excited not only to learn about the show, but also that it was near her neighborhood. Again, “all-girl” operated as a signifier to fans of women musicians. The show would become seminal to Arriola-Sands’s

artistry and performance. As she shared, the show was "what set me on this track of making music, to begin with, because it was like a night to remember … it is etched in my brain forever."

Arriola-Sands vividly remembers the visual and sonic details of the bands that performed that night. For example, she recalled the singer of Civet wearing a vintage 1950s dress while singing lyrics in opposition to "proper femininity," shouting "I'm a social drinker," and strumming the guitar. Another memory was when the singer from The Eyeshadows ended a song by placing her bass against the mic and running it to make the noise "ka-rrin-ng." Arriola-Sands shared, "That lineup changed my life like I still remember what they looked like. I still remember the songs. I still remember where I sat." For Arriola-Sands, it was significant to see women on stage who embodied both a feminine *and* an aggressive stage presence that disrupted the patriarchal and hetero-masculine norms of punk spaces.

During the interview, Arriola-Sands asked if I remembered the show she was referencing, almost asking for reassurance that she was not making this story up. Although it sounded familiar, I could not quite pinpoint the show. About a month later, as I was digitizing Aguilar's flyers, I came across two of the flyers for the same "all-girl show." I immediately knew that this was the show Arriola-Sands was referencing. With Aguilar's permission I shared the flyer with Arriola-Sands, and she was ecstatic to see the flyer and have a digital copy since the show meant so much to her. This connection speaks to how tactile memorability serves affirm important memories, identities, and genealogies.

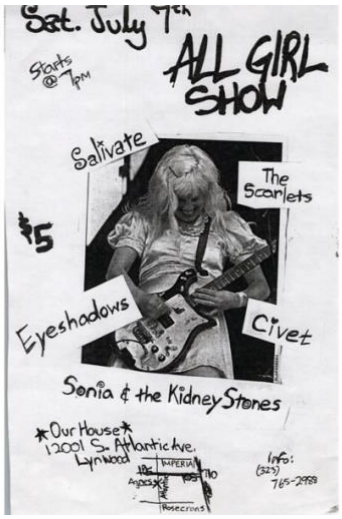

Figure 27 "All Girl Show" Flyer; Courtesy of Mayra Aguilar

My Space a Lost Space

Returning to Aguilar's archive, as we started going through flyers of her band Bruise Violet, I noticed that the pile of flyers was significantly smaller than the others. Aguilar proceeded to share that she only has a small number of physical flyers because the emergence of Bruise Violet coincided with the emergence of MySpace. This social media network shifted how teenagers and young adults communicated with each other. Like most social media networks, anyone could create a profile. What stood out about MySpace was the possibility to personalize your profile using HTML codes, add songs, and upload pictures. Because of the ability to share music, MySpace became an excellent tool for independent musicians and bands to promote their music and upcoming shows through event invites. Aguilar recalls, "We [Bruise Violet] started coming up right around like MySpace. So then I feel like then there became like less like paper fliers and more of just like, what was it? Where they invites? I don't remember." As a result of the digital shift, Aguilar had less than ten flyers of Bruise Violet shows. Later the popularity of MySpace dwindled and people began shifting their social media accounts from to Facebook, and in the process, Bruise Violet lost photos, flyers, and fans.

This loss was not unique to Bruise Violet, but rather exemplifies a loss experienced by this generation of social media users. For marginalized communities whose histories are already on the periphery, the loss of digital content is significant. The limitations of the internet's attempt to democratize information are exposed. There is also something to be said about losing historical records for those from immigrant communities. In the case of Aguilar, her parents migrated with minimal belongings and mementos that document familial histories. The loss of a band's flyer may not be as significant as family pictures, but losing digital band flyers and photos signifies a loss of community histories and stories of Latinx punk placemaking. The loss of the tactile leaves little to reference, and Aguilar's generation experienced both the first major social media network and the first wave of digital loss. This returns us to considering the precarity of social media networks used as archives by people like Rosales and Dr. Leal.

