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Zapotec Generations Across Settler Colonial Borders: Gendering Belonging and Identity

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Zapotec Generations Across Settler Colonial Borders: Gendering Belonging and Identity

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philoshophy in Chicana and Chicano Studies

by

Brenda Nicolas

2020

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Zapotec Generations Across Settler Colonial Borders:

Gendering Belonging and Identity

by

Brenda Nicolas

Doctor of Philosophy in Chicana and Chicano Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2020

Professor Maylei Blackwell, Chair

Drawing on oral histories and participant observation fieldwork with Zapotecs in Los Angeles, California and Oaxaca, Mexico, my dissertation, *Zapotec Generations Across Settler Colonial Borders: Gendering Belonging and Identity*, examines how the experiences of the U.S.-raised generations, and women participation in particular, are central to sustaining transnational immigrant Indigenous communities across borders. I argue that through their involvement in traditional dances, Oaxacan brassbands, and immigrant hometown association (HTA), Zapotecs in the U.S. diaspora, shape their Indigenous identities in ways that challenge their racial categorization as Latina/o and/or Hispanic. These forms of community belonging confront state notions of Indigenous "authenticity" in the U.S. and Mexico, while also contesting gender role expectations that attempt to exclude women and immigrants from community practices of belonging. By incorporating historical and comparative approaches to race and gender, I consider

how the United States and Mexico, as settler colonial states, have shaped, maintained, and/or reconfigured Indigenous racialization into a national imaginary that attempts to make invisible, silence, and eliminate Indigenous peoples. I use a critical hemispheric Indigenous framework that bridges Latin American, Latina/o, and American Indian literature to draw on my theoretical framework, *transborder comunalidad*, an ongoing Indigenous Oaxacan conception of collective community life sustained through practices and beliefs in diaspora that challenges state violence against Indigenous peoples.

The dissertation of Brenda Nicolas is approved.

Shannon Speed

Leisy J. Ábrego

Mishuana Goeman

Maylei Blackwell, Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2020

Dedication

To the loving memory of my dear father: Rogelio Nicolas Robles (Zoochina Zapotec, 1952-2016) and to my mother (Yatzachi el Alto Zapotec) who continues to be my stone. *No tengo suficientas palabras por todo sus sacrificios y enseñansas! Para* Iván Rogelio Sánchez-Nicolas, *tu existir es mi medicina y mi luz en cada momento. Los amo!*

Para los de San Jerónimo Zoochina aquí y allá!

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Glossary

Agencia	=	Indigenous community authority's office
Autoridad	=	Indigenous community customary elected authorities
Banda Oaxaqueña	=	Oaxacan brass band
Casa de Comisión	=	Communal kitchen/house used for the pueblo's social and cultural gatherings
Cargos	=	Service
Convivios	=	Social gatherings
El Espíritu Santo	=	The Holy Spirit
Escoletas	=	Amateur band classes
Fiestas	=	Parties/celebrations
HTA	=	Hometown Association
Jaripeo	=	Bull ring riding
Kermeses	=	Party fundraisers
La Unión	=	Used by Zoochinenses to refer to their hometown association
Maestro/a	=	Brass band music teacher
Misa Oaxaqueña	=	Oaxacan Mass
Paisana/o	=	Townswoman/man or countrywoman/man
Pueblo	=	Town/Community (Here I use it more often to indicate the town)
Solfeo	=	Singing of music scales
Sones y Jarabes	=	Sounds and Rhythms
Tequio	=	Community Labor
Usos y Costumbres	=	Indigenous customary law
Vocales	=	Speakers (elected community officials in the HTA that call on community members for meetings, etc.)

Acknowledgments

First and foremost I would like to thank my family who has given me such immense support, gratitude, and love, but particularly to my son Iván Rogelio Sánchez-Nicolas who has brought the happiest and most full of life moments to my life in the past three years. *Tú cara, tus sonrisas, palabras, carácter juguetón, y en general tú vida me trae a círculo complete amor de mi vida*. I started this PhD journey with my father. Unfortunately, I am ending it without him. *Lo extraño tanto, pero se que nunca me dejo sola. En los momentos más dificiles tengo su voz, sus videos, su ropa, y sus fotos. Su historia también va en estas páginas. A mi madrecita querida, no tengo las palabras para agredecerle todo lo que usted y mi papá han hecho por mi. Después de tantas graduaciones esta es por fin la última… aunque no hubo celebración, gracias por siempre celebrar mis logros y por hacer mis deseos académicos una realidad!* My nieces and nephews love for Zoochina have made this dissertation that much more powerful: Beatriz Martínez, Gabriela Martínez, Vanessa Rubi Ruíz, Jerónimo Martínez, and Alejandro Anthony Ruíz—I love you! And to Luis Sánchez-López who always heard my ideas, bounced back thoughts or simply told me that I needed to read more outside my comfort zone.

I would like to thank the following foundations and fellowships that were supportive throughout my dissertation: Cota Robles Fellowship, Ford Foundation Dissertation Fellowship, the UC Office of the President Award, UCLA Dissertation Year Fellowship, UCLA Gold Shield Alumni, the Graduate Dean's Scholar Award, the Institute of American Cultures Research Grant, UCLA's International Institute Dissertation Fieldwork Fellowship, UCLA Graduate Summer Research Mentorship Fellowship**,** Graduate Research Mentorship Fellowship, and the Sawyer Seminar Sanctuary Spaces Writing Group, the latter which I was lucky to have been awarded my last quarter in response to mentally and financially support student writing as the pandemic hit. I

am thankful for these foundations, Graduate Division Fellowships, and anonymous faculty, who believed in my work enought to graciously fund me through my years at UCLA.

To my committee members: Maylei Blackwell, thank you for being an amazing advisor, for caring not only about the writing and other projects that came along, but also for our humanity and sanity. You have shared, guided, and extended a mondo of resources and time that have gone acknowledge, acted upon, and reciprocated. From the FIOB, to the Critical Latinx Indigeneities (CLI) Working Group, through our loses and through our wins with our toddlers, it could not be more supportive and fun. Leisy Ábrego, your sanity, warmth, humbleness, and love to tell the stories and push for those who continue to be underrepresented within Chicana/o and Latina/o Studies have kept me hopeful and passionately pushing through. Thank you for all of your support and being that example within the community. Mishuana Goeman, aside from Maylei, I took every class of yours I could get my hands on!.... but also, thank you for boldly telling me that I was done taking classes and I just needed to "write that dissertation!" Early on, you taught me so much, have inspired me, and guided me in the field of critical Indigenous studies in ways that I had not yet found. Thank you for being you! Shannon Speed, your feedback, presence, and dedication is most appreciated. Your abundance of knowledge on a number of issues that pertain to Indigenous women throughout the hemisphere has been a strong intellectual stone in my academic growth. Thank you for your patience, your diligent mentorship, and participation from my qualifying exams as you crossed through the brushfire to get to the defense early in the morning and for preparing me into the job market. My dissertation committee is one of the strongest blessings I have had not only in academia, but specifically in critical Indigenous studies and Chicana/o/Latinx studies. My deepest appreciation to you all!

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Book Reviews

Nicolas, Brenda. 2018. "Indigenous Women and Laws in Latin America." Review of *Demanding Justice and Security: Indigenous Women and Legal Pluralities in Latin America*, edited by Rachel Sieder. *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*. Vol. 41, no. 4.

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Digital Humanities

Nicolas, Brenda. 2015, 2016, 2017. Latin American Indigenous Diaspora. *A Mapping Indigenous Los Angeles (MILA) UCLA Digital Project*. Available at: http://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapTour/index.html?appid=31d1100e9a454f5c9b905f55b08c0d22

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INTRODUCTION

California is home to one of the largest Indigenous Latin American diasporic communities in the United States. If we consider Latin American and Pacific Islander Indigenous diasporas, in addition to American Indians, Los Angeles stands as the most Indigenous populated city in the United States.[1] In Los Angeles, Zapotecs make up a population of more than 250,000.[2] Despite being discriminated against, in large part by non-Indigenous Mexicans and Latinos, Zapotecs in L.A. have maintained customs that challenge the idea that Indigenous peoples are dead or dying across borders.[3] Indigenous migrant communities and their children maintain their traditional cultural, social, and political practices that shape their identity differently and in relation to other migrants from Latin America. In particular, my research argues that Zapotecs across generations living in the U.S. shape their identities as Indigenous in ways that complicate their racial categorization as Latina/o and/or Hispanic, as well as U.S. and Mexican notions of Indigenous authenticity and disappearance.[4] I consider how Mexico, as a settler state, has shaped,

[1] The 2010 U.S. Census reported New York City as holding the largest Indigenous populations in the U.S. only when taking into account American Indians.

[2] Based on the 2010 American Community Survey report Ed Kissam (2012) estimates that there are a total of 69,000 Indigenous Oaxacans, including U.S.-born children, in Los Angeles County (Stephen 2013, 299, e.n. 15). I used Kresge 2007 and Takash et al. 2005, as it may further include the U.S.-raised (1.5-generation).

[2] Based on the 2010 American Community Survey report Ed Kissam (2012) estimates that there are a total of 69,000 Indigenous Oaxacans, including U.S.-born children, in Los Angeles County (Stephen

[3] Many scholars (Johnson, 2008; Veracini, 2011; Tuck and Yang, 2012) in Indigenous critical studies use the terms "settler states," to refer to the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and Hawai'i. Shannon Speed (2017, 2019) and María Josefina Saldaña Portillo (2016) frame Mexico as a settler state. Following Saldaña Portillo and Speed, I also talk about Mexico as a settler colonial occupied state, acknowledging that before states or a nation-state, there were Native Nations. I want to thank Mishuana Goeman for pushing me to think through this Native Nations—nation-state acknowledgment.

[4] Odilia Romero-Hernández, Centolia Maldonado Vasquez, Rufino Domínguez-Santos, Maylei Blackwell, and Laura Velasco Ortiz, "Género, generación, y equidad: Los retos del liderazgo indígena binacional entre México y Estados Unidos en la experiencia del Frente Indígena de Organizaciones Binacionales (FIOB)," in *Otros Saberes: Collaborative Research on Indigenous and Afro-Descendant Cultural Politics*, ed. Charles R. Hale and Lynn Stephen (Santa Fe, New Mexico: School for Advance

maintained, and/or reconfigured Indigenous racialization into a national imaginary that attempts to eliminate Indigenous peoples through the racial logic of *mestizaje* or racial mixing.

I draw on twenty-five oral histories and six years of participant observation. In order to have a representative sample for this dual-sited project, eight oral histories were conducted with the generation that migrated, nine were with the 1.5 and second-generation, and eight interviews with elders and adult men and women in Zoochina. In Los Angeles, my study is based in the areas of Mid-City, Koreatown, and South L.A.[5] These areas hold the largest and oldest culturally and politically active Zapotec populations from Oaxaca's Sierra Juárez and Central Valleys. In Oaxaca, I conduct my work in the town of San Jerónimo Zoochina located in the region of the Sierra Juárez (Juárez highlands), which is approximately four hours away from the capital, Oaxaca City.

My dissertation addresses the following questions: (1) how does the Oaxacan Indigenous diaspora contest racial violence and pressures to assimilate into a larger Latina/o/Hispanic identity?; (2) how have migrants' collective actions to affirm their Indigenous identity formation across borders allowed U.S.-raised generations to embrace their parents' culture of origin and affirm their own Indigenous identity?; (3) and what role do Zapotec women play in (re)defining and (re)producing Indigeneity across the U.S.-Mexico colonial borders and across generations?

Specifically, my work centers women, the 1.5-generation (children who arrived under the age of twelve and completed high school in the U.S.), and the second-generation (children born in the U.S.) because they are central actors in the struggle for Zapotec survival. While some

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Research Global Indigenous Politics and the Latin American Studies Association, 2013): 75-100. Romero-Hernández, et al. focus on the gender and generational experiences of FIOB members throughout Mexico and the United States.

[5] For more on Oaxacan regions and settlements in Los Angeles see, Blackwell 2017 and the UCLA Mapping Indigenous Los Angeles Project in Latin American Indigenous Diasporas, http://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapTour/index.html?appid=31d1100e9a454f5c9b905f55b08c0d22

generations may differ in how they maintain or re-create belonging, these practices have been continual across place, space, time and Native lands in California. Writing from a critical Indigenous historical and theoretical perspective, I challenge migration studies that argue that assimilation and acculturation of immigrants and their U.S.-raised children are unavoidable beyond the first generation.[6] I contend that this sense of Indigenous belonging and identity remains strong across settler borders and generations. I do so by focusing on the Zapotec diaspora from San Jerónimo Zoochina in the Sierra Juárez (also referred to as the Northern Sierra) of Oaxaca, Mexico.

Zoochina migration to the U.S. first began as a result of the Bracero Program (1942-1964). When Zoochina men's contract ended they returned to their pueblo armed with weapons to fight in a war that had started in the 50s and would last for twelve-years with a neighboring town over dispute of lands. During this time, migration to Oaxaca City and the State of Mexico in the City of Nezahuatlcoyotl was recurrent as people from the pueblo where obtaining and trasporting weapons from Bracero's who had brougth them from the U.S. to the State of Mexico, and with the help of the rest of the community, transported them from Mexico to Zoochina. When the war ended, the first person to immigrate to the U.S. was a women—Crisostona—who also helped found Zoochina's immigrant hometown association and of whose story I describe in chapter 3. The unlivable conditions that the war had left and the increase of Indigenous migration to urban cities throughout Mexico, particularly Mexico City, made it that much more difficult to obtain a job in the country. Migration to the United States was the only option in order to help

[6] Rumbaut and Portes, 2006; Alba, 1990; Alba and Nee, 1993, 2003; Zhou and Bankston III, 1998; Brown and Bean, 2006; and Jiménez, 2010. More so, college educational achievement, attaining middle or high class, who one marries (out of their ethnic or racial group), loosing their native language and culture, and where one lives is what these studies draw on as indicators of U.S. assimilation and acculturation for immigrants and their descendants.

sustain their families and the needs of the larger community. Because Zoochina is a pueblo that traditionally uses *comunalidad* (communality) practices to collectively sustains it self as an autonomous town, community members that live throughout Mexico or in California have always contributed to its economic and political well being.[7] For this reason, fostering and maintaining ties among the Zoochina and even other Sierra Juárez pueblos in diaspora has been foundational to their collective survival.

When people from the Sierra Juárez migrate to California, their geographic distinction as *Serrana/os* and their communal practices also continue, thus helping them maintain and survive as a larger Indigenous regional community. San Jerónimo Zoochina has a unique position within transborder, generational, and gender studies as its leadership has involved the participation of young, adolescent, and adult children of migrants, of which women contribute much to transborder migration studies. Since the 1990s the children of migrants have politically, culturally, and socially participated and sustained their transborder comunalidad ties through the HTA, traditional dancing, and/or the brass band). Particularly, I contend that through their participation in dances, Oaxacan-brass bands, *kermeses*, and political organizing in their hometown association (HTAs) and/or other Indigenous organizations, reaffirms Indigenous diasporic futurity.[8]

[7] Autonomous refers to Zoochina's traditional governance in "*usos y costumbres*" (Indigenous customary law). There are no political parties in Zoochina.

[8] A kermes refers to social and communal (usually party like) fundraisers open not only to other fellow Oaxacans, but to Latina/os and non-Latinas/os. They are common among Mexican migrants and non-migrants in both the U.S. and Mexico. *Convivios* are social (more intimate) gatherings only among villagers from the same town. These, however, are free of charge and involve free breakfast and/or lunch at a fellow villager's backyard. Immigration scholars refer to hometown associations (HTAs) as immigrant organizations. HTAs are established to bring together a migrant community for social, political, and/or cultural issues in Mexico or the diaspora.

Due to their unique cultural, social, and political circumstances as Indigenous Latin American diasporas, Indigenous Oaxacans culturally express themselves in ways "distinct from the standard definitions and expressions of Indigenous identity in Mexico," such as identifying with their town of origin despite the years they have been in diaspora.[9] By looking at the first, 1.5, and the second generations in diaspora, my work fills a gap in the scholarly literature, which has focused primarily on the first generation.[10] My work attempts to remap women and U.S.-raised and U.S.-born Indigenous generations as actors in their community's survival and futurity across borders. In conducting oral histories across the U.S. and Mexico, my research reveals that Zoochina immigrant women founded their immigrant hometown association in Los Angeles in the early 1970s.

Immigrant women have organized and held leadership positions in the HTA since its founding. Prior to their migration, women fiercely defended the land by safely passing children, the elderly, and weapons to a nearby ally town during a twelve-year war (1950s to 1960s) with a neighboring town, and as I describe in chapter 2 and chapter 3. Women were also the first to immigrate to the United States. Similarly, their U.S.-raised sons and daughters have held leadership positions in all four of the HTA's *cargos* (positions)[11] since the 1990s. Zoochina women, more than Zoochina men, have a long and hidden history and presence as leaders and organizers, that has communally sustained the *pueblo* (town). Repeatedly, women and men

[9] Michael Kearney, "Transnational Oaxacan Indigenous identity: The Case of Mixtecs and Zapotecs," *Identities* 7 (2000): 174-175.

[10] In studies of children of immigrants, sociologists have designated the description of "2.5 generation" to those whose one parent was born in the U.S. and the other parent who was born in their Native land, but came as a child to the U.S. I borrow this description from Telles and Ortiz's *Generations of Exclusion: Mexican Americans, Assimilation, and Race* (2008), 130.

[11] These *cargos* (positions) are: president, treasurer, secretary, and two *vocales* (vaguely means speaker.

talked about the twelve-year war between Zoochina and a neighboring town[12] to express their love, connection, and respect to the land. It was during these very sensitive and triggering conversations where I first learned how deep women's comunalidad practices spanned across settler colonial borders and how three generations in diaspora contest racial and gender exclusion within neoliberal global structures. Through the use of oral histories, my work breaks with static settler state ways of defining Indigeneity in Mexico and the U.S., and patriarchal spaces[13] that have rendered Zapotec women's voices otherwise invisible.

Positionality

My inspiration for this dissertation resides in the history of my pueblo and its migration to Los Angeles. My mother, who is from the Zapotec town of Yatzachi el Alto, migrated to Los Angeles in 1971 and my father, from San Jerónimo Zoochina, migrated in 1973. Both towns are located in the Sierra Juárez, about five hours away from Oaxaca City. I was born and raised in an apartment in Mid-City Los Angeles with my sisters and my parents. At home, my parents spoke their Native language, Zapotec, and Spanish and they would blast *banda Oaxaqueña* (Oaxacan brass band) music from their Sony stereo. My parents always inculcated their desire for their children to be involved and give our community service that is valued among the diaspora in L.A. and in Zoochina. As a result, at the age of seven, I participated in the first all children dance, *Los Malinches*,[14] in Los Angeles where 1.5- and second-generation Zoochina children participated. Like the Oaxacan brass band, taking part in traditional dances has been particularly fundamental for children and youth to be recognized by the community and has shaped their

[12] The name of the community at war with will remain undisclosed throughout this project.

[13] Shannon Speed, "Structures of Settler Colonialism in Abya Yala," *American Quarterly* 69, no. 4 (2017): 787-788.

[14] In further talk about *Los Malinches* in chapter 4.

identity. Furthermore, my participation in dancing as a teenager in the Los Angeles *La Guelaguetza*,[15] and again with my community in 2014, allows me to intricately grasp how (adult) children in diaspora make meaning of our relationship and belonging to Zoochina.

My community's teachings drove me to write my first master's thesis on the politics of identity and organizing among Indigenous Oaxacan youth in Mexico and the U.S. in 2012. I continue to do this work, as I believe it is important to highlight that the racial violence our parents and elders experience in Mexico and in the U.S. continues beyond the first-generation migrants. As I concluded my thesis for the master's in Latin American Studies, this ongoing racism reached international headlines when Indigenous Oaxacans in Oxnard, California launched a successful campaign, No Me Llames Oaxaquita (Don't Call Me Little Oaxacan/Indian) to ban the derogatory term, "Oaxaquita," from being used by students and staff in Oxnard's school district.[16] Inevitably, this situation allowed me to see that my racial experiences of being called "Pinche India María"[17] (Fucking Indian Maria) and "India bajada del cerro" (Indian down from the mountains) as a young girl were not uniquely my own. It was crucial to continue addressing these issues in my research. By positioning myself as a Zapotec scholar in Chicana/o Studies, I seek not only to bring forth the different ways in which

[15] *La Guelaguetza* is traditionally a Zapotec word from the Central Valleys of Oaxaca that means reciprocal exchange. Nowadays it is more commonly used to refer to the annual festive celebrations in Oaxaca and California where folkloric Oaxacan dancing and brassbands perform, although in Oaxaca *La Guelaguetza* is a tourist attraction.

[16] Newspaper publications and television news in the U.S. and in Mexico reported about the successful campaign, "No me llames Oaxaquita," which started when an elementary Mixtec kid threatened his mother to commit suicide after ongoing racist remarks from his Latino classmates and teacher for having a parent that spoke an Indigenous language. The Mixteco Indígena Community Organization Project (MICOP), based in Oxnard, was the lead organization in this campaign.

[17] "La India María" is a Mexican television fictional character of an unfitting Indigenous woman in Mexico City and the United States as she emigrated from her rural town. María Elena Velasco was the creator and actress of the 30-year (1970-2014) hit sitcom and films where she consistently portrayed a clumsy, backwards, and funny character.

Indigeneity is conceived and indeed claimed by self-identified Chicanxs, but also to highlight the real-life consequences that such claims have had on Indigenous migrants from Mexico.

Indigenous Mexican Racialization in Transborder Context

Figure I.1. The 8 Regions of Oaxaca.

Most Zapotecs in Los Angeles come from the Oaxacan regions of the Sierra Juárez (also known as Sierra Norte) and the Central Valleys of Oaxaca. I conducted twenty-five oral histories and participant observations with Zapotecs from the Sierra Juárez (known as Serranos) in Los Angeles, California and Oaxaca, Mexico. My own life experience as a person from the community and the lack of scholarly literature, both in Mexico and the United States, about San Jerónimo Zoochina are what drive me. This community is located in the Sierra Juárez and is one of fourteen pueblos that belong to Sector Zoogocho in the Sierra. According to my findings, slightly more than a quarter of the population, both in Oaxaca and Los Angeles, have married or have been in domestic partnership with another Serrana/o from Sector Zoogocho. These relationships further support how they maintain their strong communal presence across colonial

borders.[18] Yet others have married Indigenous Oaxacans from the Central Valleys, with the exception of a few in Zoochina who have married migrants from the Mixe area in the Sierra or Chinantecs from the region of Papaloapam[19] (see figure I.1, The 8 Regions of Oaxaca). In Los Angeles, about six community members have married non-Oaxacan Mexicans. This broader identity is further important because of the region's history as the birthplace of former Zapotec Mexican President, Benito Juárez; the first Indigenous president of the Americas and the only Indigenous president of Mexico.

To consider how Indigenous peoples in diaspora continue to challenge U.S. and Mexican assimilation and racialization, this dissertation plays close attention to the ways in which each settler-state has racialized Indigenous peoples, particularly looking at 20th century policies and popular culture that continue to portray Indigenous peoples as undesirable and therefore in need of assimilation. At the same time, I am attentive to the patriarchal structures created by the state that have shaped how some communities govern themselves and thereby constitute membership as they continue to complicate women's and the diasporas' claims as people from Zoochina and disrupt expected gender roles and traditional practices.[20]

In the U.S., some American Indian communities have been racialized by scientifically measuring their blood quantum since 1705;[21] where at times the less Indigenous blood you are

[18] This was done by compiling a list of Zoochina-based and Los Angeles-based members who are married or in domestic partnership with any of the fourteen communities who belong to Sector Zoogocho.

[19] Also spelled Papaloapan.

[20] For more on gender roles, women, traditions, community membership, and the state see, Espinosa Damián, Dircio Chautla, and Sánchez Néstor 2010; Hernández Castillo 2016; Rachel Sieder (ed) 2017; Sánchez Nestór 2005; Speed, Hernández Castillo, and Stephen (eds) 2006; Stephen 2005; Ramirez, 2007; Barker, 2011; Simpson, 2014.

[21] In 1705 the colony of Virginia passed the first blood quantum law. In 1887 the senate passed the Dawes Acts (also known as the General Allotment Act) which declared remaining Native lands after allotment as surplus and available for sale to other Natives and non-Natives. However, the Dawes Commission Act of

"scientifically" proven to have, the less likely you are to be federally recognized as Indigenous.[22] However, at other times, and depending on the community, recognition was entirely based on base rolls and land security that some communities had "proven" was ancestral land.[23] Indigenous federal recognition was quite diffeernt in Mexico where culture (in language, dress, and even living conditions) became the principal way in the 19th and 20th century by which Indigeneity was measured. During the 20th century specfically, the Mexican settler state developed a national project of assimilation (mestizaje) that sought to transform Mexico into a *modern* and *progressive* nation, much like their U.S. and European counterparts.

Early work on Indigenous Oaxacan migration to the U.S. demonstrated how anti-Indigenous discrimination continued to be practiced among non-Indigenous mestizo Mexican immigrants in the United States.[24] Most notably, Michael Kearney, who is known as the pioneer of Oaxacan migration studies in the United States, contributed to understanding how Mixtec and Zapotec transnational forms of organizing and indigenous identity formation developed in California.[25] Kearney, like Lynn Stephen's early work, detailed how Indigenous Oaxacan migrants challenged their mestizo Mexican co-workers' discriminatory practices. However, only a number of studies, overwhelmingly dissertations and masters' theses, have more thoroughly

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1893 enforced tribal belonging through blood quantum in order to allot land. The Dawes Act is considered the most devastating to Native sovereignty, culture, and identity as it empowered the U.S. government to legally consider who is Indigenous based on blood quantum, preventing the right to self-define in order to appropriate large parcels of land for profit (Grande 2015, 142-143; Blansett 2015, 161-162). Though informally, blood quantum was used during the 19th and 20th centuries by different states.

[22] As its goal, this federal recognition complicated access to land distribution and financial assistance For more on the Indian Reorganization Act see, Deloria and Lytle 1984; Kauanui 2008; Barker 2011.

[23] More recently, many other communities have used lineage to assert their relationship.

[24] See for example, Kearney 1988, 2000; Fox and Rivera-Salgado 2004; Sanchez 2018; Stephen 2007; Cruz-Manjarrez 2013; Nagengast and Kearney 1990.

[25] Nagengast and Kearney 1990; Kearney 1998, 2000.

centered the ongoing discrimination towards the children of Indigenous Oaxacan migrants and how this generation negotiates their identity and background. Interestingly, Indigenous Oaxacan scholars and community youth have been the ones to bring these stories forward. Mexican state racial violence are undeniably ongoing and have crossed settler borders as people migrate. Undoubtedly, both Mexico and the U.S. have worked to further erase Indigenous populations in order to dispossess them of their lands.

When talking about Indigenous diasporas from Latin America, it is also important to consider the effects of maintaining Zapotec beliefs and practices on other Indigenous peoples' lands, such as the Tongva/Gabrieleños of the Los Angeles basin and the Southern Channel Islands. This intervention is of crucial importance given the historical conditions that force and displace Indigenous peoples out of their lands and often times unknowingly settle onto other Indigenous peoples' territories in order to survive.[26] Taking on a discussion on settler colonialism, land, survival, and differences and commonalities in the struggle to maintain Indigenous visibility in diaspora are essential, though absent, in migration studies. I particularly knit these conversations from American Indian, Indigenous Latina/o, and Latin American Indigenous studies perspectives to critically analyze "U.S. colonial policies targeting indigenous nations" that continue to "deterritorialize indigenous prior claims" to land through "illegal" or

[26] I am thankful to the participants of the first Critical Latina/o Indigeneities Symposium at Austin, particularly Shannon Speed and Maylei Blackwell for their suggestion to get me to consider the effects of settler colonialism when talking about Indigenous Latina/o immigration to the U.S. Dr. Maylei Blackwell, Dr. Luis Urrieta, and Dr. Floridalma Boj-Lopez formed Critical Latina/o Indigeneities at the Native American Indigenous Studies Association (NAISA) in 2014. In March 26, 2015 Critical Latina/o Indigeneities held its first symposium at the University of Texas at Austin, titled: *Critical Latinx Indigeneities: Constructing and Theorizing Between Fields*. See, Blackwell et al., 2017.

"undocumented" status discourses.[27] I interrogate how Mexico, not only as a nation-state but as a settler colonial state, has historically displaced and eliminated Indigenous peoples.

Consequently, I draw on my work as a member of the Critical Latinx Indigeneities (CLI), an interdisciplinary working group composed of junior and senior faculty and graduate students. CLI makes visible the transborder social, political, cultural, and educational experiences of Indigenous diasporic generations from Latin America in the U.S. As an Indigenous scholar, my work also considers the complexities of Latinx Indigeneities positions as "guests" or "arrivants" on other Native Peoples' lands,[28] an ethical task that continues to guide and be at the core of our research as critical scholars and teachers.[29] Being that Los Angeles is the U.S. city with the highest Mexican and Latina/o population[30] and the city with the highest growing Indigenous Latin American diaspora, it is important to capture the multiple intersectionalities this population crosses.[31] That is, gender, class, race, age (across diasporas), migration and educational status, and colorism make up the complex realities this growing diaspora in the U.S. has navigated in the past forty years, yet this population continues to remain largely invisible.

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[27] Jodi Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 189.

[28] Blackwell, Boj-Lopez, Urrieta 2017.

[29] Tuck and Yang (2012) borrow the idea of "settler logic of innocence" from Patrick Wolfe (2006, 12), which describes how settlers rid themselves of guilt and complicity on the dispossession of Natives from their land.

[30] "Hispanic Population and Origin in Select U.S. Metropolitan Areas," Pew Research Center tabulations of 2014 American Community Survey (IPUMS), last modified September 6, 2016, https://www.pewhispanic.org/interactives/hispanic-population-in-select-u-s-metropolitan-areas/

[31] Kimberle Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review*, Vol. *43*, No. 6 (1991) p. 1241-1299.

Because the migration demographics of Serranas/os (people from the Sierra Juárez) in my work are, for the most part, documented,[32] it is necessary to acknowledge what this means in the realm of the settler "comes to stay" or is here to stay.[33] For many of the families I have interviewed and built entrenched relationships with over the course of my life, staying is more a feeling of sadness that has manifested onto their U.S.-born and raised adult-children. For example, migrant elders and parents often express that they wish to permanently return to their communities in Mexico when they reach retirement. Though the reality of a growing family with grandkids in diaspora has often changed these permanent return plans, there are those that seasonally migrate back-and-forth (e.g.: every six months), while others, unfortunately, return (in a casket) only to be buried there. These stories too demonstrate how migration and Indigeneity are shaped through multiple and never-ending Indigenous communal circuits. As well, these practices contest settler colonial theory that sometimes too easily describes arrivants or guest, especially Indigenous peoples, as (permanent) settlers.

Theoretical Framework Contribution

Comunalidad (communality or community collectivity) is a non-singular way in which Indigenous Oaxacans practice and form their beliefs around collective ways of being with their community. Comunalidad shapes Oaxacans' Indigenous identity to their community through shared common ways of knowing. Indigenous Oaxacan intellectuals inform my transborder work. I contend that comunalidad as practice and pedagogy are taught and sustained from generation to generation and makes itself adaptable to the current conditions of the community. My work intends to culturally, socially, and politically capture gender dynamics in comunalidad

[32] The migrant generation in my study became legalized under the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA, November 6, 1986). Signed into law by then President Ronald Reagan it became a major congressional act that reformed U.S. immigration law.

[33] Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization is not a Metaphor," 5.

traditions as these are spaces where community membership, belonging, and identity take form and strengthen. The work of Zapotec intellectual Jaime Martínez Luna from the community of Guelatao[34] and Ayuuk/Mixe intellectual Floriberto Díaz Gómez from Tlahuitoltepec have been fundamental in my understanding of comunalidad as theory. Díaz Gómez is first credited for establishing comunalidad conversations within a larger intellectual discourse in Mexico in the 1980s. Based on their community's practices of comunalidad, Díaz Gómez and Martínez Luna brought comunalidad practices to rich theoretical conversations.[35] Both were aware that although their communities, like many others, did not refer to their town's practices and beliefs as "comunalidad," it was important to see them born from the collective processes that take shape within Indigenous communities. Anthropologist Elena Nava (2009) described this oral absence as an "analytical category [that is] not used by the people in general, however, all its strength comes from, principally, the category Land/territory, among others that we previously live and that show the daily voices of the people."[36] Comunalidad continues to be theorized by community intellectuals and scholars alike, mostly anthropologists in Latin America, who have made some interventions; for example, in gender.[37]

Therefore, I employ an Indigenous Oaxacan communal perspective as it directly and critically speaks to Indigenous frameworks. Comunalidad is a key concept that I develop as an

[34] Guelatao is in the Sierra Juárez region. It is also the home of former Zapotec President Benito Juárez.

[35] Tomas Cruz Lorenzo (Chatino) was another early Indigenous comunalidad thinker. Unfortunately, his life as activist and thinker was cut short in 1989 after being gunned down. His murder remains unsolved. Cruz Lorenzo was from the community of San Juan Quiahije, Oaxaca (Wikipedia, May 11, 2020).

[36] Elena Nova, "*Comunalidad*: Ensayo sobre la legitimación de una teoría nativa," *Revista oaxaqueña para el diálogo intercultural* no. 2 (2009): np. Origina: "…como categoria analítica, no es usada por el pueblo en general, sin embargo, toda su fuerza proviene, principalmente, de la categoría Tierra/territorio, entre otras que vivimos previamente y que aparecen cotidianamente en las voces del pueblo."

[37] Aquíno Moreschi 2013; Vásquez Vásquez 2013.

analytic thread in my theoretical framework. I do so by paying close attention to the role of women and adult children of migrants that continue their way of life through cultural and political engagement. In understanding comunalidad as a gendered process, women disrupt, alter, participate, and contribute similarly like their male counterparts. Women's comunalidad practices further help us understand how they hold community together, while contesting their erasure as women and as racial subjects against settler states they move through. As an Indigenous Oaxacan conception of community life, comunalidad, foments current forms of community participation in Los Angeles in relation to Zapotec life back home. I move from a romanticized discussion on comunalidad and propose that we further consider the complications it brings when it lacks recogntion of women's labor in comunalidad practices and that of diasporic generations in the United States.

Zoochina women have been key to maintaining and re-creating comunalidad in the past fifty years since diaspora.[38] Yet, like other Indigenous women, as intellectuals and participants in building comunalidad, they have largely been left out of these conversations or have been rendered uninvolved. Zoochina women and young and adult children of migrants in the diaspora have never stopped taking part in commulidad practices. By taking part in sociocultural traditions or taking political positions within diasporic ways of organizing, they also contest Mexico and U.S. settler practices of Indigenous elimination by bringing their presence and leaderships forward. As an Indigenous process that is maintained and re-created across borders, comunalidad requires us to consider and re-think through settler colonialism and intesectionalities as it moves across lands, space, and time.

[38] Re-creating refers to practices where women now participate in where traditionally they had been excluded; thus they re-create communal traditions.

Lynn Stephen proposes a transborder framework, instead of transnationalism, because she argues that it informs a multi-border consciousness for Indigenous migrants that captures the multiple borders migrants cross: "ethnic, class, cultural, colonial, and state borders within Mexico," as well as the "ethnic hierarchies" of the U.S.[39] Whereas transnationalism looks at the movement and practices migrants "forge and sustain" between nation-states,[40] a transborder concept allows us to complicate traditional notions in which we come to understand borders as strictly defined. That is, I look at how race and gender borders are particularly at play for Zapotec diasporas in California. Therefore, a communal and transborder theoretical approach offers a rich relational understanding to Indigenous epistemologies that considers how Indigenous racialized Latina/os navigate multiple borders and racial landscapes.

The theoretical framework I bring to the field is *transborder comunalidad*, an Indigenous ideology and practice of communal belonging and being across generations in diaspora. My research is the first in the U.S. to address the role of the diaspora and women in building transborder comunalidad and offers a comparative and cross-border approach to race, migration, and gender. While there are some studies that reveal how women have been continuously active in communal practices,[41] there is a complete absence of attention on women's labor in building comunalidad in the diaspora. Although certain community practices have excluded women from participating in male-centered traditions, women from Zoochina have often sought to participate

[39] Lynn Stephen, *Transborder Lives: Indigenous Oaxacans in Mexico, California, and Oregon* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 6.

[40] Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Szanton Blanc, "From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration," *Anthropological Quarterly* (1995): 48-63.

[41] For example see, Burneo and Montalvo (International Land Coalition), Cadenillas and Ramírez (Onamiap Organization), and Bolaños Guerrero Osorio (Rights and Research Initiative) 2015; Gutiérrez Aguilar, ed. 2018; Lastarria-Cornhiell 2011; Vásquez Vásquez 2013.

and be recognized by the community like their male counterparts. Transborder comunalidad addresses the fact that Indigenous peoples have always been mobile, in transit, and in relation with other Indigenous peoples,[42] prior to nation-state formations and first settler contact.[43] Taking a pre-nation-state and ongoing transit perspective into account, my theoretical use of transborder and comunalidad proposes we use a relational approach that considers how Indigenous migrants and their children continue to navigate Indigenous belonging and identity that in turn speaks against colonial logics of erasure and displacement. These conversations are essential to understanding contemporary Indigenous Latin American migration that is entrenched in forced migration.

As a mechanism of survival, Indigenous generations in diaspora are partaking in the revival of Zapotec ways of life. Their direct experience of community life does not stop at the settler borders of Mexico or the U.S., rather it moves across state borders and into other Native lands. My dissertation studies how Zoochina Zapotec children and women in the Los Angeles diaspora have been fundamental in the community's longevity and survival as they further make their Indigenous experience visible, recreated, re-claimed, and complex in the Latina/o/Hispanic racial categories, and often in the Chicana/o identity as well. To claim and be claimed by an Indigenous community disrupts racially categorized labels; thereby, making Zapotec identity or Zoochinense identity not only a collective process of consciousness, but a political one as well. Zoochinenses' sense of belonging and identity in Los Angeles is one of relational and continual belonging to their lands/hometown. I understand relational belonging as that which is embedded in the cultural, social, and political practices that occur across generations of the same diasporic

[42] These conversations have been dominant and further advanced in American Indian and Native studies.

[43] I'm thankful to Mishuana Goeman and Shannon Speed for their conversations that Indigenous peoples have always been in transit when debating between a transnational or transborder framework.

town or as members from various Oaxacan towns that take part in traditional and political Oaxacan organizations in L.A.[44] Continual belonging refers to the ways in which their identity and practices have persisted, despite their years in diaspora or place of birth. While some generations may differ in the ways they maintain or (re)create belonging, these have been continual across place, space, and even land.

Using an Indigenous Oaxacan communal perspective allows me to employ a multidisciplinary analysis of Indigeneity scholarship. A hemispheric Indigenous studies framework brings overlapping, yet distinctive histories, geographies, and peoples to an often-muddled terrain of communal and scholarly responsibilities as Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars.[45] In understanding Indigenous histories across settler states, we share each other's knowledge, struggles, pain, and survival as Indigenous peoples. Claiming difference is an especially important assertion to make against Western culture because Indigenous communities' worldviews are relational, sacred, and reciprocal.[46] Critical Latinx Indigenous studies has the potential to dismantle the idea that Indigenous peoples no longer exist and bring Indigenous

[44] There are many Oaxacan folkloric dance groups in Los Angeles that have membership from people of various Oaxacan towns. Most of the membership is composed of the 1.5, second, and even young 2.5 generation who are from the central valleys or Sierra Juárez region of Oaxaca. However, there is also non-Oaxacan membership in many of these folkloric dance groups. The political Oaxacan groups I am referring to, and of which also includes Oaxacan people from different towns and non-Oaxacans are the Indigenous Front of Binational Organizations (FIOB), the Mixteco Indígena Community Organizing Project (MICOP), and the Tequio Youth Group, to name a few. My previous MA Thesis in Latin American Studies more broadly looks at Zapotec youth from multiple towns that are in college in Oaxaca City and Los Angeles. I look at how Zapotec students who are involved with their community re-create their Indigenous identity once in college.

[45] M. Bianet Castellanos, Lourdes Gutiérrez Nájera, and Arturo J. Aldama, *Comparative Indigeneities of the Américas: Toward a Hemispheric Approach* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2012).

[46] Duane Champagne. *Lecture: Comparative Indigenous Societies* course, Presentation on "Exploring Cultural and Institutional Affects on the Possibilities of Social Change," April 2016.

migrants and American Indians into dialogue to address shared responsibilities, as well as tensions in occupying other Indigenous people's lands.[47]

Methods

My research interviews and analysis offer insights into how racial and ethnic minorities in the U.S. Latina/o population interact with each other, and how this process renegotiates race and ethnicity and (re)creates belonging and identity in the diaspora. My research methods are therefore based on oral histories and ethnographic fieldwork in Los Angeles and Oaxaca. Because studies on Oaxacan migrants do not usually capture the perspective of those who stay back *home*, my work attempts to include their voices to capture stronger understandings of communal and transborder relationships. My ethnographic fieldwork includes: (1) participant observation and (2) oral histories. My methodological approach of retelling stories attempts to relate the lived and living experiences of past and current Zapotecs as a way to disrupt notions that Indigenous peoples are dead, dying, or assimilated to mainstream U.S. or Mexican culture.

Although the main focus is on the experiences of the diaspora, I interviewed Zapotecs in Oaxaca to further understand the effects of transnational relationships occurring across borders and the sentiments felt by non-migrants when the diaspora claims identity and belonging to the respective community. Oftentimes in migration and transnational studies we ignore the experiences and feelings of those who "stay-behind" in the home country. This avoidance does not allow us to critically analyze the different constructions of belonging, identity, and experiences among Indigenous migrants. I have chosen to conduct oral histories with twenty-five participants because life stories are shared at length. That is, oral histories tell and consider much

[47] Floridalma Boj López, "Mobilizing Transgression: *Red Pedagogy* and Maya Migrant Positionalities: Response 4," in *Red Pedagogy: Native American Social and Political Thought*, ed. Sandy Grande (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015), 285-287.

more of what is at stake for the person sharing their life history. For Indigenous peoples and diasporas, this is central considering the effects of colonialism and the multiple ways in which they continue to survive. Thereby, oral histories usually take on less participants, compared to in-depth interviews that focus on a set of particular topics that often require a larger set of participants.[48]

I conducted my fieldwork from 2015-2020. I went to Zoochina every year, with the exception of 2019, as a community member, as relative, and as an Indigenous critical ethnographer. I consistently participated in the monthly or bi-monthly hometown association meetings in Los Angeles. It was the early oral histories I conducted in Los Angeles taught me that women played a central role in the survival and longevity not only in Zoochina, but also in the diaspora. It was for this reason that I dug deeper to understand more relationally and historically what their role as women meant as migrant women, as women who remained in the pueblo, and those who were born in Los Angeles. Given the transborder comunalidad reality of my community, returning to Zoochina was never a one-time research practice. Upon my last return in 2018, I conducted follow up questions with elders in Zoochina. From 2019 to 2020, I conducted follow-up questions with elders in Los Angeles and some second-generation adult children. Given the growing participation of the grandchildren of the elders, it was important to get the perspective of the grandparents who either lived in Zoochina or in Los Angeles. These stories further show Zoochina's participation in communal ways is both *ongoing* and *growing* contesting settler colonial structures that seek their elimination, while showing that comunalidad is an ongoing practice that crosses multiple borders and generations. Women continue to be at the center of (re)creating belonging and Zapotec Zoochinense identity through communal practices in diaspora. I aim to demonstrate that being Zapotec is taught and practiced in multiple

[48] Blackwell 2011; Goeman 2013; Hesser-Biber and Leavy, 133.

ways that challenge U.S.-Mexico colonial and nation state notions of Indigeneity and recognition.[49] These stories also allow us to become more fully aware that comunalidad never died, but rather was revitalized in order to meet the global changing structures that forced so many to migrate to the U.S.

