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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

War Against Migrants, Racial Violence in the United States: A Critical Ethnography of
Mexican and Latino Day Labor

by

Albert Ponce

Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science

University of California, Los Angeles, 2013

Professor Raymond Rocco, Chair

Globalization is celebrated as connecting the world's population and linking once isolated economies with the rest of the world. Yet, this celebratory view conceals the role of nation-states in imposing violent measures against persons who transgress their territorial boundaries without authorization. While studies of the rise in violence along these areas has advanced our understanding of the effects for those who are not authorized to cross into or exist within the nation-state, this study attempts to link how and why race dictates the levels of violence within U.S. institutions and society. This problematic advances a critical examination of the relationship between race and violence at the foundation of the U.S. nation-state institutions and society. Specifically, this study will analyze how and why Mexican and Latino migrants have become contemporary targets of racial violence? Furthermore, how does racial violence function in establishing the commodified disposability of Mexican and Latino migrant labor? The goal is to establish a framework of racial violence which will provide the ability to investigate how and

why specific populations are constructed as targets of the U.S. nation-state and its citizens. This dissertation will provide the conceptual development of commodified disposability, that is, how and why Mexican and Latino migrants have been de-humanized and relegated to labor in itself. Conceptually, commodified disposability moves beyond labor as simply exploitable or replaceable, rather this becomes the embodiment of disciplined migrant labor. It is the space where racial violence is lived. This critical ethnography links the empirical reality of “illegal” day laborers to a theory of racial violence.

The dissertation of Albert Ponce is approved.

Mark Q. Sawyer

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Kelly Lytle Hernandez

Raymond Rocco, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2013

Dedication

Para mi madre, Maria Elena Ponce (1941-1996), and my daughter Maya Elena Ponce and life-partner Yvette Villarreal who show me how to live

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