Covid-19 Disruptions

As previously mentioned, Aguilar and I met during the stay-at-home order after quarantining for two weeks; and we kept our masks on the entire time. Aguilar and I had not shared space with anyone outside our households, and we both shared feelings of excitement and fear to be together. At the time, little was known about Covid-19, and we remained optimistic for a return to normalcy although deep down we knew that it was unlikely. We shared how much we missed our friends, going to shows, and being in community. As we were ending for the night, Aguilar shared, "I always feel like thankful for in all of this craziness with the pandemic, I like try to take a minute and then just be grateful for what I have … I'm just like, damn dude, like because of music and like this little punk rock scene that no one would give like a second … bat an eye. And I think like so much good like freaking came out of it." Indeed, much came out of it! Aguilar's own contributions are still felt, as evidenced by Arriola-Sands memory of the "all-girl

show." Aguilar's experiences organizing punk shows and learning the ins and outs of sound would later facilitate the start of the CRSELA. Her archive tells us about different ways that youth participated in Latinx punk placemaking, and her archive serves as a tactile remembrance of that time while also reminding us of the importance of documenting our own stories.

Lo-Fi Sonic Archives

Taking a cue from documenting our own stories, I turn to the archive of Cindee, a drummer from South Central. Cindee was raised in a single-parent household, her mother migrated to the US from Guatemala at the age of eighteen and currently works as a janitor for the University of Southern California. As a child in the 1990s, Cindee was introduced to music through her older brother. Cindee's brother listened to the radio stations Power 106, which played hip-hop and house music, and to KROQ 106.7, which played alternative rock. While her brother introduced her to US popular music, it would be her friend's older sister who would introduce Cindee to punk and backyard punk shows. Cindee remembers the first time she attended a backyard punk show and felt an excitement that she could only compare to the excitement one has for a quinceañera. She shared, "But like to me, that was like my quinceañera, you know, I was so fucking happy and excited. And once I was there, I was just like, damn, I love, I love it. And it was like my first show, and I was already in love with it, it felt so right." Punk spoke to Cindee because it was a place where she could let out her anger about growing up in an economically precarious single-parent household and not fitting in as a Central American in a majority Mexican area. She remembers lying to her peers and telling them she was Mexican because she did not want to stand out. But more than anything, economic precarity fueled Cindee's frustrations. While her mother did her best to provide the essentials, Cindee realized at an early age that she did not have the same economic privilege as some of her peers. One of

these moments of realization was when her friends would speak of having their own bedroom at home while Cindee shared a small one-bedroom apartment with her mom and brother.

Despite the economic precarity Cindee experienced growing up, her mom was supportive of her interest in music. When Cindee became interested in playing instruments, she initially wanted to play the guitar and begged her mom to buy her a guitar. Eventually, her mom took Cindee to a music store in Downtown Los Angeles. Once inside the store, as Cindee studied the guitars, she realized that she was much more interested in the bass, so that is what she left with. Soon after, Cindee formed a band with some friends. They realized they needed a drummer, and after some encouragement from her bandmates, she decided to try it out. She loved the experience. Unfortunately, Cindee did not have a drum set, so she worked all summer for a program that targeted inner-city youth to clean the streets of South Central. Cindee recalls cleaning up syringes and opened condoms. Finally, when Cindee saved enough money, she bought a no-brand drum set, and her mom allowed her to set up and play the drums in their living room.

Like many of my interviewees, Cindee referenced flyers as she shared her experience in punk. However, cassette tapes also played an influential role in her life. Cindee recalled that the first piece of music she owned was a gift from her mom's boyfriend, who gave her bootleg cassette tapes of house music and Michael Jackson's *Thriller.* Later on, when Cindee formed her first band Amenaza in the early 2000s, there was a strong wave of Anarcho-punk in Los Angeles. Cindee recalls going to Luna Sol, a restaurant in the MacArthur Park area that served vegetarian options before it was widespread. In 1998, Luna Sol, named Luna Tierra Sol, was founded by Black, Latino, Asian and white community organizers as a co-op.[14] Luna Sol created space for