By focusing on Indigenous migrants across generations, my work explores the multicultural and multiethnic processes by which the Indigenous diaspora navigate belonging and identity in the U.S. Comparative decolonial theory of the Americas, as a critical lens that rejects Western constructions of Indigenous peoples as dead, dying, and passive actors, is essential for studying the multiple ways Indigenous peoples reconceptualize Indigeneity across borders.[50] As a methodological framework, I incorporate historical and comparative approaches to race and ethnicity that build upon the recent emphasis on gender, identity, and transnationalism in immigration and Indigenous studies.

Accountability

As a Zapotec scholar, my methods and methodological work are informed by Indigenous protocols of respect, permission, and reciprocity.[51] I followed closely the protocols of the community I work *with*, which allowed me to be responsible, accountable, and respectful to the community. Following these protocols has allowed me to establish long-lasting relationships

[49] In thinking about Indigeneity and recognition American Indian, Canadian, and Native Hawaiian literature have specifically been influential in my work. Latin American and Indigenous migration literature have also been integral in helping me think through frameworks of transnational/transborder and migrant organizing.

[50] Lourdes Gutiérrez Nájera, M. Bianet Castellanos, Arturo J. Aldama, "Introduction," in *Comparative Indigeneities of the Americas* ed. M. Bianet Castellanos, Lourdes Gutérrez Nájera, and Arturo J. Aldama (Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press, 2012).

[51] Indigenous protocols refers to following Indigenous community's ways of conducting research. There are certain guidelines one must follow as a researcher to make him/her/them more accountable to the community. I briefly describe some of the protocols I have followed and will continue to follow below.

with the communities I work with. Before visiting my town to conduct oral histories with elders and adults as an undergraduate student in 2008, I was instructed on the community's protocols by my father and grandmother. Some of the community protocols that I need to follow are: formally present myself (my name, whose child and grandchild I am, where I come from and the purpose and impact my research will have to the community); give thanks for allowing me to stay in the town while conducting my work; and offering my assistance to anything they may need, such as communal labor. These procedures, and others, I talk about in chapter 2 that take place with the local authorities[52] of my town and my hometown association in Los Angeles.

I share a set of responsibilities and accountability to those who allow me to work with them. It is through my family connection and relations that I have been able to conduct work with various Indigenous Oaxacan communities both in California and in Mexico and for which I owe much of my own academic growth. Because my work involves both participant observation and interview fieldwork, I make it my responsibility not only to give back to my community, but to ask what it is that they want from my work, what are their expectations of me, and last, but not least, my responsibility as an insider. As a Zapotec who is living in diaspora, my community considers me as an active member of the community. Therefore, accountability as an Indigenous community-engaged scholar is never ending. It lies at the center of our practices and our love for our community's collective survival and it informs the work itself. It continues in many ways to guarantee Indigenous survival and futurity despite present forms of colonialism.

Chapter Outline

[52] Local authorities in Zoochina are autonomously and communally elected. There are no political parties in the community and instead they follow "usos y costumbres" (customary law) governance laws. The community elects their own people to serve their position based on expected responsibilities as a citizen and on rotation-basis (e.g., those who have not served as President or held any other position for some time).

Zapotec Generations consists of four chapters, in addition to an introductory and concluding chapter, which I briefly outline here and then describe in longer detail below. Chapter 1, "Indigenous Mexican Racialization: Transborder Racial-Gendered Processes of Erasure and Contestation," is a brief historical account of Mexico's racialization process of Indigenous peoples, starting with the first Mexican census 1895. Chapter 2, "Transborder Indigenous Protocols: A Community-Engaged Perspective," explores Indigenous research protocols in a transborder (transnational) perspective that connects my research methodologies to my own experiences as a Zapotec community-engaged scholar in the Los Angeles diaspora. Chapter 3, "Zoochina's Immigrant Hometown Association: Gender and Generational Shifts," shows how Indigenous Mexican hometown associations are highly political sites of gender nonconformity and racial contestation where children of migrants have taken on leadership positions since the early 1990s. Finally, chapter 4, "Gendering Participation in Traditional Dances and Banda San Jerónimo Zoochina L.A.," looks at the collective sociocultural practices that children have participated in, such as traditional dances and Oaxacan brassbands that reinforce their transborder connections to their homeland and their identity as they challenge settler logics of Indigenous elimination.

Chapter 1, "Indigenous Mexican Racialization: Transborder Racial-Gendered Processes of Erasure and Contestation" considers the distinctive ways in which Mexico has attempted to eliminate Indigenous peoples. It starts by analyzing how the Mexican state, through the national project of the census (1895) began accounting for Indigenous peoples and ends with the ongoing racial experiences of U.S.-raised Indigenous Oaxacans in the United States. It is divided into four sections: The first section looks at the census from 1985 to 2010 and how it has officially ascribed an Indigenous identity to those who could only speak an Indigenous language, and

secondly through clothing and footwear. These characteristics are not only part of the states push to modernize the state, but have been backed through mestizaje and Indigenista intellectuals before these became a full-force national project from the 1940s through 1960s. I look at the Mexican census as a settler colonial tool of Indigenous erasure because it is the official record used at the local and national level to account for and provide social welfare aid to Indigenous peoples/communities. The second section further theorizes Mexico as a settler colonial state by examining structures of patriarchy and whiteness through mestizaje. I do so by merging American Indian feminist voices with that of Indigenous women's experiences from Mexico, which allows me to move to the third section of this chapter. The third section of this chapter, "Indigenous Women in the City" examines the infamous case of "Las Marías," a name given to Indigenous women by non-Indigenous Mexicans upon Indigenous women's migration to urban cities throughout Mexico starting in the 1960s. Lastly, using oral histories from U.S.-raised Zoochinenses in Los Angeles, I describe how they have experienced, while at the same time challenged their experience as Oaxacans. Recent works by Bianet Castellanos (2017), Josefina María Saldaña-Portillo (2016), Maylei Blackwell, Floridalma Boj López, and Luis Urrieta (2017), and Shannon Speed (2017, 2019) have made critical interventions by examining how settler colonialism takes place in Latin America and how it impacts Latin American Indigenous diasporas in the United States. This chapter contributes to this particular literature by considering how settler colonialism has taken place in Oaxaca and how its diaspora navigates their position as "guest" or often as non-Indigenous "arrivants"[53] in Tongva land— Los Angeles, California. I

[53] Jodi A. Byrd, *Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), xix. Others use "guests." See, Blackwell et al. 2017; Blackwell 2017; Boj Lopez, 2017; Saldaña-Portillo 2017; Gutiérrez Nájera and Maldonado 2017. In "Mobile Archives of Indigeneity," Boj Lopez (2017) argues that the "arrivant" in settler colonialism is "ignored or [understood as] categorically not Indigenous," which is troubling in how other Indigenous peoples outside of the United States become erased (215).

argue two things. One, that Oaxaca, like the greater Mexican state, is organized through a settler colonial structure of Indigenous elimination through language, clothing, and the dense "rural" locations in which a significant population finds themselves in and by which they have historically been officially categorized as Indigenous. And secondly, considering that Indigenous peoples continue to be in transit/mobile, we must complicate the discourse that views Indigenous migrants from the south as settlers. Settlers, as we have come to understand it in American Indian studies and of course settler colonial frameworks implies, power, land, seizure, among other forms of domination that Indigenous diasporas, particularly in the Americas, do not necessarily have.

Chapter 2, "Transborder Indigenous Protocols: A Community-Engaged Perspective," explores Indigenous research protocols in a transborder (transnational) perspective that connects my research methodologies to my own autoethnography as a Zapotec community-engaged scholar living in Los Angeles. I capture the feelings, thoughts, connections and/or tensions that non-migrants in Oaxaca feel about the diaspora. Because my work is both transnational and generational, it is important that I capture the perspectives of those who have, over the years, stayed back *home* in order to have a more representative sample of my data and analysis. More than a method, conducting oral histories with non-migrant family members, friends, or *paisanos* in Oaxaca informs my theoretical framework. As a critical ethnographer, the retelling of stories is an attempt to relate the lived and living experiences of past and current Zapotecs as a way to counter settler notions of disappearing Native peoples. I propose that we consider Indigenous protocols as responsibilities that are informed by practices in the homeland and the lands we come to settle as a process of doing and undoing—a transborder Indigenous research method. Therefore, this section is carefully crafted to express not only the oral histories, but their facial

and bodily expressions as well, including the non-verbal expressions of sorrow (silences and weeping) and emotions that can, and have occurred in my fieldwork. These are important markers that many times tell a much wider story.

Chapter 3, "Zoochina's Hometown Association: Gender and Generational Shifts," shows how Indigenous Mexican hometown associations are highly political sites of gender nonconformity and racial contestation. Three generations of women and children of migrants have taken on leadership positions in Zoochina's HTA, even though most Oaxacan HTAs do not allow, or have rarely seen, women and U.S.-raised adult children become board members.[54] However, as discussed in chapter 3, the Zoochina HTA—*Centro Social San Jerónimo Zoochina*, commonly referred to as *"la unión*," have not only had women actively participate in various community affairs, but women founded their hometown association and have been part of the board membership since its founding fifty years ago. U.S.-raised and U.S.-born women also make a significant number of the membership and have actively participated since the nineties; though the board members have been mostly male.

Chapter 4, "Gendering Participation in Traditional Dances and Banda San Jerónimo Zoochina L.A." looks at the collective sociocultural practices that children participate in, such as traditional dances and the brassbands. I look specifically at the re-creation of two community dances, *Los Malinches* and *Las Negritas.* For *Los Malinches*, I look at the experience of the first set of 1.5 and second-generation children that first danced in 1994. I then look at the experience of Zoochina's *Las Negritas* (traditionally known as *Los Negritos*), who in 2014 became the first women to perform that dance. *Las Negritas* was also the first dance by the community to include the migrant, the 1.5, and the second-generation. Furthermore, I incorporate the experience of the

[54] For example, see, Bada 2014; López, Escala Rabadan, and Hinojosa-Ojeda 2001, 6; Rivera-Salgado 2004/2005, 2015; Zabin and Escala Rabadán 1998, 2001.

children of migrants in the *San Jerónimo Zoochina L.A.* band. The band, like most, if not all pueblos in the Sierra Juárez, is the backbone of all festivities. Without the band, there is no dance, there is no yearly festival, there is no communality that rings throughout the multiple events of how Zoochinenses have come to understand comunalidad. Bands are at the center of identity formation not only among Zoochinenses, but between the different pueblos of the Sierra whose knowledge and participation with the bands have come to also reinforce communal practices.

Conclusion

My project foregrounds how Zapotecs reclaim and (re)create their Indigenous identity against stereotypical and racial violent notions of what it means to be Indigenous across borders. Through a historically informed analysis, I demonstrate how Indigenous Mexicans and women have been racialized by the Mexican state, as well as the multiple contemporary ways Zoochina Zapotec migrants and their children contest their U.S. Latina/o and/or Hispanic racial category and therefore their invisibility. Indigenous women have further been left out Mexico's settler state project Therefore, I do this by examining how three Zapotec generations in Los Angeles and Zoochina elders and larger adult population in Zoochina that make transborder comunalidad and belonging possible. Their identity and belonging as Zoochinenses is reinforced in cultural, political, and social gatherings across borders. The stories I collect offer new insights into how racial and ethnic minorities in the U.S. Latina/o population interact with each other, and how this process renegotiates race and ethnicity that challenges an assimilationist discourse.

CHAPTER 1

INDIGENOUS MEXICAN RACIALIZATION: TRANSBORDER RACIAL-GENDERED PROCESSES OF ERASURE AND CONTESTATION

> "These multiple colonialities have produced different state-managed boundaries of indigeneity, which, under conditions of neoliberal globalization, have collided and hybridized… 'hybrid hegemonies' [2010, 2017]… describe[s] how one racial system migrates and gets mapped onto US white supremacist and settler state projects through the process of migration."
> —Maylei Blackwell[55]

> "Presumably, then, the racial and gender tropes that emerged in support of these projects [of land occupation, dispossession, elimination, destroy to replace] should have been fundamentally different [in Latin America] and they have been generally understood to be so. Yet, when we look at the countries throughout the Americas, what we see instead is a fair bit of similarity in the racialization of indigenous peoples as uncivilized and savage, unfit for modern life and thus doomed to fade into extinction. (Corresponding gender tropes of indigenous women as subordinate and inherently subject to settler violation are equally present throughout the hemisphere). How those tropes have developed and been deployed over distinct histories and landscapes is not uniform, but they nevertheless were directed to similar aims of Native elimination through direct physical or assimilationist violence…"
> —Shannon Speed[56]

In this chapter, I adopt historical, comparative, and transborder approaches to race and gender to examine how Mexico, as a settler colonial state, has shaped, maintained, and/or reconfigured Indigenous racialization into a national imaginary that attempts to make Indigenous migrants and their U.S.-raised diaspora invisible, silent, and vanished. I make two primary arguments about Indigeneity. First, Mexico's settler colonial logic of Indigenous elimination takes place through what I call *settler colonial racial-gendered processes of erasure*, a set of racial and gender violent ideologies and state policy practices against Indigenous peoples that

[55] Maylei Blackwell, "Geographies of Indigeneity: Indigenous Migrant Women's Organizing and Translocal Politics of Place," *Latino Studies* 15 (July 2017): 174–175; Maylei Blackwell, "Líderes Campesinas: Nepantla Strategies and Grassroots Organizing at the Intersection of Gender and Globalization," *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 35, no. 1 (Spring 2010).

[56] Shannon Speed, "Structures of Settler Capitalism in Abya Yala," *American Quarterly* 69, no. 4 (December 2017): 786-787.

has been produced and maintained since colonial arrival. These practices then get acted upon by non-Indigenous mestizo citizens towards its Indigenous populations living in the Native homeland and in diaspora that includes children of migrants born outside of the homeland. This racial and gender violence then gets passed on and used by non-Indigenous mestizo children of migrants towards Indigenous peoples. Second, Indigenous identity exceeds the physical and temporal boundaries of the nation-state; it does not end when one migrates, or as Indigenous generations grow in diaspora. In fact, I argue that Indigenous Oaxacan children, adolescents, and adults raised in California show that being Indigenous goes beyond rigid and fixed settler notions of Indigeneity. In making these two arguments about the circulation of settler colonial violence and the resilience of Indigenous identity, I think through the following questions: How does Mexico practice Indigenous erasure across time and place? How does racialization take place as a gendered process in which women are distinctly subjected to violence? How do Indigenous Oaxacan diasporas, raised in California, respond to racial-gendered violence and navigate their own sense of Indigeneity?

I begin this chapter with the section, "Settler Logics of Erasure in Mexico's Census," to offer a historical analysis of the Mexican census, which is carried out by the *Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía, e Informática* (National Institute of Statistics, Geography, and Information, INEGI), the government agency used in the country to officially account for Indigenous peoples. Through this analysis of the Mexican census, I document the ways in which the state contributes to an ongoing process of eliminating Indigenous identity. INEGI accounts for Indigenous populations and peoples based on anti-Indigenous and pro-mestizo racial categories that depict Indigenous peoples with static and stereotypical characteristics. Though there have been some changes to how Indigenous peoples are characterized, these categories

remain entrenched in logics of Mexico's racial, ethnic, and gender processes of elimination through which Indigenous migrants are rendered no longer Indigenous. The second section, "Mapping Settler Colonialism through Mestizaje (Whiteness) and Patriarchy," provides an analysis of gender violence in an ongoing mestizo state where Indigenous women and bodies are treated as disposable in order to obtain land. I argue that patriarchy and whiteness, operating by way of mestizaje, make settler colonialism possible within migratory circuits. The third section, "Indigenous Women's Racialization in Cities," examines the racial experiences of Indigenous women's internal migration from rural communities to Mexican cities. Their rural to urban migration from the 1960s to 1970s marked the first largest contemporary exodus of Indigenous women. These women became popularly racialized as "*Las Marías*," for whom their traditional clothing, Indigenous monolingualism, and poor economic conditions as street vendors positioned them as targets of gendered racial violence. I argue that non-Indigenous Mestizos and the media—which circulate and reproduce representations of indigenous women as "*Las Marías*"—continue to carry out the state's racialization of Indigenous peoples on an everyday basis that are directly tied to how the Mexican census, vis-à-vis mestizaje and Indigenismo projects erasure and gender violence of Indigenous women. The final section of this chapter, "Oaxacan Racialization of (Adult) Children in California," offers a transborder analysis of how "state-managed boundaries of indigeneity"[57] travel across other settler states—namely, the United States—by incorporating oral histories of adult children of Oaxacan migrants in California. In this section, I argue that the children of Oaxacan migrants contest their racially and gender violent identity that they have experienced at the hands of other children of non-Indigenous mestizo Mexican migrants. Over the years, the growth of Indigenous Oaxacans in Los Angeles and their *transborder comunalidad* practices have allowed U.S.-raised or born Zoochinenses to

[57] Maylei Blackwell, "Geographies of Indigeneity."

maintain and re-create their identity despite the years of violence and feelings of shame they have negotiated as young children.

Racial gendered violence against Indigenous people—in the form of tropes and representations that aim to eliminate and erase Indigeneity—has a broad geographical reach that travels across time and space. I start this chapter with epigraphs from Maylei Blackwell and Shannon Speed because they capture the processes of racial formation in settler states in Latin America and the U.S. and illustrate how these processes directly and relationally seek the elimination of Indigenous people. Maylei Blackwell's hybrid hegemonies framework (above) captures the transborder impact that Mexico's racial system has directly on Indigenous Oaxacans at the hands of non-Indigenous mestizo Mexicans. As we take a closer look, it reveals what Shannon Speed describes as scattered pieces, where "racial and gender tropes" collide across the Americas that make Indigenous peoples unfit and exterminated for modernization of the state. In other words, both Blackwell and Speed describe what I capture in this chapter—namely, that the reproduction of Mexico's state-based racial and gender violence is a transborder process that migrates with people as they cross borders. In this chapter, I extend this argument by analyzing how Zoochina Indigenous women and (adult) children in diaspora directly experience physical, mental, and life-threatening violence that render Indigeneity erasable. Because "race is colonialism speaking"[58]—in other words, because race is a gendered process born from colonialism—erasure or elimination requires a violent process in which women are particularly targeted for their presumed "passivity" and "fragile nature."

Settler Logics of Erasure in Mexico's Census

To begin to understand how Indigenous peoples have been accounted for by the state is to begin to find a match buried under two landscapes of scattered and piled brushwood. A brief

[58] Patrick Wolfe, *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race* (London: Verso, 2016).

historical overview of how the Mexican state and Mexican people have developed and employed eliminatory tactics requires us to examine these over time and place. In this section, I analyze the the Mexican census and INEGI, the state agency responsible for the census, to contextualize the ways in which state-sanctioned modes of Indigenous erasure and elimination congealed in Mexico beginning in the early twentieth century and how they continue to manifest today.

Since the early twentieth century, particularly in the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920), the Mexican state has manufactured discourses of race and racism that use mestizaje to obscure racial violence and police the boundaries of who is considered Indigenous. Discourses, policies, and beliefs of mestizaje— a racial mixing project and ideology aimed at Indigenous peoples that emphasized assimilation through whiteness where in an effort to create a modern nation-state, national unity through identity was seen as necessary— have influenced race and racism toward Indigenous peoples that have been formed and transformed by the state over the years. Given the overwhelming literature that describes how mestizaje—a whitening nationalist project in Mexico, like indigenismo, a glorification of an Indigenous *past* (the project's emphasis) mostly through a celebration as "Aztec"—has been used to hurt Indigenous communities today, it is my intention to focus here on how the census in particular has played a role in maintaining formal government counts of who is and who is not Indigenous—in ways that continue to shape dominant, mainstream perceptions of Indigeneity in Mexico. In such a manner, Emiko Saldívar and Casey Walsh (2014) remind us that the "Censuses are made by rulers to count people, places, and things over which they rule and for arranging the disposition of things (people, objects, social relations) within territories...Censuses thus both contribute to, and demonstrate, power."[59] This power of the census, as I demonstrate throughout this section,

[59] Emiko Saldívar and Casey Walsh, "Racial and Ethnic Identities in Mexican Statistics," *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Research* vol. 20, no. 3 (2014): 455.

works to erase Indigenous peoples from the map. It works to further racialize Indigenous migrants—within Mexico and also transnationally—as non-Indigenous mestizo subjects.

The first population census of Mexico was in 1790 (also known as the 1793 Revillagigedo [New Spain] census). Though there had been prior ways in which the Spanish crown ordered population counts of New Spain, these included mostly encyclopedic graphs and and maps that appeared in publications like atlases. They also included paintings like the now infamous *systema de casta* [caste system] paintings) (see below figure 1.1, *"Las Castas"*).

Figure 1.1. "Las Castas." This painting shows 16 racial groupings used in the 18th century. Artist: Anonymous.

Censuses took on increased importance for Mexico in late nineteenth century. In 1895, the first enumerative census began including questions of age, sex, civil status, place of birth,

nationality, language, religion, elementary instruction, occupation, and "defective" physical and mental wellbeing were asked.[60] Notably, by this time, the categorization of Blackness and Afrodescendants that were imperative during the Spanish crown *casta* system were no longer part of the questions or documentation in newly independent Mexico.[61] In the beginning of the 1880s, with the growth of bureaucracies and governments like that of Porfirio Díaz, along with the economic boom of Mexico, the Mexican government increasingly sought out these enumerative measures reflecting Europe's tighter category models that had "apparently" worked, and of which had previously started in other Latin American countries twenty-five years earlier.[62]

In the 1895 census, the government laid out the incorporation of Indigenous and mestizo categories, differentiated by language (with Spanish, Indigenous, and foreign languages), to racially identify the growing nation. The state implemented its decadal census beginning in 1900, and like the 1895 and 1910 censuses, the 1900 census's racial (or "*ethnic*," as Alan Knights argues)[63] categorization reinforced cultural markers where language was again the dominant indicator of racial formation. While the three Porfiriato regime censuses used language, the way in which the questions were asked in each varied, and each iteration got different results showing

[60] INEGI, "Cronología de la Estadística en México (1521-2008)" (Aguascalientes, Ags: *Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía*, 2009), 35.

[61] Saldívar and Walsh, "Racial and Ethnic Identities," 457.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Following Indigenous self-determination and critical Indigenous studies I also refuse the idea that Indigenous peoples, nations, and tribes are a race and ethnicity. See chapter 2. In "Racism, Revolution, and *Indigenismo*: Mexico, 1910-1940," Alan Knight (1990, 73) however, favors the use of ethnicity over race to describe the categorization of the time.

a small, but important decrease of Indigenous populations as Mexico was seeking to begin its early formation as a non-Indigenous nation-state.

The Mexican censuses' questionnaires defined the ways in which Indigenous peoples would fit into the developing model of forming the nation. For example, in 1895, census takers were asked to "determine the 'habitual language: castilian (Spanish) or indigenous language; mexican or náhuatl, zapotec, otomí, tasrasca, maya, huascateco, totonaco, etc'" of the household or individual.[64] Seeking a non-Indigenous nation-state, this question sought out castilian as the primary and unitary language to create a national mestizo identity. However, with the Porfiriato regime over and Díaz exiled in Paris, the census in 1921 was delayed as the Revolution came to an end in 1920.

Multiple transformations in the twentieth century changed the census's priorities. The 1921 census is said to be the only one in the twentieth century to consider biological information. Mexicans were considered, (a) *blanca* (white), (b) *indígena* (indigenous), and (c) *mezclada* (mixed); foreigners as a separate category "regardless of race;" and finally all others were simply "any other race, or unknown."[65] According to Juan Cristóbal Rubio Badán (2014), the three Mexican categories were obscure to the population and therefore prompted an Indigenous increase as *indígena* might have been more relatable than that of the category *blanca* and *mezclada*, which prior had not been added or seen in biological terms.[66] However, as Emiko

[64] Saldívar and Walsh, "Racial and Ethnic Identities," 463.

[65] Saldívar and Walsh, "Racial and Ethnic Identities," 465.

[66] Juan Cristóbal Rubio Badán, "Censos y población indígena en México: Algunas reflexiones," *Naciones Unidas Sede Subregional de la Cepal en México: Estudios Perspectivos* (2014): 17. Rubio Badán further believes that this moment revealed that not speaking an Indigenous language was not a determinant for Mexicans to not identify as Indigenous, of which I speculate it was more the case of strong indigenista practices and policies of the time that might have prompted some to identify.

Saldívar (2014) and others have noted, whiteness (and I believe "mezclada," not so much mestizaje) continues to be an absent category of identification among most of the Mexican population category.

With the arrival of the Great Depression, Mexico was beginning to stabilize and grow politically, economically, and demographically. At this point, the country was recovering from the Revolution in the early twentieth century and also from the War of Independence (1810-1821), the Mexico-U.S. War (1846-1848),[67] and a number of internal wars that included Indigenous revolts[68] against those in power all in the previous century. The 1930 census, therefore, wanted to prove the growth and recovery of Mexico. The government successfully released its Agrícola-Ganadero and Industrial censuses in addition to the general population count. In addition, with the assistance of state-hired anthropologists, there were an incredible number of new categories now being used, including growing economic outcome of its population and physical defects. At the same time, the census abandoned the three previous (1921) racial categories of "*blanca, indígena, mezclada*"—language was again a determinant factor of being Indigenous or not. Language—formally categorized on the census as "hablante de lengua indígena," or HLI—was reintroduced. Indigenous monolingualism and bilingualism (Spanish was never measured or asked for on this census), along with gender and age, were also

[67] Manifest Destiny was the doctrine the U.S. used to justify and find westward expansion across the Americas throughout the nineteenth century as inevitable and a "God given right." Part of this was the U.S.-Mexican War (1846-1848) that came to an end with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848). The treaty ended the war and ceded large parcels of already previously stolen Indigenous land by the Mexican state to the U.S. Another agreement of the treaty was that it was supposed to grant Mexicans now on the U.S. side of the border U.S. citizenship. While not all received citizenship, one thing that would remain contested until today was the racialization of Mexicans and other Latina/os as whites or as a race.[67]

[68] These Indigenous wars included the Texas-Indian Wars (1820–1875); the Comanche-Mexico Wars (1821–1870); the Apache-Mexico Wars (1821–1915), which were part of the Mexican-Indian Wars (1821–1933) and American Indian Wars; and the Yaqui Wars (1821–1929).

now being considered. This meant that if a child, five years or older spoke an Indigenous language, they were considered Indigenous, under the assumption that at such an age they had fully acquired their ability to speak their primary language. As figure 1.2 ("Population Census 1895-2000") shows below, the new categorical changes caused an upward spike (16%) in the count of Indigenous populations that had not been seen since 1895.

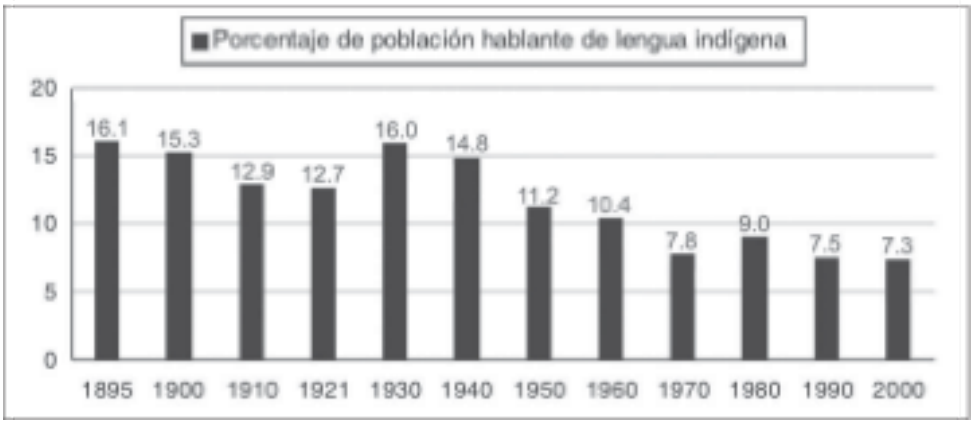

Figure 1.2. "Population Census 1895-2000"
Image Source: INEGI, La Población indígena en México. México: Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía, e Informática, 2004.
*The above graph is taken from Eva Sanz Jara's article "La diferencia étnica construida por el estado: identidad nacional mexicana e identidad indígena."

However, the rights set about in the 1917 Mexican Constitution were the reasons for the 1930 census racial modifications. The constitution established that everyone has the same rights, same duties, and are equal under the law despite their origin or skin color.[69] Even though the constitution apparently called for a non-discriminatory practice in the census, the census and its classification systems would prove to be essential in the Mexican state's attempt to "resolve the Indian problem" during an ever-growing mestizo and indigenista movement in the twentieth century.

[69] Eva Sanz Jara, "La diferencia étnica construida por el estado: identidad nacional mexicana e identidad indígena," *Liminar: Estudios sociales y humanísticos* vol. III, no. 3 (2005): 102.

Under the leadership of indigenista anthropologist Manuel Gamio, who found great support for his statistical vision under the Presidency of Lázaro Cardenas (1934-1940), and Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, Alfonso Caso, and other anthropologists were hired to foresee the best statistical methods to implement mestizaje accountability practices in the following decadal census.[70] In 1936, Cardenas's administration created the *Departamento de Asunto Indígenas* (Department of Indigenous Affairs, DAI) to continue the integration and modernization of the Indian who, at the time, was still considered "a backward proletarian, possessed of a number of vices (alcoholism, fanaticism, isolation, etc.) and continu[ously] exploited by a variety of class enemies, but open to redemption."[71] Though Gamio and other revolutionary Indigenista and mestizaje thinkers and politicians had already significantly conceptualized Mexico as a mestizo nation prior to the post-revolutionary nation, the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s proved to be the most extensive, intensive, and perhaps crucial in consolidating mestizaje and Indigenismo. Many of the ideas that emerged in this time are the same ideas that shape representations of Indigenous peoples today, as I describe in the sections that follow. In the 1940 census, Indigenous peoples accounted for 14.83% of Mexico's 16.78 million population. Thirty-three Indigenous languages (1.25 million Indigenous people reported being bilingual; 1.23 million, monolingual) were reported, a three-point decrease from 1930.[72]

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[70] Alan Knight, "Racism, Revolution, and *Indigenismo*: Mexico, 1910-1940," in *The Idea of Race in Latin America 1870-1940* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990).

[71] Stephen E. Lewis, *Rethinking Mexican Indigenismo: The INI's Coordinating Center in Highland Chiapas and the Fate of a Utopian Project* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2018), 5. The DAI was then renamed as the Department of Autonomous Indigenous Affairs (DAAI).

[72] Like previously censuses, Afromexicans continued to be unrecognized as part of the nation. I use the 1940 and 1950 data reported from Resano Pérez report of INEGI (2015) titled, "El tema de etnicidad en los Censos de Población en México" and the work of Eva San Jara (2005), "La diferencia étnica construida por el estado: identidad nacional mexicana e identidad indígena."

In the 1940, 1950, and 1960 censuses, new Indigenous "categories" were created that further reinforced static notions of Indigeneity. For instance, one was considered Indigenous if you had more than one of the following categories: (a) were barefoot, (b), used huaraches (traditional sandals) or even western shoes,[73] and (c) consumed maíz instead of wheat bread, in addition to speaking an Indigenous language. Additionally, the 1940 census captured one's sleeping pattern. If you slept on the ground, a "tapexco" (usually wooden bed with bamboo), hammock, a cot, or bed with a mattress, you were considered Indigenous. The Mexican census new racial categories were in a way more strictly defined and at the same time that it considered additional "cultural" traits that indigenistas decided were solid characteristics of "lo indio."[74] In reality, these categories inextricably tied Indigenous culture and poverty together, while also assuming that these categories were "Indigenous cultural" characteristics. The characteristics were to be further reinforced by the Instituto Nacional Indigenista (Indigenist National Institute, INI).

In 1948, INI was created as an agreement from the Primer Congreso Indigenista Interamericano in Pátzcuaro, Michoacán (1940) where Latin American countries agreed that political action was needed to deal with "the Indian question."[75] Though Chiapas would be the first state with Centro Cordinador (1951) offices of the INI, Oaxaca was its first priority as it looked into colonizing the fertile lowlands on the coast with, according to Alfonso Caso, an

[73] During this time many Indigenous peoples from rural towns had migrated to cities or were returning from the U.S. as Braceros wearing western clothing if they had not done so previously.

[74] In the 1950 census material culture markers were reduced to consumption of wheat bread (Saldívar and Walsh 2015).

[75] Nancy Grey Postero and Leon Zamosc, *The Struggle for Indigenous Rights in Latin America* (Portland, UK: Sussex Academic Press, 2012).

"excess population" from the Mixteca Alta.[76] INI's second project in Oaxaca involved the study and relocation of tens of thousands of Chinantecos, Mazatecos, Mixes, and Popolocos whose lands were soon to be flooded due to the start of construction (1949) of the Miguel Alemán Damn in the Papaloapan River basin boarding Veracruz.[77] Being removed from their lands brought devastating changes for all four groups. All were relocated to "fertile, irrigated lands with schools, medical clinics, markets, and roads [where, in the words of Caso, was], 'improvement of the indigenous.'"[78]

Sanitation and schools stand as the most significant for indigenistas and the mestizo project. It was believed that sanitary considerations on the census were among the most vital [as if sanitation was not already part of Indigenous people's daily lives] to educate, assimilate, and thereby incorporate Indigenous peoples. In many communities, such as Hueyapan in Morelos, INI inspectors attended state-mandated flag-raising exercises multiple times a week and inspected children as they stood in line to pledge allegiance to the flag, making sure they wore clean clothing and were washed according to the "training" their mothers had been provided.[79] Of those mothers who challenged these new state measures, their children, like them, were humiliated by bathing their child in public and branding mothers as "lazy Indians."[80] Therefore, mestizaje was not only a settler colonial tool of Indigenous erasure, but one that continues to be significantly gendered. In this case, mestizaje reinforced gender expected roles of mothers being

[76] Stephen E. Lewis, *Rethinking Mexican Indigenismo*, 10.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Judith Friedlander, *Being Indian in Hueyapan: A Revised and Updated Edition* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 128-129.

[80] Judith Friedlander, *Being Indian in Hueyapan*, 129.

the care provider to their children, while no matter how much they did were still racialized as "lazy Indians," of which I will come back to later on in the chapter. Teaching of Spanish through the education system would continue to flourish with the re-assignment and newly certified teachers, many of whom were from surrounding communities, but whose trained mission was to minimize and eventually reduce the number of people speaking their Indigenous language for years to come.

The 1950 census accounted for 11.2% million Indigenous population, with a nationwide population of 21.77. Of this Indigenous population, 795,069 (with 29 Indigenous languages) are reported monolingual and 1.65 are bilingual with a drop to twenty-nine existing Indigenous languages. An additional measure would now include the material components of the home. These took into account how many rooms homes had, whether most of the material used to construct the home was adobe, brick, mud, wood, etc. and if had water pipes. The 1960 census would continue to see a spiral drop in language with 10.4% million reportedly Indigenous out of a national population of 29.14 million where 1.92 million Indigenous people were bilingual and 1.10 monolingual. By this time, the census had added questions on protein intake (e.g.: meat, milk, eggs, and fish) and modified material culture questions by adding the presence of a television and radio in the home. These were clearer signs of modernity and development than language and clothing alone to account for race and ethnicity.[81] All of these measures and results were, however, most importantly, indicators to the foremost direction of the government's move to a modernizing state and that Indigenous peoples presence were indeed assimilating or vanishing. While there was a drop in Indigenous languages being spoken each decade, as well as

[81] Saldívar and Walsh, 468.

those who were monolingual and bilingual, statistically, the census proved that mestizaje was prevailing.

By the end of the 60s, the Indigenista project dwindled. Even though indigenismo would seem to come to an end, it was not quite so until 1990. The education system, however, continued to be the primary government institution to assimilate, stimulate patriotism to the nation, teach about sanitation, etc. to both children and adults. For example, at the start of the 1960s, textbooks focused on teaching communities most remote about nationalism and modernity, using an Indigenous homogenized past as Aztec, and many other venerations and symbols to the state, including national male heroes like Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla and Benito Juárez[82] where the role of women was non-existent, much less that of Indigenous women.

In the 1970 census, illiteracy was not directly connected to speaking an Indigenous language. There had also been modification to custom wear, which was reduced to footwear and diet. The census would show an all-time Indigenous population decrease since it first started in 1895. Decades of invasive assimilationist and Spanish-based educational programs in schools, church ministries, health industry where nurses and doctors further trained community locals on western medicine as alternatives had taken its purpose where Indigenous peoples would no longer be seen as fully Indigenous. In the meantime, in their attempts to "regain legitimacy" of its treatment towards Indigenous peoples, the state continued to work its nationalist agenda of inclusion through assimilation in its mestizaje whitening project.[83] They were able to do so by opening multiple INI offices, install bilingual education in rural Indigenous schools (1972 and 1974), and by creating the General Office of Indigenous Education with the Ministry of

[82] Natividad Gutiérrez, *National Myths and Ethnic Identities: Indigenous Intellectuals and the Mexican State* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999).

[83] Saldívar and Walsh, 468.

Education (1978). Eventually, strong criticism from Indigenous organizations, along with a new era of anthropologists, denounced the national projects of mestizaje and indigenismo. They also denounced the ever-growing presence of the federal state into rural Indigenous communities as they saw their presence as devastating to the survival of Indigenous communities and autonomy. Also, important to mention is that during the sixties an increase of Indigenous migration to the cities occurred. The presence of Indigenous peoples in large cities, like that of Mexico D.F., further caused the census to alter their traditional wear. Like years prior, this new wave of Indigenous migrants was also encouraged to leave their clothes for western clothing once in the city in order to best assimilate.

At the same time, the ongoing heavy presence of Indigenista federal projects in these communities found an increase of ten new Indigenous languages being reported for the 1980 census. It was the only time that there had been an increase of Indigenous populations, 9.0% of the total 57.30 million population.[84] Language still remained the principal indicator to account for Indigenous peoples; what remained of cultural indicators from the 1940s, in this case footwear, was removed from the census. Diet was reduced to the monitoring of protein as it indicated Indigenous peoples' standard of living and social economic welfare. By 1990 census, children from 0-4 years of age were considered Indigenous if the head of household spoke an Indigenous language. 1.13 million children ages 0-4 HLI were considered Indigenous whereas the Indigenous population five years and older accounted for 7.8% HLI (Hablante de Lengua Indígena/Speaker of an Indigenous Language with 92 Indigenous languages) of 70.56.[85]

[84] Sanz Jara, 104.

[85] Sanz Jara, 105.

As discontent grew about how the state dealt with Indigenous peoples, the 1992 Quincentennial discussions and actions brought attention to multiple state funded eliminatory acts against Indigenous peoples, while shifting the language from "population" to "peoples'" (in part to emphasize Indigenous diversity) with the coming of the 1989 UN Indigenous and Tribal Peoples International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 169. As the first international global law to protect Indigenous peoples rights to maintain and govern over their institutions, culture, language, identity, religion, and economic development, Convention 169 legally prohibited discrimination and assimilation, while acknowledging Indigenous peoples' inability to exercise their most basic rights within settler states. Mexico was one of the early countries to sign ILO into law. By 1992, the country had reformed it into their constitution, and by 1998,[86] the state of Oaxaca amended it into their local legislation and thus its own constitution, although it had previously recognized *usos y costumbres* (Indigenous customary law) in 1995.

The 1994 Zapatista uprising paralyzed the country, exposing centuries of oppressive policies towards Indigenous communities. With these actions, the EZLN took over the INI Coordinating Center in San Cristobal de las Casas exclaiming, "While you worked to integrate us into Western society, our roots dug deeper into the heart of our mother earth. Therefore, all attempts to disappear us or acculturate us failed" sending the Indigenistas off with packed bags as the Tsotsils and Tseltals took over the center.[87] Looking at settler colonial politics in Canada, Glen Coulthard argues that settler institutions in Canada grant Indigenous nations 'recognition' to contain them as a domestic difference that facilitates authority over their land and definition of

[86] This became known as the Ley de Derechos de los Pueblos y Comunidades Indígenas del Estado de Oaxaca.

[87] Lewis, *Rethinking Mexican Indigenismo*, 2.

their Indigenous identity.[88] For Mexico, Indigenous peoples have always been recognized as a group to contain whereby the state's idea of Indigeneity through culture (language, traditional clothing and footwear) and location limits conceptions of who is and who is not Indigenous. The Mexican census's demographic data becomes the official use of the state to fund federal programs, events, and other projects aimed towards Indigenous communities, despite years of undercounting and inadequate representation. Most recently, Mexico's declaration and constitutional amendment as a "multicultural" state further becomes a bandage to facilitate authority not only over identity, but also Indigenous land acquisition.

In 2000, 7.3% of the Mexican population reported speaking an Indigenous language (with 1 million being monolingual and 5.12 million bilingual, and a total of 85 Indigenous languages across Mexico). While language would continue to be the primary method in which the state accounted for an Indigenous population, the 2000 census would include *"autoadscripción"* (self-adscription) as part of the agreement of Convention 169. However, only a pre-selected 10% of the national population was asked about their *autoadscripción*. This question was asked in the following way: "Is (NAME) náhuatl, maya, zapoteco, mixteco, or from another Indigenous group?" Interestingly, some Indigenous peoples in urban places considered that language alone was not the sole determinant factor to claim an Indigenous identity, while others believed that they were no longer Indigenous because they did not have certain characteristics that the state had used for years to determine who was Indigenous, such as wearing traditional clothing or footwear. Moreover, other urban Indigenous peoples considered that more traits factored into being or claiming an Indigenous identity.

[88] Glen Coulthard, "Subjects of Empire: Indigenous Peoples and the 'Politics of Recognition' in Canada," *Contemporary Political Theory* 6 (2007): 437-460.

Additionally, many of those who spoke an Indigenous language did not see themselves as Indigenous, as is the case of the people of Zoochina who are at the center of this dissertation. Like other Serrano communities, people from Zoochina see themselves as Zoochinenses and are uneasy about an outside self-adscription as Indigenous or even Zapoteca/o. While there are many reasons for their uneasiness, their deep and long relationship with the land and on it, has allowed them to directly hold their Zoochina identity. In other words, Zapotec(a/o) and Indigenous are foreign terms to them, or have very little meaning, as they have grown up all their lives knowing where they or their parents are directly from. Despite urban Indigenous peoples' efforts to contest Indigenous identity solely on language, the settler government still used language as the utmost determinant factor. On May 21, 2003, after ongoing intensive pushback from Indigenous communities, leaders, and allies, the INI, under the administration of then President Vicente Fox, changed their name to Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos (National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples Act, CDI) in order to break away from its notorious assimilationist projects. In Oaxaca, at least until 2007, its main office still held onto their name as INI. Nevertheless, Indigenous racial and cultural categorization would continue into the 2010 census, although the question of self-adscription was again modified, asking: "In terms of (NAME)'s culture, does she or he consider he or herself part of an Indigenous group?"[89] Along this question, a number of changes in terms of accounting for Indigenous peoples were added. The 2010 census considered children as young as three years old and those who understood an Indigenous language to be Indigenous, which resulted in a 1.3% increase from the previous decade. According to Emiko Saldívar and Casey Walsh (2014), the change of a person being part of an Indigenous list already provided by the census or "from another Indigenous

[89] Saldívar and Walsh, 470.

group" in 2000 to does the person "consider [themselves] part of an Indigenous group" in 2010 further changed how people saw themselves as transmitters of "indigenous culture" more so "than members of an Indigenous group,"[90] which reflects in some way Gamio's quest for "permanence of Indigenous traits among mestizos." So much as this might be the case, it might also be indicative that Indigenous peoples continued to see themselves based on their community's relationship and continued understanding to the land.

Mapping Settler Colonialism through Mestizaje (Whiteness) and Patriarchy

The analysis of the Mexican census and its shifting classifications in the previous section allows us to understand how the Mexican state categorically and statistically accounted for Indigenous populations based on what they characterized as the "main traits" that defined Indigenous peoples. In this section, I locate this state-based dwindling numeration within a framework of settler colonial structures of Indigenous elimination and gender violence—what I collectively refer to as *settler colonial racial-gendered regimes*. Moving away from the crude assumption that speaking one's Indigenous language is the sole determinant of one's identity, I reveal that Mexico's national project of census classification and categorization is entrenched in settler colonial practices of Indigenous elimination through the use of mestizaje. Furthermore, I demonstrate how mestizaje works to portray Indigenous Mexican women as passive, "traitors," renders them vulnerable to the violence of erasure in Mexico and among Mexicans in the United States. The fact that men have been considered heads of the households in Mexican homes, was the source of information that the Mexican census more often than not relied on to inquire about the households "Indigenous practices."

The state continues to use mestizaje as a strategic tool used by the state to deny race and racism and, instead, claim a post-racial society. Yet, as others further contend, multiculturalism

[90] Ibid, 470-471.

becomes a banner for inclusion and racial mixing that makes mestizaje possible.[91] Because mestizaje disregards race and racism, mestizaje also has a gender distinction that cannot be separated from race and thus is a settler project of erasure as it not only works to assimilate Indigenous peoples, but historically perpetrates violence against Indigenous women as an inevitable process of settler completion, continuity, and thereby elimination of Indigenous futurity.

For example, from the beginning of conquest, the image of Malintzin, also known as La Malinche, or Doña María, a trilingual Nahuatl woman who served as Hernán Cortés's interpreter and courtesan, is said to have played a crucial role in the defeat of the Aztec Empire. She is seen as twice a *"vendida"* ("sell-out"). Not only did the Tabascos sell Malintzin into slavery to Hernán Cortés, but she too has been nationally portrayed as a "traitor" to her people, as Mexican artist José Clemente Orozco and writer Octavio Paz, among other prominent mestizo men first depicted her during Mexico's 20th century nationalist period. Paz described La Malinche as "la chingada" (or the "fucked one") as he saw her as passively allowing her rape and the "penetration" of her body as well as that of Indigenous lands.[92] Malintzin and Córtes had a son who is said to be the first mestizo ever born and thus the beginning of the "mestizo race" in Mexico. However, Chicana feminist writers such as the late Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherrie Moraga, Ana Castillo, and others have rejected such portrayal as it upholds patriarchal structures and violence towards Mexican and Chicana women, and instead depict her as a brave and rebellious woman who did what she could under her circumstances. How patriarchy and whiteness play out in Mexico vis-à-vis settler colonialism is my next point.

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[91] Mónica G. Moreno Figueroa and Emiko Saldívar Tanaka, "'We Are not Racist, We Are Mexicans': Privilege, Nationalism and Post-Race Ideology in Mexico," *Critical Sociology* 42, no. 4-5 (2015): 516

[92] See Octavio Paz's 1950 essay, "Sons of La Malinche."

Settler colonialism discussions are new interventions in the fields of Chicana/o and Latina/o studies. Much of this new literature looks at how Indigenous migrants from Latin America, mostly Mexico and Guatemala, maintain Indigenous survival as a diaspora in the United States, while negotiating their unique position as Indigenous diasporic "arrivants" or "guests."[93] However, even these terms, particulalry "arrivants," have come under intense debate as African Caribbean poet Kamau Brathwaite, whom Byrd borrows from, used it to describe those whom were "forced into the Americas through violence of European and Anglo-American colonialism and imperialism"[94] in which Indigenous peoples from Mexico and Guatemala do not necessarily fit. Therefore, recognizing Indigenous Others (Zapotecs, Mixtecs, Mayas, etcetera) within settler colonial theorizing is of curcuial importance. In applying Patrick Wolfe's (2006) description of settler colonialism as a structure and not an event, we must approach discourses that describe Indigenous migrants as settlers with caution. Because we know that race is a social construct that has been formed and maintained through whiteness as power,[95] race is therefore embedded in colonialism.[96] Consequently, settler colonialism, as a structure set forth by white settlers, implies power through white hegemony, racism, privatization and abstraction of land as surplus and therefore land as resource extraction, "historical capital" [97] that Indigenous Latin American diasporas do not necessarily have.

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[93] Jodi Byrd (2014) used "arrivants" to describe non-white settlers. Others in the emerging field of Critical Latinx Indigeneities (CLI) use "guests" (see Latino Studies journal special issue, "Critical Latinx Indigeneities" in 2017, Saldaña-Portillo 2016; and Gutiérrez Nájera and Maldonado 2017) to avoid using the word "settler" as they think through the unique position of Indigenous diasporas from Latin American in the United States.

[94] Jodi A. Byrd, *Transit of Empire*, xix.

[95] See, Delgado 2012; Delgado and Stefancic 1997, 2012; Hill 2008; Lipsitz 2016.

[96] Patrick Wolfe, *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race*, 101.

[97] Patrick Wolfe, *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race*.

Needed in settler colonialism theory is an in-depth conversation of the "unsuccessful colonizer."[98] In the particular context of Indigenous Latin American migrants and their diaspora, settler colonial approaches must expand their scope of analysis to consider the U.S. and Mexico as settler-states that have maintained and reconfigured Indigenous erasure and invisibility—through neoliberalism, whiteness, wars, genocide, and indeed, forced labor and (e)migration — not only in the United States, but across the Americas.[99] Expanding studies on the unsuccessful colonizers, or Indigenous "arrivants" or "guests," requires us to examine how Indigenous peoples, particularly migrants of the global south have not had the historical preconditions to prevail.[100] That is, we must further examine the colonial relationships in the Americas and read across these regions and within them to further build on a comparative Indigeneities framework without obscuring or homogenizing differences, as others have already noted.[101] Latin America, with occupied settler colonial landscapes shaped by whiteness[102] (or mestizaje) is maintained through violent physical acts, policies,[103] and ideologies (vis-à-vis mestizaje and other nationalistic identities). These wide forms of Euro-settler colonial violence are comparable to the experiences of other non-dominant racial subjects (Kelley 2017).

[98] Patrick Wolfe, *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race*, 20.

[99] See Castillo 2019; Speed 2019.

[100] Byrd, "Transit of Empire."

[101] Castellanos et al. 2012; Lowe 2015; Pulido 2017.

[102] Richard Gott, "Latin America as a White Settler States," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* vo. 26, no. 2 (2007).

[103] Saldaña-Portillo 2016; Castellanos 2017; Speed 2017.

Settler colonialism, however, is not only informed by race but also by gender. "Women's issues" and "Native issues" are not separate; for Indigenous women, the two are necessary.[104] Like the U.S., Canada, New Zealand, and Australia, Mexico is a country built on paternalism, heteropatriarchy, and whiteness, all of which uphold settler colonial regimes of race and gender binaries.[105] As Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill remind us, "Native women's critiques implicate the historical and ongoing imposition of colonial, heteropatriarchal structures onto their society."[106] Such impositions of colonial, heteropatriarchal structures have crossed U.S.-Mexico borders as people continue to migrate and confront gender logics of the United States.[107]

Starting in the 1920s, Mexico built stronger paternalistic ideologies through education. Textbooks and other school curriculum educated the masses about loyalty to state institutions and defending "la patria," along with idolizing Aztec male heroes, that of Independence, and the revolution, while Indigenous women as combatants or defenders of their lands were left out of history textbooks. This national education also reached into the most rural communities with the hiring of new primary teachers, who were mostly women. Heteropatriarchy came about establishing gender roles between men and women, but also following the logics of divide and conquer within communities for the purpose of maximizing settler permanence of Indigenous lands.

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[104] Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck, and Angie Morrill, "Decolonizing Feminism: Challenging Connections between Settler Colonialism and Heteropatriarchy," *Feminist Formations* vo. 25, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 15. This is also true of other Indigenous women, for example from Latin America. See Hernández and Canessa eds (2012) *Género, complementariedades y exclusiones en Mesoamèrica y los Andes*.

[105] Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill, "Decolonizing Feminism," 9.

[106] Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill, "Decolonizing Feminism," 9.

[107] See Kearney 1991; Blackwell 2017; Stephen 2007.

As Tonawanda Band of Seneca scholar Mishuana Goeman argues, the colonial cartography within Native women's bodies became essential for the logics of divide and land conquering to be acquired.[108] Using the troubled story of a young Native foster child girl from Linda Hogan's *Solar Storms*, Goeman argues that "Native women's bodies have been a site of struggle since early in the colonization of the Americas."[109] In addition, these bodies at other times nourish the "settler state's investment in disappearing Indians," as I briefly detail at the beginning of this section.[110] That is, while Indigenous bodies are rendered replaceable and extinct, Indigenous women's bodies are seen as key to colonization to continue beyond frontiers. Specifically, Indigenous Mexican women's forced migration and racial violence has been essential not only to continue colonization, but to move colonization and Indigenous dissapearance forward. As a resi;t, the "disappearing Indian" serves to make seizure of land and control of identity possible. Hogan's ongoing question of how bodies remember colonization and its processes, and how do we disrupt the recurring discourse that stem them (from it), speaks to the racialized bodies of Indigenous Mexican women in a migratory context as I describe below.[111]

Indigenous Women's Racialization in Cities

In the previous section, I argued that Mexico's census classification schemas have historically mobilized ideas of mestizaje to obscure Indigenous identity generally and the

[108] Mishuana R. Goeman, "Ongoing Storms and Struggles: Gendered Violence and Resource Exploitation," in *Critically Sovereign: Indigenous Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies*, ed. Joanne Barker (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2017).

[109] Mishuana R. Goeman, "Ongoing Storms and Struggles: Gendered Violence and Resource Exploitation," 113.

[110] Sherene H. Razack, "Gendering Disposability," *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law* vol. 28, no. 2 (2016): 306.

[111] Mishuana R. Goeman, "Ongoing Storms and Struggles," 111.

experiences and lives of Indigenous women in Mexico and the United States specifically. Though Mexico's settler state looms large, I argue that these ideas are often part of a national imaginary that shapes mainstream discourse. In other words, the ways in which the census reproduced difference and attempted to eliminate Indigeneity is not only operating at the level of the state; the nation-building impulses underlying mestizaje and patriarchy circulate a settler colonial racial-gendered logic that has been refracted in everyday practice, too. In this section, I draw on the understudied racial experiences of Indigenous women's internal migration from rural communities to Mexican cities in the mid-twentieth century in order to argue that non-Indigenous Mestizos and the media—which have circulated and produced representations of Indigenous women as "*Las Marías*"—continue to carry out the state's racialization of Indigenous peoples on an everyday basis. These gendered representations of Indigenous women constitute an everyday vernacular of Indigenous erasure that accompanies state-sanctioned mechanisms of Indigenous elimination and erasure—exemplified in the classification schemas of the Mexican census. Taken collectively, the state and institutional actors and everyday non-Indigenous people who circulate, maintain, and reproduce dominant narratives of who "counts" as Indigenous and what Indigenous "representation" is constitute neo-*settler colonial racial-gendered regimes* that transcend borders across time and space. In Mexico and in diasporic communities in the U.S., Indigenous women confront these settler colonial racial-gendered logics that often exceed the nation-state boundaries of Mexico.

In the 1960s, a vast number of Indigenous migrants from rural Mexico started arriving to nearby cities, largely to Mexico City, as economic conditions in rural Mexico plummeted and urban industry and infrastructure were vibrant to continue Mexico's development of a modern

city.[112] Unfortunately, very little attention has been given to the national racial experiences of Indigenous women during this time. Indigenous migrant women were racially targeted in that their traditional clothing, Indigenous language, and their poor economic condition became the particular objects that signified their "backwardness" and "incompetency"—more specifically, their inability to live urban modern lives. In the dominant narrative, their clothing, language, and poverty marked the incommensurability of their Indigeneity with modernity. These markers have been the same characteristics that INEGI— the agency in charge of the Mexican census—has used for more than a century to define and control Indigeneity to continue reducing and eventually erasing Indigenous presence and futurity.

Most Indigenous women who migrated to these urban places worked as nannies and as street vendors selling fruits, vegetables, and candy as they found themselves at lowest margins of the racial, gender, and labor exploitative pool.[113] However, merchants, everyday non-Indigenous mestizo people, and mainstream media, in addition to state and local governments, ferociously inflicted violence to guarantee their assimilation, removal in certain places as they sold, and were in dire economic conditions, while culturally and physically exploiting their bodies (e.g., in skin-tone, hair type, and traditional dress) for mass consumption of "Lo India" ("the Indian woman").[114] In the city, Indigenous women initially became unwanted subjects of the state and at the same time undesirable for local merchants as they often competed for the sale of goods. This

[112] Natividad Gutiérrez, "Miscegenation as Nation-Building: Indian and Immigrant Women in Mexico" in *Unsettling Settler Societies: Articulations of Gender, Race, and Class* (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 1995), 173.

[113] Natividad Gutiérrez, "Miscegenation as Nation-Building: Indian and Immigrant Women in Mexico," 175-176. Also see, Arizpe 1995; Novo 2003.

[114] Here I highlight the female pronoun representation of, "La India," as we often overtly hear and read about the masculine, "Lo Indio."

would change as tourism grew and Mexico pushed to position themselves as a multicultural state upon backlash and the 1994 uprising to oppose its neoliberal agenda.

Many people who came from Oaxaca, Puebla, and the state of Mexico, arrived wearing their traditional clothing, footwear, speaking their Indigenous language, and physically "appearing" Indigenous or dark-skinned. They were also extremely poor. For Mexico, this urban undesirability not only stood in contrast to a long sought-out modernity by the nation since the Porfiriato regime, but it also demonstrated to Mexican state officials that despite years of the mestizaje projects, they had not completely successful. Discrimination based on being Indigenous, speaking their Indigenous language, holding other cultural traditions, and for being severely poor followed, as these women became known as "las Marías" by the 1970s. The name "Marías" was used by non-Indigenous mestizos whom Indigenous women interacted with on a daily basis as customers or onlookers which had racist connotations by lumping together all Indigenous women living in the city.

In *Indígenas en la ciudad de México: el caso de las "Marías*" (1975, 1995), Lourdes Arizpe describes the arrival and impact of Mazahuas and Otomí women and the relationship they developed with the larger white and mestizo populations in Mexico City.[115] Arizpe's analysis closely looks at disconnects and relationships among Indigenous and non-Indigenous merchants and customers. For Arizpe, the Indigenous women's multiple identities or intersectionalities further caused their marginality and their strong competition with other poor mestizo vendors and better-established merchants as they were seen unfit with "meager" merchandise. As other groups began arriving, their merchandise also increased but now in *artesanías* (handicrafts), such

[115] Lourdes Arizpe, *Indígenas en la ciudad de México: el caso de las "Marías*" (Secretaría de Educación Pública- SepSetentas: México, 1975).

as textiles, *chaquiras* (beads), and *barro* (clay pottery).[116] Of these, the most culturally consumed, aside from traditional shirts/*huipiles*, have been *las muñecas Marías* (the Maria Dolls, see figure 1.3).

Figure 1.3. Las Muñecas Marías (Maria Dolls).
Photo Source: "Muñeca de Trapo." A Medium Corporation.

These dolls, which are made out of cloth (though newer versions made of clay or plastic now exist), are said to have originated in Mexico City by Mazahua migrant women. They are dressed with traditional clothing, along with black braided hair, usually adorned with colorful ribbons. Nowadays, cities also produce them representing the Indigenous peoples of the region and they continue to be consumed or bought in bulk for resale by Mexicans and foreign tourists alike. Some popular media accounts tell that it was the daughter of muralist Diego Rivera, Guadalupe Rivera, who supported by city officials, established the Programación y Estudios Económicos (PYEE, Programming and Economic Studies) to train Mazahua (and Otomí) street vendors to make the dolls and thereby combat racial and gender harassment through economic

[116] Lourdes Arizpe, *Indígenas en la ciudad de México.*

empowerment.[117] Though it is unclear if the PYEE or the Mazahua women themselves named the dolls, what is clear is that since, Indigenous women in cities have increasingly been racially categorized as Marías with references as Indigenous *and* poor (my emphasis). In his work on Indigenous peoples in Mexico City, Claudio Albertani (1999) describes that the dominant culture, the mestizos, began using the name "María" to refer to all Mazahua women who sold outside of Metro stations and the Zona Rosa,[118] then an economically deteriorating neighborhood in the city. As P'urhépecha and Matlatzinca anthropologist Gabriela Spears-Rico reminds us, "…'María' was a common name given to indigenous women during colonial times [and] it is deeply offensive" because it not only "generalizes indigenous women" as one homogenous group, but it also promulgates racial stereotypes of Indigenous urban women.[119] As the 1970s rolled around, "Las Marías" ("the Marías") got even more popularized.

A great example of this mainstream popularization is the infamous sitcom spin-off of "La India María" ([Maria the Indian], whose formal name on the screen was María Nicolasa Cruz). María Elena Velasco, a mestiza Mexican actress, played the character of La India María from the show's first airing in 1972 to 2015. She portrayed a newly arrived "rural" Indigenous woman struggling to adapt to urban life in Mexico City as she commits consistent foolish acts "expected" of newly arrived rural Indigenous peoples to the city. Precisely, towards the end of

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[117] Leigh Thelmadatter, "The María doll: from street vendor to international icon," Mexico News Daily, April 6, 2020. Also see, "All Dolled Up," Barefoot Diary, last modified, September 17, 2019, https://barefootdiary.com/Article-Barefoot-Diary/ArtMID/471/ArticleID/76/All-Dolled-Up; "Está en Amealco el único Museo de la Muñeca Artesanal del país," Nuevo Periodismo, last modified, March 2, 2015.

[118] Claudio Albertani, "Los pueblos indígenas y la ciudad de México. Una proximación," *Política y Cultura*, no. 12 (1999): 211.

[119] Gabriela Spears-Rico, "Consuming the Native Other: Mestiza/o Melancholia and the Performance of Indigeneity in Michoácan" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2015), 46.

impersonation, Velasco claims that she was inspired by Mazahua women arriving to the city in the 1960s,[120] which others had previously hinted towards because of the colorful clothing she used similar to that of Mazahua women.[121] Even though there has been quite some work that closely analyzes the personality of La India María, very few critically analyze the historically racist and violent connotations the character has and instead highlight that despite some critiques, it should be looked at within the scope of Mexico's film industry as it has produced one of the country's longest lasting and most successful sitcoms worldwide. Others further call for its celebration as very few women at the time did what for most was unreachable: create, direct, and successfully sell massive sitcoms and films. The scant literature on La India María and her TV shows and films mentions the stereotypes portrayed by the character, but fails to go beyond acknowledging and instead justifying it in good faith as great acting.[122] As described below, the portrayol of Las Marías has left lasting affects on how people racially and violently see Indigenous women as passive and backwards, hence an obstruction to state modernity.

Specifically, the character of La India María has left a lasting impact that more than a celebration of "Mexican culture" or the triumph of an Indigenous woman in the city who defeats a number of odd situations, cast increasing racial and economic violence towards Indigenous women. First, La India María reinforces the notion that all Indigenous women are or could be referred to as "María," which as I have already provided in this chapter leave significantly imposed racial categories that reduce the diversity of Indigenous peoples by homogenizing them.

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[120] Seraina Rohrer, "Stereotyping in the films of La India María," *The Journal of Latino-Latin American Studies*, vol. 3, no. 3 (Spring 2013): 54.

[121] Maricruz Castro Ricalde and Emily Hind, "Popular Mexican Cinema and Undocumented Immigrants," *Discourses*, vol. 26, no. ½ (2005): 205.

[122] Seraina Rohrer, *La India María: Mexploitation and the Films of María Elena Velasco* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017), 3.

Second, the character also renders Indigenous peoples and women specifically as economic scapegoats when Marías are placed time and again selling fruits and vegetables on the floor of a street corner. Third, as this first featured sitcom begins, a silent image of her community's name is provided, "San José de los burros" (literally, San José of the donkeys). Calling someone "*burro*,*"* particularly an Indigenous person, is a well-established racist way to say they are "illiterate" or "backwards." In line with this racist trope, the following clip provides a voice over where María's grandparents say their farewell: "No te digo que nos escribas porque al cabo ni sabes" ("I don't tell you to write to us because why do so if you don't know"), followed by the grandfather who further states, "Y si nos escribes paque', si ni sabemos leer" ("And if you write to us why, if we don't know how to read").[123] More so than situate the origins of María Nicolasa Cruz (as the name of La India María is not yet given to her until she arrives to the city), this early scene makes reference to Indigenous peoples as "burros" and/or coming from a town where "burros" dominate. In this way, Indigenous communities/pueblos become settler reinforcements for non-modernity or lacking "improvement" or "development," while the city becomes "settler fantasies […] for vanishing Native ways"[124] and also the utopia that reinforces clumsy and inadaptable rural Indigenous women.

These racist references and reinforcements do not remain exclusively within the confinements of the Mexican state; these representations often circulate across time and space. For Indigenous women in diaspora, "Las Marías," La India Maria, India, and Indio further become a violent racialized process as it crosses local, international, and transnational borders,

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[123] Fernando Córtes, "Tonta, tonta, pero no tanto," filmed September 7, 1972 at Mexico City, video, 3:43, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7GNksAQxs_k.

[124] Eve Tuck and K Wayne Yang, "Decolonization is not a metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* vol. 1, no. 1 (2012): 15-16.

the subject of my next subsection. These racial hierarchies specifically travel across lands with migrants and are sustained in the settler colonial logics of Indigenous elimination where Indigenous lands and culture is not only economically profitable, but also politically profitable for a mestizo state that tirelessly promotes itself as multicultural.[125] Particularly, this racial violence is maintained and still practiced against Indigenous Oaxacans today, even towards (adult) children of migrants who were not born in Mexico.

Oaxacan Racialization of (Adult) Children in California

These settler colonial racial-gendered logics and practices of erasure, which have historical roots in the Mexican settler state and its investment in classifying Indigenous people out of existence, exceeds the geography of the Mexican nation-state; in fact, the logics of Indigenous erasure and elimination that uphold these regimes have followed Oaxacan Indigenous migrants and their children to their diasporic communities in the United States, where they continue to operate in particularly violent ways. In this section, I examine just how these material and discursive violence's travel across borders and geographies to continue to affect Indigenous Oaxacans in diaspora. I then draw on my own conversations with first- and second- generation Indigenous Oaxacans to argue that, even as they confront these settler colonial logics, they are also finding ways to reaffirm their Indigeneity.

Oaxacan diasporas in California experience racial violence at an alarming rate, yet it often goes unreported. These settler colonial racial-gendered processes of elimination have historically, and currently, attempted to control, reduce, and eventually portray a national non-Indigenous mestizo country where Indigenous peoples and women stand invisible to their male Indigenous counterparts, or get placed outside of community/communal contexts. Furthermore, racial-gendered regimes have officially worked at the national and transnational level (through

[125] More on multiculturalism, Indigenous peoples, and neoliberalism see Hale 2005, 2006.

the conscious and unconscious perpetuation of migrants). These racial-gender forms of erasure imagine Indian women through state-based characteristics in clothing, Native language, as well as economic conditions, while believing that migrants are no longer Indigenous because of presumed degrees of "loss" in culture. My oral histories contest these state-imposed markers of Indigenous elimination. Therefore, this chapter argues that Mexico is a settler colonial state that is informed by racialization and gender as it continues to portray Indigenous migrants and their diasporas as no longer Indigenous because of a presumed dominant cultural assimilation that is believed to take place when one migrates.

A transborder reflection on racial formation allows us to better grasp how racial violence travels with migration. Specifically, Zapotec children of migrants throughout California experience racial violence at the hands of other non-Indigenous mestizo Mexican children, which has had major repercussions against the livelyhoods of Indigenous youth and their identity. Until recently, scholars have begun to look at the racial experiences of children as prior literature has only focused on first-generation migrants.[126] The racial logics of seeing Indigenous peoples as passive, dumb, static and backwards threatens children and youth's lives much more than their parents as many cases point to self-inflicted physical harm or harm inflicted by their perpetrators.

Most of the racial epithets towards Oaxacans are aimed at their physicality for being dark skin, "short," and for "looking Indigenous." Many have often been told, "No seas Indio" ("Don't be an Indian") as a way to say, "Don't be backwards." As my research and others demonstrate, this violence mostly comes from mestizo Mexican compatriots of northern and central states, like

[126] For example, see: Alberto 2017; Barillas Chón 2010; Cruz Manjarrez 2013; Gonzalez 2016; Kovats Sánchez 2018; Nicolás 2012, 2017; Sanchez 2018; Sánchez-López 2010; Vásquez 2012. Interestingly, a lot of this literature is conducted by Indigenous Oaxacan scholars who are the adult children of migrants.

Jalisco, Zacatecas, Guanajuato, and Michoacán.[127] The first wave of second-generation adults growing up in the 80s and 90s,[128] are reported sharing that saying you were from Oaxaca or Oaxaqueña/o at the time was like saying that you were an "Indio" (Sánchez-López 2017, 243). In my conversation with a man in his forties, who was brought to Los Angeles as a teenager he explained, "Back then … it's like … no one wants to be Indigenous!" Time and again, this first wave, shared feelings of being "ashamed" and "scared" to express their identity. As a result, outside of the Oaxacan community, they never adopted a Oaxacan or Indigenous identity. For this reason, many were silent or outright rejected their Indigenous background. And, although some might not have experienced the racial epithets or other forms of racial violence directly, they defended those who did and even learned to not fall prey to it.

For example, Domingo, who arrived to L.A. at the age of ten and is now in his forties shared that when he attended high school in the early 90s, "Cada vez que deciamos que eramos Oaxaqueños, claro que nos insultaban porque eramos morenos, bajitos... teníamos una cierta fachada."[129] Domingo, who went to high school with his two male cousins, Antonio and Uridio, shared that his cousins were not really made fun of because of their light skin non-Indigenous complexion. Domingo arrived in L.A. in the late 80s and discrimination for being Oaxacan was a new experience for him. He explained that when he attended high school he hung out with other immigrant youth whose first language was Spanish. However, at some point he was made fun of because of his dark-skin and short stature. I asked him how he felt at the moment and he replied,

[127] Cruz-Manjarrez 2013, 14, 125, 141-149; Fox and Rivera-Salgado 2004; Kearney 2000; Stephen 2007, 210-220.

[128] The first waves are children of migrants who were born in the 70s and 80s. They are now in their thirties and forties.

[129] Personal communicaiton, Domingo, August 11, 2015. Translation: "Every time we said we were Oaxacan, of course they insulted us because we were brown, short… we had a certain appearance."

"Te sientes que eres menos. Te entra un tipo de vergüenza. Como que empiezas a negar tus origenes … pero es porque uno no sabe mejor."[130] Domingo is not alone in these feelings of shame, as I later show. Nonetheless, his response drove me to talk to Antonio a few weeks later to ask him about his own racial experience. His remark was quite surprising, as none of my prior participants in 2012 and 2017 had ever exclaimed not being discriminated against by their Mexican peers.

Antonio shared, "I really didn't experience that discrimination for being Oaxacan. I've heard of it, and I know of it because of my family. It's very unfortunate that among our own people we disrespect each other like that; solely because of how you look and how you might speak."[131] Antonio is of light-skin complexion. He is the first U.S.-born Zoochina child in Los Angeles and the third of eight siblings. After only a few years his parents returned to Zoochina and therefore he was raised in the pueblo. When his parents returned to Los Angeles, Antonio was of high school age and went to school with his cousins, Domingo and Uridio. He remembers other Mexicans' disbelief of being Oaxacan, "You don't look like you're from Oaxaca. You're so light skin. People from Oaxaca look just like your cousin, short and dark."[132] It was the first time that Antonio had ever heard such remarks. These words stayed with him throughout his life and made him aware of racialization towards Oaxacans. Extremely damaging for young and old, but especially for young children and adolescents this racial violence is devastating to Indigenous children who are barely coming into consciousness of their identity and background. Although my conversations with Serrana/o a children and adolescents in Los Angeles indicate

[130] Personal communicaiton, Domingo, August 11, 2015. Translation: "You feel like you are less. You get kind of embarrassed. You start to deny your origins ... but it's because you don't know better."

[131] Personal communication, Antonio, September 17, 2015.

[132] Ibid.

that they no longer experience such level of violence as the first-wave of Oaxacan U.S.-raised once did, intraracial discrimination towards Oaxacans is still incredibly prevalent in other parts of California. These acts became so widely used against Oaxacan children that it remains a constant fear for some to simply attend school.[133] Although I was unable to formally conduct an interview with Uridio, my frequent run-ins with him at HTA meetings, *kermeses* (party fundraisers), and other events allowed me to see that his tall height (nearly at 6' feet), his light-skin complexion, along with his urban style as a U.S.-born and raised young man played a role in not experiencing discrimination like his cousin Domingo did.

Similarly, Soledad, a Los Angeles born woman in her mid-40s, explained, "Saying 'I am Oaxacan' was like saying you were Indigenous" ["Decir que 'Soy Oaxaqueña' era como decir que eras Indígena"]. Being aware of this Indigenous correlation simply by saying "Oaxacan," was enough for Soledad to not publicly associate with Oaxaca or hold a Oaxacan identity at any level.[134] She continued to explain that because there were no other Oaxaqueña/o students in her school, as there are now, she did not grow up with a sense of pride for being Oaxacan. Her acknowledgement of negative connotations associated with simply saying Oaxaca is precisely what she used to avoid from experiencing direct violence. As I further inquired about her correlation between saying "Indigenous" and "Oaxacan" she replied, "Saying that you were Indigenous or Oaxaqueña was like saying that you were … you weren't like other Mexicans …

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[133] Verna St. Denis & Eber Hampton, *"Literature Review on Racism and the Effects on Aboriginal Education*" (Prepared for the Minister's National Working Group on Education (Ottawa, ON: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2002); Bernard Schissel and Terry Wotherspoon, *The Legacy of School for Aboriginal People: Education, Oppression, and Emancipation* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2003).

[134] Personal communication, Soledad, September 17, 2015. Lynn Stephen (2007, 214-220) describes how Indigenous Oaxacan migrants and non-migrants in Oaxaca also share that they use Oaxacan and Indigenous identity simultaneously. Stephen further demonstrates that non-Oaxacan Mexicans and Latinos use Oaxacan identity to mean Indigenous.

that you were an India María. That's when La India María shows were beginning [in the U.S.]. I was just like no way."[135]

It is precisely the stories of how racial violence affects Indigenous women— the daughters of migrants specifically— that we have yet to grapple with. As mentioned earlier, race, as a gender-based process, must be carefully analyzed given the multiple landscapes in which it follows Native diasporas. For both women and men in my study, non-Indigenous mestizo men, of any age, always perpetrated racial violence. More so, Indigenous women's presumed "passiveness" and lack of defense was an important characteristic of violence towards Oaxacan women. Very interestingly, it is these exact words in which Mexicans, like other Latina/os, have come to associate Oaxacans. Chandra Mohanty describes collective otherness, subjugation, and inferiority of third-world women by Western feminist scholarship that labels third-world women as uneducated, victimized, sexually battered, and in need of salvation.[136] Non-Indigenous mestizo men thereby use Western colonial views that other and subjugate Indigenous Latin American women at higher risks as they become racially invisible within U.S. categories of Latina/Hispanic.

Furthermore, as much as Soledad always attempted to hide her Indigenous background, she could not, "My parents and grandparents also spoke Zapotec and that's something that made me feel very uncomfortable when they picked me up from school. I did not like that. I didn't want anyone to look at me differently or treat me less than others." Although Soledad might not have directly or consistently been discriminated against for being Indigenous, settler perimeters were already put in place where to be Indigenous had great stigma, while also negotiating her

[135] Personal communication, Soledad, September 17, 2015.

[136] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under the Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," in *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003).

own reaction to the possibility of these violent acts and images. I suspect that like Antonio, their light skin complexion, along with Soledad's small all girls' private Catholic schools factored into her not being racially attacked.

Mixteca organizer and scholar, Elizabeth Gonzalez, describes that feelings of "*miedo* (fear), *vergüenza* (shame), and *pena* (embarrassment)" are all a result of discrimination towards Oaxaqueña/os, which then causes them to not want to learn or hide their Indigenous language as well as "publically deny their Oaxaqueña/o or Indigenous background."[137] Soledad used her prior awareness of Oaxacan and Indigenous racial violence as a defensive mechanism to prevent being directly shamed. The image of La India María further made her disassociate, at least in public, with her Oaxacan background. Almost immediately during our conversation, the fears of being seeing as an India María was acknowledged.

This internalization however, more so than irrational or ignorant, is used as a tool of survival. For many Oaxaqueños, especially young 1.5 and second-generation, hiding their Indigenous background is nothing new. In her work with young Oaxacans from the community of Yalalag, Adriana Cruz-Manjarrez (2013) found that Yalaltec adolescents dealt with racism by hiding their Indigenous background.[138] Concealment of racial/ethnic identities has been a mechanism used by Oaxaqueña/o children, young and old, that have been ongoing for many years to harbor safeness and survival. Without it, they face ridicule, physical violence, and also suicide. Similar patterns of denial and/or concealment have been found among urban born and

[137] Elizabeth Gonzalez, "Ethnic-Racial Attitudes and Indigenous Identity Among Oaxaqueño/a Adolescents and Young Adults" (PhD diss., University of California, Santa Cruz, 2016), 44.

[138] Adriana Cruz-Manjarrez, *Zapotecs on the Move: Cultural, Social, and Political Processes in Transnational Perspective* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University, 2013), 149.

relocated American Indian youth in schools.[139] These tactics of survival however, are in response to what settler states have historically and structurally inflicted, as it has been settler states that racially and gender wise inflict negative notions of being an Indigenous woman.

Maya Guatemala scholar Floridalma Boj-López (2017) describes that racial attacks against Indigenous migrants pushes them further to the sidelines where automatically Indigenous migrants may choose to hide their practices and therefore seek acculturation as the safest alternative.[140] Boj-López urges us to comprehend instances of self-invisibility in the "context of ongoing state violence" across the country of origin and the receiving country (the U.S.).[141] Even in considering Soledad's mechanism of self-defense from violence is to see that she is not a passive actor. Her mechanism of concealment is indeed her fight, while being conscious that her family has different customs from that of the larger Mexican and Latina/o community. During her high school and college years, Soledad danced the Los Angeles Guelaguetzas and with her Zoochina community, of which she also participated in the pueblo. To say that Soledad completely or ignorantly denied her Indigenous identity ignores the settler state's role in promoting this shame.

Over the years, my work with the larger Zapotec, Mixtec, Triqui, and Chinantec youth community in California has made me see that there is no safe alternative provided to these children and adolescents to prevent verbal or physical violence. Denying, hiding, concealing, and rejecting their Indigeneity are the best strategies they can use to prevent such matters from

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[139] See, Deborah Davis Jackson (2001) "'This Hole in Our Heart:' The Urban-Raised Generation and the Legacy of Silence" in *American Indians and the Urban Experience*. Edited by Susan Lobo and Kurt Peters.

[140] Floridalma Boj-López, "Mobile Archives of Indigeneity: Building La Comunidad Ixim through organizing in the Maya diaspora," *Latino Studies* vol. 15 (2017): 203-204.

[141] Floridalma Boj-López, "Mobile Archives of Indigeneity," 204.

escalating or happening in the first place. Sometimes those who faced violence were actually involved with Oaxacan community organizations and cultural affairs, which allowed them to respond by organizing "anti-bullying" or "decolonizing workshops." These workshops were educational and ranged from learning about Oaxacan history, to Indigenous social movements in Latin America, to knowing our rights as Indigenous peoples and migrants. Various youth's organizing allowed other Oaxacan youth, even those not previously politically involved or aware of the situation, to educate about Oaxacan Indigenous cultures, identities, languages, and ones pueblo's histories in order to find more conscious ways to empower themselves.

P'urhépecha scholar, Luis Urrieta (2003), reflects on his childhood and adulthood experience in the United States. Urrieta discusses that to talk about Indigenous identities, brings "painful, contradictory, emotional, re/colonizing"[142] feelings where "racist and genocidal attitude(s) toward indígenas" is persistently used by Latino and white Americans, making one's Indigenous identity become silent and thereby submersed under the Hispanic/Latino category.[143] As the first self-reflection of growing up as an Indigenous Mexican in the U.S., Urrieta brings to the fore the long, ongoing, yet hidden pain of childhood and adulthood intraracial violence. As I briefly mention below, this intraracial violence has been extremely detrimental for Indigenous Oaxacan survival as some have internalized self-hate, depression, and even attempted to commit suicide for being Indigenous.

For instance, Zapotec scholar Luis Sánchez-López vividly recounts how he came to consciousness about his Zapotec identity and his perceived identity, "One day, one of my friends who had dark skin like mine told me that I was a 'fucking Indian.' With a smirk on his face, he

[142] Luis Jr. Urrieta, "*Las Identidades También Lloran*, Identities Also Cry: Exploring the Human Side of Indigenous Latina/o Identities" *Educational Studies* vo. 34, no. 2 (2003): 148.

[143] Luis Jr. Urrieta, "*Las Identidades También Lloran*," 150.

added, 'Yeah fool, you're from Oaxaca. There's nothing but Indians there."[144] Perplexed by the friend's comment Sánchez-López replied, "So what?! You're probably Indian too! [of which his friend quickly replied] Nah, I have French blood."[145] His friend, who was from Puebla, Mexico associated himself with having French blood because of the French's invasion and battle with Puebla in May 5, 1862 where the poblanos defeated the French army. It should not come to a surprise that white-skin or dark(er)-skin Mexicans, and other Latina/os, would associate themselves with having European blood. Looking at whiteness as a form of power whereby the U.S., as a settler structure is embedded on, whiteness also refers to groups and individuals who have historically benefited from this racial power—white non-Indigenous mestizos and others. Mestizos or "white-looking" ("white-passing") Latin Americans also embody, and therefore privilege off whiteness. As others further contend, "immigrants of color, always attempt to distance themselves from dark identities (blackness)" and Indianness when in the U.S.[146] Unfortunately, children of Oaxacan migrants who were not born or raised in Mexico continue to associate Mexican whiteness with beauty. The "possessive investment in whiteness"[147] is therefore not only a racial polity in the U.S., but also in Latin America.

Yet for other Oaxacans, they are subjected to multiple layers of racialization. Their

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[144] Luis Sánchez-López, "Learning from the *paisanos*: Coming to consciousness in Zapotec LA," *Latino Studies* 15, no. 2 (2017): 243.

[145] Ibid.

[146] Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, "'New Racism,' Color-Blind Racism, and the Future of Whiteness in America," in *White Out: The Continuing Significance of Racism*, ed. Ashley W. Doanne and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 271. Bonilla-Silva also paraphrases himself (1997) and his co-author Amanda E. Lewis (1999).

[147] Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2015); George Lipsitz, *Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2006). Moreton-Robinson's analysis of Australia is useful as I begin to thinking about mestizo possessive investment in whiteness, both as a nation-state project and an ongoing everyday practice among Mexicans in Mexico and the U.S.

unknown Indigenous identity is what scholar Lourdes Alberto (Zapotec) described as "coming out as Indian" during her childhood in Los Angeles in the 1980s.[148] For Alberto, she used her Yalaltec doll to "come out as Indigenous" to her white teacher and mostly white peers. Confused and unaware of her Indigenous identity, her teacher misread her as Native American.[149] It was her teacher and peers' lack of knowledge of Indigenous Latin American migrants that put Alberto in a position to be misread. By virtue, claiming an Indigenous identity was reason enough to be read using U.S.-based Indigenous identities. While some Latin American Indigenous diasporas do claim a Native American identity in the hopes of being seen as Indigenous within the contexts of the U.S., these instances further demonstrate their invisibility that is a result of what Blackwell calls "hybrid hegemonies" (2010, 2015, 2017) or multiple forms of coloniality. This means that Zapotecs, like other Indigenous diasporas from Latin America, get racialized twice more often than their mestizo counterparts as they have reported being mistaken as Southeast Asian, Black, or even Dominican because of their dark skin or monolid shaped eyes.

Acts of renaming, categorizing, and racializing Indigenous peoples are potentially devastating; they "have the intergenerational staying power to destroy generations."[150] These colonial forces, as Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson exclaims, prevents Indigenous peoples from "intimately connecting to each other" and may obliterate the relationship we hold to the land by fostering a multitude of devastations that include suicide.[151]

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[148] Lourdes Alberto, "Coming Out as Indian: On Being an Indigenous Latina in the US," *Latino Studies* 15, Issue 2 (July 2017): 250.

[149] Lourdes Alberto, "Coming Out as Indian," 250.

[150] Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done,* 93.

[151] Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done,* 93.