[14] Chuck Morse, "The Luna Sol Café: The Past, and Maybe Future, of LA's Radical Restaurants." *L.A. Taco,* June 28, 2017, https://www.lataco.com/history-of-luna-sol-cafe-los-angeles/.

the community to gather and have healthy food. In 2000 the Democratic National Convention occurred in Los Angeles and incited radical activism, and Luna Sol was part of that energy. In 2003 Luna Sol served the last plate as the café closed due to political repression in a post 9/11 war, the increased use of the internet to organize, and gentrification. While Luna Sol was still in operation, it held anarchist punk shows, and Cindee took the opportunity and demo tape recording of her band Amenaza and passed it around. She recalls, "We made our little demo tape in my living room where I had my drum set with, like, those cassette recorders." This led to Amenaza being booked for a show that included the band Tragatelo with Martin Sorrondeguy on drums. In this case, cassette tapes operate as punk placemaking — they tell us about a place while also inciting memories of what Cindee had access to.

The anarchist punk scene eventually dissolved, and Cindee struggled with feeling connected to the punk scene at large. The sexism and homophobia that she encountered in the scene did not allow full participation. Cindee shared,

> I'm a fucking feminist dyke. And that just doesn't sit well with straight dudes who, you know, they're the ones throwing the shows, so it's like it's a bunch of straight dudes throwing the shows and then like some fucking, you know, feministic dyke is over here fucking ranting, ranting about fucking the patriarchy. No, that's it's not going to flow with them.

This sense of feeling excluded or not given credit because she is a feminist, and not because she lacks drumming skills, urged Cindee to document herself. This speaks to the ways that feminist consciousness is kept out of the mainstream punk scene. Cindee documented herself in two ways. The first was changing her name and going by Cindee with two e's at the end to stand out and as a play on words to reference "sin" or pecadora in Spanish. Secondly, Cindee created a

sonic archive as she began to record bands that she has been a part of. Cindee shared, “I document my own shit. I record my own shit. I produce my own shit because I'm not expecting anyone to do it for me.” She went on to share, “that's why I think recording is important and documentation is important because I know that these bands aren't going to last forever … and it's cool, you know, [to] look back and be like, hey, let me listen to this.” Importantly, DIY tools and a feminist consciousness inform Cindee’s practices of self-documentation because she is keenly aware of the time limit on punk bands. More importantly, she knows that her feminist and queer politics place her in an abject positionality even within punk.

Figure 28 Tamboreras Vol. 2

Another way Cindee has created sonic archives is through her Tamboreras series, where she created a tape compilation of bands from Los Angeles that had women-identified drummers. In it, she featured drummers from various genres such as punk, rock, and metal. To debut the first volume, Cindee organized a tape release show. Cindee notes that although there was a small turnout, it was important: “it was very memorable to me because I was able to combine all these passions of mine, which is drumming, engineering, producing, organizing community, queer community at that, you know, so all of things … and that it happened.” This reflection is critical because Cindee was able to bring together her passions. She is also aware of the importance of

such an event and documenting the tape release show. Cindee also shared that she organized another show at Heart of Art Gallery, "the only queer space in South Central." Heart of Art Gallery was where organizers for Ladyfest Los Angeles would meet, which Cindee was also involved in. Cindee's sonic archive speaks to the different formats in which minoritized communities document themselves.

T-Shirt Wall

Vikki, co-founder and organizer for Chicxs Rockerxs South East Los Angeles (CRSELA). The first chapter of my dissertation details CRSELA's summer camp and the decorations used to transform the campus. Decorations also serve the function of ephemeral archiving through what is known as the T-shirt wall and hallway decorations. As previously described in chapter one, the dreary colors of the school campus where CRSELA takes place need a visual intervention to inspire and disrupt the institutionalism of school. Vikki recalls the hallways at the school painted in two-tone, with the top half of the wall in an off-white and the bottom half being a light brown toffee. These unexciting colors prompted the comadres[15] to transform the hallway by drawing inspiration from their teenage bedroom walls plastered with posters of their favorite bands. The hallways became replicas of their bedrooms, except that there was intentionality on what posters and images were used. Vikki remembers that the first year of camp, she used many of her own posters of women and queer musicians. She wanted to share images of musicians who inspired her but also introduce campers to musicians they might not be familiar. She wanted to feature musicians "that kids did not have access to like super pop music artists… but we did have a picture of Beyoncé." For the comadres, visibility of musicians is important so that campers can visualize themselves as powerful and talented musicians. The