This is particularly the case among children and youth whose racial violent experiences have too often gone unnoticed or seeing only as "bullying." According to multiple sources, bullying by definition, are repeated acts of unwanted aggressive verbal and/or physical abuse; perceptions or observed power imbalance; and can be direct or indirect.[152] Perhaps the most nationally and internationally reported case of "bullying" against Indigenous Oaxacan children and youth was the 2012 campaign in an Oxnard, California school. After continuously being made fun of for being Oaxacan, a young Mixtec boy threatened to harm himself. His mother reported him saying, "Te odio mamá por ser indígena. Ya no quiero ser tu hijo nunca más!" (I hate you mom for being Indigenous. I don't want to be your son ever again!)[153] This became known as the "No me llames Oaxaquita" campaign where the larger Oaxacan community and other Latina/o allies organized to ban the racial epithet, "Oaxaquita" and "Indito," from the Ventura County School District. "No Me Llames Oaxaquita" helped bring to light the intraracial violence that Oaxacan children continued to experience far beyond their parents and other first-generation migrants. As prior work on Native American youth has show, these racial discrimination also exposed the psychological problems that came along with it.[154]

Suicide and other forms of self-inflicting harm were brought to the table as consequences

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[152] See, "Facts about bullying," Stopbullying.gov, last modified June 10, 2019, https://www.stopbullying.gov/resources/facts#definition; and Lawrence Robinson and Jeanne Segal "Bullying and Cyberbullying," Help Guide: Your Trusted Guide to Mental Health and Wellness, last modified November 2019, https://www.helpguide.org/articles/abuse/bullying-and-cyberbullying.htm

[153] "'No me llames Oaxaquita' Press Conference," *Tequio Youth*, last modified June 1, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GIfcNhphYmY

[154] See Peter A. Leavitt, Rebecca Covarrubias, Yvonne A. Perez, and Stephanie A. Fryberg, "'Frozen in time': The impact of Native American media representations on identity and self-understanding," *Journal of Social Issues* 71, no. 1 (2015); Andrea J. Romero, Lisa M. Edwards, Stephanie A. Fryberg, and Michele Orduña, "Resilience to discrimination stress across ethnic identity stages of development," *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 44, no. 1 (2014): 1-11.

of racism but have since prevailed among youth. Interestingly, then President of Mexico also denounced the racism, but did nothing more than acknowledge the campaign for fighting it. However, shortly thereafter it motivated youth to organize and others to hold "Anti-bullying" workshops throughout California in an effort to educate and empower themselves and others.[155] Some of the issues discussed among these youth groups are the remarks often followed by the perpetrator's insidious justification, "Es nada más un decir" ("It's just a saying), or "Es nada más una broma" ("It's only a joke"). In their attempts to talk back, Oaxacans have exclaimed that there is nothing simple, innocent, or funny about these remarks. Obscuring these tensions further guarantees settler colonial racial and gendered regimes as both men and women equally experience these violent moments. Indigenous peoples lives too often hang by a needle where their voices and pain are invisible or are simply not important. Indigenous lives matter! Unfortunately, their racialization as Latina/o, just Mexican, or even their identity as Native American, muddles their unique circumstances and overall how Indigenous migrants south of the U.S. border deal with multiple forms of invisibility. We must remember that these forms of violence are the result of settler societies' infliction upon arrival to the Americas that remain part of the structure towards elimination. Therefore, the blame falls not on the victim, but rather on the settler colonial state[156] and rather than feel disempowered and disconnected with their community and their Indigeneity, the opposite is occurring.

The Second Wave of Adult Children: Empowerment and Indigenous Continuity

Against the context of material and discursive logics of elimination reproduced by the

[155] Some of these organizations at the fore were, Tequio Youth Group, the Mixteco Indígena Community Organizing Project (MICOP), the Autónomos, and youth from the Frente Indígena de Organizaciones Binacionales/Binational Front of Indigenous Organizations (FIOB).

[156] Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done,* 86.

Mexican settler state and everyday actors, these Oaxacan youth and adults are seeking out new ways to respond to the settler colonial racial-gendered regimes that structure their lives even in their diasporic communities in the United States. There is an interesting generational shift happening among U.S.-born Oaxacans. The second wave of second-generation teenagers and young adult seem to be shifting how they negotiate their Indigenous identity to that of the first wave I previously talked about. Although I specifically captured these moments with the second wave of Zoochina second-generation in their thirties and forties, I have also observed with other Zapotec Serrana/os of the same age that they take more pride in being Oaxacan and even Indigenous than the first wave did. In Los Angeles, the increasing number of Oaxacan U.S.-raised and born children, teenagers, and adults, along with their ongoing participation in the brass band, traditional dancing, practices in sociocultural events, and even their returns to their parents' pueblos has made this self-identity much more possible. This shift can also be interpreted as a form of contestation to the transborder settler imaginary that the Mexican settler state continues to discursively and materially produce and that gets reinforced in the U.S. where to be Indigenous and a migrant, or in diaspora, means to no longer be Indigenous.

Like Alberto and Sánchez-López above, second-generation teenagers and young adults contest, in multiple ways, their racialization.[157] They reported verbally wanting to "defend" themselves and remarked that their Mexican peers were simply "ignorant" and did not know any better. Specifically, these acts of contestation should be read as ways in which Indigenous diasporas from the global south practice their autonomy by refusing to be yet again erased within the confinements of Mexico (e.g.: because they do not speak their Indigenous language, wear traditional clothing, or live in their pueblo) and the U.S. that tirelessly sorts groups into specific

[157] These contestations are the focus of my arguments in chapters 3 and 4.

racial categories. It is in fact the entrenched relationship and knowledge these individuals or group of people have with their community that holds many Serrana/o communities together across racial, ethnic, state, and other settler borders.

Coming back to my informants' perspectives, at the end of our conversation, my older 1.5 and second-generation respondents conveyed that to an extent "now it is more accepting to say you are from Oaxaca or Zoochina," than when they were growing up, something that my younger respondents affirmed and of which is the next point of conversation.[158]

My participants' identity formation as Zoochinenses, as opposed to Zapotec, grew out of their participation, and that of their parents,' with their pueblo, it too has formed in response to the growing participation of children from other pueblos who have continued to be involved in their community's affairs.

Time and again, I asked all my participants if they had ever felt discriminated for being Oaxacan. Although previous hints were given by the first wave of 1.5 and second-generation Oaxaqueña/os, that now it was more accepting to be from Oaxaca, it was the younger generation (the second wave) of U.S.-born or raised, that detailed this "acceptance." One late afternoon, as I sat with Tracy, a twenty-two-year-old woman born in Los Angeles, I asked her if she ever felt discriminated for being from Oaxaca. She recalled occasionally being made fun of by a young Latino co-worker in regards to the lunch she brought to work, her dark-skin complexion, her short stature, and most recently by the smell of her huaraches (traditional sandals)[159] she had just brought back from her trip to Zoochina: "We play around a lot, but that time (when talking about her food) I was like, you know Oaxaca has one of the best and most diverse foods in Mexico

[158] Personal communication, Domingo, August 11, 2015.

[159] Huaraches in the Sierra Juárez are made of untreated leather and therefore produce a strong odor.

right?"[160] She then presumed to encourage him to try some of the Oaxacan restaurants in the city. As I tried to inquire about her racial experience in high school, she replied:

> Yeah, I've heard of that, [of which I asked her to clarify what she meant] that the older generation, like you and my uncles' age experienced a lot of teasing for being from Oaxaca. Now everyone wants to be from Oaxaca… and if you know the other person is from Oaxaca you ask from what pueblo… and if they say they're from the Sierra you're like, 'yeah, but from what pueblo?' and everyone [referring to Oaxacans from the Sierra] just knows (that pueblo). Your generation really didn't have that growing up.[161]

Tracy's family experience made her aware of a "past" and current Oaxacan racialization. At the same time, Tracy raises an interesting point that I have recently begun to hear time and again, "Now everyone wants to be from Oaxaca." Tracy, like other young men and women coming of age in Los Angeles have a specific consciousness of being Oaxacan, being from Zoochina, as well as being from the Sierra. Growing up in Mid-City Los Angeles, following her grandfather and uncle's footsteps, she is now part of the Zoochina L.A. brass band and dances with the community (see chapter 4). Her participation has allowed her to further know other Oaxacans and pueblos to which previously she was not cognizant of. As a result, her relationship with Zapotecs in diaspora have extended to that beyond of her town as previous generations have continued to cultivate to their children and grandchildren.

Like Tracy, Angela and Melina are both in their early twenties. They were born in Mid-City and South Central Los Angeles, respectively, and although Angela periodically continues to be in the Zoochina brass band, Melina no longer is due to increased work demands. Like Tracy, they too expressed not being discriminated for being Oaxacan. Angela shared, "No. Are you kidding? In Lucerne Angel's High School almost everyone is Oaxacan. I was in marching band,

[160] Personal communication, Tracy, September 18, 2015.

[161] Ibid.

so my group was mostly Oaxacans. I hung out with the Oaxaqueños."[162] Angela recently graduated from college and married an immigrant young man who plays in his respective pueblo's brass band. Although she has heard of derogatory terms being used by other Latina/os to refer to Oaxacans she claims, "They just don't know. I feel like they haven't been exposed [to the various peoples and cultures of Mexico]."[163] For Melina, slowly and somewhat confused she began, "Ugh, no. I didn't. [Laughing she continued] There's so many of us."[164] Caught totally off guard by their response, I explained to them about the first wave of Oaxacan children in L.A., to which Melina responded: "Now everyone claims to be Oaxacan or from Oaxaca [giggles]."[165] Her last response here correlated with Tracy and Angela's response about this "positivity," "pridefulness," and "want to be" associated as Oaxacan. Nowhere in their response did this younger generation associate the first wave's response of fear, shame, or denial to be or claim their Oaxacan identity; what is more, sometimes they did not even have to claim or say they were Oaxacan in public spaces in their schools, like their music course or marching band.[166] Like Angela and other Zoochinenses, Tracy was also involved in her high school's marching band in addition to playing for the Zoochina L.A. Banda. However, the question still remained, "Why do you think that people are now more prideful or not embarrassed of being or saying their Oaxacan as they were before?" Of course, this question should not assume that all Oaxacans in California feel or experience racialization or their Oaxacanness the same way as this younger generation.

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[162] Personal communication, Angela, August 11, 2015. I have used a pseudonym for the real name of the high school as requested by my participant.

[163] Ibid.

[164] Personal communication, Melina, August 6, 2015.

[165] Ibid.

[166] See chapter 4 for more details.

Furthermore, Tracy, Angela, Melina, and other non-Zoochina Serrana/o adult children I have talked to in the past four years mentioned that the celebrations during the *Mes De la Herencia Oaxaqueña*/Oaxacan Heritage Month were further reasons why they believe that claiming an identity as "Oaxacan" or even "Zapotec" is "more acceptable now."[167]

The *Mes De la Herencia Oaxaqueña* is an annual celebration in the City of Los Angeles that began in the summer of 2013; it was organized by the Organización Regional de Oaxaca (Regional Organization of Oaxaca, ORO), the Frente Indígena de Organizaciones Binacionales (Indigenous Front of Binational Organizations, FIOB), and the Asociación Oaxaqueña de Negocios (Oaxacan Business Association, AON) after many years of planning. I asked these participants what exactly they felt with the Mes De la Herencia Oaxaqueña in L.A. and they *all* quickly mentioned *La Calenda*, followed by the celebrations of *La Guelaguetza*. *La Calenda* in Oaxaca is both a religious and sociocultural procession that announces the coming of a major festivity or patron saint celebrations in a community. This procession includes the Oaxacan brass band(s), which leads people from house-to-house and lastly to the communal kitchen in the pueblo or the offices of the local authority as they play. La Calenda in Los Angeles, similarly marches with anywhere from three to six bands, dance groups, while Oaxaqueña/os and the larger Latina/o community follows throughout Pico Boulevard in the Mid-City neighborhood to Arlington Heights, and ending in the Pico-Union neighborhood on Normandie Avenue.

Nevertheless, Oaxaquena/os in diaspora have been able to carry out the physical, spiritual, and sociocultural communal ways of being and living as Indigenous peoples away from home. In turn, these transborder communal celebrations have helped created a strong sense of pride and unity (though in occasions of mourning unison across pueblos is also strongly felt) for younger generations, as well as for those who previously did not have these greater communal

[167] Personal communication, second wave of second-generation Oaxacans, summer 2015.

experiences growing up to combat racial violence. Angela expressed the L.A. Calenda as "exciting," "fun," "everybody wants to go;"[168] Melina described it as "we [her partner and her] always look forward to it. We want to get out and dance and have a good time, you know;"[169] Tracy further described the moment as, "Everybody and their moms go. I rush home from work, put my huaraches on, and [traditional] shirt, and sometimes my instrument [clarinet] … in case one of the bands needs a back-up."[170] In the years that I have attended and participated in the list of events happening during the month of celebration I have seen an overwhelming attendance of the 1.5, the second, and even the third-generation (or 2.5-generation) of Oaxaqueña/os.[171] Most vividly however, is these generations' presence as they dance along with their Oaxacan-Serrana/o relatives, friends, and/or partners and make up the Oaxacan music players. Dressed in their pueblo's traditional clothing and/or huaraches, and at times the name of their pueblo on a piece of clothing or bag, they march along with the greater Oaxacan community they previously may not have been aware of (e.g.: communities from the *Valles Centrales*/Central Valleys). My participants' remarks above show the excitement for being in celebration with other fellow Oaxaqueña/os peers and expressing their Oaxacanness, as well as their Zoochinense pride.

Following Renya Ramírez's concept of a "hub-making" process, Oaxacan "hubs" of L.A. allow Indigenous diasporas "to maintain a sense of connection to their […] homelands and urban spaces through participation in cultural circuits and maintenance of social networks," from cross

[168] Personal communication, Angela, August 11, 2015.

[169] Personal communication, Melina, August 6, 2015.

[170] Personal communication, Tracy, September 18, 2015.

[171] For a brief discussion on the 2.5-generation (children who have one parent born in the pueblo while the other one was born in Los Angeles) see Telles and Ortiz, 2008.

border rural towns to cities and from generation to generation.[172] Recent Oaxacan hubs, whether larger celebrations, grassroots, and even nonprofit organizations, offer an escape route for these youth to come together and combat racial violence and even feelings of suicide from these constant racial attacks. The *Mes de la Herencia Oaxaqueña* specifically is now a hub-making zone by where it is the younger generations' participation, attendance, and performance that have helped sustain it and bring it further to fruition. This fruition is not only one of culture, social, or physical interaction alone. It is one that also resists colonial structures of erasure, shame, denial, and complete annihilation. As the event of La Calenda crosses multiple heavily transited intersections (Crenshaw Boulevard, Arlington Avenue, Western, and finally Normandie), it also passes through a multitude of Oaxacan business from barbershops, restaurants, traditional clothing and craft-making stores, markets, ice cream parlors, *panaderias* (bakeries), to shipment carriers and money wiring offices heightening how Oaxaqueña/os are marking their presence.

While in previous work (Nicolás 2012), I have found that college education, particularly courses in history and social sciences with Latin American Indigenous topic focuses has allowed Oaxacan youth to pridefully retake and reclaim their Indigenous identity, I have also laid claim that for those who have never gone to college, their participation in sociocultural practices and close relationship with their pueblo affairs nurtures a specific identity to that of their town and as Oaxaqueña/os.[173] In the chapters that follow, I draw on my work with the community of San Jerónimo Zoochina in Los Angeles and in Oaxaca to illustrate just how these cultural and political practices take shape from childhood to adulthood—and for women particularly. I also

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[172] Renya K. Ramírez, *Native Hubs: Culture, Community, and Belonging in Silicon Valley and Beyond* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 3.

[173] Brenda Nicolás, "'*Reclamando lo que es nuestro*: Identity Formation among Zapoteco Youth in Oaxaca and Los Angeles" (M.A. thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 2012).

explore how these practices collectively constitute a response to contest a Latina/o/Hispanic imposed identity and the racial violence they have experienced over the years.

Conclusion

As I show above, discrimination and shaming for being Indigenous goes back to centuries of colonial domination, which have been reimagined and reinforced post-independence through mestizaje and indigenista (indigenist) projects in Mexico. Immediately in post-revolutionary Mexico, the state sought to officially (1920s to 1970s) create a racial and ethnic *progressive* and *modern* national image where the Indian was seen as backwards, romanticized (in the past), and in the way of Mexico's advancement (Bonfil Batalla 1996, 3; Doremus 2001, 380; Knight 1990). Mexican elite intellectuals, predominantly Jose Vasconcelos and Manuel Gamio, pushed mestizaje as a national project of integration through assimilation (Contreras 2008; Friedlander 1975 2007; Gamio 1916; Vasconcelos 1925). In the same manner, anthropologists and archeologists hired by the state at the turn of the century, implemented Indigenista policies that celebrated an Indigenous past to tell Mexico's national history (Caso 1954; 1948; De la Fuente 1947; Gamio 1916) while creating programs to assimilate present Indigenous communities into a national mestizo Mexican identity. Mestizaje and the Indigenismo (Indigenism) movement became racialized modern projects of the state to deny not only a very diverse Indigenous presence, but also their practices and traditions as these were taken to be obstacles to development. Situating this moment allows us to see the impact that Mexico's official racial project during the twentieth century had on the national population. As a result of these long and government sponsored anti-Indigenous sentiments, it is no surprise that these attitudes have crossed and remained entrenched among many immigrants and get passed down to their U.S.-

born children. Mestizaje, like indigenismo, would continue to permeate using education as the most significant way to integrate Indigenous Mexicans into a multicultural country.

In order to understand the racial and gender violence that Indigenous Oaxacan diasporas experience today, it is necessary to acknowledge the policies and practices of the Mexican state in the last century that promulgated this violence in the first place. Mestizaje, indigenismo, the census, among other (non-coercive) violent practices of the state, must be analyzed and understoood as their static and racist notions continue to resonate and be carried out not only in Mexico, but among Mexicans in diaspora who have come to believe that Indigenous peoples, and Oaxacans specifically, stand in the way of "modernization" or progress. Culture and traditions towards Indigenous women become used as gender-specific obstacles and tropes where being Indigenous and "modern" are seen as impossible to mutually exist. More so, for many young and adult children of migrants in diaspora, the fact that they have internalized self-hatred for being Indigenous because of the discrimination they experience at the hands of non-Indigenous mestizo Mexicans is of great concern. Unfortunately, little is known about how ongoing racial violence also targets children of Indigenous migrants and how over the years, participation in community traditional dancing, the brass band, and in their respective immigrant hometown association has helped them communally confront this situation.

While Mexico continues to portray a racially harmonious society united through mestizaje and celebrated as multicultural, Indigenous racialization is an ongoing gendered migratory process that goes beyond the confinements of the Mexican settler state — so greatly ingrained, but hardly ever looked at within a transborder contexts. How, and at what point, did it become acceptable to be publicly Oaxacan? Zapotec generations in the Los Angeles diaspora

however, continue to reimagine their Indigeneity and thus refuse the "strong, sometimes racist perception that being Aboriginal [Indigenous] and being urban are mutually exclusive."[174]

[174] Sherene H. Razack, "Gendered Racial Violence and Spatialized Justice: The Murder of Pamela George," *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* 15, no. 2 (2000): 102.

CHAPTER 2

TRANSBORDER INDIGENOUS PROTOCOLS: A COMMUNITY-ENGAGED PERSPECTIVE

In 2008, I began conducting oral histories in my town of San Jerónimo Zoochina in Oaxaca, Mexico. I was eager to know the history of my town since there is no written account of the community in Mexico or the United States. Fifty years had passed since the end of a twelve-year war with a neighboring town where land from Zoochina was acquired. It was also the first time that my grandmother recounted these vivid memories to anyone. About ten minutes into the conversation she said while crying: "Ay Brenda, tú me estás haciendo recordar! No hablo de esto por la misma razón de que me pongo mal" ("Oh Brenda, you make me remember! This is why I don't talk about it for the same reason that it makes me unwell"). I remained silent for a few seconds, thinking about what I should do or say next. She tried to continue talking about those memories but she did not make it past a few seconds. She cried, sobbed and whimpered and we broke down together as my tape recorder continued playing. Eight years had passed since these interviews. This time (2016) I was back in Zoochina to interview the community about belonging and identity among the children of migrants. However, a recurring theme kept coming up among the elders, the war and the memory of it.

My grandmother's story of sorrow, survival, and memory were not hers alone. Her feelings and memories were shared among many Zoochinenses who had lived through the war. Although I was not necessarily asking about the war this time around in 2016, it became a recurrent theme for Zoochinense elders living in Zoochina and those who lived in Los Angeles. For them, belonging, love to Zoochina and their Zoochinense identity had much to do with their lives not only prior and after the war, but during the war as well. Collectively, Zoochinenses had sacrificed their lives for the pueblo to continue living. As a result, feelings of love, respect, and responsibility to the pueblo have been transmitted to those born in diaspora of which children of migrants continue to profess through their participation in multiple community affairs and stories of Zoochina that continue to transcend settler colonial borders. In other words, their oral histories (storytelling) practices are Indigenous protocols that are much about Indigenous methods as they are about knowledge.

These personal accounts are narratives where the silences, bodily, and cultural expressions are all tied to memory and living that foments Indigeneity among those who remain on the land and those in diaspora. My methodological framework of retelling stories attempts to tell the experiences of past,[175] present, and future Zoochina Zapotecs as a way to disrupt notions that Indigenous peoples are dead, dying, or assimilated to mainstream U.S. or Mexican culture, or that Indigeneity ends with migration. It does so through a set of critical ethnographic methods, such as using Zoochina's Indigenous protocols, Indigenous autoethnography, and storytelling (a way of Indigenous communal knowledge transmission that closely fits within oral history research methods). I position myself as a community-engaged and critical Indigenous interdisciplinary scholar. As a Zapotec Zoochina woman in diaspora, my community's Indigenous protocols are central to my work. I ask: what are the ways in which we, as Indigenous researchers in diaspora, hold ourselves responsible to the community or communities we work *with*? How do we critically engage with protocols within transborder landscapes? And, why do transborder Indigenous protocols matter?

In order to explore these questions, this chapter includes stories from elders in the Los Angeles diaspora, as well from elders in Zoochina. I weave these stories with an engagement of a multitude of Indigenous scholarship and scholarship from other underrepresented diasporic groups. In conducing critical ethnographic research, I propose two things: one, that we consider Indigenous protocols as transborder *comunalidad* (communality/collectiveness) responsibilities that are informed by practices in the homeland and with the diaspora in the lands we become guests in. And second, that we critically analyze how collective memory is a way that allows

[175] Some of the elder participants I include in this chapter have since transitioned to the spirit world. I honor their strength and support.

Indigenous peoples to share stories that challenge colonial logics of Indigenous elimination, while sustaining our sense of communal survival and belonging as Indigenous peoples.

Critical Ethnography: Autoethnography and Positionality

From an ongoing frustration of having our own history and archives denied, piled with years of dust, and off far away, it has been my task to recuperate and return what is rightfully ours.[176] I began collecting archival documents of Zoochina in 2010 from Oaxaca's state archives, as well as other local municipal archives to return these to my community. The documents I came across were from the 18th and 19th century. I created two binders that included a photocopy of the document with a transcription right below the image, as these were handwritten in quill or dip-pen in old century script and therefore hard to understand. I then presented them during a hometown association meeting in Los Angeles (and one in Zoochina) where members were surprised to see that such documents existed in which many found their family's last names. These belong to the land and to the people of Zoochina who make these archives possible in the first place through their actions and ways of being in relationship to their land.

Zoochinenses have been denied access to and ownership of much of our material history, which is one of the reasons why so many Indigenous communities have sought to implement respect of their history and current ways of living for researchers. As Indigenous and non-Indigenous critical ethnographers, it is important to respect, honor, and give back to the communities in ways that sustain their survival and counter all forms of violence. Too often, researchers have taken the information from these communities and never returned their findings. As a result, there is a lack of accountability, respect, and understanding for how reciprocity works. Although I am not suggesting that all researchers are not invested nor that there is only

[176] Megan Ybarra, "Don't Just Pay It Forward: From Accountability to Reciprocity in Research Relations," *Journal of Research Practice* 10(2) (2014), 2.

one way of being accountable (because there are multiple ways of doing so, especially with transborder research) I do believe that accountability, respect, and reciprocity are essential to having good relationships with the communities that allow researchers to work alongside them, rather than on them. Engaging beyond the texts and maintaining those relationships *with* the Zoochina community in the U.S. and in Mexico is a process of doing and undoing. *Undoing* our new racial labels and erasure imposed on us in the U.S. and Mexico, as well as *doing* the cultural, political, and other *comunalidad* practices that inform who we are as Zoochinenses across these geographies.

As a child of Zapotec immigrants in Los Angeles, I grew up with surrounding Oaxacan businesses. From barbershops, beauty salons, to restaurants and neighbors selling fresh Oaxacan food imports from their homes, these have been the daily experiences of many 1.5 and second-generation adult Oaxacans throughout California. There was not a week where *banda Oaxaqueña* was not blasting from my parents' or neighbors' home. Dinner conversations mostly revolved around what was happening in San Jerónimo Zoochina or Yatzachi El Alto (where my mother is from). My parents always inculcated their desire for us, their children, to be involved whether in dancing, playing in the pueblo's brass band, and eventually in our hometown association as we transitioned into adulthood. I became involved with my community since I was seven years old by participating in dances. It is from this early age that my involvement and responsibility towards my community first began and for which my responsibility in ethical community-engaged research extends from. Like many migrants, my parents' desire was to one-day permanently return to Zoochina when they reached retirement or death (whichever came first). My life has been full of communal practices that come from my parents and pueblo's teachings. My parents never abandoned their transborder relationship in their forty years in

diaspora. I write from this ongoing teaching of love, respect, commitment, responsibility and belonging to Zoochina.

Upon reading Adriana Cruz-Manjarrez's *Zapotecs on the Move* (2013), I was not only thrilled about the relationship she captured between the different Zapotec Serranos in Los Angeles, like Zoochina with the community of Yalalag (originally a Zapotec community on a different hill more than 10 miles away, but nonetheless visible enough from Zoochina). She wrote about the death of a Oaxacan brass band instructor, *el maestro* (teacher) Jeremias Rios who suddenly passed away one morning. *El maestro* Jeremias was from Yalalag and was the music teacher of Zoochina's L.A. band when he passed onto the spirit world. Reading the passage brought back a lot of memories I collectively shared with the larger *Serrano* community. I was there, present at his *velorio* (wake) held in the backyard of a Yalaltec community member's home in Pico-Union. The *velorio*, however, was also one of celebration, a space to honor a musical talent. About six to eight bands were present, each taking turns to play in front of his casket. That was the first, though not the last, *velorio* I saw where the entire home, inside and out, was filled to capacity so much so that people were lined up onto the street to pay their last respects before *el maestro* Jeremias journeyed onto his last rest in Yalalag.

Traditionally, as ethnographers in the social sciences and in the humanities we are primarily trained to rely on fieldwork as our source of data crafted and branched through Western eyes.[177] Māori scholar, Linda Tuhiwai Smith describes that "[r]esearch is one of the ways in which the underlying code of imperialism and colonialism is both regulated and realized" because Indigenous peoples have historically been left out or portrayed by the west;

[177] I am referring to Chandra Mohanty's groundbreaking article (turned chapter),"Under Western Eyes" (1984), where she engages Western feminist discourses on women in the Third World and urges for a radical cross-cultural decolonization in the context of solidarity.

never as fully human and always othered.[178] As researchers we are trained and told to keep distance from the community we conduct research with in order to avoid biases and validate the research undertaken (Charmaz and Mitchell 1996; Houston 2007).[179] Research, therefore, has historically exploited Indigenous peoples, stories, and land in order to maintain imperialism and colonialism.

In conducting work with Indigenous people and communities, we must consider their views and protocol as ethical research if we are committed to decolonize not only how we think through our methodology and theory formation, but also how we engage with it. As Indigenous scholars, we not only risk a long and ongoing responsibility and trust with the communities we belong to and work *with*,[180] but we also have to resist the danger of conducting settler colonial research that erases Indigenous peoples.[181] Simply put, it is impossible for Indigenous peoples to separate themselves from the communities we belong to while writing about them. Holding my responsibility and respect to my participants and larger community, I am reminded that "[r]eporting back to the people is never a one-off exercise or a task that can be signed off on completion of the written report" (Tuhiwai Smith 16). My engagement throughout the years is deeply engaged and committed to decolonial acts of transborder comunalidad participatory research.

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[178] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, second edition (London and New York: Zed Book Ltd, 2012), 8.

[179] Kathy Charmaz and Richard G. Mitchell, "The Myth of Silent Authorship: Self, Substance, and Style in Ethnographic Writing," *Symbolic Interaction* 19, no. 4 (1996): 285-302; Jennifer Houston, "Indigenous Autoethnography: Formulating our Knowledge Our Way," *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education* 36, no. s1 (2007): 45-50. These forms of methodologies also fail to take into account that many of our communities, particularly those of color and Native, already have enduring forms of knowledge and ways of understanding the world prior to 1492.

[180] Wendy G. Teeter, "Working in Tribal Communities" course, UCLA, January-June 2017.

[181] Wolfe 1999, 2006.

These decolonial acts of transborder comunalidad research have been by considering both community's protocols, which includes asking for permission on a number of research procedures (e.g., being able to stay in the pueblo, asking for group interviews and participant observation during a number of Zoochina events, etcetera), returning Zoochina knowledge of my findings in Spanish and English,[182] and presenting my work to the elected authorities in L.A. and in Zoochina. While I provide my labor and economic contribution for *kermeses*, I do not count these as participatory research as it is something I have done prior to my research and that is expected of me as a member. To not be conscious and critical about Indigenous decolonial acts of participatory research would be crucially unethical, to say the least, and a settler move in research indeed.

Therefore, Indigenous autoethnography is useful in describing how I approach my work. I read myself into these stories with the "we," "us," "our," and "I."[183] This is a distinctive "method of inquiry" used in Indigenous autoethnography where the Indigenous researcher situates themselves respectfully and alongside the community.[184] As a method of inquiry, it "seeks to resist dominant ideologies" and narratives by reconstructing how stories have been interpreted in anthropology and by non-Indigenous researchers.[185] Going beyond, ethnography allows us to see what for others is hidden, often *misinterpreted* (my emphasis), and temporary research practices. As a critical Indigenous ethnographer in diaspora this entails recognizing my power dynamics as a researcher and as someone being legally able to travel across state borders;

[182] About 90% of Zoochinenses do not know how to read or write in Zapotec.

[183] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*.

[184] Paul Whitinui, "Indigenous Autoethnography: Exploring, Engaging, and Experiencing 'Self' as a Native Method of Inquiry," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* vol. 43, no. 4 (July 2013).

[185] Paul Whitinui, "Indigenous Autoethnography," 465.

the latter, which has facilitated my transborder relationship. I do not intend to deny this. Instead, I use my position to bring about the stories to make us visible—existent. At the heart of writing and understanding how much of our communities to share, comes our respect to our pueblos; our protocols are not held in a momentary time capsule that we then disregard after fieldwork.

Inspired by community's unwillingness to disconnect, and by Deborah A. Miranda's *Bad Indians: A Tribal Memoir*, I, as a Zapoteca member of the Zoochina community, hope to construct "the mosaic" of Zapotec lives as they relate to their migratory experiences and relationship/connection to *home* (my own emphasis) in Oaxaca.[186] For many Zapotec communities, there is no written history of our people back in our lands of origin *or* in diaspora. Like other Indigenous communities, we learn from our past through stories passed on from elders and our parents. While I draw from oral history methods, I would depict my/our research processes as storytelling. This is not a process by which an outsider gathers knowledge, but is an act of communal transmission or a way of knowing ourselves as a collective— one that involves maintaining cultural and political practices, but also contests them to make gender, class, children, and other further marginalized intersections within the community inclusive, recognized, and with the same rights and privileges as their male counterparts. In order to guarantee that the next generations of Zapotecs know their family's (migratory) history, I compile these oral histories as an act of transborder comunalidad that weave conversations across multiple landscapes. As Miranda argues, "If we allow the pieces of our culture to lie scattered in the dust of history, trampled on by racism and grief, then yes, we are irreparably damaged. But if we pick up the pieces and use them in new ways that honor their integrity, their colors, textures, stories — then we do those pieces justice, no matter how sharp they are, no

[186] Deborah A. Miranda, *Bad Indians: A Tribal Memoir* (Berkeley: Heydaybooks, 2013), 135.

matter how much handling them slices our fingers and makes us bleed."[187] Miranda's multi-method Indigenous approach is one that informs my own work as she uses oral histories of her tribe and photography to "honor their integrity" in past, present and future existence.[188] Therefore, I collect Zoochina's own shards of histories in archives, in oral histories, in community events, music, dances, and other storytelling practices across Mexico and the U.S. to show a *transborder comunalidad* Indigenous method of past, present, and ongoing survival.

Towards a Zoochina Pedagogy: Protocols and Accountability

"Buenas tardes. Buenas tardes. Buenas tardes. Buenas tardes. Buenas tardes" ("Good evening") I repeat five times with a handshake as I go around greeting the maximum *usos y costumbres* (customary law) authority of my pueblo in *la agencia* (the authority's office). The *agencia* is located atop the highest hill of Zoochina alongside the church. The *agencia* has local-made wooden furniture, including two 10-foot-long benches alongside one of the entrances where I am seated. On the parallel wall across me, there are windows looking out at the entrance of the pueblo, where most homes are located, while on the opposite side the windows look out to the corridor and onto the basketball courts with a scene that stretches onto mountains and pueblos (Yalalag and the Cajono communities) miles away. I have been instructed by my grandmother and my father a few years back to start by greeting the community's autonomously elected municipal President, and follow with the next closest local authority in the *agencia*, which consist of the treasurer sitting behind the main wooden desk, the two community police, and the young secretary who is typing away on a small table. They all make up the 2018 community elected assembly that have been selected by the pueblo using *usos y costumbre* traditional Indigenous governing practices. They repeat after my salute, "Buenas tardes" and we

[187] Miranda, *Bad Indians*, 135.

[188] Deborah A Miranda, *Bad Indians: A Tribal Memoir* (Berkeley: Heyday, 2012), 135.

then take a seat of which I know I must briefly get up and start my introduction. I have been through this process quite a few times now and I feel a lot more comfortable this last time around, in December 2018 However, emotionally, a lot has changed as now I am by myself. My grandmother who always accompanied me to the *agencia* and my father who would remind me to present myself in front of the authorities upon returning to Zoochina have journeyed onto the spirit world. With a smile on the authority's face and their welcoming words they let me know I will be okay. I am home.

These protocols I follow are always negotiated with the local authorities of the town. These include: (1) formally present myself (provide my name, whose child and grandchild I am, what diasporic community I come from and the purpose and impact my research will have to the community); (2) describe the reason for my presence[189]; (3) ask for permission to be able to conduct research by gathering interviews; (4) give my appreciation for allowing me to stay in the town while conducting my work; and (5) agreeing to offer my assistance in anything they may need, such as communal labor which I have always done since I became a formal member through the Los Angeles-based Hometown Association in 2011. Similarly, because of my unique communal position with the diaspora in L.A., and the transborder research I undertake, these protocols were also to be replicated with the hometown association in Los Angeles, *Centro Social San Jerónimo Zoochina*.[190]

For example, the *Centro Social San Jerónimo Zoochina* Los Angeles HTA, mirrors their own structure of traditional authorities. Similarly as there are communally elected authorities in Zoochina, based on Indigenous customary law, there is a president, secretary, treasurer, and

[189] Other than coming to stay with my grandmother as I usually do in the summers, I must state my other intent behind my visit.

[190] See chapter three for more on the Zoochina hometown association in Los Angeles.

vocales (speakers) in the Los Angeles HTA. As I describe in chapter 3, *Centro Social San Jerónimo Zoochina* is the maximum authority for Zoochinenses in L.A. One cannot perform in a dance in either location, decide to conduct a project for the wellbeing of the entire community in Zoochina, visit Zoochina without getting taxed (for those who are not HTA members living in Los Angeles), or until recently obtain land in Zoochina without going through the Los Angeles HTA membership (see chapter 3). In communication and agreement with the authorities in Zoochina, *Centro Social* is as much involved in communal and personal decisions and projects of migrants and the pueblo as one would think. Knowing this, I proceeded to engage with both authorities to the same extent and process of asking for permission, being clear about my intentions, my continued respect, responsibilities, and actions as a Zoochinense and now as a researcher through the HTA.

One thing that was different however, was that in addition to being asked to provide a copy of my materials in Los Angeles, I was asked to present my findings during an HTA meeting with twenty to forty members, which I submitted in Spanish and English.[191] In Zoochina, the authorities simply asked that I provide a copy of my findings for everyone's accessibility at any given time, which I did. In this way, Zoochina's protocols reinforce living in communal transborder ties. That is, their protocols sustain the community as a way to challenge Western views. Not only do I face communal responsibility, but I also feel strong sense of accountability towards my family, especially the elderly, to write and address their life experiences. It is through my family connections and relations that I have been able to conduct work with various Indigenous Oaxacan communities throughout California and Mexico over the course of eleven years.

[191] I have provided these materials to the Zoochina authories (in Oaxaca and Los Angeles) in Spanish and English.

As I am finishing my dissertation, I further hone-in on what these protocols do for the community and my relationship to Zoochina. During my last visit to Zoochina (2018) this involved asking about migrants' return to the *pueblo* (town) and the process of presenting themselves to the authorities. This is because at a previous hometown association (HTA) meeting in 2017, Telma, a migrant woman complained about her daughter's (Dariela) last visit to Zoochina.[192] Dariela was asked by the authorities to present herself at the *agencia*. Surprised at Telma's reaction, yet intrigued, I listened closely as she continued:

> No entiendo porque le pidieron a mi hija que se presente hacia las autoridades. No es la primer ves que va. Yo veo eso como una falta de respeto la mera verda; que la traten así, como que si no la conocieran o como que si algo debe.[193]

Telma felt that having Dariela to present herself threatened her daughter's own sense of belonging and recognition. However, Dariela had only recently started going to Zoochina and had become involved with the hometown association in Los Angeles after finishing her bachelor's degree in 2013. In 2014 she was elected as treasurer by the HTA. That year it was the HTA's turn to host the patron saint festival in Zoochina and as a result Dariela's duties required her, like all elected board members, to be in constant communication with the authority of Zoochina prior to the festival. It also required her to be in Zoochina during the festival that year to help carry out the everyday logistics with the authorities. Therefore, to return three years later after her position as treasurer and be asked to present herself seemed incomprehensible. More so,

[192] Thelma, who is in her fifties, was raised in Mexico City most of her childhood. She is the youngest of all her siblings. Despite not having been raised in Zoochina, she serves as a board member for the HTA and is speaking from that position when she expresses her complaint.

[193] Participant observation, *Centro Social San Jerónimo Zoochina*, July 2017. Translation: I don't understand why they asked my daughter to present herself in front of the authorities. It's not the first time she goes. Honestly, I see this as disrespectful; that they treat her in such way, as if they didn't know her or like she owes something.

there were disproportionate gender dynamics at play. For one, all the authorities were male.[194] Their request exerted their heteropatriarchal power while also their knowledge on the process of traditional protocols. Unaware of these traditional practices, Dariela and her mother found them infringing their status as responsible HTA members.

Indigenous Zoochina protocols of respect, recognition, and accountability remind us how these transborder comunalidad practices gender Indigenous nationhood in settler states where Indigenous women are casted second-class citizens or non-citizens at all. At the transborder communal scale, Indigenous women migrants and their U.S.-born or raised daughters, push back to make their belonging and identity to their community recognized as they have equally contributed to its ongoing transborder existence like their male counterparts. In other words, while settler states have rigidly and statically defined and attempted to eliminate Indigenous peoples at the global, national, and transnational scale, Indigenous women and children also contest them in everyday transborder practices. As I describe in this chapter and those that follow, because these transborder practices are entrenched in *comunalidad* ways of knowing and doing, transborder communities contest settler states assimilation and forced migration as elimination.

In this regard, Audra Simpson (2014) reminds us that this "sense of nationhood" brings up "the narratives [like communal non-state based practices] of membership [that] may work to build a sense of nationhood not from the signs and symbols of the state, but rather from the words and interactions of the people—words and actions that are issues in the everyday moments

[194] There has not been an elected woman official that has been part of the cabinet of *autoridades* in Zoochina for more than twenty years.

of exchange."[195] The words and interactions of Indigenous transborder comunalidad are indeed reflected throughout oral histories and participant observation in Mexico and the United States, but they are particularly taught and acted upon by elders.

For example, it was the elders present that spoke up one after the other. Don Adalberto, a migrant in his 70s replied:

> Telma, no es eso. En el pueblo así es la costumbre. Se respeta a la autoridad que el pueblo elige. Me sorprende que lo hicieron porque ya casi no es así. Uno va y viene [a Zoochina] y a la autoridad no se les da el respeto que merecen ni dicen nada. Ya no hay ese tipo de formalidad y respeto. No lo hacen de mala fe.[196]

Introducing yourself to the *autoridades*, whether you are a direct migrant from the community, or a child of migrants is a sign of respect. However, it is children of migrants who perform a dance or who play in the brass band during the patron saint festival who will introduce themselves as a group.

After Don Adalberto's words there was a moment of silence. As I turned to see the others' reactions, I realized that this silence was thought-provoking. The president then asked if there are any other remarks and quickly two hands went up. Doña Crisostona, in her seventies and one of the HTAs founders, whose story I share in chapter 3, spoke: "No te lo tomes a mal Telma. Son cosas que se deben hacer en el pueblo. A todos, bueno, hablo por los viejos [la gente mayor], sabemos que debemos pasar por allá [con la autoridad] como señal de respeto a la

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[195] Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014), 171.

[196] Participant observation, *Centro Social San Jerónimo Zoochina*, July 2018. Translation: Telma, it's not that. In the pueblo that is the custom. We respect the authority that the people have elected. I'm surprised that they did because that's uncommon now. One comes and goes [to Zoochina] and there's no respect to the authority that they deserve nor do they say anything. There's no longer that type of formality and respect. They don't do it in bad faith.

autoridad cada vez que vamos al pueblo."[197] Doña Crisostona's words made me reflect on my own visits. Though I have conducted research at every moment of my return to Zoochina during my dissertation years, these are the only times I have individually gone to the *autoridades*. I further became aware of the greater implications of paying my respects to the communally elected authorities of Zoochina after these long conversations. What I learned after this meeting is that Indigenous protocols are not only about respect, gratitude and permission, but they are also about transborder *comunalidad* that further pushes back against settler state notions of erasure, unbelonging, and de-Indigenizing the diaspora and our relationship with the land for both men, women, children, and elders. Furthermore, they are comunalidad practices that push against the grain in western research practices and (re)center the rules and ethics of the pueblo and with it. Zoochina women however, while they might agree to maintain Indigenous protocols as signs of respect to the pueblo, they also contest the ways in which this becomes a gendered process of recognition. As seen in Telma's story above, an all male authority cabinet in Zoochina carries uneven gender dynamics where women have little to no representation. The ways in which Indigenous protocols are carried out by women and adult children in diaspora continues to be reflected upon and receive push back through women's and adult children's participation in traditionally male-dominated spaces like the immigrant hometown association.

To get a more balanced understanding on what these protocols mean for those in the pueblo, and how these are negotiated in Los Angeles, I found myself once more absorbed by the elders' reflections in Zoochina. They agreed that outside of return visits during festivities it is not common to have first-generation migrants visit the autoridad to present themselves. I asked a

[197] Participant observation, *Centro Social San Jerónimo Zoochina*, July 2018. Translation: "Don't take it wrong Telma. They are things that must be done in the pueblo. To all, well, I speak for the old [the elders], we know that we must go there [with the authority] as a sign of respect for the authority every time we return to the town."

woman in her late seventies, Doña Chuchita to explain about this introductory protocol. Short on her responses, but very quick and affirming she continued:

> Doña Chuchita: Oh no, eso ya no se hace.[198]
> Brenda: ¿Qué piensa de que algunos migrantes todavía van a presentarse?"
> Doña Chuchita: Yo pienso que está bien. Son del pueblo. Son de Zoochina. Respetan al pueblo.
> Brenda: ¿Qué piensa de los hijo e hijas de los migrantes que hagan lo mismo? Que se presenten enfrente de la autoridad.
> Doña Chuchita: Está bien. Que lo hagan está bien. No se si lo hacen, pero no esta mal. Yo tengo tantos nietos y estaría bien porque también son del pueblo.