[15] Las comadres are the core-organizers for CRSELA.

hallways thus became a site of transfer of knowledge. Both campers and volunteers would learn of musicians, bands, and artists they might not have been familiar with. Upon reflection, las comadres decided that they could also showcase the volunteers who are in bands. Vikki remembers, “at a certain point it was we have these awesome bands and stuff [but] we are older than the kids … we need to get bands not [just] from the 90s or 2000s.” She continued, “in 2019, we made it a point to print local bands—local women musicians like Apostasis, Bruise Violet, Destruye y Huye, any local bands that have women and queer folks.” Importantly, the hallway then became a visual history lesson of musicians and bands from Los Angeles. Campers were able to identify their camp instructors and be empowered and gain confidence to take on the stage. Many of the posters at CRSELA have been laminated to withstand the elements of camp. The campers can touch the decorations and feel connected to the images. Volunteers who saw themselves on the walls of the hallways experienced full circle moments where they healed their inner selves and shared sentiments of wishing they had a camp like CRSELA when they were younger. The feelings of being an outsider or having no place to belong were reconciled as the volunteers knew that all the time and effort would nurture and affirm young children from their community.

Figure 29 T-Shirt Wall 2022 Image by Author

Another element at CRSELA is the "T-shirt wall," which was created in true DIY fashion when decorations and posters fell short, and one bulletin board still needed to be covered. Vikki came up with the idea of the T-Shirt Wall by pinning band t-shirts to the bulletin board. Vikki shared, "We have a bunch of shirts that are posters, but in fabric (laughter), I asked the other Comadres to bring their t-shirts and T-shirt wall happened." The next day everyone brought a band T-shirt to put up on the wall. Vikki arranged the t-shirts with push pins to make sure the image of the musician or band was visible while making sure to cover as much as the dull brown colors of the school hallway. The first t-shirt wall consisted of band t-shirts from local bands such as Angustia, Sister Mantos, and Trap Girl. It also included the CRSELA camp t-shirt, OC Rock Camp, and Austin rock camp and t-shirts. These local bands are sitting next to t-shirts of famous musicians like Beyonce, Selena, and the Yeah Yeah Yeahs. Every year the T-shirt Wall changes, and it is based on what t-shirts are clean and can be brought to camp—some t-shirts have been donated, others are loaned. The T-shirt wall has become a staple decoration at camp, and every year campers and volunteers look forward to seeing what bands will be featured. Now, bands and other rock camps donate T-shirts. Although Vikki came up with the idea on a whim, it serves multiple purposes. First, it is a place where campers can draw inspiration as they design their band logo. Second, it adds color and liveliness to an otherwise sterile and drab atmosphere. Third, it offers a space for campers to see the bands that their band coaches, band managers, and instructors are a part of. The "T-shirt Wall" operates as a form of Latinx punk placemaking through the fluctuating archive of cotton and screen-printed t-shirts of bands, musicians, and local organizations. Some of the T-shirts are visibly worn out, with faded black fabric or cracked band logos. The T-Shirt wall has become an archive in a way that preserves the history of

women, queer, and trans-local and widely famous musicians. It is an embodied and ephemeral archive as people wear T-shirts but they are not permanent.

Conclusion

The archives I have discussed are not complete, as everyone interviewed remains involved in the punk scene and the archives continue to grow. These archives were created through multiple format and are significant in telling the stories of the communities that make up lesser-known parts of Los Angeles like Southeast Los Angeles. Personal archives keep memories alive of what used to be as communities shift and keep possibilities open for what is to come. These collections form an unraveled and untamed archive that exists in their homes.