Doña Chuchita connected this early ongoing relationship between migrants, their children, and those in the pueblo. It is not only about tradition or respect from migrants, but as returnees, how children of migrants are also implicated in protocols as ways of teaching and being with one another. This connection and relationship further highlights the many interactions, practices, stories, and the not so visible (e.g.: the silences, of which I speak to later) that make Zoochina ways of knowing a multi-method approach. This multi-method approach, more than an ethical research tool, is one that allows Zoochinenses to tell their stories from their perspective, as well as hear those that previously have not been paid attention to in (Indigenous) transnational studies, elder women.

I then pressed Doña Nilda, in her early seventies, on this same question. Doña Nilda and I have a long-established relationship. She's known me my whole life and once lived in Los Angeles:

> Ya nadie hace eso. Si la autoridad toma con toda seriedad esta forma de respeto que bueno, esta bien. Todos los que vienen a Zoochina, son de Zoochina, también deben seriamente tomar ese respeto porque es [una forma de respeto] a la máxima autoridad que el pueblo ha elegido.[199]

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[198] Personal communication, Doña Chuchita, December 28, 2018. Translation: Oh no, that no longer exist.

[199] Personal communication, Doña Nilda, December 27, 2018. Translation: No one does that anymore. If the authority takes this form of respect seriously, that's good. It's okay. Everyone who comes to

Particularly, it was the "coming to" and "being from" Zoochina that they found reasoning to continue this practice, which highlights not only the diaspora's recognition by those in the pueblo, but specifically, Doña Chuchita and Doña Nilda's, as recognition by elder women. The respect for the "maximum communally elected authority," further stood out in the sense that this respect was for a customary law authority that had been elected by the people and in support by the Los Angeles HTA. While Indigenous customary elected officials throughout the country continue to be largely men,[200] it is important to consider what changes or relationships women, both in the pueblo and in diaspora, play to reinforce, bring back, and alter how we understand respect and belonging. Native mapping by women and elders are, as Mishuana Goeman defines through the concept of Esther Belin's "directional memory," she writes, "people who possess knowledge of the land – but they are not absolute. Each generation will have to find a map to reconcile the vast changes among generations, however, as time and space are not stagnant for Native people, or anyone for that matter."[201] That is, women, elders, and growing generations in and outside the land have remained now, as before, and emergently vocal, opinionated, and ever ready to push back and alter. They continue to speak, even if they cannot write their Native language or colonial language.

Upon my last return to the pueblo in 2018, I conducted ten follow-up interviews, I asked five young-adults and five elders the following question, "¿Diria que los hijos de migrantes (en

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Zoochina, who is from Zoochina, should also seriously take that respect because it is [a way of respect] to the maximum authority that the pueblo has elected.

[200] See Hernández Castillo 2016; Shannon Speed, R. Aída Hernández Castillo, and Lynn Stephen 2006. Also see part 2 of *Demanding Justice and Security: Indigenous Women and Legal Pluralities in Latin America* (ed. by Rachel Sieder, 2017), titled, "Indigenous Autonomies and Struggles for Gender Justice."

[201] Mishuana Goeman, *Mark my Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 116.

los estados unidos) son zoochinenses? (Would you say that the children of (U.S.) migrants are Zoochinense/from Zoochina?). When I first asked this question in 2008 and then again in 2010, the response was not immediate; they negotiated the ways in which the children in diaspora could, to an extent, be Zoochinense, but they often ended with skepticism and suggested that for the most part they were American. Mr. Aran, like Mr. Clemente, Doña Cruz, and Doña Eloida explained that U.S.-raised children were Zoochinense "pero más que nada son Americanos" (more than anything they are American) because of their birthplace. Now, ten years later in 2018, all respondents, without hesitation expressed, "son Zoochinense," "también son de Zoochina" (they are from Zoochina; they are also from Zoochina). I then pressed forward and asked how so? And they all shared that the 1.5 and second-generation's return, and those of the grandchildren (the third-generation) of migrants, showed the love and connection they still have for the land, "Regresan" (they come back), "participan" (they participate), "les gusta venir" (they like coming). Mr. Famián further expressed, "Siguen viniendo, con o sin sus padres, y andan tranquilos caminando en el pueblo y haciendo relajo. Uno siente bonito que les guste venir y pasar sus vacaciones aquí; es un orgullo."[202] Since 1994, when young children first danced *Los Malinches*, about more than half-a-dozen *danzas* (dances) have taken place in Zoochina by the L.A. diaspora. So too has the Zoochina L.A. band returned during almost every patron saint celebration to play in unison with the Zoochina-based band and the band from the State of Mexico (coming from the City of Netzahualcoyotl) to play in Zoochina by representing that state's Zoochina HTA.

[202] Personal Communication, Sr. Famian, San Jerónimo *Zoochina*, December 2018. Translation: They keep coming, with us without their parents, and they are comfortable walking in the pueblo and making commotion [in jokes, laughs, pranks]. One feels nice that they like to come and spend their vacation time here; it's prideful.

In my years in the field, I have witnessed the slow transformation of those who remain in Zoochina have recognized the U.S.-raised and born children of Zoochinenses. The stories of grandparents, parents, and other elders in the community have taught us of the *ongoing* and *growing* participation as members of the hometown association, as dancers, and as musicians. Since the late 1980s those whose parents obtained legalization from IRCA (1986) began returning to the pueblo during the annual patron saint *fiestas* (parties). Gradually, they also started returning during other smaller town celebrations, such as the smaller *fiesta* of San Jerónimo in September, to visit relatives during winter holidays, or to spend their summer vacation time with grandparents. Though I remember little about attending *kermeses, fiestas*, or the hometown association meetings under the age of five, those memories of listening to the band or Zapotec-Yatee singer Martín Marcial during breakfast or dinner with my parents were early moments of transborder comunalidad teachings.

These multiple forms of Zoochina teachings allowed me, like my sisters, and peers who also grew up returning and listening to Oaxacan music to become familiar with the town and its people. And, even though Martín Marcial's Zapotec was distinct to that of Zoochina's, and I only knew but a few words of Zapotec, my parents' translation of the songs were my parents's way of teaching about *"cosutmbres*" (traditions). These were some of the ways in which children began to build knowledge about being Zoochinense, being from the Sierra, and even some glimpse into Zapotec words that allowed them to build ties to a land they were not born in.

Ties to Land and Collective Memory as Methodological Practice

As I began to collect the oral histories of the first-generation migrants, a recurrent theme kept coming up, the 12-year war (1940s to 1960s) in the pueblo. The 12-year conflict was an armed conflict between Zoochina and a neighboring pueblo. There are two stories of why it

began, but the one that was often repeated by those who lived through the war was that it began over a love affair. Tia Chelo, of whose story I detail in chapter 3 described, "Cuando este hombre se enteró del enredo, se enfrentó al hombre de Zoochina. Involucraron un arma y ahí es donde comenzó [la guerra]."[203] Many lives were lost on each side and along with that went some land. For many years, it left uneasy feelings between both Indigenous communities involved. In Los Angeles, reconciliation occurred through the bands. In the Sierra, relationships began earlier through the interactions of the younger generations, some as authority members and as bull-riders in *jaripeos* (bull-riding contests) who were not alive then, but who have had to participate with one another in an effort to carry out community events. In chapter three, I describe more at length what effect and role the conflict had on HTA first-generation immigrants, and women in particular, here I reflect on the feelings, silences, and other tellings I captured while conducting oral histories and participant observation.

One afternoon, during *Centro Social San Jerónimo Zoochina's* HTA meeting, the discussion of recruiting more youth membership was put on the table. As members debated ideas about how to recruit youth and their lack of membership through the HTA, a migrant man in his fifties shared, "Necesitamos que hablar más con nuestros hijos sobre los sacrificios que se hicieron durante el conflicto. Las vidas que se perdieron para poder tener nuestro pueblo."[204] Others similarly exclaimed, "Es importante enseñarles a nuestros hijos todos estos sacrificios para que entiendan nuestro amor al pueblo y que no haber sido por nuestros padres y paisanos

[203] Personal conversation, Tia Chelo, January 9, 2020. Translation: "When this man found out about the affair, he confronted the man from Zoochina. A weapon was involved and that's where it [the war] began."

[204] Participant observation, *Centro Social San Jerónimo Zoochina*, July 2014. Translation: We need to talk more with our children about the sacrifices that were made during the conflict. The lives that were lost in order to have our pueblo.

que dieron su vida no habría un pueblo al cual regresar."[205] Doña Crisostona, one of the main founders of the HTA further expressed, "Esos momentos fueron los peores de mi vida. Lo peor para muchos aquí [cuando su voz comienza a quebrarse con lágrimas en los ojos continuó]. Creo que muchos de nosotros hemos hablado durante mucho tiempo con nuestros hijos sobre estos traumas. Lo que vivimos."[206] Her comment, allowed an overwhelming number of elders to agree and provide further detail about how they lived and what they witnessed during those times. For those of us who were not there during the war, all we could do was listen and feel their sorrow as each elder painfully remembered with a tremble in their voice and sniffling and blows into tissue. They were raised during the war (1950s-1960s) and are therefore children of war. They too were more vocal and willing to talk about the war then the elders in the pueblo who were adults raising these children at the time.

At the beginning of this chapter, I start with my grandmother's interview. That year, I was on a mission to interview the elders who had survived the war. I interviewed four men and four women all in their seventies. Naïvely, I went in thinking I was ready enough to handle the feelings that talking about the war might bring up. I always asked before, during, and even after the interviews if my participants and their family were okay with continuing these conversations. Although they always remembered so much, they only talked about it to their children. Surprised that a daughter of an immigrant would be interested enough to hear them, they assured me they wanted to continue, as I assured them that I wanted to be able to capture their stories for

[205] Participant observation, *Centro Social San Jerónimo Zoochina*, July 2014. Translation: It is important to teach our children all these sacrifices so that they understand our love for the people and that had it not been for our parents and countrymen who gave their lives there would be no pueblo to return to.

[206] Doña Crisostona, *Centro Social San Jerónimo Zoochina*, July 2014. Translation: Those moments were the worst of my life. The worst for many here [as her voice starts cracking with tears in her eyes she continued]. I think many of us have for a long time spoken to our children about these traumas. They know my pain. They know that pain is shared amongst us.

the next generation of Zoochinenses in order to understand what you went through to remain on the land. Clearly, as much as I prepared, I was emotionally not ready for all the grief that would come.

I asked, “Me puede decir que es lo que recuerda del conflicto? Cómo fue?” (“Can you tell me what it is that you remember of the conflict?” How was it?) Slowly, some made it past ten or fifteen minutes before tearing up and/or remaining silent as they gathered up again. There was one interview however, where I was unable to go on indefinitely. This was a man who was at the forefront of the war and had survived. His health had deteriorated two years prior, but I could see his strong character. His daughter stood right next to him as she translated to me what he was saying in Zapotec. Another man vividly recounted how he had smuggled in weapons as a Bracero and how despite not wanting to ever shoot, especially against someone, he had to. The other two men only briefly got involved in the war as they had older uncles who took them to the city and therefore out of the long devastation that would follow.

Each man held a weapon to defend the land, but each woman also guaranteed the longevity of the pueblo in a way perhaps only imaginable to those who have directly experienced war and other forms of violence. Women had critical roles. They were in charge of moving children and elders to the next allied pueblo when the fighting would erupt again, while frantically grabbing whatever food was available; mostly tortillas and coffee, if at all, for an unknown number of days. They were also in charge of getting the *petate* (reed mat) ready for a fellow townsman to easily grab if a house member was killed. These mats had for years been used as coffins and became an important symbol as they were not only used to sleep on, but to lay to rest community members who had died in Zoochina. Two women described what it felt like to see a man rush to their house after gunfire to get a reed mat. One precisely described,

"Cuando venían a agarrar el petate [de nuestras casas] ya sabíamos. No tenian que decir nada (conforme se rompía su voz y se quedó callada)."[207] It was mostly difficult when women, children, and elders were unable to escape before fighting resumed that these mats announce such a traumatic loss as they saw the lifeless body of a husband, father, son, brother, or uncle wrapped in them. For many of the immigrant generation in Los Angeles, this is exactly what they remember. Children who were as young as four-years-old and are now in their sixties bore witness to such horrors and remember it throughout their lives.

Even the silences, stillness of their body, and the blank gaze into space at every moment of these particular conversations were filled with emotion. As Salvadoran diasporic scholar Leisy Ábrego describes in her work with Central American women in diaspora coping with the effects of the civil war, "women have moved beyond the silence, using their gendered consciousness and their knowledge."[208] Zoochina women have also used their silence as a coping mechanism, but it is their gendered consciousness and their communal knowledge that have allowed them to further transition from a state of silence to one where sharing opens the possibility to map the ways in which women also defended the land. However, as Zoochina women, they never shared these horrors with children of migrants that were not immediately related to them. Opening up to me was both a process of moving beyond the confinements of their silence as well as a transborder *comunalidad* sharing of their knowledge. While both processes spoke to the fear they had carried over time, their silence helped them cope. Just as they were not passive or housebound, their actions carried out what their silence could not speak, showing that their love

[207] Personal communication, an elder woman in Zoochina, summer 2010. Translation: When they came to grab the reed mat [from our house] we already knew. They didn't have to say anything (as their voices would break and they remained quiet).

[208] Leisy Abrego, "On Silences: Salvadoran refugees then ad now," *Latino Studies* 15 (2017): 83.

for the pueblo was one tied by weaving their shared past through their presence and ongoing existence.[209]

Furthermore, coping was not necessarily part of a recovery process because no one really recovers from a loved one's tragic death or land dispossession, one just learns how to transition into a different stage of coping. However, sharing was a form of recovery in the sense that these stories have never been heard. This was evident when talking to the U.S.-raised and born Zoochinenses on the role that women took in the conflict. Though I kept names confidential between all my participants, when I shared what their roles were, in general terms, this history was completely unknown. One young woman replied in the following way: "What? In the *conflicto*? Really? I didn't know that?" Another woman exclaimed: "Who told you? Why didn't I know that?" Haitian scholar, Michel Rolph-Trouillot, talks about the process of history (making) as the fruit of power. He reminds us that individuals "participate in history both as actors and narrators" where the silences take up different forms, such as in remembrance, omission, recordings, or/and acceptance.[210] Having these women's silence transition from when I listened to them in their corridors or kitchen tables, to rewinding their recording in order to transcribe and make sense of it in coding recurrent themes, and to then write them was a process of mourning and historical recovery. Being unaware of how women put their lives at risk to save their children, elders, and community, was as telling as those who held a weapon.

Indigenous oral histories tell a deep and long history of trauma. These are not only personal stories, but also collective ones in which memory is deeply grounded. The stories

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[209] Susan Kellogg, *Weaving the Past: A History of Latin America's Indigenous Women from the Prehispanic Period to the Present* (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 3.

[210] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1995), 2.

presented here tell many communal stories, some which indirectly speak, but also capture silences and, at times, even weeping and other bodily emotions. Oral historians refer to this process of memory or remembering as "working memory" by which emotions are painfully triggered (Charlton et al. 2011). Collective memory leads communities to find peace, justice, and reconciliation, yet for others there is a refusal to forgive.[211]

In Latin America, voices of Indigenous women have largely come about through *testimonios* (testimonies).[212] Testimonios, like storytelling and oral histories, take critical points of departure in showing past and current Indigenous Latin American stories of survival. For instance, testimonios take the characteristic of individual and collective memory where telling both "empowers and destroys."[213] Whereas Blackmer Reyes and Curry Rodríguez 2012 contest that Spanish to English translation does not do justice for the severity of the crimes Indigenous peoples have bore witness to, they have often as well empowered survivors and others to continue telling their truths against settler states and empires like that of the United States. As John Beverly describes, "[this is] part of a necessary pedagogy … despite its ambiguities and contradictions."[214] However, equally important is that "Testimonio literature is powerfully

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[211] Rachel Flowers, "Refusal to forgive: Indigenous women's love and rage," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 4, no. 2 (2015). For more on Indigenous reconciliation, peace and justice see, (Seils, 2002, Kaminer et al. 2001, and O'Neill 2005).

[212] Testimonios began to be written in the 1970s where it was Indigenous women's voices from Latin America that took a center stage. Some of these testimonio books include: '*Si me permiten hablar…'* testimonio de Domitila una mujer de las minas de Bolivia (1977), *me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia* (1998) and *When a Flower is Reborn: The Life and Time of a Mapuche Women* (2002).

[213] Kathryn Blackmer Reyes and Julia E. Curry Rodrígez, "*Testimonio*: Origins, Terms, and Reources," *Equity and Excellence in Education* vol. 45, no. 3 (2012): 527.

[214] John Beverley, *Testimonio: On the Politics of Truth* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 24. Some of the contradictions occur in how these stories get translated and lose some of its meaning, as well as being translated and transcribed by a white person and most often a U.S. press.

gendered by the voices of women."[215] This gendered dynamic juxtaposes that of highly male-dominated politics and stories where the roles of wives, daughters, and other women in the community have often been degraded or ignored.[216] Though exclusion of women in movements, organizations, or community elections are not new, *testimonio*, like storytelling and oral histories can provide a tool through which Indigenous women refuse to forget and forgive the conditions and fear that settler states inflict upon them.[217]

Because *testimonio* literature is told through a collective memory process, time and again Indigenous women/feminists argue that it is impossible to talk about oneself outside of their community.[218] Therefore, testimonios by Indigenous women not only sustain women communally, but also connect them and the larger community to their land. Undeniably, their story has shaped the literary field and how the world may be use to seeing them as "passive" to active. In a similary way, this chapter, born from interdisciplinary training in Latin American studies, Chicana/o studies, and American Indian studies, does just that. Additionally, because Indigenous peoples have always been in transit, it contends that Indigenous protocols help sustain transborder comunalidad practices.

For many Indigenous peoples and communities, land is remembered as that which holds collective memory and survival, and not necessarily as property or economic profit, (Arvin,

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[215] Georg Gugelberger and Michael Kearney, "Voices for the Voiceless: Testimonial Literature in Latin America" *Latin American Perspectives* Issue 70, vol. 18, no. 3 (1991): 8.

[216] In '*Sí me permiten hablar*,' Domitila Barrios tells the story of the men, children and women who live under the harsh conditions of the mining houses. By situating the family and community in the mines, as well as the labor movement to demand better living and working conditions Barrios testifies to the daily harmful conditions of a large Andean labor force.

[217] For example, some of the most popular testimonios by Indigenous women have been that of Domitila Barrios (Andean, Bolivia), Rigoberta Menchú Tum (K'iche,' Guatemala), and Rosa Isolde Reuque Paillalef (Mapuche, Chile).

[218] Rosalva Aída Hernández Castillo and Andrew Canessa, ed. 2012; Martha Sánchez Nestor, ed. 2005.

Tuck, and Morrill 2013; Dunbar-Ortiz 2014; Goeman 2008, 2009, 2015; Martínez Luna 2010; Rivera Cusicanqui 2012; Wolf 2006). Seneca scholar, Mishuana Goeman (2015), discusses the ways in which American Indian diasporas describe land. In Goeman's words,

> Indigenous peoples make place by relating both personal and communal experiences and histories to certain location and landscapes—maintaining these spatial relationships is one of the most important components of politics and our identity. Indigenous Nations claim land through a discursive communal sharing, and land is not only given meaning through consensus of claiming territory but also through narrative practices (Goeman 2015, 73).

Identifying as Zoochinense, rather than Zapotec or "Indigenous" is directly linked to migrants' relationship to Zoochina and Oaxaca. For the U.S.-born generation, the hometown is such an important place because it is the root to their identities and it gives meaning to them in understanding their parents' love to the land through the shared stories of struggle, war, loss, family and survival. It is the way in which they have come to understand their everyday life and reality as Indigenous *Serranos* settled in urban diaspora where 'Land in this moment is living and layered in memory'" and across generations participating in multiple sociocultural traditions in diaspora (Goeman 2015, 75).

(Story)telling as Practice & Refusal

For Zoochinense elders on and off their land, pain, sorrow, and refusal to *forget* never ended. They continue to work through the ramifications of the war. Collectively, whether in their homes or in the hometown association meetings, they have passed these stories onto their children and grandchildren. While these stories are painful and triggering, they are also a way in which many in the community maintain their relationship and love for San Jerónimo Zoochina. Working memory crosses multiple generations and fills younger generations with the same love, respect, and belonging as the children of migrants who continue the communal responsibilities

that further tie them to the land and their identity. For the elders and parents, whose ages range between sixty and eighty, this collective memory has been part of them for most of their lives.

Because research on Indigenous peoples is rarely told from the perspective of Indigenous peoples themselves, our relationships with the community goes beyond research for research sake. As critical Indigenous ethnographers, placing the community at the heart of our work means that they take a front, center, and ongoing presence in and outside our research scope. Ethnographic investment means breaking from Western tradition that overtly pushes for a personal detachment and distancing with those whom we write about and *with*. Due to our long confrontation with settler colonial violence telling and sharing our stories are indeed acts of contestation because they show that despite five quincentennials we are still here. We are living, teaching, (re)creating, unsettling, and marking our past, presence, and ongoing ways of life individually and in transborder comunalidad ways. These are also acts of refusal because they show that we refuse to assimilate, be racialized, and be seen as dead or dying.

Audra Simpson (2007) describes that community involvement in the development of a project not only speaks and pushes back against empire, but also allows Indigenous peoples to "write their own histories, to claim their own intellectual and material space and to exercise dominion over it."[219] This push back allows past, present and emerging stories to be conceived and told through the peoples' perspective and communal knowledge and practices. Like Simpson, ethnographic refusal speaks beyond academic confinements of (ethical) research and against colonial structures that define belonging, recognition, and identity. Critical Indigenous scholars refuse settler colonial states Indigenous classification (see chapter 1) that are premised on static notions of identity and elimination. As fully and ongoing immersed Zapotec generations

[219] Audra Simpson, "On Ethnographic Refusal: Indigeneity, 'Voice' and Colonial Citizenship," *Junctures* (2007): 78.

in diaspora, we also refuse and problematize U.S.-racialization of our peoples as Latinas/os/Hispanic, and ethnic studies courses that attempt to label us as Chicanas/os. In identifying as Zoochinenses (people from Zoochina), Serrana/os (people from the highlands), Oaxaqueña/os (Oaxacans, an identity that I also pose as an Indigenous claim), there is also a push back against Empire to define us and remove us from our lands. Our communities have had vast differences in the ways we participate with one another in cultural, political, social, and (religious) ceremonies across many landscapes. To refuse is to acknowledge that we are here and that we continue to be from Zoochina.

In this regard, Jeff Corntassel et al. (2009) reminds us of the importance of remaining grounded to the community. In other words, these stories are doing more than telling an individual and collective narrative; they are telling a truth that counters state, government, and other settler imaginaries of Indigenous peoples complete dispossession.[220] As Indigenous scholars writing on Indigenous issues it is not enough to work alongside the community if there's not an interrogation that discomforts the state while at the same time situates the community's history, present, and ongoing actions and narratives as knowledge and teaching productions that make such distress erupt in the first place. Indigenous peoples are not passive and have never stopped sharing their stories of survival and strength to the next generation[221] as a way to maintain their relationship and love for their community. Whether as a method of sustaining or countering history, Indigenous communities have often continued to rely on oral and participatory communication as an alternate source to texts.

At the Crossroads of Chicana/o, Latin American, and American Indian Studies

[220] Jeff Corntassel, Chaw-win-is, and T'lakwadzi, "Indigenous Storytelling, Truth-telling, and Community Approaches to Reconciliation," *English Studies in Canada* vol35 no. 1 (2009).

[221] If only in such a specific and traumatizing context have certain stories of war not been shared.

The emergence of settler colonialism has recently begun in Ethnic Studies fields, and some disciplinary studies departments. Unfortunately, this time lag has left Indigenous studies, particularly, American Indian/Native American studies, First Nation studies/Aboriginal studies, and Kanaka Maoli studies outside the scope of settler colonialism, as if the dialogues recently started in the last couple of years. Our responsibility as Indigenous diasporic or Indigenous "arrivant" scholars is to acknowledge that critical Indigenous studies, particularly Indigenous scholars, have paved the way since 1492.[222] Nevertheless, the "awkward banner of 'settler colonial theory,' as described by Aimee Carrillo Rowe and Eve Tuck (2017), describes the severity of some scholarship that too often looks at settler colonialism as a framework, rather than a real life violent structure that continues to erase Indigenous voices.[223]

Indigenous land acknowledgment is essential in critical ethnography. Land acknowledgment in Chicana/o and Latina/o Studies has only recently begun. This transition has further allowed those who once claimed Los Angeles and the rest of the U.S. southwest as their own to be more cautious. For Chicana/os, as well as those in the field, these landscapes have been referred to as Aztlán, the mythical ancestral home of Aztec people and therefore of Chicana/os who claim to be their descendants. Though, still unsettling for some, these are unceded lands. The Tongva/Gabrieleno/Gabrielinos, Chumash, Fernandeños, and other Native peoples of the many basins, channels, mountains, desserts, valleys, and hills throughout southern California, as elsewhere, never "died out" and most importantly never ceded the lands. If at the center of our research is acknowledgment and respect for the lands we traverse and who we are as Indigenous peoples, we must address these slippages.

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[222] Aime Carrillo Rowe and Eve Tuck, "Settler Colonialism and Cultural Studies: Ongoing Settlement, Cultural Production, and Resistance," *Cultural Studies* 17 (1), (2017): 3.

[223] Carrillo Rowe and Eve Tuck, "Settler Colonialism and Cultural Studies," 3.

With the arrival and long establishment of settlers, people of color, and other Indigenous peoples from the global south have come the renaming of lands, particularly in large ethnic enclaves. While important scholarship has emerged from these early studies, critical Indigenous epistemologies are necessary to understand the other side of the coin. As critical Indigenous scholars, engaging, interpreting, and rewriting our stories are decolonial acts or resistance. My ethnographic procedures and responsibility as an Indigenous scholar inquire me to address that Yangna, downtown Los Angeles, like other cities in California are not Oaxacalifornia. Oaxacalifornia, is a term coined by late anthropologist Michael Kearney to describe a third-space that Indigenous Oaxacan migrants in California create home through social, cultural and political acts that contest Mexico as an empire.[224]

Similarly troublesome is the field of Chicana/o studies that traditionally, rather easily, and inconsequently, label Chicanas/os as Indigenous, while at the same time label all Latina/o (students) as Chicana/os. First, there is a popular misbelief that Chicana/os *all* derive from an Aztec/Mexica ancestry or that the community they are from "once had many Indigenous peoples" and therefore it is okay to reclaim an Indigenous ancestry. It is not okay. This move of "playing Indian" is problematic as it mirrors a *settler moves to innocence* practice. Coined by Tuck and Yang (2012), they describe settler moves to innocence as, "strategies or positions that attempt to relieve the settler of feelings of guilt and responsibility without giving up land or power or privilege, without having to change much at all. [These] are enacted differently by

[224] For a depth original analysis on Oaxacalifornia see Kearney's "Transnational Oaxacan Indigenous Identity: The Case of Zapotecs and Mixtecs" 2000). For its original coining timeline refer to "The Effects of Transnational Culture, Economy, and Migration on Mixtec Identity in Oaxacalifornia," in *The Bubbling Cauldron: Race, Ethnicity, and the Urban Crisis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1995). Also see Gaspar Rivera-Salgado's, "Mixtec Activism in Oaxacalifornia: Transborder Grassroots Political Strategies," (1999): 226-243."

white people and by brown and Black people."[225] Relieve of feelings of guilt and responsibilities are indeed entrenched in non-Indigenous strategies and positions. The lack of these feelings is also tied to a lack of communal ongoing relationship to the land and the Native peoples of the land.

Recent scholars in the field of Chicana/o studies are addressing these issues.[226] For example, there have been instances when Chicana/os have attempted to romanticize Indigeneity and/or question it when one does not have "authentic" or "static" characteristics or practices. At other times, the desire to play Indian occurs through the wearing of Indigenous shirts, jewelry, patterns, designs, symbols, and to a lesser extent footwear, where other times it occurs through the romanticization of Indigenous icons, images, spirituality, at its bare minimum. It is true that some have fully taken on the task to more responsibly seek these practices through the teaching of Indigenous elders or others who wish to be in dialogue, but what I underscore here is more the vulture-like practices that have very little, if at all, concern to bring accountability, respect, and responsibility with Indigenous communities. Of further concern is the fact that these are all very gendered practices where Indigenous women are used as trope-like figures to accomplish settler fantasies. This in its very act not only defies Chicana/o relationships with Indigenous peoples, but outright survival as they infringe upon traditional ways of knowing . Mirroring the Indigenous consumption of "a desire to 'play Indian,'" we are reminded, "it is actually a fundamental condition of life within settler colonialism."[227] Particularly, this is the case in the

[225] Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization is not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education, and Society* vol. 1, no. 1 (2012): 10.

[226] See the *Latino Studies* Critical Latinx Indigeneities special issue (2017) as well as Alberto 2012; Castellanos et al. 2012.

[227] Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck, and Angie Morrill, "Decolonizing Feminism: Challenging Connections between Settler Colonialism and Heteropatriarchy," *Feminist Formations* vol. 25, Iss. 1 (spring 2013): 19.

United States with Latin American Indigenous diasporas and American Indian cultural appropriation where the bodies of Indigenous women have been central and sought out the most to accomplish appropriation, accessibility, and desirability. Though Indigenous women, like men, children, and elders make a living by selling these items, what is at stake here is the recognition that these elements cannot exist without responsibility to, for, and with Indigenous lives. Even though these conversations are not new, as critical Indigenous scholars within Chicana/o studies have been discussing and writing about, they are indeed new to many who have consciously or innocently "played Indian."

Not surprisingly, these critiques have been received negatively, where overwhelmingly Chicano men have called these mostly Indigenous women out as "sell outs," "ignorant," "divisive."[228] These were the same critiques Chicano men used against Chicana women (mostly queer women) during the 80s and 90s when Chicanas called out the sexist and homophobic practices that excluded their concerns and confined them to gender expected roles.[229] Additionally, as Oaxacans who were raised in the southwest, and California specifically, we have often grown up experiencing a hyper-Indianization by non-Indigenous mestizos/Chicana/os. Many of us began these critiques on Chicana/o Indigeneity within our Indigenous grassroots organizing, our lived experiences with our Indigenous communities, and finally now in the classrooms and in cyber spaces not formally available. Like then, we continue to know that the field still needs growing.

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[228] Much of this critique and backlash have occurred through social media.

[229] See for example, Alarcón 1990; Anzaldúa and Moraga 1981; Anzaldúa 1987; Blackwell 2011; Garcia 1997; and Hurtado 1998.

It is my intention that through transborder and communal voices, practices, and other acts this work can provide an alternate perspective to the field of Chicana/o and Latina/o Studies. So much as we voice our anguish against appropriation and our imposed identity as Chicana/os, transborder comunalidad intends to bring to the field of immigration and transnational studies non-traditional marginalized stories of Latin American diasporas. As Kanaka Maoli scholar, Lisa Kahaleole Hall reminds us, "Reconstructing [and re-creating] tradition and memory is a vital element of indigenous survival, and there is nothing simple or one-dimensional about the processes of reconstruction."[230] In other words, Indigenous transborder comunalidad stories and practices not only have the power to maintain communal ties to their land and translocally, but they challenge settler colonial ideas of Indianization across geographies and among Mexicanos/Chicana/os themselves.

Critical Indigenous studies and ethnography, as a field beyond the North (U.S. and Canada), allows Othered Indigenous narratives to be brought from out of the shadows of academia and from other settler structures. For example, U.S. and Latin American state assimilation models propel us to revisit the boundaries of critical pedagogy in order to consider an in-depth Indigenous pedagogy not only from American Indian studies perspectives, but also from the perspective of Latin American Indigenous diasporas. An Indigenous epistemological intervention in the literature of the West, while calling for its unique position as Indigenous "arrivants" on Native land is therefore not only an act of literary citation, but it involves critically merging conversations with scholars and communities who speak on the experiences from colonial erasure, yet weaves Indigeneity frameworks that speaks across commonalities and differences.

[230] Lisa Kahaleole Hall, "Navigating Our Own 'Sea of Islands:' Mapping a Theoretical Space for Hawaiian Women and Indigenous Feminism, *Wicazo Sa Review* vol. 24, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 31.

So crucial is the need to merge voices from the North to voices from the Southern hemisphere. One of these Latin American-based scholars is Quechua-Aymara intellectual Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (2012) who urges U.S. scholars in colonial studies and its subfield, decolonial and postcolonial, to recognize and engage with Indigenous Latin Americans because for a long time they have provided contributions in theory and discourse.[231] Cusicanqui argues that the appropriation of Indigenous knowledge of the south and other Third Worlds, by Latin American mestizo elites in the U.S. and Latin America specifically, forms an intellectual canon built on academic race-based hierarchies. These U.S. academic hierarchies come with cultural and symbolic capital to continue a U.S.-centered tradition of scholarly formations where traditional disciplinary hierarchies profit from Indigenous stories.[232] Similar to Grande (2000) Pulido (2017), Smith (2012), Simpson (2007), and Tuck and Yang (2012), Cusicanqui posits that Indigenous intellectual exclusion and lack of acknowledgement within multiple (sub)fields represent complicity in the genocide and removal of Indigenous knowledge and peoples.[233] Therefore, exclusion of Indigenous presence and episteme not only occurs within disciplinary studies or subfields, but across geographical regions where those with significant and dynamic capitals have advantage and prestige. Being aware that as a U.S.-interdisciplinary based scholar my work benefits from U.S.-centered knowledge, the reality of transnational or transborder Indigenous communities further complicates this reality. In other words, while Zoochinenses transborder and communal experiences and pedagogy attempt to contest Western-based

[231] Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, "Ch'ixinakax utxiwa. A Reflection on the Practices and Discourses of Decolonization," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 111:1 (Duke University English Translation), (2012): 104.

[232] Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, "El potencial epistemológico y teórico de la historia oral: de la lógica instrumental a la descolozación de la historia," In *Teoria critica dos direitos humanos no século XXI*, edited by Phenix Produções Gráficas (Porto Alegre, Brazil: Edipucrs), 2012: 157-178.

[233] Rivera Cusicanqui, "El potencial epistemológico y teórico de la historia oral," 175.

perspectives on Indigenous peoples, they can also highlight how academic exclusion outside of the U.S., where race-based and ethnic hierarchies also exist, are further complicity in the genocide and removal of their knowledge and communities.

Conclusion

Critical ethnographic research must center: (1) the community; (2) Native knowledge as critical pedagogy; (3) Native/Indigenous literature not only within the global structures that we essentially form our scholarship. As a Zapotec second-generation woman in the Los Angeles, my lifetime transborder community involvement centrally informs my Indigenous autoethnography and how I position myself as both a community-engaged member and as scholar. My responsibility and commitment for respect and acknowledgement of Indigenous peoples and communities lies not only with those whom I work with, but also the Native peoples of the Los Angeles basin —Tongva/Gabrielino — where I conduct my research and where the Zoochina community practices numerous gatherings. As a commitment to those I work with and the different Indigenous lands I have come across in the United States and Mexico, I am indebted to past, present, and emerging Indigenous communities who continue to center our communities before individualism, neoliberalism, and other settler structures that govern over stolen Indigenous lands. Using critical interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research approaches that center Indigenous protocols and strategies of survival, such as oral histories, storytelling, and even testimonios, this chapter has attempted to map Zapotec ways of knowing, accountability, respect, responsibility, and peoples through shared stories, silences, and practices that sustain transborder comunalidad survival. The sources I gather to form my theoretical framework, transborder comunalidad, help shape my critical ethnographic perspective. Precisely, it is my community's protocols of working with them that have shaped my scholarship and the ways in

which I undertake my ethnographic research. It is impossible to not be affected by the relationship I continue to foster with them and that which I have further built with the larger Indigenous Oaxacan population throughout California and throughout Oaxaca, Mexico.

CHAPTER 3

ZOOCHINA'S HOMETOWN ASSOCIATION: GENDER & GENERATIONAL SHIFTS

In the late 1960s, Zoochina migrants formed their immigrant hometown association (hereafter referred to as HTA or *la unión*, as the community commonly refers to it). It was not until 1970 that the HTA established itself as the *Centro Social San Jerónimo Zoochina*.[234] *La unión* was started by three immigrant women in their late teens; the oldest being in her early twenties. Since then, women have continuously formed about half of *la unión*'*s* membership and have served on the board of directors. Likewise, the children of migrants have continuously participated as members and held leadership positions since they joined *la unión* in the early 1990s.

The *Centro Social* was formed to bring *paisanas* and *paisanos* (townswomen and men) in Los Angeles together through social, civic, and politically projects for the town. It is the home base for those who continue to be involved with the community, and it plays a central role for the Zoochina diaspora's involvement in other activities, such as dancing and participating in the brass band. In the eyes of members as well as the customary elected authorities in Zoochina, someone involved with *Centro Social* is considered a member of the community more so than those who are not involved because the investment that HTA members provide economically, labor-wise, and time-wise, are seen as wholehearted acts of caring and love for the pueblo. *Centro Social* plays a unique role in how migrants and their children maintain their relation and belonging to the *pueblo* (town) and to those in diaspora as Zoochinenses.

In this chapter, I look at the role that women and young and adult children of migrants have played in the fifty-year survival of *Centro Social San Jerónimo Zoochina* as an Indigenous

[234] I will refer to the Zoochina HTA as *la unión* and *Centro Social* interchangeably, unless otherwise noted.

Oaxacan HTA. I argue that women and children of migrants have been at the heart of Zoochina's survival across borders, acting, organizing, and building together through their hometown association. Furthermore, I depart from most existing studies that view HTAs as simply civic and "non-political," or "less politically involved," organizations whose memberships do not typically include women and the generations born and raised in the U.S. as their *transborder comunalidad* actions directly contest their attempted erasure by the settler colonial projects of Mexico and the U.S. In this chapter, I center the stories of the women and children of migrants who are in fact active core members of *la unión* to draw attention to their important role in sustaining the future of Zoochina. The Zoochina hometown association is an ongoing site of resistance against colonial infrastructures that continuously govern Indigenous identities and gender exclusion. It is through *la unión* that Zoochina Zapotecs and their children have solidified and sustained their relationship and knowledge with the community, and it is through *la unión* that they continue to do so.

I begin this chapter by explaining my methodological engagement with *la unión*. Next, I locate *la unión* and its distinct commitment to transborder communal autonomous practices in the landscape of hometown associations. I then renarrate the chronology of *la unión* and examine the organizational structure of *la unión* before documenting the many ways in which women and the children of migrants have contributed to sustaining *la unión* and Zoochina. I conclude with a reflection on the ways in which Indigenous ways of life and knowing and building distinguish *la unión* as a communal transborder site that reaffirms Indigenous modes of being and centers Zoochina futurity.

Methods and Positioning in *La Unión*

The importance and meaning of *la unión* has progressively changed for me as I have become an adult and eventually a mother. When I first joined *la unión*, the oldest members and the board welcomed me by talking about their excitement having youth join the HTA because, as one women founder shared, "La unión se formo para el futuro de Zoochina. Nosotros ya estamos viejos y necesitamos a los jóvenes que se integren y lo [la unión] lleven adelante."[235] Over the years, I have seen the membership grow to include more second-generation women. Before my integration, there was about a handful of second-generation women; since then, many other women have joined, some of whom have been elected and reelected as board members.

I have learned so much about the important role that women play in *la unión* by listening and observing different interactions in *la unión*, from meetings and events to more informal conversations. As the youngest member of *la unión* in 2011, I listened more than I spoke, as much of what was often shared at the meetings was new to me. As I listened and observed, I came to more fully understand the "behind the scenes" organizing and fundraising for Zoochina projects in Los Angeles and in Oaxaca. During my years in the HTA, I have observed how elders pass on their commitment, seriousness, responsibility, and love for the pueblo to the younger membership. These teachings are heard through the elder stories of living in the pueblo during difficult times. However, among women, the elders put these transborder communal ways of being into practice. Women, who make up most of the membership, then carry out these practices. Without women, it would almost be impossible to organize and guarantee the community's collective futurity.

Of course, this does not mean that women have equal representation in the HTA to that of their male counterparts. Although women are outspoken just like men, men speak up a lot more

[235] Doña Cresencia, Los Angeles, CA. 2011. Translation: "The HTA was formed for the future of Zoochina. We are old and need youth to be part of it [the HTA] to carry it forward."

in length during meetings; men have accepted their position as president more often than women have. Clearly, there are gender divisions. However, what I attempt to grapple with in this chapter is how these gender and generational shifts in *la unión* still make possible modes of belonging and Indigeneity that counter state-based transborder elimination. In other words, and as I have argued in Chapter 1, Indigeneity does not end with migration or across generations in diaspora. Specifically, diasporic Indigenous women and children of migrants through *la unión* politically and communally complicate their Latina/o and Hispanic identity and therefore survival as Zoochinenses. In the more than fifty years during which it has maintained continuity across generations, genders, and land, the members of the *Centro Social San Jerónimo Zoochina* HTA have demonstrated a commitment to belong to and hold in their hearts a place where many of them were not born.

In Context: Mexican and Oaxacan Hometown Associations

This section briefly contextualizes the role and goals of Mexican and Oaxacan hometown associations in order to locate the distinct position of *Centro Social San Jerónimo Zoochina* HTA, or *la unión*, within the broader landscape of these HTAs. Specifically, *la unión* relies on an autonomous funding structure, engages in Indigenous customary law, and engages in a set of practices that transcend geographies; *la unión* engages in a set of what might collectively be called transborder communal autonomous practices that set it apart from other associations.

According to Fox and Rivera-Salgado (2004), these immigrant associations/groups refer to themselves as "'organizaciones de pueblo,' 'clubes de oriundos,' or 'clubes sociales comunitarios.'"[236] In 2001, Zabin and Escala revealed that metropolitan Los Angeles had the

[236] Jonathan Fox and Gaspar Rivera-Salgado, *Indigenous Mexican Migrants in the United States* (La Jolla, CA: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies and the Center for Comparative Immigration Studies, 2004), 13.

second highest density of Mexican HTAs,[237] after Chicago.[238] Among the most common tasks of HTAs are to collectively organize and obtain money from fellow *paisanos* to send back to their pueblo of origin for community projects or infrastructural development purposes; broadly speaking, for social development and to maintain linkages with their town. While these hometown associations are not unique to the experiences of Mexican migrants or even Latina/o migrants,[239] among Mexican immigrants (mestizo and other non-Indigenous included), these associations have high representation from the Mexican states of Michoacán, Jalisco, Zacatecas, Guanajuato, Guerrero and Durango in the United States.[240] Additionally, these Mexican states have *federaciones* (federations), whose purpose is to work as a representative coalition alongside HTAs. For example, some of the major projects of the federations has been to support their hometown associations with Mexican governments aid-programs. The *Programa 3x1* (3 for 1 Program) is the most popular of these government projects. 3x1 is a multi-level (federal, state, and municipal) program established in 1999 to its major transition at the multiple levels it is sourced in 2002. At the multiple levels of the Mexican government, 3x1 adds three dollars[241] for every one-dollar remittance sent by migrants. Overall, it is successfully implemented with the

[237] Carol Zabin and Ruben Escala-Rabadán, "From Civic Association to Political Participation: Mexican Hometown Associations and Mexican Immigrant Political Empowerment in Los Angeles," *Frontera Norte* 14, no. 27 (2002): 7.

[238] Xóchitl Bada, *Mexican Hometown Associations in Chicagoacán: From Local to Transnational Civic Engagement* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2014).

[239] See, Orozco and Rouse (2007) on Filipino HTAs; Moser (2018) on Senegalese HTAs; Paul and Gammage (2005), Somerville et al. (2008), and Freilich (2017) on Salvadoran HTAs; and Popkin (1999, 2005) on Guatemalan Mayan transnational networks, to name a few.

[240] See, Bada 2003; Fox 2005; Fox and Bada 2008; Rivera-Salgado, Bada, and Escala-Rabadán 2005.

[241] According to the Global Forum on Migration and Development (2019), one peso is added by the federal, state, and municipal government in Mexico to equal a total of 3 pesos.

assistance of hometown associations or migrant federations abroad.[242] Interestingly, this social government aid practically does not exist for Indigenous Oaxacan immigrants and their communities back home.

There are more than a dozen Oaxacan HTAs in Los Angeles. Of these, many are from the Sierra Juárez and concentrate in South L.A., Koreatown, Pico-Union, and Mid-City. These HTAs however, have not taken part in the only Oaxacan federation that has existed, the *Federación Oaxaqueña de Comunidades Indígenas en California* (FOCOICA).[243] This is in contrary to the experience of non-Indigenous mestizo federations, like the Zacatecan, Guerrense, and Michoacán who continuously are part of their Mexican state federation. Likewise, the *Programa 3x1* has largely funneled aid to large traditional sending communities (e.g., Zacatecas, Michoacán, Jalisco, among others),[244] who have also been more economically stable than the southern states of Oaxaca and Chiapas; though the same year that the FOCOICA was formed in 2001, Oaxaca's governor, José Murat, traveled to Los Angeles to sign the 3x1 program agreement implementation in Oaxaca.[245]

Early work on Oaxacan HTAs, particularly that started by Mixtec scholar Gaspar Rivera-Salgado and others, has provided early and ongoing insight into how Indigenous Mexican hometown associations have helped migrants cope with belonging and identity in diaspora (Fox

[242] For more on hometown migrant federations/clubs and the 3x1 Program see, Burgess 2012; Iskander 2012; Orozco 2002.

[243] FOCOICA no longer operates with multiple HTAs as it once used to. For more on FOCOICA see, López, Escala-Rabadán, and Hinojosa-Ojeda (2001) and Rivera-Salgado and Escala Rabadán (2004).

[244] Bada 2014; Duquette-Rury and Bada 2013; Fox and Rivera-Salgado 2004; Zabin and Rabadán 1998, 2001.

[245] Gaspar Rivera-Salgado and Luis Escala Rabadán, "Collective Identity and Organizational Strategies of Indigenous and Mestizo Mexican Migrants," in *Indigenous Mexican Migrant in the United States*, eds. by Jonathan Fox and Gaspar Rivera-Salgado (La Jolla: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies and the Center for Comparative Immigration Studies, 2004), 169.

and Bada 2008; Rivera Salgado 1999; Rivera Salgado and Escala Rabadán 2004). As early models of Indigenous Oaxacan organizing, HTAs have preceded and left remarkable impressions of citizenship building as well as binational and transnational participation[246] that children of migrants have taken on. These forms of organizing indeed have a long history that predates modern projects of state citizenship[247] and first settler contact as I argue throughout this chapter. Unlike larger towns where previous works have been conducted, citizenship plays a more direct, though ambiguous at times, route of responsibilities and rights for Zoochinenses. Lynn Stephen defines cultural citizenship as "recognition of contributions and corresponding rights and claims that may come from the presence of a group of people in a political arena where they lack national citizenship or are effectively stripped of it by discrimination."[248] I conceive of citizenship for Zoochinenses in the Los Angeles diaspora, as also political citizenship in four realms: communal, local, national, and transnational. Though I will not get into the latter three scales of organizing, they go hand-in-hand with the findings that previous studies have shown.[249] Transborder communal citizenship nonetheless, speaks to political forms of citizenship that are further reinforced and adjusting according to how newer generations see fit. These forms of citizenship building, and membership continue to challenge their erasure and elimination as Indigenous peoples by two states that render them as Latina/o and no longer Indigenous.

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[246] Gaspar Rivera-Salgado and Luis Escala Rabadán, "Collective Identity and Organizational Strategies of Indigenous and Mestizo Mexican Migrants," in *Indigenous Mexican Migrants in the United States*, eds. Jonathan Fox and Gaspar Rivera-Salgado (La Jolla, CA: Center for U.S. and Mexican Studies, 2004), 145–178.

[247] Lynn Stephen, "Transborder/Transnational Citizenships: Migrants and Anthropologist: A Response to Gaspar Rivera-Sagado," *Latin American Perspectives* 41, no. 3 (May 2014): 47.

[248] Lynn Stephen, "Transborder/Transnational Citizenship," 50.

[249] For works on the different levels of Indigenous women organizing in Mexico see Blackwell 2006.

The *Centro Social San Jerónimo Zoochina* HTA, or *la unión*, has had many distinctive traits since it was formed. For one, they do not rely on Mexican (or U.S.) government sponsorship to keep themselves active or gain government profit for their community. They are not driven by, nor supported by U.S. or Mexican government programs, like the Program 3x1. Like other Indigenous Oaxacan hometown associations, what makes *San Jerónimo Zoochina's* HTA different is not only their attempt to be autonomous, but also their racial/ethnic composition. Finally, in *la unión*, you can hear up to three different languages being spoken during meetings. Some members are trilingual between speaking Zapotec, Spanish, and English, while most only speak Spanish and English. Zoochina attempts to reflect on *usos y costumbres* (Indigenous customary law) practices that are strongly informed by their autonomously elected authorities in their town. Zoochina does not have political parties and strongly resembles an Indigenous customary law like process of political procedures where, like in Zoochina, the L.A. community elects the next cabinet members based on rotation (e.g., those who have not been elected for some time). Election is considered part of one's responsibility to the pueblo and is now only reserved for those between their late teens and fifties, of who are always men.

A further example of transborder communal autonomous practices is taxation. If someone goes to Zoochina, they are taxed once they step foot there, whether they are a member of the HTA or not. This is the case if they have not made the yearly contribution to the HTA or if they are simply not at all involved in the transnational forms of organizing.[250] This is done in order to guarantee that everyone—whether they are visiting for a few weeks or months—contributes equally to its development and autonomous sustenance, particularly in the usage of water, power, and trash collection.

[250] Yearly contributions are less than $200USD. I am unable to provide further details due to the community's right to privacy on this matter.

A Chronology of the Formation of *Centro Social San Jerónimo Zoochina*

One January afternoon, I visited Tia Chelo at her new residency outside of the City of Los Angeles.[251] I sought to ask her about her early experience in the HTA and her invaluable support during the war. I was particularly excited for this interview, one because Tia Chelo, now 91-years-old, had sacrificed so much of herself, but as she later states, it was "por el pueblo" [for the pueblo]. To say the least, I was enthusiastically impatient to listen to her life. As we began, she inquired more details about human protection (IRB), "Comó es eso? A ver, explicame porque no entiendo bien."[252] I explained that she can share anything she feels okay with and, "Si hay una pregunta que no quiere cotestar esta bien y simplemenete le hago otra [pregunta]. Esta en todo su derecho."[253] I also let her know that I would use pseudonyms, of which she was particularly relieved, "Ah bueno, ha eso es lo que iba."[254] At the moment I did not make much of her intriguing questions, other than not wanting other *paisanas/os* who might come across my work to easily identify her. Never could I imagine that at some point Tia Chelo had been a wanted woman in Oaxaca City for smuggling bags and boxes of weapons. She did so carrying the weapons from house-to-house all the way from Mexico City, to Oaxaca City, and lastly to Zoochina with the help of migrant men. Tia Chelo explained,

> Ellos [los hombres] nos pidieron nuestra [las mujeres] ayuda. Les estaba costando trabajo poder pasar lo aquello [weapons] por los retenes militares entrando a la Sierra y la ciudad [de Oaxaca], pero más que nada la Sierra. Voluntariamente dije que yo podia. Me decian mis tias que si estaba loca, que no lo hiciera, pero yo me encomende a San Jerónimo [el

[251] Tia Chelo is also referred to as "la tia de todos" (everyone's aunt) in the community.

[252] Personal communication, Tia Chelo, January 9, 2020. Translation: "How is that [how does it work]? Let's see, explain to me because I don't understand."

[253] Personal communication, Tia Chelo, Translation: "If there is a question you do not want to answer, it's okay and I'll simply ask you another one. You are in all of your right."

[254] Ibid. Translation: "Ah, okay. That's where I was going."

> santo del pueblo], 'Todo lo hago porti, por tu pueblo, a si es que tu sabes si me cuidas oh no.'[255]

She was the only woman to volunteer and help in such a way during the twelve-year war (1950s to 1960s) with a neighboring town (see chapter 2).[256] Though she momentarily hesitated before volunteering, she knew that her participation was necessary for the pueblo to push through. At the time, she was only twenty-one years old, of which I asked what her parents thought about her helping in such way. Tia Chelo quickly replied, "No querian, no querian. Los dos tenian miedo. Mis tias tenian miedo … pero yo segui. *Yo lo queria hacer por mi pueblo. Por ver su desesperación* [her emotional and physical emphasis]."[257] Her strong perseverance, and the desperation of the community allowed Tia Chelo to continue helping until the end of the war.

For Tia Chelo and many others, armed resistance was not an option; it was necessary. In order to do so however, she had to travel between Zoochina, the city of Oaxaca, and the state of Mexico. It was at this point that I further grasped how the stream of Zoochina migrants and the formation of HTAs helped them cope with the war and their struggle to maintain their lands.[258] As Tia Chelo informed me, the HTA in the City of Netzahualcóyotl[259] (state of Mexico), was formed to aid during the war, "la unión de México se formo con ese proposito, para ayudar al

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[255] Ibid. Translation: "They [the men] asked for our [the women's] help. They were having a hard time bringing in the weapons because of the military checkpoints set out entering the Sierra and entering the City [of Oaxaca], but mostly the Sierra. I volunteered. My aunts would tell me if I was crazy, to not do it, but I entrusted myself to San Jerónimo [the patron saint], 'I do it all for you, for your pueblo, so it's up to you to protect me.'"

[256] There are uncertainties as to why the war started. Some say because of land and others say it was because a love affair involving people from both towns.

[257] Ibid. Translation: "They didn't want to. They didn't want to. Both were scared. My aunts were scared … but I continued. *I wanted to do it for my pueblo. To see their desperation* [her emotional and physical emphasis]"

[258] The HTA in the state of Mexico is older than the Los Angeles-based HTA.

[259] Hereafter referred to as Neza.

pueblo."[260] Therefore, the HTA was critical to the survival of the community. The HTA was the meeting point where Braceros, returning from working in the U.S., stopped to provide Zoochina men and later women with the weapons they had bought while overseas. Multiple men then separately transported them all the way to the pueblo. As they continued doing so, it also became riskier for them as they consistently traveled through a number of state and city limits where police and security were becoming all too familiar with their presence. For this reason, they felt that the safest solution was to ask women for their assistance. Tia Chelo, with responsibilities to help her parents at home, but also with a strong demeanor and rebellious expression to oppose playing with other young girls, marry, or have children (at least in her late teens), agreed to be the only woman to transport these weapons.

Never had I heard of Tia Chelo or, for that matter, any women participating in the war. As I came to learn from speaking with elders in the Los Angeles HTA, *all* women had played a role. They did not simply stand by or take care of their children and elderly. In the city of Neza, it was women who concealed the arms at home and who, when their husbands and other *paisanos* had taken them to Zoochina, discretely packed them up for the long two days of travel by car. Their labor facilitated a secure transportation across the different routes they each took from the state of Mexico to Oaxaca, and finally to Zoochina. These women, as Tia Chelo described, "Prepararon comida, bebidas, ayudaron a esconder las armas para que los paisanos y la carga llegaran bien y no tuvieramos que parar agarrar algo de comer en el camino"[261] and therefore Tia Chelo felt it was important for her to finally share her experience with someone.

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[260] Ibid. Translation: "For the HTA [based in the state of Mexico] was formed with purpose, to help the pueblo."

[261] Ibid. Translation: They prepared food, drinks, helped hide the weapons so that the civilians and the cargo could arrive well so that we would not have to stop anywhere along the way to eat.

She explained, "No he querido compartir con nadie. La verdad es que hay muchas cosas, cosas tristes, pero ya tengo una edad que digo: '¿Qué me pueden hacer en este momento de mi vida? Así que acepté que vendrías."[262]

On a couple of occasions, she and a few men traveling in a different car were stopped in Oaxaca at a military checkpoint and at a police checkpoint.[263] Riding on the back of an empty pick-up truck, she sat on top of the concealed weapons and opened up her wide traditional Zoochina skirt so as to further hide them when asked for her identification documents. A few moments later, they allowed her and those in the truck to proceed. She had successfully used her hand-woven skirt as a ticket to safety for her and the other men; in that moment, too, she had the freedom to be in control of the situation. Tia Chelo's traditional wear empowered those of her community against the surveillance and policing of the state that had done nothing to bring about peace between both communities. On another occasion in Oaxaca, prior to taking more secure measures, a police officer asked her what was in a box. Calmly and seriously, she replied, "*Trastes* (dishes)." She remembered that the officer, somewhat hesitantly after asking for everyone's identification, allowed them to proceed. "¡Tenía un pánico que no podía creer! Le dije: 'Bueno, que sea lo que Dios quiere.' Me encomende a San Jerónimo y cuando regresó a mí, nos dijo que procediéramos."[264] Tia Chelo carried no dishes whatsoever. However, the action she took with her skirt, allowed them time to think of different ways to passage through in the future.

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[262] Ibid. Translation: "I have not wanted to share with anyone. The truth is that there many things, sad things, but I am already of an age that I tell myself, 'What can they do to me at this point in my life?' So, I agreed that you would come."

[263] Amidst the ongoing war of the two towns, the Oaxacan government had placed a military checkpoint at the entrance to the Sierra Juárez.

[264] Ibid. Translation: "I had a panic that I would not believe! I said, 'Well, let it be what God wants.' I met Saint Jerome and when he returned to me, he told us to proceed."

Unfortunately, Tia Chelo soon grew more preoccupied as news spread about her role in transporting weapons, fearing that the town at war with would attempt against her life. With the support of the Neza HTA, they decided that she would now travel with different assistants at each cross point (Neza, Oaxaca, and in the Sierra). In communication with the communally elected authorities in Zoochina, they decided to guard (*"poner guardia"*) her home each day. Even though Tia Chelo refused to be intimidated and assured them that she could take care of herself, "Les dije que no lo necesitaba. Que iba ha estar bien. Todas las noches me dormía con mi arma de bajo de mi almohada,"[265] they did not cede. However, she also let them know that she did not need a man's help to feel safe. Each pueblo guaranteed the safety of their community. Both also wished for the war to end soon in order to live in peace.

Tia Chelo's story, like that of other migrant women who are now elders in Los Angeles, also risked themselves to defend children, elders, and provide other support for men during combat (see chapter two). Doña Elena[266] recounted how one day when war erupted without warning, she was coming back from picking brushwood from a nearby mountain. As she entered the pueblo, with her seven-year-old son, her one-year-old baby on her back, and the brushwood on her head, gunfire broke out. In her desperation, they all accidentally slipped down a hill when her sandal broke and landed in the high cornfields where she shielded her children with her body. Women along sidemen, did all they could to defend the land. The pain, love, and respect they have for Zoochina is ingrained in collective memory of war trauma. For this reason, they have never stopped organizing and seeking their participation in it.

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[265] Ibid. Translation: "I told them I didn't need it. That was going to be fine. Every night I fell asleep with my gun under my mattress."

[266] Personal communication, Doña Elena, July 2015. Doña Elena passed away the following year. She was 83 years old.

Similar to Zapatista Totzil, Tzeltal, Tojola'bal, and Mam women, Zoochina women spoke up and demanded to participate as they saw fit. Zapatista women who made their demands on their own declaration stated the following:

> We have been taught since childhood to be obedient, to silence our complaints, to put up and shut up, to refrain from speaking or participating. But we do not want to be left behind. We do not want to be stepped over. Both as indigenous people and as women, we demand respect for ourselves and for all our rights.[267]

From the 1950s to the 1960s, during the war, Zoochina women contested gender expectations through their actions and words. Even when their lives were on the line, they refused to be treated as unable to care for themselves and in need of men's help at every moment. By organizing alongside their male compatriots across four regions—the U.S., the state of Mexico, Oaxaca City, and Zoochina—they organized themselves to guide a community to safety. This organizing took on transborder and translocal dimensions. Drawing on their own communal teachings, Zoochina women organized across multiple geographies to conserve Zoochina's longevity. As the war ended, increasingly more women, men, and youth migrated, bringing with them their organizing skills and love for the pueblo. First, they settled in the State of Mexico for a few years, and then they took the journey further north into the United States. Like other migrants, they had established networks from other Sierra pueblos living in the heart of Los Angeles— Koreatown and Pico-Union.

I became aware of the unique gender composition of the Los Angeles-based *Centro Social San Jerónimo Zoochina unión* during a conversation with Don Rogelio,[268] where he discussed the importance of participating in it. This was the first time I heard that women had

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[267] Shannon Speed, R. Aída Hernández Castillo, and Lynn Stephen, *Dissident Women: Gender and Cultural Politics in Chiapas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 6.

[268] Personal communication, Don Rogelio, October 2015. He has since passed away. He was sixty-three. Don Rogelio's name remains unchanged.

actually started the *unión.* I was intrigued as he attempted to remember as many details as possible. Don Rogelio enjoyed sharing these stories that had not completely escaped his mind, while allowing himself to recollect other memories as he continued. I had previously and naïvely mentioned to him two elder men's names that I mistakenly thought had founded the L.A. HTA. I assumed so because these men often spoke about their long ongoing membership in the HTA during the meetings and no other elders or women spoke about their early participation as often. Don Rogelio firmly corrected me:

> Pues fuerón las mujeres que formaron la unión. Ellas llamaron a los paisanos que ya se encontraban aquí para invitarlos a las juntas."[269] Assertive and unequivocal he continued, "Las mujeres formaron la unión. Mi madrina Crisostona, Añila, Liana… entre otras, pero ellas fueron las meras meras—las que empezaron.[270]

Like other Indigenous women and Chicanas, these founding women were far from being passive and have had a powerful history of organizing in the U.S.[271]

Doña Crisostona, Añila, and Liana had less than four years settling in the same apartment complex and apartment unit in Koreatown. Like other Serrano (people from the Sierra Juárez region) immigrants, they established networks from other immigrant pueblos,[272] like Yatzachi el Alto, Yatzachi el Bajo, and Yalina. As I spoke to elders of the HTA, they confirmed that it was Doña Crisostona, Liana, and Añila who began calling their *paisanas* and *paisanos* to let them know that they would be meeting simply to socialize with their fellow migrants who were

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[269] Personal communication, Don Rogelio, October 2015. My own translation: "Well it was the women who formed the union. They called the townsmen and women who were here to invite them to the meetings."

[270] Ibid. Translation: The women formed the union. My godmother Crisostona, Añila, Liana ... among others, but they were the specific ones— the ones that started.

[271] Blackwell 2010; Nicole Guidotti-Hernández 2001; Pérez 1999; Ruíz 1994.

[272] See Andrew 2018, 9; Fox and Rivera-Salgado 2004; Gutiérrez Nájera 2010, 64.

increasingly flowing into Los Angeles. Doña Crisostona, a current member of the *unión*, emotionally described, "Se forma la unión para el pueblo. Por el amor que todos tenemos al pueblo [as her voiced quivered]. Las que estuvimos ahí [looking to Añila], al frente sabemos el sacrificio que hicimos para poder organizarnos y sacarnos adelante no solamente como pueblo, pero entre paisanos."[273] Upon hearing Doña Crisostona, now in her seventies, like the other migrant Indigenous women had sacrificed to provide for themselves and the family they had left behind. These generations of migrants were survivors. They had survived a twelve-year war. Doña Crisostona, was the first Zoochina woman to migrate from the pueblo to the United States; though she had spent months on stays in Oaxaca City and the State of Mexico. About a couple of years later after her arrival, she began meeting with her fellow townswomen, Liana and Añila, to socialize and talk about their new daily lives as nannies and/or *domésticas*[274] (domestics) to white upper-middle class families in the neighborhoods northwest of Koreatown. Their conversations, however, always steered toward their families, parents and siblings for the most part, that they had left in Zoochina. While their initial goal was simply a social one, with the growing attendance of recent migrants and the economic need, they began talking about different ways to potentially support Zoochina's overall development beyond providing assistance during patron saint festivals. These types of associations also became places where resources were shared and pooled. Strategies for adjusting to the new environment where also discussed when

[273] Participant observation, Doña Crisostona, June 21, 2016. "The HTA formed for the pueblo; for the love that we all have to the pueblo. Those of us who were there, at the forefront know the sacrifices we did to organize ourselves and move us forward not only as a pueblo, but among townswomen and men."

[274] For more on caring and household low-wage labor of Central American and Mexican migrant women in California see Hondagneu-Sotelo 2007.

new arrivals moved while trying to cope with war trauma.[275] They became useful places to share information.

However, in the early morning of September 19, 1985, a magnitude 8.0 earthquake rocked Mexico City. The strongest earthquake ever to hit Mexico, it was felt thousands of miles away. In Zoochina, their adobe Catholic church suffered major damage. As a place of worship and devotion, the church has a unique meaning. During the war, its hilltop location allowed men to better see when their enemy was approaching and to ring the warning bell. This alert, made possible by the high vantage point of the church, often gave women and children a few minutes to go into hiding as the enemy approached. Therefore, the first "major project" was to reconstruct the church, moving its location to one of their highest mountains. Once the new church was completed, "Se dieron cuenta que la necesidad del pueblo era grande;"[276] in other words, the community's need for improvement of their basic infrastructure was major. With the exception of Zoochinenses in the state of Nebraska, each HTA (in the State of Mexico and Los Angeles) has the tasks of raising money to improve communal infrastructure; for example, the school, church, the municipality's headquarters, roads, the *casa de comisión* (communal kitchen/house used for multiple social and cultural purposes), and annual saint festivities in Zoochina.

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[275] Similar to Central American refugees during the Cold War, Zoochinenses found these meetings necessary to their and their pueblo's livelihood. For example, see Cecilia Menjívar, *Fragmented Ties: Salvadoran Immigrant Networks in America* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012); Nora Hamilton and Norma Stoltz Chinchilla, *Seeking Community in a Global City: Guatemalans and Salvadorans in Los Angeles* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), 180-218; Rossana Pérez and Henry A. J. Ramos (eds), *Flight to Freedom: The Story of Central American Refugees in California* (Houston: Arte Público Press- University of Houston, 2007).

[276] Personal communication, Don Rogelio Nicolas Robles, March 2016. Translation: "They noticed that the need of the pueblo was major."

The earlier organizing efforts of Zapotec immigrants from the neighboring municipality, San Baltazar Yatzachi el Bajo, allowed Zoochinenses to envision a possibility to help their pueblo. The community of el Bajo was mentioned time and again by my participants as having been one of the first *Sector Zoogocho*[277] pueblos to settle in L.A. By the 1960s El Bajo had established their hometown association, and its members had begun sending collective remittances.[278] As described by Luis Sánchez-López (Zapotec) in "Learning from the Paisanos," for Zapotecs in Los Angeles, a learning process of community engagement has not only been a transnational process, but a translocal one as well, in which they have learned from each other.[279] The close bond among Sector Zoogocho towns in Los Angeles is a reflection of their practices back home, which is facilitated by the pueblo's close proximity to one another in the Sierra, the *unión de autoridades de Sector Zoogocho*, and equally important the weekly *día de la plaza/Mercado* [day of the Market] in the community of San Bartolomé Zoogocho to which towns flock to every Thursday. More than fifty years have gone by since *Centro Social San Jerónimo Zoochina* started, and most of the women founders, with the exception of one woman who attends her husband's pueblo's *unión* continue to be actively involved.

The Organizational Structure of *La Unión*

Currently, el *Centro Social Zoochina* is composed of approximately forty-three members across three generations: thirty-three first-generation migrant men and women, two 1.5-generation members (migrated as youth), and about nine second-generation members born in Los

[277] Sector Zoogocho is a union of thirteen pueblos surrounding the community of San Bartolomé Zoogocho. Zoogocho is a larger town among these smaller communities.

[278] Personal communication, Gladys, August 12, 2018. Gladys is from Yatzachi el Bajo.

[279] Luis Sánchez-López, "Learning from the *paisanos*: Coming to Consciousness in Zapotec L.A.," *Latino Studies* vol. 15 (2017): 242-246.

Angeles.[280] They range in age from twenty-one to early seventies. Membership is provided upon one's yearly economic contribution, which is a standard price for everyone and can be made in installments of one's choice over the course of a year or in one payment. However, one's labor and time also goes into determining membership, in addition to the annual quota. Women now make up most of its constituency. As migrants began permanently settling, making a stable minimal, but livable wage, and buying homes meetings were held in backyards of members' recently bought homes. From living room or studio apartment meetings in Koreatown (1960s to early 1990s), backyard homes in South Central L.A., Downtown, and Mid-City have facilitated and strengthened Zoochina's transborder communal possibilities.[281] Some backyards have even been permanently transformed with plastic tarps or makeshift wooden ceilings so as to provide the best comfortability during these events.

The re-creation of a space for Zapotec Serrana/os, as for many others, while not uncommon varies in degrees from melancholic events to outright the happiest moments in kermeses, per say. In one clear example of how these temporary converted spaces reinforce Indigenous identity, belonging, and longing, Lourdes Gutiérrez Nájera describes a wake she attended in the backyard of a Yalaltec member in Los Angeles as "fostering a sense of belonging and membership in an otherwise alienating urban environment."[282] Their experiences and struggles—their alienation in society as racialized Latina/os and as Indigenous peoples with

[280] There are other members who do not attend meetings but do economically contribute or donate their time during party fundraisers or other occasions. This is because they typically work weekends or live some distance away in another city.

[281] Throughout the years, many Zoochina backyard homes have also been used by other pueblos to host party fundraisers *(kermeses)*.

[282] Lourdes Gutiérrez Nájera, "Hayandose: Zapotec Migrant Expressions of Membership and Belonging," in *Beyond el Barrio: Everyday Life in Latina/o América*, edited by Gina M. Pérez, Frank A. Guridy, and Adrian Burgos Jr. (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 64.

"visible Indigenous" markers, and their experiences of working more than full-time and still finding it hard to get ahead—momentarily take a backseat during the meetings as both men and women voice their opinions and take a vote. It is *la unión* where political, and even sociocultural traditions get re-created and enforced to guarantee survival across borders. Thereby, the relocation of politics within the creation of hometown associations in "new urban narratives [as shortly described later with in the incorporation of children of migrants] are the stories of survival, of 'survivance,' of negotiations between cultural heritage and city life and a refusal to be confined to or contained…"[283] Understanding its structure is important not only as it closely reflects practices from the hometown, but also because it has enabled their futurity.

In terms of how these meetings come about, a new board of directors or "*mesa*/*mesa directiva*" committee (I hereafter refer to the board as members refer to it, *mesa*) is nominated, or nominates themselves, and is elected to serve for one year by those members in attendance. In sharp contrast to existing literature of northern Mexican hometown associations and its *mesa* director's characteristic background, Zoochina's directors are not highly educated. Like many Oaxacan HTAs in metropolitan L.A., the mesa has some elementary education, and about ten percent have a high school diploma or completed some college, though they have no degree.[284] However, as many of the elder generation have stated, they have been "educados en la escuela de la vida" (educated in the school of life). For them, this is equally if not more important because they come from communities that have, since time immemorial, learned, retaught, and practiced

[283] Laura Furlan, *Indigenous Cities: Urban Indian Fiction and the Histories of Relocation* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017), 32.

[284] In "From Civic Association to Political Participation," Carol Zabin and Luis Escala (2001) state that the board of directors of HTAs and Federations in L.A. have finished primary schooling and have obtained a college degree. While they focus on three Oaxacan Federations in Los Angeles and a number of northern, central, and western Mexican HTAs and federations, there is no further detail or comparison as to which regional groups exactly hold a high educational attainment.

their own ways of governing and survival against the settler state and within multiple settler states. Each mesa decides how frequently they want to have membership meetings; they have varied from once every three months to once a month in the last few years though the meetings always go over anywhere from thirty minutes to 1.5 hours, or beyond. In the past, the meetings have gone over time when the main annual festivity is approaching in May or June, or when kermeses in L.A. to fundraise for the annual festivity in the pueblo are nearing. The *mesa* decides how often member meetings are held; currently, the *unión* meets once a month, a decision that has been made by three *mesas* since 2014.

Centro Social San Jerónimo Zoochina uses its monthly meetings to plan and move forward on different areas of its ongoing transborder work. There are typically three pressing tasks during these meetings. They are (1) to organize the annual saint festivity of "El Espíritu Santo" (Holy Spirit), (2) to organize the less attended San Jerónimo saint festivity in September, and (3) to plan any ongoing infrastructure development projects in Zoochina. If there is an infrastructure development project, then that takes precedence, alongside the May/June festival, throughout the year. Accordingly, members continually dedicate labor, energy, and time to planning for multiple *kermeses* (party fundraisers) throughout the year, collecting money from Zoochina people who do not make yearly economic or labor contributions, coordinating all the phone call meetings between the elected board and the authorities in Zoochina, and preparing notes and agendas for monthly meetings every two weeks.[285] With the exception of phone calls,[286] which also take a transborder communal formation, these tasks are not new to

[285] Sometimes, collecting money from non-HTA members requires traveling after work for someone who lives in Maywood, per say, and must drive to San Gabriel for a donation.

[286] Zoochina successfully installed its first landline in 2008. It was one of the last pueblos in Sector Zoogocho to receive a connection. Previously, they had to travel to a neighboring town like Yatzachi el Alto or Zoogocho.

Zoochinenses. Although the annual saint festivities are by far what brings the diaspora together, every project further strengthens once sense of belonging and identity to Zoochina. As the stories below demonstrate, *Centro Social San Jerónimo Zoochina* works as the highest transborder communal authority for Zoochinenses in the Los Angeles diaspora.

Women and Gender in *La Unión*

Women are active and present in *la unión*—both in terms of membership and participation. While some associations continue to carry the paternalistic views and gendered expectations that women's participation or leadership be minimal or relegated to their secretarial positions, Zoochina's experience is slightly different.[287] There are approximately twenty-four women who consistently attend meetings. Of these, thirteen were born in Zoochina, five were born elsewhere in Oaxaca (two women come from surrounding pueblos and married into Zoochina), and six are second-generation Zoochinenses born and raised in Los Angeles. Comparatively, there are about a total of seventeen males who regularly attend meetings. Eleven were born in Zoochina, about three were born outside of the pueblo,[288] and three are Los Angeles born and raised. More than their growing membership and words, women's actions speak to their communal responsibilities they have learned and continue to fulfill, while demonstrating that they are not passive or completely absent in community building. As an HTA that has been active for more than fifty years, their actions demonstrate how women and adult children of migrants have come to participate. *La unión* shifts notions of gender belonging within Mexican

[287] Ana Raquel Minian, "De Terruño a Terruño: Reimagining Belonging Trough the Creation of Hometown Associations," *Journal of American History* 104, no. 1 (2017): 132.

[288] There are three men of whom I do not account for since they do not attend the meetings and are originally from the state of Michoacán, Jalisco, and another region in Oaxaca; they married into Zoochina. However, through their wives, they economically contribute and help out during kermeses or other major events. Most interestingly, the two non-Oaxacans have served as board members at some point.

hometown associations. Specifically, as an Indigenous HTA, whose membership is more than 50% women, the communal practices and transborder communication amongst migrants and their children are key to their refusal to vanish with the structural confinements of settler states.

Since its founding, women in Zoochina's hometown association, including daughters of migrants, have consistently held positions as treasurer, secretary, or *vocales*, and (to a lower extent) as president, since the early 1990s. Over the years, *Centro Social Zoochina* has had a handful of women presidents, but there has not been a woman to agree to take on this position for more than ten years. The last woman president was Doña Carmen in the early 2000s. The fact that Zoochina women do not hold such leadership positions as often as their male counterparts does not diminish the responsibilities and commitment of the other positions that they do take, including treasurer, secretary, *vocal* (speakers). For example, Zoochina's secretarial position holds special significance as the role that ensures and maintains transborder communication. This position, which tends to be filled by second-generation adult men and women, often entails more responsibilities, such as note taking, writing agendas, transcribing documents, sending communication to Zoochina, reading *"comunicados"* (letters) from Zoochina, and providing other documents during meetings. *Vocales* are responsible for calling all members to let them know about upcoming meetings, other events, to ask for donations, and help set up every meeting; usually a woman and a man are jointly elected. The treasurer, responsible for collecting membership fees and other donations, also works as a bookkeeper and provides detailed financial reports at meetings.

Another group of women who lack formal leadership positions but play pivotal roles in the *unión* are the wives of elected officials. Numerous wives often support their husbands with their position during meetings or at home behind closed doors. Throughout the years, however, I

have noticed that this is more prevalent among U.S.-born and their migrant spouse. In one case, a migrant man with a second-grade education was elected as treasurer but was unable to count large sums of money.[289] His wife, a U.S.-born Zoochina woman stepped in to help him. It was the wife who did most of the labor of keeping record of the money collected, sending it off to Zoochina, and writing the receipt slips for members who had recently paid their dues. However, the husband consistently sat at the table alongside the rest of the board of directors while his wife took a back seat in public. In his work with Indigenous Bolivian migrants in Washington D.C., Christopher Strunk (2014) found that a woman HTA leader also "gradually became the de facto treasurer of the organisation" where the male leadership sometimes referred to her as her husband's secretary.[290] Clearly, the wives do not work for their husbands, but they are often compelled to work without any formal recognition. In these instances, women's unacknowledged labor demonstrate underlying uneven gender power dynamics that are often at play, even if they may be hard to see, in various contexts of *la unión*.

One of the first women who first attended the HTA meetings was Doña Carmen, a sixty-four-year-old immigrant woman. One evening, as I sat in her dining room table in Mid-City L.A., she reminisced on her long and almost uninterrupted participation with *la unión*: "Ya tengo mucho tiempo en la unión. Soy una de las más viejitas, se puede decir. Me gusto el proposito.

[289] As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, the HTA mirrors their "usos y costumbre" (customary law) practices. Therefore, each member will be nominated or directly elected if they have not fulfilled a cargo (position) in more than a few years or at all. In other words, decisions are communally made, and it is the responsibility of each member to accept or state why they are unable to fulfill a cargo at the time. Financial constraints are usually the main reason why someone is unable to fulfill their duty.

[290] Christopher Strunk, "'We are Always Thinking of our Community': Bolivian Hometown Associations, Networks of Reciprocity, and Indigeneity in Washington," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (January 2014): 10.

Todos teniamos ideas y trabajabamos en conjunto."[291] Doña Carmen was not born in Zoochina. She was born in Oaxaca City, but as she expressed, "Yo le tengo mucho amor al pueblo. No naci ahí, pero tengo tantos recuerdos. Mis papas están enterrados ahí."[292] Though she was not born in Zoochina, Doña Carmen *was* raised in the pueblo. Her parents returned to Zoochina only a few years after she was born, when the war was well underway. She explained that they returned so her father could help fight. Through her parents, she learned the importance of the pueblo and the peoples' sacrifice allowed her to never lose her ties to Zoochina. All of her life challenges have made Doña Carmen a strong woman. She is one of the most vocal members and among the most to be involved in different Oaxacan organizations.[293]

Doña Carmen's strong will is still evident today. For example, in 2015 she decided to step away from the HTA for a year after a dispute with some of the men in music. As Doña Carmen described,

> Sentí que era suficiente. Sentí una falta de respeto. Como que mis inquietudes y quejas con ellos [hombres] no estabán siendo tomados seriamente. En ves de reconocer sus fallas que tuvieron en una ocasión, se expresaron enojados y groseros. Me dijeron, 'Si no te gusta, vete.' Eso me enfuresio. Me fui, pero no sin primero decirles sus verdades.[294]

This was a big moment for Doña Carmen because voicing her concerns resulted in a consensus

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[291] Personal Communication, Doña Carmen, December 30, 2019. Translation: "I already have a lot of time in the unión. I am one of the oldest, you can say. I liked the purpose. We all had ideas and worked together."

[292] Ibid. Translation: "I have a lot of love for the pueblo. I wasn't born there, but I have so many memories of it. My parents are buried there."

[293] Doña Carmen is one of the original members of the Oaxacan Regional Organization/Organización Regional de Oaxaca (ORO) in Los Angeles who organize the annual La Guelaguetza festivals. For many years, she was also a dancer.

[294] Personal Communication, Doña Carmen, December 30, 2019. Translation: "I felt it was enough. I felt so disrespected, like my concerns and frustrations with a few [men] were not taken seriously. Instead of acknowledging their faults I experienced on a prior occasion, they responded with outright anger and rudeness. They said, 'If you don't like it, leave.' That infuriated me. I left, but not without first telling them their truths.'"

by very few men to publicly humiliate her. These types of humiliation, while not new, do often inhibit women from their continued participation. At the risk of being silenced and even shunned by those present, Doña Carmen took her chances by exposing these men's faults to everyone at the meeting. She also described that on one occasion they called her for a donation,

> Ellos [los hombres] me llamaron para pedir mi donación cuando era su turno [de llamarme] para recaudar dinero y comida para su kermes [no es la kermes de la unión]. Y yo les dije, 'No donaré. Igual como ustedes ignoraron mis inquietudes y fueron totalmente groseros, no voy a donar.'[295]

She continued talking by asserting that despite her frustration with some of these men, she did not stop donating financially: "nada más renuncié de ir a las juntas, pero no a la unión."[296] Doña Carmen's perseverance prevented her from being silence, although she momentarily stopped going to the meetings. Furthermore, she took advantage of the chances she got to let them know her concerns and did not shy off from declining to provide them support. She admitted that this group of men no longer approached her or acknowledged her in public, but she was okay with that, "No les debo nada. Yo estoy bien. Estoy bien con el pueblo."[297]

The stories of Doña Carmen and other women in la unión illustrate that, though not always in formal leadership roles, women of various generations in *la unión* take on responsibilities crucial to the transborder work required to sustain Zoochina. The overwhelming participation of women as founders, leaders, vocal members in *la unión* strongly suggests that

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[295] Personal Communication, Doña Carmen, December 30, 2019. Translation: "They [the men] called me to ask for my donation when it was their turn [to make the calls] to raise money and food donations for kermes [this is not the HTA's kermes]. And I told them, 'I will not donate. Just like you ignored my concerns and were outright rude, I will not donate.'"

[296] Personal Communication, Doña Carmen, December 30, 2019. Translation: "I only resigned from going to the meetings, but not to the unión."

[297] Personal Communication, Doña Carmen, December 30, 2019. Translation: "I owe them nothing. I'm fine. I'm fine with the town."

the space that *Centro Social* has carved out a gender inclusive space for women, though they still must navigate uneven gender dynamics. About 90%, of the women in *la unión* are mothers. Because many live in extended family households, another relative in the home, or an older sibling is often able to provide for the care of the younger child when the mother or both parents are off to the meeting. That does not mean that all is taken care of, however. In her work with *Líderes Campesinas*, a California statewide farmworker women's organization, Maylei Blackwell describes that for many migrant women "Becoming an organizer often requires taking on yet another shift of work."[298] For migrant and second-generation Zoochina women alike, about 85% of them work outside the home. In addition to fulfilling expected gender norms as the main care providers for their children, and maintaining household chores, they are expected to organize across and within multiple transborder zones. Specifically, their transborder communal labor as organizers often reflects the "chain of care across borders." For example, this is more visible as women are always assigned, or assume the position themselves, in the kitchen during events. Nonetheless, there are some exceptions to the norms.

This was uniquely captured during my conversation with Magdalena, of whose leadership story I talk about in the next section, as we spoke about her more than full-time workload as a housekeeper outside the home. To get ahold of Magdalena for an interview, weekday or weekend, was a task in itself since the days that she is able to get out of work early, she rushes home to take her children to their sports activities while her husband prepares the food most days of the week, picks the children up from school, and washes laundry at the local Laundromat twice a week . She stressed, "I'm only able to do the few things I can because I don't want to

[298] Maylei Blackwell, "Líderes Campesinas: Nepantla Strategies and Grassroots Organizing at the Intersection of Gender and Globalization," *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 35, no.1 (Spring 2010): 23. For more see Latin American literature, such as, Moreno 2010; Arpini, Castrogiovanni, and Epstein 2012.

miss out on everything my kids do and I need to help [Albino] with the *cuentas* [counting the HTA money and having an account update] before his meeting with *la unión* on Fridays." Generally speaking, cases like these are an exception to the norm and one must really wonder at the different levels of inclusivity and equal labor that are at play.

These are the direct results of *a triple* jornada for both Magdalena and Albino. However, Magdalena's role as the one that does all the bookkeeping is invisible to everyone else in *la unión* and in the homeland of Zoochina. She does not get to sign documents, sit on the board as copies and reports of the HTA are provided and read out loud, nor does she get any type of acknowledgment. These gender discrepancies, while intimately seem to be okay need to be recognized and centered as they can easily leave out how deeply women are key to the survival *of transborder comunalidad* lives. In other words, formally and informally Zoochinense women in the HTA continuously make relationship to land, identity, and community possible across the growing generations in diaspora. As I describe next, adult children, and even young children (the latter more indirectly) are also key to *la unión* making *comunalidad* Zoochina futurity possible.

Children of Migrants in *La Unión*

As the immigrant generation began having kids, their children also grew as part of the community seeing their relatives organize for the well-being of Zoochina. Children of migrants have learned, become involved, and developed their leadership in *la unión* over the course of twenty years. In this section, I start with the experiences of young children and adult children in *la unión* in order to capture *la unión's* ongoing and relational experience that fosters identity and belonging through *transborder comunalidad* actions.