Conclusion

My dissertation, *Constellations of the Abject: Brown, Queer, and Feminist Punks in Los Angeles*, overall explores the cultural productions and placemaking practices in Southeast Los Angeles by queer and feminist Chicanx and Latinx punks. In this project, Southeast Los Angeles serves as the regional nexus of constellations of Latinx punk placemaking. I examine the expressive cultures of feminist and queer Latinx, in Southeast Los Angeles through the rock camp Chicas Rockeras Southeast Los Angeles, the queer punk party Club Scum, and personal archives of queer and feminist punks. I highlight how histories of globalization and neoliberalism come to shape Latinx communities and how queer and feminist Latinx punks respond to exacerbated inequalities in their communities. In this dissertation, I argue that Latinx punk placemaking becomes central to understanding how queer and feminist Latinx punks build community while living in neglected communities that have been affected by neoliberalism and globalization.

Latin punk placemaking is my theoretical that I use to describe how feeling like an outsider or abjection, paired with Latinx soundscapes (both mainstream and alternative), and a punk politic that produces specific places to gather for queer and feminist Latinx punks in Los Angeles. Departing from what has been said about placemaking, I focus on sound as it tells us about home and placemaking and the dissonant growls in punk that give voice to queer Latinx punks in a world that otherwise silences their place in it. I am centering punk and sound as informing ways to create new forms of worldmaking that are place specific and are anti-assimilationist. Specifically, Latinx punk placemaking has a distinct politic, one rooted in punk. Punk here means disturbing sanitized neoliberal politics of inclusion that instead center queer racialized bodies and punk as an aesthetic, a sound, but also as a praxis of belonging. In sum,

Latinx punk placemaking makes what Jose Esteban Muñoz calls queer worldmaking possible while also telling us about racialized sexualities, genders, and structural inequalities.

My research project is based on collaborative ethnography, oral histories, and participant observation. I follow a feminist praxis of reciprocity as I have organized and volunteered with CRSELA and Club Scum. I conducted 20 oral histories of queer and feminist punks from SELA based on my participation in the local punk scene since I was in high school and over 15 years. I also digitized over 2,000 images from the personal archives of Rudy Garcia and Mayra Aguilar. Taking the oral histories, personal archives, and digitized personal archives tell a much more complete story of queer punks in Southeast Los Angeles. Overall, I argue that abjection informs Latinx punk placemaking. The DIY archival practices preserve the disaffection of marginalized communities. Lastly, paying attention to space and sound is critical to Latinx punk placemaking as it produces new subjectivities and places that make worldmaking possible.

The first chapter, "Y Lla Llego Nuestro TIempo," I argue, that Latinx punk placemaking at Chicas Rockersas South East Los Angeles a rock camp for girls, trans, and gender expansive youth, happens through decorations with the goal to explicitly disrupt the institutionalism of the school campus. Initially, I was interested in examining the intergenerational skill-sharing practices at CRSELA, however, the process of placemaking through decorations soon became important. Punk in this chapter is an ethos that informed the crafting of decorations. The bright and glittery piñatas burst open the possibilities to transform a boring classroom into a place of creativity, imagination, and possibilities. Piñatas and streamers do not necessarily scream punk as perhaps they are too joyous however as Mainé shared the first interactions campers have with camp is through the visual and audible. They see the decorations and posters and hear the

blasting music of women in punk. Decorations and sounds set the vibe—the vibe is based on a Latina feminist punk genealogies and praxis.

The papel picado exemplifies Latinx placemaking that is reminiscent of family parties that is then met with bulletin boards with affirmations and women, queer, and non-binary musicians to inspire campers. The decorations aside from inspiring lyrics such as "burn homework / make it go away" they also add to the transformative experience of camp as a place where campers feel cared for, a place where rules are thrown out the window, and they can scream, growl, be loud but also and very importantly campers feel comfortable to express their gender in ways that feel most comfortable to them. Through examining the process of placemaking with inexpensive decorations what is also discovered are the economic disinvestments, tensions around division of labor, and a politics of care that is demonstrated through laboring over making DIY crafts. In essence, decorations do more than cover dull cork boards through a feminist punk ethos, decorations informed by Latinx cultural practices, disrupt politics of assimilation to create a space of belonging for youth and adults!