Since *la unión's* founding there have been two generational waves of adult children of

migrants to join.[299] The first wave joined in the 1990s. The second wave joined in the mid-2000s. For the first wave of U.S.-born, they recall attending meetings and playing with other Zoochina children as they were too young to formally participate. In the Mapping Indigenous Los Angeles project at UCLA, William Martinez, who was born and raised in Los Angeles, recalls his childhood memories in these meetings as being what motivated him to become a member and eventually to become part of the board of directors as secretary:

> The reason I can honestly tell you is as a child. I remember being a kid, being five, six, seven, ten years old and being brought to these meetings, these hometown association meetings. And I would see my other cousins, and we would just run around everywhere, all over, up and down the house, or the meeting space where they were having [the meeting], but I didn't realize that it sent something in me. It set a seed in me where I would see in my parents, in other individuals from Zoochina that they were agents of change, and they were taking an act. They were active participants in creating change in their hometown. So that's where my inception of the hometown association started. That was the genesis of it.[300]

Martínez's story is different from that of other Zoochina children of that generation. For one, Martínez's mother is from Guerrero and he is the oldest of five siblings. He is one of two children of Zoochina migrants who went overseas for military service. Upon his return, he transferred from Santa Monica College to UC Berkeley and eventually earned a master's degree. He is now a counselor at a community college. Now in his early forties, Martínez became involved with *la unión* once he re-established himself in Los Angeles. The following year, he was elected secretary. Though he was not the first child of migrants to serve in *la unión*, his early "genesis" in it resonates with many other young children who were brought by their parents to the meetings.

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[299] The first wave of children grew up in the 1980s/1990s, while the second wave have come of age from 2010-2016.

[300] "Zoochina: The Second-Generation." In the Mapping Indigenous Los Angeles (MILA) project, last modified October 14, 2015, http://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapTour/index.html?appid=31d1100e9a454f5c9b905f55b08c0d22 Because his story is public, I keep his name as it is used in the MILA Project.

Nowadays, there are anywhere between five to ten kids running from one end of the backyard to the other where the Zoochina meetings are held. These kids, as young as six and as old as eleven, are the grandkids of migrants in attendance and all of their parents are U.S.-born Zoochinenses. Though I was unable to interview them for my project, they all have a growing Zoochina identity consciousness. And while they might not directly take part in the decision of the town through the transborder communal discussions, they are nonetheless considered Zoochinenses. Their grandparents, parents, and the larger membership sees the incorporation of these young kids essential for their growth and longevity for years to come, particularly as many participate in traditional dancing and the brass band at such a young age.

For instance, there have been a few instances where I have stepped out of the meeting and onto the yard where I have overheard kids talk about their latest dance steps, or difficulties in dance steps while trying to practice amongst themselves. In one instance, a child asked other kids what their favorite thing to do when they go to Zoochina is. Everyone, in their eagerness to be heard, said a number of things, including, *"Montar los caballos, ver el jaripeo, estar en la tiendita, or ir al Mercado de Zoogocho."*[301] Although I had not made much of moments like these, it was my nieces and nephews constant presence at the meetings, at the *kermeses*, at the *convivios*, as dancers, as kids in *solfeo* [music scale classes] where they talked with other Zoochina kids about what they had done over the weekend or the latest pop culture gossip. Thus, the very young (the third) generation continues to be informed of their Zoochina and Oaxacan identity that honors and values their pueblo in multiple ways. The context of growing generations that are heavily involved, not only in Zoochina, but other community's as well, further contest intraracial shifting dynamics that previous generations consistently grappled with

[301] Translation: "Climb horses, see the jaripeo, hang out in the little store [Zoochina has one small store that is run by a group of siblings], or go to the Zoogocho market."

(see chapter 1). Their growing participation demonstrates their survival and refusal to except the settler logics of erasure that sees them as racialized subjects within gendered specific roles.

What exactly constitutes membership at this time? In the past decade or so, *Centro Social San Jerónimo Zoochina* has altered their definition of who is considered a member. This is because there has been a growing participation of young adults who are college students or recently college graduates.[302] All were born and raised in Los Angeles. The three members who continue attending and participating in kermeses are also women. The woman who is currently in college has been in the HTA for nine years and upon joining announced in her first meeting that she would not be financially donating due to lack of funds; since 2016, however, she voluntarily pays the yearly fees. The other two women joined in the last five years, but only one has been able to pay upon joining. For those unable to pay, they have exposed their student and financial situation as reasons for being unable to financially contribute at their first meeting. Apparently, all members have been okay with this and these women have been welcomed with speeches of appreciation by other members. While members were equally grateful for the women's voluntary incorporation and their transparent reasons for being unable to donate, others went further by talking about the history of *la unión*, adding that it was established for Zoochina's futurity. As is tradition, the president of the board of directors also made a speech, followed by a collective applause that welcomed them. Interestingly, all three women have been nominated for board membership. While two have declined given their school responsibilities, Leah, the member who began paying upon joining, has been elected twice to successive terms as secretary. Currently, she is beginning her second year as secretary.

[302] There are many factors why community members decide not to join the HTA. The primary reasons are because they either work Sundays or because they live outside of metropolitan L.A. A smaller number have decided not to join because they no longer return to Zoochina (usually because they no longer have immediate family there). These are usually migrants that were not raised in Zoochina.

Cecilia, of whom I speak of in chapter 4, was perhaps the first second-generation woman to participate in *la unión* in the late 1990s. When I asked her why she became involved, she said the following:

> I got involved after coming back from *Los Malinches* (1994). I was helping in Zoochina with whatever my dad told me to help with, 'Cecilia, do this. Cecilia, they need this.' I remember it was stressful because I didn't know anything. I was scared of fucking something up. I had no experience […] I liked it though, and once we came back to L.A. I was in [*la unión*].[303]

Cecilia is one in a handful of teenage daughters who grew up during this time in the 1990s. The organizing of the *danza Los Malinches* by the Los Angeles diaspora proved to be meaningful for multiple people, even if they were not directly participating as dancers, the parents of the dancers, or as HTA members. However, because many of the parents of whose children danced *Los Malinches* were also part of the HTA, they were working nonstop. The year 1994 marked *Centro Social's* year to organize the patron saint festival for which *Los Malinches* L.A. was organized, which meant that *Centro Social* would plan and lead most of the weeklong *fiesta* activities in Zoochina, with the exception of the welcome and blessing from the local authorities. Cecilia's family was involved in the festival events in different ways. Her father, an HTA member, had to help with official duties. Cecilia's brother participated in the dance, and her mother—who is from another Sierra Zapotec town—was busy helping in the dance and at the communal kitchen preparing the meals for special guests.[304] Cecilia remembers a lot of responsibility fell mostly on the teenage girls since the teenage boys were playing in the band day and night. Given their heavy involvements in the festival, their integration into *la unión* was

[303] Personal communication, Cecilia, August 2015.

[304] These guests consist of the bands the pueblo invites to play during the four-day celebration. They are given a place to stay in the pueblo during these days and all meals are provided free of charge, in addition to the service fee they are paid.

rather swift. As I am sitting in her living room in South L.A., she makes sure to tell me of all the labor involved during fiestas, especially in Zoochina: "You don't sleep, you have your three meals if lucky, you don't go home or you go home late, but you know what, 'You do it for the love to the pueblo.'"[305] These were recurring words I heard from everyone, not just those born in Zoochina.

Magdalena, of whom I spoke earlier about, formally became a member of *la unión* years later. Like Cecilia, Magdalena recalls that when it is the *Centro's* turn to coordinate the patron saint festival, there is really no time for yourself. When *Los Malinches* performed in Zoochina, she too was asked to help, though more so with the dancers in passing out water, attending to anything that may come up as they are dancing, and making sure they ate at the *casa de comisión* as this dance is performed three times throughout the day for about one hour. Her story is quite unique. Magdalena was born in Mid-City Los Angeles in 1976, though she has lived most of her time in Los Angeles. After she graduated from high school, she went to live in Zoochina with her grandmother in 1996. Eventually there she met a young man, Albino, and within a year they were married. After a year of living in Zoochina with her husband, she moved back to Los Angeles and, when he received his *papeles* (immigration papers), he joined her a few months later. It was his first time living anywhere outside of the pueblo. Many things were new to him, and although most of his extended family was living in Los Angeles, he found his new life more adjustable by attending kermeses and being in comradery with *paisanos*, who, like him, mostly spoke Zapotec. Nevertheless, Magdalena's father encouraged them to participate in *la unión* and shortly thereafter, as most Zoochina HTA presidents do, they received a formal letter invitation to join. They joined about three years after they readjusted to Los Angeles in 2000 and have been members since.

[305] Personal communication, Cecilia, August 2015.

Equally important are the ways in which participation in traditional dancing takes place through *Centro Social San Jerónimo Zoochina's* approval. In order for Zoochinenses to dance as a group, and in the name of the pueblo, all dancers who have agreed to participate must first present themselves during an HTA meeting. Typically, the leader, or organizer of the dance must get prior permission from the elected board to be able to present themselves. Once at the meeting, the leader must make a collective introduction and state their purpose, which is nearly always a description that the dance will be for the Holy Spirit festivity (of which is always first danced in Zoochina). If there is a child, at any age,[306] who is not known within the community, community members *will ask* whose child or grandchild they are. Since most who participate are usually the children or grandchildren of migrants in the HTA, normally the community thanks them for "putting" a dance for the annual celebration of which then is followed by giving them permission, reassurance that if there is anything they need that they have *la unión's* support, completed by their blessing.

The *transborder* communal practices of *la unión* emphasize the ways in which Zoochina membership is constantly adapting to the needs and conditions of its members; furthermore, membership in Zoochina relies less on exclusive birthright but rather on members' commitments to sustaining Zoochina across geographies, reflecting Indigenous modes of understanding membership that reject borders and settler states. For example, in one conversation, I asked Magdalena if she would have joined had she not married a Zoochinense. Before answering, she looked at me in somewhat sarcastic disbelief, as if to say, "Of course I would have." She and I have talked about her feelings for Zoochina several times, "Soy de Zoochina. Por su puesto que

[306] If the child is an elementary or middle school-aged child, the leader of the group is usually the one to provide an answer of the child's family.

si [seria parte de la unión]."[307] I then pushed forward and asked her what it means to be in *la unión*, of which she replied between English and Spanish,

Magdalena:	Yo si puedo decir con todo mis derechos que soy de Zoochina. Nadie me puede decir que no soy de Zoochina.[308]
Brenda:	Alguien te ha dicho que no eres de Zoochina?[309]
Magdalena:	No. No one has ever told me that. They know they can't tell me that cause we [spouse and her] pay our monthly fees and we always help out [ei: in kermeses, convivencias, etc]. I'm 100% from Zoochina… Others [non-HTA members] claim their from Zoochina, but they don't pay their fees, don't help out, and when we call them to ask for their donation, or that they owe money, they simply turn the other way and never return our calls, pero como si nada hay andan escribiendo en Facebook que 'mi pueblito, que soy de Zoochina,' y llegan al pueblo como si nada.[310] They don't pay their dues. If they cared about Zoochina they would help or at least show up to the meetings.
Brenda:	But isn't that's why they get taxed once they're in Zoochina, well at least for the ones that go to Zoochina?
Magdalena:	Yeah, but we shouldn't have to ask them so many times.
Brenda:	Who charges them in Zoochina? The President?
Magdalena:	Yeah, usually. Oh cualquier agente que este disponible.[311]

Though I have heard these concerns from other few HTA migrants, it is the first time I have ever heard a second-generation member express these same feelings. Magdalena's comment was assertive, passionate, as well as concerning. It was assertive as a member who has met her responsibilities with the community, while passionate about her feelings to help Zoochina. Her concern towards community members that do not, in her view, share the same level of commitment for the pueblo was also of anger. Some scholars suggest that people who participate

[307] Personal Communication, Magdalena, July 4, 2018. Translation: I'm from Zoochina. Of course I would [be part of the HTA].

[308] Translation: "I can say with all my rights that I am from Zoochina. No one can tell me that I'm not from Zoochina."

[309] Translation: "Has someone told you that you are not from Zoochina?"

[310] Translation: "But like nothing they are writing on Facebook that 'my little town, that I'm from Zoochina, and they arrive in the pueblo like nothing.'"

[311] Translation of second half: "Or whatever agent [autonomous elected official] is available."

in hometown-based transnational activities, referred to as "transnational civil society actors," construct new ways "of membership, but do they involve rights and responsibilities that are sufficiently clear to count as transnational citizenship?"[312] The skepticism of whether hometown-based activities and membership "count as transnational citizenship" implies that migration and migratory experiences are static or the same for various, if not all, HTA actors. There is no question that for Zoochinenses, transnational, or better yet, *transborder* citizenship, is a reciprocal action between Zoochina and Los Angeles; members in both geographies are equally active. Moreover, my work pushes us to rethink a transnational framework, as Indigenous peoples have always been transnational before European settler contact and nation-state building. There are many ways in which transborder Indigenous actors create rights and responsibilities for their membership that adapt to changing conditions and needs, while maintaining their identity and belonging across state lines.

Leah is a twenty-five-year-old woman who recently obtained her bachelor's degree in child development. Prior to joining the HTA she danced *Las Negritas* (see chapter 4) in 2014. It was through her experience of dancing with other Zoochina women that she decided to join *la unión*. Half of the women in the dance were members, which influenced Leah to join. In the past four years, and similar to Will, all the secretaries have been second-generation adults. Their ease to use a computer and send emails has made their election as secretary a lot more preferred than for any other position. The older members who are also second-generation have also held secretarial positions, as well as positions as president, treasurer, and *vocales*.

Leah has taken a prominent role in *la unión*. Recently, Leah was unanimously elected by members to attend to responsibilities in Oaxaca. During her nomination to Zoochina, she replied,

[312] Jonathan Fox, "Unpacking 'Transnational Citizenship,'" *Annual. Rev. Polit. Sci.* 8 (2005): 175.

"Yo lo hago. Si necesitan que yo lo hage y si me brindan su confiansa y apoyo lo hago. Nada más me tienen que decir que es lo que tengo que hacer. No quiero quedar mal, so necesito sus consejos."[313] For Leah, trust, support, and guidance were necessary for her to be able to commit to her important role in Zoochina. Though Leah has not had immediate relatives living in Zoochina for the past decade, it is these community components that continue to be essential for the new generations to take on the serious commitments with the pueblo. The following month Leah was on her way to represent *Centro Social San Jerónimo Zoochina* during a communal project. She would be the first U.S.-born woman to make such an important trip that was not during the patron saint dates.

La unión remains a place of struggle, where second-generation women subvert generational and gender expectations as they question and propose alternatives in the process of planning fundraising events, taking notes during meetings, and nominating and electing board officials. They even challenge expectations around whether U.S.-raised women should assist in the kitchen. For example, during a meeting, Mendoza, a migrant woman, expressed her concern about how and when the younger second-generation women should help in the kitchen during party fundraisers. She complained that "las jóvenes" [the young women] should not be helping to the extent they did in the prior kermes and, instead, should take a "step back" on their support because it slowed down her *tlayuda* preparations and "[ellas] no saben hacerlos bien."[314] The young women present replied that it was not about doing things "her way" and that if they do not

[313] Participant Observation, Leah, May 2019. Translation: I'll do it. If you need me to do it I'll do it and if you give me your trust and support I'll do it. You just have to tell me what I have to do. I don't want to disappoint you all, so I need your advice.

[314] Participant observation, *Centro Social San Jerónimo Zoochina* meeting, 2016. Translation: They do not know how to do it correctly. Tlayudas usually consist of sprinkling water to soften the tostada like tortilla to make it foldable before all the ingredients, such as lard, bean spread, *quesillo* (Oaxacan string cheese), cabbage, and choice of beef or pork goes on as its placed on the grill.

step up in their support during festivity fundraisers they will never learn. Edna, a second-generation woman further remarked with a level of frustration, "Se quejan que no ayudamos lo suficiente, pero después se quejan que no hacemos las cosas a la manera que estan acostumbrados. Si son pacientes y nos enseñan hacerlo bien, mejor los podemos ayudar!"[315] A moment of silence followed, and Mendoza explained that it was not about doing things her way, but rather that there is a certain way to prepare the *tlayudas* so they would not break. The president then tried to reconvene by acknowledging everyone's endless efforts to carry forward the kermes, but also pointed that there are matters that should be worked on, such as "enseñando a los jóvenes, con pasiencia, como hacer las cosas; pero creo que también deberiamos de ponernos en sus [de las/los jóvenes] zapatos que estan al pendiente y quieren ayudar para que no después se sientan desanimados y alejarse. Al igual que ellos no se ofendan cuando les tratamos de coregir."[316] Quickly thereafter, about a handful of other members spoke and the topic continued for more than thirty minutes in support of the youth, but also in agreement that there are things that the older members need to do to guide the newer generation. It is important to point out that if Edna would not have given her opinion during the meeting, it was most likely that these conversations and recognitions from the older members might not have taken place. Her comments were acknowledged and addressed not only by the board of directors, but also from the larger membership. She was also comfortable enough to express her concerns to the overwhelming members who have years of participating in *kermeses* and other events as food or

[315] Participant observation, *Centro Social Zoochina*, 2016. Translation: You complain that we need to help more, but then you complain because we don't do things the way you all are used to. If you're patient and teach us how to make it correctly we can better help!

[316] Ibid. Translation: "…teaching the youth, with patience, how to do stuff; but I also think that we should put ourselves in their shoes as they are [voluntarily] up-to-date and want to help so then they don't feel discouraged and distance themselves. Similarly, they should not feel offended when we try to correct them."

logistic organizers. In the end, this case, like others mentioned throughout my dissertation, reminds us that transnational networking is extraordinarily complex as well as diverse.[317]

Hometown associations, at least those from the Sector Zoogocho area, are "the most important organizations by which Oaxacan immigrants stay connected to community members in their new location as well as in their *pueblo* of origin."[318] For the early Sector pueblos who established themselves in Los Angeles, it was the hometown associations through which they first began to organize. Through sports, collection of money, dances, and later the brassbands, their respective HTAs were the primary channel that made both a translocal and transborder communal experience possible. The Zoochina 1.5 and second-generation however, have sustained these channels in the last three decades. Collectively, they have readjusted to fit the needs of the growing interest of younger members, who find it hard to contribute monetarily as students, but still seeks alternative ways to integrate them.

For example, new members, who happen to be women and adult children of migrants, can either help out in the kitchen or work as a cashier at either of the two charging stations (at the entrance or near the food area) set out during *kermeses*. It is also important to point out that, of the three college women, two have active parents who attend monthly meetings, while Leah, the secretary, whose mom is a single parent, is not involved with *la unión*. Despite her absence in the HTA, Leah's mom always voluntarily donates during *kermeses*. Indeed, *Centro Social San Jerónimo Zoochina* has significant power in consolidating unity among those in diaspora; at the

[317] Andrews 2018; FitzGerald et al. 2013; Fox and Rivera Salgado 2004; Levitt 2001; Portes and Rumbaut, 1990; Stephen 2007.

[318] Victoria A. Beard and Carolina S. Sarmiento, "Ties that Bind: Transnational Community-Based Planning in Southern California and Oaxaca," *International Development Planning Review* 32, no. 3–4 (2010): 212.

same time, *la unión* maintains strong communal ties with the Zoochina authorities in Oaxaca through weekly or bi-weekly communication and project constructions.

Politically, culturally, religiously, and even socially, *Centro Social* plays a crucial role in developing a sense of belonging and identity that connects the many generations in Los Angeles with the pueblo in Oaxaca. The consolidation that migrants collectively have in Los Angeles through their involvement in the HTA is further supported by the *autoridades* in Zoochina, making it maintain a strong relationship and power that is always active. Zoochina's hometown association therefore has the greatest power where its members provide their voice and vote for events in Los Angeles or development projects and patron saint festivities. In her work in Indian Country, Laura Furlan describes that for urban (relocated) Indians survival is strategically "community building and imagined intertribal activities [that] affect the construction of Indian identity" that is "historically and culturally correlated with place."[319] As I have demonstrated through the incorporation of multi-generational Zoochina women, they too make meaning of their identity and belonging through political practices that have for many years been a transborder communal process where land has always been centered.

Conclusion

Centro Social San Jerónimo Zoochina is a communal transborder site that challenges their racial confinement as Mexican and Latina/o/Hispanic. While most in the community might not take on an identity as Zapotec or Indigenous, their awareness as peoples from Zoochina or as Zoochinenses gives specific relationship to the land their families have inhabited prior to Spanish arrival. Different from other non-Indigenous mestizo hometown associations, *la unión* creates a safe space for migrant, 1.5, and second-generation women in Los Angeles who otherwise have

[319] Laura Furlan, *Indigenous Cities: Urban Indian Fiction and the Histories of Relocation* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017), 32.

been historically excluded from state, national, and international politics. Women—as founders, leaders, and the ones who make up most of the membership—inhabit *la unión* in ways that set it apart from most Mexican and Latina/o hometown associations in which men and patriarchy dominate. In this chapter, I have therefore demonstrated that women's long and strong transborder communal involvement in *la unión* speaks against two settler colonial states logics of erasure, while also refusing expected gender norms of inclusivity that keeps them silent and behind closed doors. Within this space that closely reflects *usos y costumbres*, Zoochinenses have been able to center their histories and activism through a collective memory to make sense of their presence and their struggle to remain more than a Latina/o/Hispanic.

To be Indigenous and claim Indigeneity is rooted not only in knowledge and teaching, but actual practice that starts from a very young age. Moreover, being in a diaspora is understood as "… the connections of a community of people" over "distance and time."[320] Thus, it is the elders "back home," in the Los Angeles diaspora, and the ongoing participation of the second-generation that have transmitted the importance of *comunalidad* political practices. Being Zoochinense, whether it be by maintaining autonomous political and social practices flourishing though their HTA, or by retelling stories of life and war in "el pueblo" to the next generations, are ways in which Zapotec identity are further solidified or re-created away from *home*.

[320] Katherine Ellinghaus, "Mixed-descent Indian Identity and Assimilation Policy," in *Native Diasporas: Indigenous Identities and Settler Colonialism in the Americas*, ed. (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 318.

CHAPTER 4

GENDERING PARTICIPATION IN TRADITIONAL DANCES AND BANDA SAN JERÓNIMO ZOOCHINA L.A.

U.S.-raised Zoochinenses learn and maintain their sense of belonging and identity to their town as a direct result of their parents' transborder communal participation over several decades. This chapter looks at the collective sociocultural practices—such as traditional dances and playing in Oaxacan brass bands—through which 1.5 and second generation Zoochinenses reinforce transborder connections with their homeland and their identity that challenge settler logics of Indigenous elimination. Specifically, I look at the re-creation of two community dances, *Los Malinches* and *Las Negritas.* I conducted oral histories with adult children of migrants who danced *Los Malinches* in 1994, the first time it was danced in Los Angeles and with those who danced *Las Negritas* in 2014. *Los Malinches* was the first all-children's dance performed by young U.S.-raised Zoochinenses born in the pueblo and in Los Angeles. It also initiated a strong relationship among the children of migrants that has lasted until today. I then look at the experience of those who danced *Las Negritas* (originally *Los Negritos*) when, for the first time in its history, this traditionally male-only dance featured all women. *Las Negritas* was also momentous because it was the first dance by the community to include multiple generations, including migrant women (one who was a grandmother) alongside 1.5 (teenage migrants) and second-generation (U.S.-born) women. Finally, this chapter incorporates the 1.5 and second-generation experience in the *San Jerónimo Zoochina L.A.* band. Like most, if not all, pueblos in the Sierra Juárez, the band is the backbone of all musical genres and festivities. Bringing these dances and the band together in one chapter allows us to see how both inform one another and that each are intricately served to reinforce their relationship to Zoochina forging a sense of identity and belonging as Zoochinenses and as Oaxaqueña/os. One cannot exist with the other.

I argue that traditional dancing and music have been the primary ways through which Zapotec children in Los Angeles have directly integrated themselves as members of Zoochina. It is these spaces where children's love for their pueblo and their identity as Zoochinense and Oaxacan begins to take shape over time. Equally important, my discussion on sociocultural practices values the ways in which the participation of young adult women and girls has been unprecedented as most bands are historically overwhelmingly male, both in Los Angeles and the Mexico-based diaspora. Within these diasporic traditional practices, the participation of U.S. born and raised generations become larger and more complex than has been represented in the existing academics studies about music and dance. As I will demonstrate in this chapter, these transborder communal practices illustrate 1.) Zapotec community's ways of knowing, belonging, identity and relationship to the land, 2.) a generational resistance to settler colonial practices of Indigenous migrant erasure, and 3.) a resistance to racial and gender violence (see chapter one for specific forms of violence).

Theorizing Transborder Comunalidad in Dance

While Zapotec intellectual Jaime Martínez Luna defines the multiplicities of *comunalidad* as one where Zapotecs from the Sierra highlands hold "collective community, the contrast to individualism, [with] diversity, not equal[ity],"[321] it is important to highlight, as Luna puts forward, there is not one single way to define *comunalidad*. Indigenous peoples make meaning of their being and identity in multiple ways, places, space and lands in which these communities continue to exist despite their attempted erasure through assimilation and physical

[321] Jaime Martínez Luna, *Eso que llaman la comunalidad* (Oaxaca: Consejo Nacional Para la Cultura y las Artes, 2010). For early and original discussions on comunalidad, see Jaime Martínez Luna, "Origen y ejercicio de la comunalidad," *Cuadernos del Sur: Revista de ciensas sociales* 18, no. 34 (2013): 83-90; Floriberto Díaz Gómez, "Comunidd y comunalidad" (2004); and Benjamín Maldonado Alvarado, "Comunalidad y responsabilidad autogestiva," *Cuaderno del Sur, Revista de Ciencias Sociales* 34 (2013): 21-27.

elimination by colonial governments. Therefore, *comunalidad* informs the everyday life of being Indigenous which contests and confronts colonialism[322] through the survival and continual practice of Indigenous dances and music among the youth and elders. Comunalidad is about practices and how these continue to be carried out as a collective transborder tools that inform Indigenous Oaxacan everyday life and ways of knowing the world. Comunalidad like identity, dances, and music are not static, they inform one another to make Indigenous continuity flourishable.

As I have demonstrated in this chapter, children of migrants have been key to this continuity precisely through traditional sociocultural practices since the early 1990s. Rather than only looking at how the 1.5 and second-generation have been influenced by their participation in these traditions across the U.S. and Mexico, I have also offered a translocal perspective from the elders in both Zoochina and Los Angeles. The elders, who play a crucial role in maintaining the transborder relationship with those who remain on the land, are significant to the survival of their practices—and Indigenous peoples who carry those communal practices forward.

For example, Cruz-Manjarrez describes dances as voluntary practices that continue to inform Yalaltec migrants in Los Angeles through "communal participation— [that is] a moral and religious obligation to the patron saints and their community… for the betterment of their group just by virtue of membership..."[323] Dance, as a moral and often religious obligation is undoubtedly linked to Indigenous *comunalidad* lives. As an altering point however, the children of migrants are renegotiating how their religious obligations becomes tied to their political, cultural, and social lives. Of all my conversations with 1.5 and second-generation Zoochinenses

[322] See Maldonado Alvarado, "Comunalidad y responsabilidad autogestiva," 21-28; Martínez Luna, "Origen y ejercicio de la comunalidad," 83-90.

[323] Cruz-Manjarrez, *Zapotecs on the Move*, 60.

none mentioned religion or Catholicism as an obligation to their participation. In comparison, elders and first-generation migrants mentioned it often and only one elderly did not mention religion at all. Of those who did reflect on religion and/or Catholicism, the patron saint, San Jerónimo was their main focus. For the 1.5 and second-generation, their obligation to transborder *comunalidad* dance is always in reflection *to* the pueblo, *with* the pueblo (and *for* the pueblo) as the stories of my participants have shown above. Curiously, before a group starts dancing for the patron saint or the pueblo, it is custom to enter the church and receive a prayer from an elder who resides in the community, followed by their blessing, and each dancer then receives a blessing from their parents standing before each saint in the church's altar. Reexamining comunalidad from the perspective of various Mexican scholars is necessary to continue understanding some of the many ways in which these practices and beliefs continue among Indigenous Oaxacan diasporas in California. Seeing it and reading it from the perspective of women, the 1.5 and second-generation that live and enact comunalidad across settler, racial, ethnic, class, gender, and other borders is of crucial intervention as my work shows that they are the actors who often make Indigenous futurity possible.

At the same time, studies on *comunalidad* in Mexico have not considered its transborder dimensions and possibilities.[324] In "La comunalidad como epistemología del Sur. Aportes y retos," Alejandra Aquino Moreschi quotes Adelfo Regino, a *comunalidad* Mixe theorist and head of the Instituto Nacional de Pueblos Indígenas under current President Andrés Manuel López Obrador: "Who will carry out the position in the community? Who will be the primary communal guardian (security)? Who will be the administrator (like mayor), municipal

[324] Díaz Gómez, "Comunidad y comunalidad"; García Sánchez 2018; Maldonado 1994, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2013, 2015; Martínez Luna, "Origen y ejercicio de la comunalidad"; Nava Morales 2013; and Robles Hernández and Cardoso Jiménez 2007.

authorities? Who will sustain the political and social life of the community? ... that generates a great challenge for our communities."[325] Both Moreschi and Regino believe that emigration brings disintegration to Indigenous communities, particularly because of the loss of youth and adults who usually take on the main political and economic responsibilities in their towns.[326] While it is true that youth and adults make up most of the exodus, it leaves unrecognized how the growing diaspora plays a significant role in collective political and sociocultural ties that sustain vast communal practices. In contrast, this chapter analyzes how Zoochina children and women in the Los Angeles diaspora sustain cultural identity through movement and sounds in traditional non-folkloric dances and in the Oaxacan brass band.

Danza among Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous Oaxaqueña/os

This particular section has been difficult to write for a couple of reasons. First, descriptions of the dances— *Los Malinches* and *Las Negritas*—do not exist anywhere in U.S. or Mexican literature. Second, I have danced with my community since I was a young child, which made it difficult to analyze what these dances mean outside the local scales of Indigenous organizing. In other words, as a community member, to dance for and with the pueblo has been a natural occurrence of which I have also been expected to participate. Zoochinenses have come to know traditional dancing as a sign of respect for the community. Capturing the intricate moments, its communal meanings, and longevity for our communities is unquestionably making meaning and relationships to the land in Zoochina, but how to discuss these to a non-Zoochinense or non-*Serrana/o* audience had been unimaginable. Reading three particular pieces of literature has allowed me to thread the two dances I discuss below as contesting multiple

[325] Adelfo Regino, as quoted in Moreschi Aquino, "La comunalidad como epistemología del Sur. Aportes y retos," 16.

[326] Ibid.

settler colonial states of seeing Indigenous peoples "obsolete."[327] These were Hupa scholar Cutcha Risling Baldy's (2018) *We Are Dancing for You: Native Feminisms and the Revitalization of Women's Coming of-Age-Ceremonies*, Matthew Krystal's (2012) *Indigenous Dance and Dancing Indian: Contested Representation in the Global Era*, and Adriana Cruz-Manjarrez's (2013) *Zapotecs on the Move: Cultural, Social, and Political Processes in Transnational Perspective*.[328]

Baldy's work allows me to see how Indigenous women hold traditional dancing as a rite of passage for younger women. Like Baldy argues, I also contend that dancing allows "continuity" of its peoples and "recovery" of women's participation and self-determination through the altering of dance. Though the dances I recount here are not necessarily recovered in a way that implies they had momentarily stopped or ended, but instead how they have altered overtime and particularly so by Zapotec diasporas across the state of Mexico and California. Notably, too, these dances are alive and well, not only among Zoochinenses, but also among other Sierra communities in Los Angeles. Cruz Manjarrez's (2013) work, of which I further draw on below, is the first transnational and generational documentation of the participation of Zapotec men, women, and children in dances. Similarly, as she discusses the generational and gender-shifts in Yalalatec dancing, she also discusses how in the pueblo of Yalalag and in Los Angeles, the creation of new dances speaks to migrant change and adaption. That is, dances, like

[327] I am particularly intrigued by Cutcha Risling Baldy's use of obsolete to tie in discussions on settler colonialism and Indigenous dance. See Cutcha Risling Baldy, *We Are Dancing For Your: Native Feminism and the Revitalization of Women's Coming-of-Age Ceremonies* (Seattle: University of Washing Press, 2018).

[328] Cutcha Risling Baldy, *We Are Dancing For You: Native Feminisms and the Revitalization of Women's Coming-of-Age Ceremonies* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 20018); Matthew Krystal, *Indigenous Dance and Dancing Indian: Contested Representation in the Global Era* (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2012); Adriana Cruz-Manjarrez, *Zapotecs on the Move: Cultural, Social, and Political Processes in Transnational Perspective* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012).

identity are not static, rather they continue to grow and develop. Specifically, the performance of *Las Negritas* enabled women to participate in this traditionally male dance, who prior to 2014, did not. Young girls' and boys' performance of *Los Malinches* allowed them to become more fully integrated to the community early on. Since the Zoochina-L.A. dances have always been performed in the pueblo first, as a form of respect to the community, and then are performed in Los Angeles, this has allowed those who cannot travel, because of lack of legal documentation or economic reasons, to take part in *transborder comunalidad*. As a result, Zoochina dances are not only migratory, but they allow undocumented migrants, along with their mixed-status families and *paisanos* to maintain their belonging, identity, and some level of connection to Zoochina. Following Krystal's (2012) careful examination of Indigenous dances, where dancers, like audiences alike, give meaning to what is seen, displayed, and told through movement, Zoochinense intricate steps and beats in dance and the brass band tell *transborder comunalidad* stories through movement and sound.

While there are a number of Oaxacan dances performed in the diaspora, I specifically look at non-folkloric dances. I see Oaxacan folkloric dances as those that are often popularly danced in large public and state celebratory events of "multiculturalism" such as La Guelaguetza[329] in Oaxaca. Even though many of the dances performed during La Guelaguetza are Indigenous (in origin), this festival has been commercialized, privatized, and has a different meaning, or no direct connection to the pueblos themselves as most of the pueblos' dances are

[329] Word used among Central Valley Zapotecs to describe Indigenous systems of reciprocal gift exchange. For more on the origins and thorough historical description the term see, Xóchitl Marina Flores-Marcial, "A History of Guelaguetza in Zapotec Communities of the Central Valleys of Oaxaca, 16th Century to Present" (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2015), 6-7. Here I use it to refer to the annual La Guelaguetza festival that the Oaxacan state sponsors every year where multiple dances and bands representing the seven regions of Oaxaca are performed. Unfortunately, this festival is also mostly an attraction for tourists.

not represented, nor do they seek inclusion to state co-optation of their traditions. Of great concern is that in both Oaxaca and California, non-Indigenous mestizo Mexicans and non-Mexicans now take part in these folkloric dances, which further excludes Indigenous peoples from participating in them.

In Los Angeles, the Guelaguetza has significantly changed from what it looked like twenty years ago, where participation of Oaxacan pueblos was much more communal, and of which I further explore in more detail later in this chapter when I discuss the band.[330] Zoochina is one of a handful of pueblos to first perform at the Normandie Park L.A. Guelaguetza as dancers, band musicians, and as food vendors in the late 80s, early 1990s.[331] Even though it is still organized by Indigenous Oaxacans in the Organización Regional de Oaxaca (ORO), collectively, HTAs no longer participate as they once did, or at all. Therefore, for the purpose of this project, when talking about the band and La Guelaguetza in L.A. as transborder comunalidad practice— given through movement, performance, and organizing across borders— I am specifically referring to the early years of the festival, when hometown associations (HTA) helped run and fund it to feature the direct communal practices that were described to me in the oral stories I have gathered.

Since the early 1990s, Zoochina children, teens, and young adults have participated in multiple *danzas* organized with the permission of the community's HTA. If not directly organized by the HTA, a single member usually takes it upon themselves to organize a dance for the patron saint festival that year out of their own desire. If there are no volunteers to organize a

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[330] *La Guelaguetza* is a word used among Central Valley Zapotecs to describe Indigenous systems of reciprocal gift exchange. For more on the Los Angeles Guelaguetza see, Lourdes Alberto, forthcoming. Also, for a quick reference on La Guelaguetza in Los Angeles see the Latin American Indigenous Diaspora section of the Mapping Indigenous Los Angeles project, http://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapTour/index.html?appid=31d1100e9a454f5c9b905f55b08c0d22

[331] Fox and Rivera-Salgado, *Indigenous Mexican Migrants in the United States*, 2004, 17

dance for a given year, it is the HTA who collectively decides what dance should be performed. Likewise, *Banda San Jerónimo Zoochina L.A*. has accompanied the pueblo's dances since the diaspora first organized it. The first dance ever to be practiced by Zoochinenses in Los Angeles was *Los Negritos* (1980s), which was composed of all male migrant participants. This was the first dance that migrants in the hometown association took back to Zoochina to be performed. It would also be the last dance to have an all-migrant male participation as women and children of migrants began replacing them. *Los Malinches* is the dance that brings children of migrants together, and it is often the first dance that kids learn when they begin to partake in sociocultural events.

Danza de "Los Malinches"

Figure 4.1. "*Los Malinches, 1994"*
Photo Source: López Family

In 1993, immigrant parents from Zoochina first organized their young children to dance after Don Rogelio, an elder migrant man, proposed it at an HTA meeting for the following year's

Zoochina's saint festivity— *El Espíritu Santo* (The Holy Spirit). *Los Malinches* (see figure 4.1: "*Los Malinches, 1994*" above), composed of twelve children— six girls partnered with six boys ranging from the age of seven to fourteen. Zoochina's *Espíritu Santo* celebration was the first socio-cultural event that brought Zoochinense 1.5 and second-generation children together for the collective good of the diasporic and non-migrant community in Zoochina. Though this would not be the last dance composed of the children of Zoochina Zapotec migrants, it established a strong foundation for children to claim their identity as Zoochinense and in turn to initiate recognition by those who remained on the land. As is tradition from previous dances performed by migrants and the older 1.5-generation, *Los Malinches* was first performed in the pueblo as a sign of gratitude and respect to the land in Zoochina. Upon their return from the *fiesta* (festival), it is custom to also hold a celebration in L.A. mirroring the saint celebrations in which the *danzantes* (dancers) are expected to perform for those who are unable to travel to Zoochina due to lack of funds or legal status. With the assistance of two elderly men as dance instructors, the children were able to successfully accomplish what many *serranos* in L.A. community have referred to as the first *Los Malinches* dance to be performed by the U.S.-raised children.

Don Adalberto and Lluvia explain the significance of *Danza* as a transborder communal practice of belonging. Don Adalberto, an immigrant elder in his late sixties shared, "Cuando bailas una danza no solamento lo haces por ti mismo, si no para todo Zoochina. Estar en una danza no es un juego, es un compromiso serio."[332] For example, when asked to discuss their participation in the dance, Lluvia (thirty-one years old), Edna (twenty-five years old), and Edna's older brother Adan (twenty-eight years old), of whom are all U.S.-born, recounted that when

[332] Don Adalberto, in an interview with the author, 2015. Translation: "When you dance it's not only for oneself, but also for all of Zoochina. When you are in a dance, it's not a game. It's a serious commitment." Words like, "devoción" (devotion) and "amor" (love) were also expressed.

they danced, their parents and grandparents always emphasized, "Puntillas! Puntillas!" (Tip toes! Tip toes!) and "Brinca! (and if need be) Muevete!" (Jump! Move your body!). Precise tip-toeing to the ground is said to be a gesture of gratitude and respect for the community overall—especially so if one does it with "devoción" (devotion). To say that "Puntillas!" is an essential component to Zoochina dances is an understatement.

As Sarracina Littlebird's (2008, 1) states in her thesis, "Many people do not have the opportunity to experience these dances, so how can I articulate through words to Western minds the subtleties," that go into every step, movement, profound sentiment that elders pass onto us through stories and teachings of when they danced the same dances young Zoochinenses in L.A. now take part in.[333] Indigenous dances, as a form of knowledge (or "knowledge production"), speak against colonialism because they involve a process of working memory that continues Indigenous traditions and, in turn, allow Indigenous identity and belonging to flourish. That is to say, on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border, the elders have continued their responsibility to teach the youth these moments that have been passed down since they can recall stories being shared to them of their own grandparents dancing and teaching youth.

Another example of how dances enact inter-generational translocal communal belonging is through the support of elders. These elders, all of whom are migrant men, have been taught all the dances or have been the primary instructors. For *Los Malinches*, it was Edna's grandfather, Don Joel, who was in his sixties at the time that he taught the dance, sometimes with the assistance of another migrant man who happened to be the father of one of the dancers. For *Las Negritas/Los Negritos*, it was Don Jiménez, a migrant man in his late fifties, who was the instructor. As children in Zoochina, both men danced the same dances they were now teaching

[333] Sarracina Littlebird, "Sacred Movement: Dance as Prayer in the Pueblo Cultures of the American Southwest" (undergraduate senior thesis, Columbia University, 2008), 1.

decades later. While Don Joel had taught the dance before, Don Jiménez had not. In fact, more than thirty years had passed since Don Jiménez last danced. Don Jiménez enlisted the help of two people—his younger brother and his cousin who also happened to dance *Los Negritos* multiple times prior to 2014. Together, they were able to carry out a successful commitment.

In December of 2018, I traveled to Oaxaca to conduct follow-up interviews and enjoy of the Christmas celebrations in Zoochina. Don Joel (now 91-years-old) so happened to be in Oaxaca City in the temporary care of his daughter.[334] Though his health had not been the best in recent months, he showed such great enthusiasm to talk about the pueblo "en aquellos tiempos" (back then). I asked him if he still remembered when he taught children the *Los Malinches* dance in Los Angeles and he replied, "por su puesto" (of course). His grandson who sat in the living room the entire time mentioned, "Siempre se acuerda. Se acuerda muy bien. Tiene buena memoria y esos son uno de los bonitos momentos que el siempre se acuerda."[335] Suddenly, Don Joel slowly got up and made his way to one of the back rooms. He came back holding a small 4-inch box, opened it up and began playing a song from *Los Malinches* with the harmonica, just like he had done more than twenty-six years ago before we were ready to begin practicing with the live band. So many memories came over me as he played various songs and made small talk asking how much I remembered the steps. Through remembrance, my elder reinforced a transborder communal sociocultural process that Adriana Cruz-Manjarrez describes as "…social and symbolic ties, shared history, memories, worldview, language, and cultural practices that

[334] A few elders travel between Zoochina, Oaxaca city, Mexico City, Los Angeles, and very few to Nebraska to be taken care of by their children. Many of them have a number of their adult children living in Mexico, while the rest live in the United States. I so happen to find Don Joel in Oaxaca, who spent half of his time there and South Los Angeles.

[335] Personal communication, Osorio, December 18, 2018. Translation: "He always remembers. He remembers very well. He has a good memory and the one he always remembers."

link[ed]" Zoochinenses in specific places and spaces across time and among various generations.[336] That was the last time I saw Don Joel alive. He passed on a few months later in May.

After dancing *Los Malinches*, many of the kids went onto dance other dances as teenagers and then as adults. Interestingly, there has never been an elder woman or women overall to teach a traditional song, but in reality they were the ones in charge of many of the logistics, such as overseeing their children's customized outfits, some making it themselves, and taking turns to bring light refreshments during practices while their husbands rehearsed more than a dozen songs we were to dance to. Over the course of a year, while preparing and practicing for *El Espíritu Santo* fiesta, everyone contributed and guarantee that the dance move through multiple borders and connect to the community in Oaxaca. The women who dance are themselves the children and grandchildren of migrants now make up about half of the dancers in many other traditional dances, even those historically reserved only for men.