The second chapter, "Queer Latinx Placemaking: The Punk Soundscapes of Los Angeles," explores Club Scum, a monthly queer punk party in Montebello, CA. When I first approached Club Scum, I was interested in soundscapes curated by Garcia and Sanchez who created a sonic mixture at Scum through mixing Spanish songs with punk favorites to create a queer punk party that purposely sits outside of West Hollywood. Barbary Wyres performance speaks to the possibilities of Scum that are informed by punk but not defined by punk. Wyre's sonic amalgamation of cow songs speaks to the shared affect at Scum. Her performance begins with Wyre taking the stage and wearing an inexpensive vinyl coat concealing her cow costume. What interested me the most about this performance was not only the absurdity but also the

brilliance behind routine that charmed the audience. In the performance Wyre is visibly tired she adjusts her wig, she struggles to keep up with the energy, she sits on the stage to catch her breath. Right when both her and the audience seem to give up, she draws everyone back in with her comedic performance of the irreverent lyrics and animal noises. As I write in the chapter, Wyre doesn't win but her comedic performance but embodies the politics of abjection of living in Southeast Los Angeles. The putrid smell that emanates from the nearby meatpacking plants is a constant reminder to the community of the hard labor to survive capitalism. Wyre's performance also reminds queer punks at Scum of the potentiality to shift patriarchal ideas about gender and sexuality. In other words, Wyre's performance is an intergenerational sonic layering and sonic code-switching that informs Latinx punk placemaking as a response to the disaffection of living in a neglected deindustrialized city.

The third chapter, "Tactile and Sonic Memorability in Archives," explores the intimate practices of Latinx punk placemaking that take place through the archival that grasp the localized histories of marginalized communities through flyers, photographs, and digital recordings. In this chapter I am working through the concept of tactile memorability to understand the importance of archives whether they exist in physical form or the digital. Through the tactile, I conjure the sense of touch and smell that stimulates consequential memories that offer details about places, temporality, sounds, and feelings that would otherwise be forgotten. The tactile is about holding an item whether it be in digital of physical and the memories it activates. The digital in the form of social media accounts, like "Noche de Jotiar" document T-parties in Los Angeles, exemplify Latinx Punk placemaking and provide a digital place to gather and exchange memories. These exchanges recount the lives of people like Ms. Martin, legendary Los Angeles drag queen. Additionally, the digital recordings of punk songs, like Cindee's tamboreras series document

Latina punk drummers in Los Angeles—a history that would otherwise be untold and unforgotten. Here Cindee is not only documenting women musicians but also the history of working-class Latinas in Los Angeles through punk music. While the digital has facilitated online forms of placemaking the physical flyers that survived the digital turn offer important evidence about the ways that Latinx punks communicated and created temporary forms of Latinx punk placemaking. For example, Mayra speaks to the "all girl flyers" where women and queers knew they would meet other like-minded people. Flyers through various signifiers gave clues about various forms of placemaking. I argue that archives contribute to Latinx punk placemaking practices through the tactile—that tell us about previous forms of community gatherings or aid in filling gaps of the histories of Latinx feminist and queers punks in Los Angeles—again a history that would otherwise be forgotten or swept under the rug.

Future Research:

As part of my future research, I would like to continue exploring intergenerational punk communities and networks. I am interested in various ways that punks collaborate and support each other in various endeavors. At CRSELA, campers and volunteers mutually exchange ideas and inform each other of new ways of expressing gendered subjectivities. The multiple generations that coalesce at CRSELA are important site to explore different forms of Latinx punk placemaking. The relationship between Rudy Garcia and Ray Sanchez is also important an important intergenerational exchange that created a place that also gathered people from various generations. Within this vein I would like to center prominent and legendary queer punk icon Martin Sorrondeguy, lead singer of hardcore bands Los Crudos and Limp Wrist, and who has mentored Rudy Garcia over the years. Matin created the Scum logo, this type of mentorship and intergenerational punk network is also important to consider how Latino gay men create supports

for each other post the AIDS epidemic of the 1990s. More so, Martin serves as the perfect vehicle to trace queer genealogies in punk as he has lived in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Orange County, and now in Chicago and has toured in Mexico and South America.

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