Jennie was born and raised in Los Angeles and was eight years old when she participated in *Los Malinches.* Now in her early thirties, she recalls:

> Despite its intensity and weekly rehearsals, mmm, I learned a lot about the pueblo and some of the things they do to organize and remain in touch with *las costumbres* [traditions] we have. It was also the first time I went to Zoochina, which was crazy!"…"Imagine! We didn't … I mean … at least I didn't, know about that way of life! … To see where our parents were born and what they always talked about… I mean… I could never really imagine it! […] "One day I would like my kids to dance it and they too pass it on to their children. There's enough young kids right now to make it possible!

For Jeannie, participating in this moment was an eye opening experience not only because it was the first time she participated in a dance. It was through her participation and trip to Zoochina, she was able to understand how culturally and politically these *transborder comunalidad* practices continue to shape migrants' identity, belonging, and community building. As well,

[336] Adriana Cruz-Manjarrez, *Zapotecs on the Move*, 53.

seeing for the first time the pueblo her parents so often talked about, was life changing in the sense that she built stronger and long lasting *transborder comunalidad* connections to a land she had only known in words.

In another example, Roberto, also in his early thirties, and born and raised in Los Angeles shared his experience as a *Malinches* dancer:

> It was the first time I got involved. I got involved though because of my grandpa, not so much my parents. Unfortunately, as you know, my dad's alcoholism took over him for most of our childhood [takes a deep breath and continues]. When the *Zoochina union* (HTA) asked my grandpa [Don Joel] to be the instructor of *Los Malinches* he signed me up as a dancer. My sisters were too young, but as the youngest of the dancers [he was six years old], I loved it! That's where I learned to dance and the seriousness of committing to dance for the pueblo.

Roberto has been participating in multiple dances with other pueblos ever since. He also plays the percussion with many pueblos, including Zoochina. This moment became critical in the kids' early consolidation of their identity and the feeling of being part of the community as it was the first time that the migrant elders in L.A. began establishing a relationship with the children of Zoochina in Los Angeles. Furthermore, Roberto's story reveals another sadly too-common story of migration, that of alcoholism. Though we did not get into the details of his father's battles, *Los Malinches* played a bigger role in helping him momentarily find distraction from problems at home. Before our conversation ended, Roberto reminded that living with his grandfather meant practicing every day and understanding just how serious was committing to dancing for the pueblo.

Danza de "Las Negritas"/"Los Negritos"

Figure 4.2. "Las Negritas Danza, 2014"
Photo Source: Claudia López

Describing the Danzas

Multiple communities in the Sierra Juárez and even other Latin American countries, have danced *La Danza de los Negritos* (figure 4.2, "Las Negritas Danza, 2014"), although there are some slight variations between them. During my fieldwork, I asked the elders in Zoochina and in Los Angeles if they knew the origin story of the dance or where the name came from because I found the name troubling. Most elders did not know the origins of the dance and could only recall stories of their grandparents dancing it. My own grandmother recalled memories of her grandfather dancing but was unable to capture the origins or the main reason why the dance existed. I found very limited information that described *La Danza De los Negritos* (literally "The Dance of the Little Blacks") as a sacred dance that Black slaves throughout Mexico (in the states of Veracruz, Oaxaca, Puebla, Hidalgo, the state of Mexico) and even Peru (after

abolishment of slavery) performed during moments of sorrow or simply for entertainment.[337] A story from Papantla, Veracruz dating back to the mid-1550s, when slaves were brought to work in sugarcane plantations, describes an enslaved boy who got bitten by a snake. His mother, along with other enslaved people came to his aid by performing rituals to bring him back to life. For the Totonaca Indian onlookers working in the plantations nearby, they saw the rituals as a mixture of dances, singing, and chanting.[338] For the community of Zoochina, the dance is considered sacred and in order to perform it requires great *commitment* and *responsibility* (my emphasis).

The attire worn by dancers in different countries and Mexican states that dance *Los Negritos* features many similarities. For example, they all wear black velvet ankle or shin high pants and a black vest (at times a jacket) with colorful ribbons on their back hanging past the knees, on top of a white or blue male dress-shirt. Most likely, these velvet cloth components are adorned with colorful handkerchiefs, colorful sequences, and a golden fringe thread on the bottom part of the vest and pants. Although every piece of the *traje* (outfit) is important, the sequence schemes hold a special significance as these reflect a choice in design by the dancer. For example, the back or front of the vest typically features large, sequined patches of the Mexican flag, patches of the Mexican coat of arms— the eagle capturing the snake on the cactus— or (as is common now among the Los Angeles diaspora) a patch of the Lakers or Dodgers. Variations of sequence imagery reflect how the diaspora adapts to the spaces and places they inhabit, while also reminding us that, like identity, dances are not static. They adapt

[337] For the case of Peru see, https://andina.pe/agencia/noticia-navidad-huanuco-ya-vive-fiesta-de-danza-los-negritos-honor-al-nino-jesus-693497.aspx.

[338] Sonia Iglesias y Cabrera, "La Leyenda de la Danza de los Negritos," *Mitos y leyendas mexicanas*, May 9, 2019, https://www.mitos-mexicanos.com/veracruz/la-leyenda-de-la-danza-de-los-negritos.html. For more of the son and mother's story, see https://www.artsrn.ualberta.ca/totonaco2/?page_id=1717.

to an ever-changing environment in order to carry their pueblo's communal living forward.

Illustrating the ways how dancer's *trajes* has their pueblo's name sequenced reveals how dancers enact the presence of community belonging within a dance, while also performing meaning of other regalia components through its careful attention and use. Take the case of the *Los Malinches'* outfits, who share the use of the castanets, with the exception of the 12-inch long wooden stick in *Las Negritas* that represents a sword. While the use of velvet, castanets, golden fridge threads and small round mirrors that adorn the hat are Spanish influenced, the *huaraches* (sandals) worn are from the Sierra region and are typically made by untreated dry cow skin. *Huaraches* in both dances are typically worn with long white socks. Zoochinenses, similar to other surrounding communities, hold *Las Negritas/Los Negritos* as a highly revered dance and over time, women, like men have made it their own. The jumping, hoping, and running involved in the long hour dance, which is composed of a number of sections (e.g., entrance, end, and quadrant sections, to name a few) are all also equally important for the community.[339]

Perhaps the most significant accessory to the vest and pants/shorts of *Las Negritas/Los Negritos* outfit is the mask. The mask is an essential component that takes up various meanings in Indigenous traditions. In his ethnographic work with Maya K'iche' dances in Guatemala, Matthew Krystal states, "Almost universal in traditional dance[340] … masks are viewed and treated as powerful objects. Many have spirits, and masks of especially significant figures that are said to invoke the spirit of the figure they represent."[341] I too emphasize the importance of

[339] Among some of the Las Negrita/os sections Zoochinenses commonly refer to are, "entrada, salida, cüadrillas."

[340] Matthew Krystal, *Indigenous Dance and Dancing Indian,* 44.

[341] Matthew Krystal, *Indigenous Dance and Dancing Indian: Contested Representation in the Global Era* (Boulder, Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 2012), 45.

masks and mask-making as they provide profound forms of meaning that strengthen communal relations with Zoochina and other pueblos of the Sierra Juárez. For Zoochinenses, masks have the power of telling stories, building emotional, spiritual, and physical strength and connections as they carry on stories and practices of communal being. Masks are a transborder process of empowerment that disrupts settler erasure through performance and Indigenous onlookers who further give meaning to masks. Masks are *transborder comunalidad* in practice. They entertain and unite, otherwise separated families by building suspense as audience members often attempt to guess who each dancer is and are captivated by the *trajeses* different adornments.

The Las Negritas/Negritos mask is made out of wood and then colored in black. The rim of the eyes is the color of the Mexican flag— green, white, and red. Depending on the community's tradition or taste there are white eyebrows, teeth, and horns on each side of the mouth. As an object that adds to the difficulty of the dance (as there are small holes from which to breath and see from), that needs to be specifically made, and that offers the things from which the dance gets its name, the mask holds many communal stories. Though some communities in diaspora make their mask in Los Angeles (usually by a mask Oaxacan specialist), Zoochinenses traditionally get theirs made in the Sierra. Depending on the mask, they order their mask from a particular community, which is placed over the phone or directly by a paisano that lives in Zoochina. These masks are then transported to Los Angeles with the help of a migrant that is traveling from the pueblo to the city after a visit or at times a relative of a dancer. Sometimes an elder volunteers out of his or her pocket to make the trip to Oaxaca for the sole purpose of getting the masks. Therefore, masks also represent a rite of passage since Zoochinenses only place an order when the dancers have collectively mastered most of the dance. By comparison,

Cutcha Risling Baldy's discussion of traditional Hupa dancing, *performing*[342] *Las Negritas/Los Negritos* is a rite of passage and commitment that foments ties, respect, and recognition to the community in Zoochina and in Los Angeles.

On the last day of the 2014 patron saint festivity in Zoochina, all the women in *Las Negritas* took off their masks before their last performance. This was significant because in the years prior no one had done so. The women agreed to take off their masks in order to reveal their identities, but more so to be seen and identified by Zoochinenses and that despite years living in Los Angeles they remain connected to the pueblo as they reinvent gender practices in dance. Chicana scholar Margaret E. Montoya's essay, *"Mascaras, Trenzas, y Greñas"* illustrates the multiple meanings of mascara (eyelash make up), *máscaras* (masks), and *más caras* (more faces). For Montoya, the use of the word mascara allows Chicanas to make themselves up or invents themselves anew and "comes from the anglicized pronunciation for the Spanish word meaning mask." However, as Montoya explains, if one separates the word to two words, *más caras,* it reveals the existence of multiple faces that are used in specific moments.[343] *Máscara* conceals in the ways that it reinvents, reveals, and shows how one makes meaning to community. This reinvention of traditions and the taking off of the mask tells both the individual and collective stories of those who long to be *of* the pueblo and *with* the pueblo as they remain connected using more than one *cara* (face) or *más caras* to make meaning of who they are and what they represent for Zoochina futurity.

[342] I would like to stress here that performing, versus practicing the dance, are also two different rites of passage as performing means that one has fully committed themselves by going to weekly practices, presenting oneself before the HTA, and fundraising with the HTA prior to the trip to Zoochina.

[343] Margaret E. Montoya, *"Mascaras, Trenzas, y Greñas*: Unmasking the Self While Un/braiding Latina Stories and Legal Discourse," Harvard Women's Law Journal 17 (1994): 218.

"Las Negritas" Stories

Though many could not point to its origin, both young and old insisted that the dance is considered sacred. Words like, "*devoción*," "*amor*" (love), "*seriedad*" (seriousness), and "*Esto no es un juego*" (This is not a game) are commonly used to describe the dance and signal the gravity and respect afforded to it. In 2014, however, *Los Negritos*, a traditionally male dance composed of eight participants was quite different for two reasons. For one, it was the first time that one dance included a multi-generational diaspora— including the 1st, 1.5, 2nd, and one 2.5-generation Zoochinense.[344] Secondly, it was the first time where all the dancers were women. Women's participation resulted in a re-making not only of the dance, but how gender relations are re-constructed through dance and across borders. These transborder gender relations generationally carved their belonging, love, commitment, and identity as Zoochinenses, while challenging U.S.-Mexico settler relations of Indigenous erasure. In other words, *transborder comunalidad* Zoochina dances are places and spaces where generations in diaspora re-member and re-construct ways that reinforce their specific identity to their pueblo, while juxtaposing it with their new racial categorizations as Latina/o or Hispanic. It is these moments that many have made stronger meaning of their communal collective lives.

The idea for an all-women version of the dance emerged one evening, when Cecilia, a second-generation forty-year-old woman, decided to call Zoochina women to put together their own all-women *Las Negritas* dance, after she had watched Yatzachi el Alto woman dance *Los*

[344] The 1st-generation is the migrant generation (parents who migrated to the U.S.). The 1.5 are those who migrated at the age of 12 and attended high school in the U.S. The second-generation are those who were born in the United States. In studies of immigrant children, sociologist Edward Telles and Vilma Ortiz (2008, 130) designate the description of "2.5 generation" to those whose one parent was born in the U.S. and the other parent was born in another country, but who arrived to the U.S. as a child. In the case above, the 2.5 child has one parent that was born in a Sierra Juárez pueblo, while the other parent was born in the U.S.

Negritos at a *kermes* (party fundraiser). Based on my participant observation work in Los Angeles, various Zoochina women recall being in disbelief and for a moment, uncertain if they would be able to "pull it off," as an anonymous second-generation woman told me. I asked Cecilia how the community responded having women perform this dance for the first time and she replied very emotionally:

> A lot of the negativity came from males, 'You are women. You ain't going to be able to handle it. Y'all can't dance it like us.' I'm like, 'If you guys can do it, we can do it!' People were like, 'Oh, you guys are too old.' I was like, 'no, were not! We still have a heart, a little kid's heart. You know? We still got this.' We (also) had a lot of positive feedback, like, 'Good job girls! Awesome! You are representing Zoochina! There has never been a danza (made up of all) females.'[345]

Particularly in the beginning, some men and even women believed that women were not going to be able to handle the one-hour dance because of their "lack of natural endurance" and the fact that it requires a lot of consecutive high jumps and spins while landing on your tiptoes wearing *huaraches*.[346] This belief of "lack of endurance" was told to me multiple times by most of the men that I interviewed, including Cecilia's father. In *Las Negritas*, other comments were made by men who would reply in relation to a dancer getting injured, "You are women, what do you expect?" and "We told you it was going to be difficult for you." While these comments were consistent throughout the yearlong weekly rehearsals, negative commentary mostly came from the male *Serranos* when participants would get injured, or when the dancers did not have the energy to continue for more than three hours of practice. Upon several conversations with the dancers, the women admitted that they often feared not being able to "aguantar" (endure) such a heavy dance as their friends and family consistently told them. However, these sexist comments

[345] Personal communication, Cecilia, August 11, 2015. Original interview in English.

[346] It is composed of twelve different segments, which is one of the main reasons it can run many hours and thereby be seen as a dance that requires a lot of endurance.

only motivated them to try harder. As Cecilia concluded, "To keep us strong, we motivated ourselves throughout our rehearsals remembering what our elderly have always said, 'Lo hacemos por el amor que le tenemos a nuestro pueblo.'"[347]

"La Danza de Las Negritas"—as these women began calling it to emphasize the role of women—became a critical turning point for the women who realized that they were making a gendered adjustment that was breaking with traditional cultural customs that have excluded women from participating. During a conversation I had with another "Las Negritas" dancer, Tracy, who is twenty and was born to her Zoochina second-generation mother and her migrant (1.5) Xochixtepec father (Xochixtepec is another adjacent Zapotec community near Zoochina), shared that her participation in the dance allowed her to get closer to her Zoochina community and feel pride as a Zoochinense. When I asked her how so, she took a deep breath, nervously giggled and paused for what seemed to be two minutes as she fidgeted with her hands. I then presumed to inquire about her recent tattoo.

> B: I want to ask you about your tattoo.
> T: (laughs) My tattoo?
> B: Yeah, cause I was like, 'before I forget I need to ask about her tattoo.' So, what does your tattoo say?
> T: 'No'l Shiin.' It says mujer de Zoochina. Oh man, this is where I'm going to freeze [giggles nervously].

I assure her she is fine and ask her if she needs a break. She insists she's okay and moves forward to say:

> T: I got it one because it ... you know, I take pride in where I come from, but it wasn't my idea! It was Edna's idea [Edna, whom I mentioned earlier, also danced in Las Negritas]. And this is where I'm going to start crying [voice starts cracking] ... mmm. In the danza, towards the end she [Edna] said, 'Oh, we should all get tattoos that say No'l Shiin, pero en Zapoteco.' We tried figuring out how to write

[347] My own translation. Original: "We do it for the love that we have to our pueblo." Whenever the community performs a dance, plays certain "sones y jarabes" (music tones and rhythms), organizes a kermes or other festivities, whether it is taken back to Zoochina or is only held in L.A., parents and grandparents always teach all generations that forth and foremost it is for the love to the pueblo.

> it [nervously laughs with tears in her eyes]. We didn't know, so we were like, 'Who are we going to ask?? My mom was like, 'Ask your grandpa!' I'm like, 'No! He's going to say Zoochina in Spanish. And then it's going to say, 'Quiero sopa' [I want soup] en Zapoteco [we are both laughing]. So, the moment that I told Edna, 'Oh, let's get it. I'll get it with you. I'll figure it out.' I finally asked how to write it. My grandparents gave it to me and I'm like, 'Edna Let's get it!'
> B: Why there? [On her left chest]
> T: Edna was the one who was like, 'Oh, let's get it here [pointing to her heart] … because this [pointing to her chest] is where we learn our heart is. It has a stronger meaning.

The day that Tracy finally got her tattoo, she found out like many Zoochinenses did, that at twenty-seven years-old Edna had passed away after a short, but strong battle against her illness. As we both tried to keep our composure, we realized that it is precisely these moments that bring Zoochinenses together not only as individuals, but also as a community in diaspora where the children of migrants are indeed part of the community and recognized as members. Tracy, who, also, has been a band member of Zoochina-L.A. since 2004, finished by saying, "I'm proud, as much as Edna was proud to be from Zoochina, mujer de Zoochina! ... you know? That gives so much power! Just saying 'mujer de Zoochina!' And you know, the day I got it I was like, it's just so beautiful! It's beautiful!"

In his participant observation fieldwork with Yoemes, David Delgado Shorter diverts from the thick ehtnographic description given of the community's traditional Deer Dance, and thus expresses how "…these dances embody Yoeme views of knowledge and truth."[348] In this respect, Zapotecs on and off their land have made meaning of their past and present truths through dance because it speaks to their ongoing relationship with Zoochina. As well, dances like *Los Malinches* and *Los Negritas/os* are not simply a form of cultural production, but as Don Adalberto states, partaking in dances is a responsibility one holds with the L.A. diaspora, as well as in Oaxaca.

[348] Delgado Shorter, *We Will Dance our Truth: Yaqui History in Yoeme Performances* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 23.

Oaxacan Brass Bands

Oaxacan music provides the transborder communal beats to connect to the people, the pueblo, and much of what makes up their identity. Though these bands have existed for quite a few years now, scholarship is only now beginning to emerge about their significance in transnational/transborder life. The literature has specifically examined how children of migrants are partaking in Oaxacan music. It is the participation of young children, teenagers, and older U.S.-raised generations that make most of the musical membership throughout Southern California. Among some prominent work includes that of Solaga Zapotec scholar Daina Sanchez (2018) who looks at the experiences of the second-generation in the *Banda Juvenil Solaga USA* in Los Angeles. She states,

> Playing in the village-based band, performing traditional dances, and attending patron saint festivities facilitate Solagueño youths' social integration into the U.S. by fostering a strong sense of ethnic pride in spite of discrimination from some members of the mestizo Latino population. Furthermore, participating in Solaga's village based-band allows youth to have an "escape" from their everyday lives.[349]

Sanchez findings highlight how Oaxacan bands provide an incredible sense of pride among Solagueños, but particularly young children and adolescent as it is this young generation that make up most of the participants playing in the band or in dances. As a result of their vast integration, it allows these children and adolescent self-assertion to identify with their pueblos. Participation in Zoochina bands for U.S.-born and raised Zoochinenses are acts of public recognition of their Oaxacan identity, particularly in relation to their specific community. As I describe in chapter 1, Zoochinense children have also experienced discrimination in school by their non-Indigenous mestizo Mexican and Latina/o peers. Belonging to a band helps them combat shame, fear, and other negative notions associated with being Indigenous, in this

[349] Daina Sanchez, "Racial and Structural Discrimination Toward the Children of Indigenous Mexican Immigrants," *Race and Social Problems* 10, no. 4 (October 2018): 312.

particular case Oaxacan. When one plays in the band, one is doing more than sound waves, beats, and intricate tones. Oaxacan music provides the transborder communal beats to connect to the people, the pueblo, and much of what makes up their identity.

Among *Serranas* and *Serranos* there is a common saying that: "no hay fiesta sin banda" ("there is no party without the band"). Similarly, there cannot be a discussion of dances without talking about *"la banda"* (the band), also referred to as *"música de viento"* (wind music). In a 2016 project conducted by the *Comisión Nacional Para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas* in a Tlahuitoltepec community of the Sierra Mixe, a woman describe the band as *"un pueblo sin música es un pueblo muerto, un pueblo sin vida."*[350] *Banda Oaxaqueña* (or Oaxacan brass band music) is the heart of Oaxacan musical genre that makes possible the festivities, everyday life, and identity whether in the United States or Mexico.

Oaxacan bands represent a crucial sociocultural component that strengthens communal belonging and therefore responsibilities with the *pueblo*. Whether a *kermes* (party fundraiser), *Convivencia* (social communal gathering), or a loved one's funeral, the band is a necessary component to successfully carry out each event. In this same project conducted in the Mixe Sierra of Tlahuitolpec by the National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples (CDI), an elder described the music as, *"La música la vivimos, la música es parte de nuestra vida, es parte de nuestra identidad."*[351] This same expression is felt among Zoochinenses. It informs who they are and provides them with a greater meaning to communal life.

[350] Comisión Nacional Para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas CDI/National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples, "La cultural musical en los pueblos de Oaxaca," youtube video, March 3, 2018, https://youtu.be/wqnNiafA4fs. Translation: "A pueblo without music is a dead pueblo, a pueblo without life."

[351] Ibid. Translation: "We live the music, music is part of our lives, it's part of our identity."

In Los Angeles, there are approximately forty bands, each ranging between anywhere from ten to thirty-members. Some only play for their pueblo, while others play for a Oaxacan or even larger Latina/o and non-Latino audience, though this has been recent in the past twelve years or so. These bands are traditionally a male composed practice that originated in Oaxaca and similarly mirrored such patriarchal composition in the 1970s when immigrant men established them in Los Angeles.[352] According to Adriana Cruz-Manjarrez, in Yalalag and in Los Angeles, the first Los Angeles brass bands were San Juan Yalálag (1990), Alma Oaxaqueña (1991), and Banda Filarmónica de Yalálag (1998).[353] Other early L.A. bands were Yatzachi el Bajo (1980s), Santa María Xochixtepec (1980s), and San Jerónimo Zoochina (1992). *Alma Oaxaqueña* was founded by Maestro Jeremías Ríos, a Zapotec migrant from the community of Hidalgo Yalalag.[354] Known among multiple pueblos for his musical talent, Maestro Jeremías formed other Oaxacan bands and helped already established bands improve their skills. With the help of Maestro Jeremías, Zoochina's band—Banda San Jerónimo Zoochina L.A.— took significant fruition.

It is important to acknowledge that although most bands play the same songs, each pueblo and *maestro* also has its own style of playing particular songs, especially towards the end of a set of music scales. This is significant because among the fifteen pueblos of Sector Zoogocho, a micro-region in the Sierra that is approximately 203.40 miles (327.35 km), musicians and migrants in Los Angeles know what band is exactly playing only by hearing them.

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[352] Personal communication, Don Rogelio, August 2015.

[353] Adriana Cruz-Manjarraz, *Zapotecs on the Move: Cultural, Social, and Political Processes in Transnational Perspective* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2013), 49.

[354] A few Zoochina migrant men were part of Alma Oaxaqueña.

For some, their unique rhythm is at times a preference among the community during events, such when a fellow paisana/o transitions into the spirit world. This difference in style is also one of the reasons why during kermeses more than one and up to three bands are chosen to play. Often, according to the style of each band is how each student learns in the *escoletas* (amateur band classes), of which I describe later.

Movement through Zoochinense/Oaxacan/Zapotec Sound in Indigenous L.A.

Oaxacan music is identified as distinctly Indigenous in its sound, lyrics, and communal practice. In talking to other mostly non-Indigenous Latin American diasporas about my work with Oaxacan music, I have often been asked if Oaxacan music is similar to *Norteño* or *tamborazo* music. These attempts to compare Oaxacan music to these genres are risky and disturbing because Oaxacan music is identified through Indigenous culture, connection to one's pueblo, and Indigenous language. Despite the fact that Oaxacan brass band instruments are European in origin (similar to those of Norteño and tamborazo), Indigenous Oaxacans have made the brass bands sound waves something that is *their own* (my emphasis), both through its tune and lyrics (both Indigenous and Spanish). For diasporas throughout Los Angeles, Oaxacan music is the identifiable marker of Indigenous music and dancing as well as cultural and political organizing that speaks to Indigenous Oaxacan *transborder comunalidad* experiences in urban places and in specific spaces. On any given day, Oaxacan brass band music flows from homes, dance halls, music classes, high schools, or churches throughout Los Angeles. Although it is still unfamiliar to the larger non-Mexican Latina/o population, Oaxacan brass band sounds reinforce a shared Oaxaqueña/o (regional) identity distinctive from Latina/o and/or Hispanic, as well as Chicana/o identity formation. As Gaye Theresa Johnson "Sonic politics are created through

shared sounds, even between communities of listeners who speak different languages.[355] Similarly, to me, the sonic politics of Oaxacan music hold communal ways of understanding; in creating shared sounds, Oaxacan music speaks against settler logics of elimination and neoliberal regimes that further push people out of their native lands and onto others, where new Indigenous modes of relation are created. Indeed, relations with Native people of greater L.A. are only beginning to take shape. Notably, the audiences of Oaxacan music, like its artists, share common languages: Sector Zoogocho Zapotec (though varying in dialect), Spanish, and, for some, English. In doing so, these sounds create a hub in moments of racial violence committed against them by non-Indigenous mestizo Mexicans.

***Banda* San Jerónimo Zoochina L.A.**

Figure 4.3. *Banda San Jerónimo Zoochina L.A.*
Photo Source: San Jerónimo Zoochina L.A.

[355] Gaye Theresa Johnson, *Spaces of Conflict, Sounds of Solidarity*: *Music, Race, and Spatial Entitlement in Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 86.

After playing with various Oaxacan bands, including *Alma Oaxaqueña* (literally Oaxacan Soul), Don Rogelio and Don Francisco co-founded the *San Jerónimo Zoochina L.A.* in 1992. One evening, I sat with Don Rogelio, who recounted his and Don Francisco's life growing up in the pueblo as musicians.[356] Don Rogelio recounted that, after the twelve-year (1950s-1960) war ended in Zoochina with a neighboring town, (see chapter 2 and 3 for in depth discussion), he and Don Francisco ran to Zoogocho to register themselves in the *CIS internado* (*Centro de Integración Social/Social Integration Center*, a musical boarding school). Don Rogelio recounts that it had been no more than a couple of weeks that the war had ended. At eleven years of age, they were both hesitant to go, fearing an ambush as they could not believe that this twelve-year conflict they had grown up in had finally come to an end. Trusting their instinct, they finally went on. He stated that one of the main reasons he wanted to join the *internado* (boarding school) was because it meant that he would have three meals each day. His then recently widowed mother struggled to feed all six of his siblings after his dad had been killed in the war. However, upon a reading and math comprehensive entry exam, Don Rogelio failed, "No pase el examen por un punto!" ["I didn't pass the exam by one point!"] and was forced to go home. Don Francisco barely made it in.

That same day Don Rogelio returned to Zoochina and shared the news with an uncle. Together they went back to the *internado* to speak to the music instructor, "Le dijo [al instructor] que por favor entendiera mi situación. Que habian matado a mi papá en el conflicto y que por todo lo que habiamos pasado no habia podido ir a la escuela… que mi mamá habia quedado viuda en cargo de todos sus hijos y que yo tenia muchas ganas de aprender."[357] The instructor

[356] Unfortunately, I was unable to talk to Don Francisco due to a medical condition.

[357] Participant communication, Don Rogelio, August 2015. Translation: "He told him [the instructor] to please understand my situation. That they had killed my dad in the conflict and because of everything we

agreed and that same day he began boarding school. This moment was the beginning of the first Zoochina L.A. band members' knowledge of Oaxacan brass band. It would also be a place in which Zoochinenses, like other migrants at the time, would build lasting relations with other young men who soon followed or had proceeded their migration to the U.S. What they built in the *internado* was in essence, not only musical talent, but translocal relationship that would become transborder (and translocal, but in Los Angeles) with other Sierra Juárez musicians.

In her book, *On Site, In Sounds: Performance Geographies in América Latina*, Kirstie Dorr argues that "sonic cultures neither can nor should be understood as inherently 'in' and 'out of place,' and concomitantly that the dynamic and contested (re)-production of place is indelibly shaped by relations of musical transit."[358] For Zoochinense migrants, the transborder dynamisms of banda Oaxaqueña is exactly located and (re)produced within communal places that continues to be shaped by migrants, like children of migrants alike. Oaxacan brass band music is informed by particular moments and spaces that have shaped collective moments, whether in sorrow or other instances, but that like migratory lives change and attempt to adapt to a new place in order to continue surviving in transit.

It was these major moments that Don Francisco and Don Rogelio carried with them that informed their love for the band. Oaxacan brass band music not only molded their relationship with the land, but it also saved them from the trauma they had lived and its aftermath. This was further evident given the boarding school's opportunities to travel to other communities to play

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had gone through I was unable to go to school… that my mom had been left widow in charge of six kids and I was eager to learn."

[358] Kirstie A. Dorr, *On Site, In Sound: Performance Geographies in América Latina* (London and Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 11.

during their patron saint festivities, something that the *internado* continues to do until this day.[359] Because conditions in Zoochina were severely dire, both men were forced to drop out of *el internado* and migrate to the United States as the only option to help their parents and younger siblings. During a brief stay in Mexico City, they continued practicing with their migrant *paisanos*. When they started *Banda San Jerónimo Zoochina L.A.*, they were in their late thirties, and following what they had learned at the CIS *internado*, they only recruited men.

Don Rogelio recalls that they started the band because they saw many other pueblos starting their own bands; in particular, the bands of Yatzachi el Bajo and Santa María Xochixtepec had grown significantly and had members whom they had been friends with since childhood. The love for *la banda* (the band) was as great as their love for their pueblo. Though they had early doubts if it would be possible to form a band, their own Zoochina paisanos and others encouraged them to push forward. Don Rogelio and Don Francisco called upon their sons, nephews, cousins, and uncles to join the band. They started with about ten first-generation migrant men and three 1.5-generation young adults. All were between their late thirties to late teens.

Within a year of forming the band, they began playing for the Los Angeles Guelaguetza with the support of the *Organización Regional de Oaxaca/Regional Organization of Oaxaca* (ORO), which had recently formed through the collective of various pueblos. For several years, Zoochina, Yatzachi el Bajo, and Yalalag were among the first bands to begin playing in the Los Angeles *La Guelaguetza* festivals at Normandie Park in Koreatown. For Zoochina and El Bajo, they already had a significant 1.5 and second-generation participation. At the same time, these young men were dancers in *La Guelaguetza* with other Zoochina women who yet did not take

[359] There is now another band group in Zoogocho, the Bachillerato. Both continue to integrate young and teenage children. They also travel a lot within the Sierra, other parts of Oaxaca, and Mexico City to play for multiple events, including government sponsored programs.

part in the band. While many of the pueblos in Los Angeles had been organizing events amongst themselves for several years, *La Guelaguetza's* structure at the time allowed them to further build a sense of comradery and collective being for these young kids. By the 1990s Oaxaqueños had made a large influx to the city. It was during this time in *La Guelaguetza* that Oaxacan music had a suspenseful time-lapse where participation of children of migrants coming of age increased significantly. One of the ways in which this happened was through the direct participation of Oaxacan children as messengers between the *puesto de comida* (food vendors) and the bands.[360] For example, once the bands stopped playing, either to prepare their notes for the next dance, to drink water, or to alternate with the other band, it indicated to the people at the *puestos* that the dances had also (briefly) stopped and that they would have a large crowd of people coming to consume their food. As a child, I was one of those kids running from one end of this location at Normandie Park to another with arms full of bottled water to give to the band or with a special request for food. For those who were old enough, a lot of responsibility went into helping in the kitchen to help in refiling supplies, delivery water or food, or to help as interpreters. Of particular help were teenagers who were asked to take orders from white attendees who only spoke English. Everyone had a role and whether you were a young child dancing, playing in the band, or helping out elsewhere, Zoochina migrants, like others, where spearheading a collective and transborder Oaxacan comradeship unimaginable to many of us growing up at the time.[361]

By 1995, *Banda San Jerónimo Zoochina L.A.* had grown significantly. This last

[360] Unlike today's Los Angeles *La Guelaguetza* who have Oaxacan family owned private businesses selling food, in the 80s and 90s, food vendors were owned and operated by the hometown associations of each pueblo. Most of the profit they gained was then sent off to their respective towns, particularly for the expenses of their patron saint festivity, though they also had to pay ORO as a source of funding for all the expenses incurred. If there were remaining funds among the pueblo, they were used to cover the cost of kermeses in Los Angeles. This prior setting also reflected a more communal system of operation.

[361] Other men participated in the basketball tournaments after they had finished playing in the band.

membership integration was largely composed of the second-generation who had recently finished dancing in *Los Malinches*. However, because most had never held an instrument or were in beginners' marching band in school, *solfeo* (singing of music scales) courses were a pre-requisite for this new level of music they were about to embark in. With the help of Don Francisco and Don Rogelio, as well as *maestros*, like Jeremías (see above) and Adolfo Aracen from the Sierra community of Santo Tomas Lachitaá, the teenagers who indeed enjoyed *música Oaxaqueña* stayed and moved onto formally play in the band. One of these members was Ciro, who was thirteen at the time. Ciro had joined at the insistency of his father who was also in the band. Though he initially did not like it much, he has been in the band for almost twenty-five years. He described his experience in the band as, "That's the love for the pueblo. When I leave, it'll be because I'm too old to blow into *el bajo* [the sousaphone] or when I die."[362] Ciro simply said, "It puts you in the mood, like you feel this rush." His sense of belonging and commitment to the band moved him to say that it was only a decline in physical ability due to old age (e.i., lacking the air to blow into such enormous wind instrument) that was also echoed among other Oaxacan band members, as well as other Indigenous communities throughout Los Angeles and the Sierra. However, the participation of young girls in the band has played a major role for Oaxacan brass bands in Mexico and in California to continue existing. For Zoochina, this has certainly been the case as they had one of only four women in L.A.-based Oaxacan bands to begin playing in the 90s.

Lluvia is a second-generation woman and daughter of one of the band's co-founder. shared her experience when, at the age of ten, she became the first girl member as a clarinet player in the Zoochina L.A. band in 1995:

It was uncomfortable at first being the first woman to be in the band … When we

[362] Personal communication, Ciro, July 2017.

> first started going to *tocadas* (gigs), people would stare at me because there were not too many women playing in the bands back then. Men would even stand right behind me to hear if I was *really* [her own emphasis] playing or if I was just simply keeping the seat warm.[363]

Although the larger Oaxacan community saw Lluvia as something to behold, it was the male dominant space of *la banda* that saw her with skepticism, as if women were unlikely to play as good or better than their fellow male counterparts. Despite this surveillance, it did not stop Lluvia from continuing her participation in the band and teaching younger Zoochina and other Zapotec children *solfeo* (or singing scale) classes. On two occasions over the years, she has helped the Zoochina male instructors teach singing scale classes to about a ten to twenty younger girls and boys who are looking to join the band. In the late 1990s, and a couple of years ago, Lluvia assisted with singing scale lessons every weekend in the garage of a fellow Zoochina migrant and a second-generation musician.

As the only Zoochina Zapotec woman to ever participate in such a way, Lluvia challenges traditional gender norms and the ways in which communal practices have been modified to meet the growing diaspora's yearning to belong and continue being Zoochinenses. The young girls and boys she taught are now professionally playing in Zoochina's band and often also play in other Oaxacan bands. The growing Oaxacan amateur band classes (or *escoletas)* throughout Los Angeles, and even beyond, demonstrate just how valuable *Banda Oaxaqueña* continues to be not only for individuals who play in them, but for the collective identity of Serrana/o communities away from *home* (my own emphasis).[364]

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[363] Personal communication, Lluvia, July 10, 2015.

[364] This information is based on ethnographic fieldwork and personal communication with the owners, founders, and parents who take their children to these *escoletas*, as the community refers to them.

The bands in Oaxaca and Los Angeles demonstrate how these unique sound waves continue to be maintained and re-created by the younger generation, like those their parents and ancestors grew up with in Zoochina. When asked about what influence playing in *Banda Zoochina L.A*. had on their identity or relationship with the community, Angela, in her mid-twenties and a member of the band, said:

> I feel being in the band is, is not like, for me it wasn't about being forced but more of *a gusto* (a pleasure) [to participate]. I'm not in it for money; I'm not in it for getting to be known. I'm in it because of the love of my pueblo. That's all I feel, that's all I feel.[365]

Like those found in Daina Sánchez's (2018) study, some children reported being forced at one point by their parents or fathers to take part in the band.[366] Ángela's commentary above demonstrates otherwise; I believe this is also because her older brother was already a band member when she joined. Melina, of whose racial experience I talk about below, also reported being forced to be in the band as a child. When I asked all genders why they felt this way, everyone reported that, because they were very young, they preferred being out with friends during Friday night over weekend rehearsals. Zoochinense youth soon found themselves playing in *kermeses* and other events fruitful. They began to see how their participation allowed them to meet other young Serrana/os playing in other Oaxacan bands, who also shared an interest in dancing "*sones y jarabes*" while enjoying hip-hop, rap, pop, or rock en español. This collective identity as Oaxacan musicians playing a specific regional genre is further evident during *misas Oaxaqueñas* (Oaxacan masses), which are now celebrated throughout multiple Catholic churches in Los Angeles.

The history and participation of U.S.-raised and born band members also demonstrates

[365] Personal communication, Angela, August 11, 2015.

[366] Daina Sanchez, "Racial and Structural Discrimination Toward the Children of Indigenous Mexican Immigrants."

the importance of place and space in building an urban Indigenous or Oaxacan pride identity. Young Oaxacan women have carved out spaces to share the sounds of Oaxacan music in their schools. This is evident in how young Oaxacan Ciro, Lluvia, Tracy, and two other Zoochina sisters all graduated from Hamilton High School in West Los Angeles. Hamilton High School specializes in music, including marching band and mariachi. While Ciro and Lluvia are fifteen years older than the other four, they all reported that the reason they attended Hamilton was because of the opportunity to continue to learn how to play and improve for the band. On Facebook, there is a 2013 photo with the caption: "Last high school [marching band] performance, but first a picture with all the Oaxacan girls." In it are six girls holding their instruments. Three are from Zoochina and the other three are from different Oaxacan towns in the Sierra, including from Zoogocho and Tavehua. At the time the picture was taken, they were all in their respective community's band. Stumbling on this friend's picture, I paused not only because I was surprised seeing my young *paisanas* in it, but because of the spaces that young Zoochina women continue to carve out to make their own and pridefully express their collective Oaxacan and pueblo specific identity.

When I first interviewed Tracy, she expressed some words that continue to resonate, "Hamilton is like Oaxaca High School! If you're in the band [Oaxacan band] or you want to be [in it], that's where you go."[367] As I have since found out, a number of young Oaxacan musicians playing in the bands are Hamilton High School alumni or are current students. Lluvia, also expressed that she knew of a few Oaxacan kids when she attended Hamilton from 1999 to 2003. Now that she has gone back to college for her second bachelor's degree (in music), she has met a lot of younger Oaxacan brass band musicians in all of her classes. During our talk she stated how

[367] Personal communication, Tracy, 2015.

she has met a lot of Oaxacan peers, also Hamilton alumni, who are all working to get their bachelor or graduate degrees in music. Tracy further highlights how on one occasion, the Oaxacan kids got together and played a traditional song during music class, after which the teacher approached them and asked, "You must be from Oaxaca?" Equally surprised, they responded in affirmation.

The unique sound of Oaxacan music is unlike that of *Norteña* (Northern Mexican) or *tamborazo* (continuous low drum strokes) music, making it easily distinguishable to musicians, particularly in a place like Los Angeles where Oaxacans make up more than 200,000 people.[368] Since the 1990s, the shift in gender integration within Oaxacan brass bands has increased significantly, but young second-generation boys and men still make the majority of the Zoochina band and other bands alike. Though girls and women's integration in the bands has been consistent over the years, for some of the older generation, it is still surprising to believe that they continue to participate in such demanding wind instrument bands that requires physical endurance.

One evening, during my participant observation fieldwork, I overheard Doña Fatima, a migrant woman in her late fifties, tell her husband as we were washing and cutting cabbage for the *tlayudas* (a large Oaxacan tostada-like tortilla) to be sold during the *kermes* for the following day, how she thought that: "[Tocando en la banda] era para hombres. Pensabamos que porque sacaban [las mujeres] mucha fuerza al soplar [en el instrumento] no iban a poder [tocar]. Quién iba a saber!"[369] Numerous men and women reiterated their fear and doubt that women would

[368] Lynn Stephen, *Transborder Lives: Indigenous Oaxacans in Mexico, California, and Oregon* (Duke University Press, 2007).

[369] Participant observation, Doña Fatima, 2015. Translation: "[Playing in the band] was for men. We thought that because they [the women] took out a lot of force to blow [into the instrument] they weren't going to be able to [play]. Who would have known!"

have the physical strength needed to play the instruments as it requires long and intricate "sones y jarabes" (sounds and rhythms) tones that may go up to one hour non-stop. Doña Fatima's reflection on her early doubts further allows us to see how women's ability to play was correlated to this perception that they lacked physical strength in comparison to men. As the stories above demonstrate, women have demonstrated their capabilities to play in the band. Their stories also reflect their love for their pueblo that transcends, and even challenges, notions of gender exclusion. As members of the community, this growing 1.5 and 2nd-generation diaspora further strengthens Zoochina, *Serrana/o*, Zapotec, and Oaxacan identity through sociocultural comunalidad practices while they shift their understanding between an imposed Latina/o/Hispanic identity. In contrast to my findings in chapter 3, which illustrated how migrant women have been vital, both as founders and ongoing transborder communal leaders in hometown associations, the 1.5 and second-generation, including young women, have been instrumental in furthering a collective survival through music and traditional dancing that challenges settler colonial practices in Mexico and the U.S. that seeks their erasure.

Conclusion

When Zoochinenses began to migrate to L.A. in the 1970s, those who stayed behind—mostly elders—believed that Zoochina would soon disappear and that those who migrated would not remain as involved as they once were living in Zoochina. Though these fears are reflected in much of the Latin American-based comunalidad literature, by examining Zoochina-Zapotec traditional dance and brass band music, this chapter has suggested otherwise—*comunalidad* practices is transborder as much as it is generational. Dance was the first transborder sociocultural *comunalidad* practice upon which Zoochinenses in diaspora returned to the pueblo

in the late 1980s. In 1994, they returned again[370] with the first all-children dance, *Los Malinches*. And, as a tri-lateral tradition between the three diasporas— Los Angeles, Zoochina, and the state of Mexico (in the City of Netzahualcoyótl)— it was the Los Angeles-based HTA's turn to organize the patron saint festivity. Equally important, in 2014 *La Danza de la Negritas* truly sparked another newer generation as it was the first time that women of all ages and generations danced it. The generational and age mixture within the bands and the dances further demonstrate how each generation is strongly informed by the next.

As I have shown, *Banda Oaxaqueña* (brass band Oaxacan music) is a communal way of maintaining and re-creating identity and belonging to the hometown. Still others use what they have learned in the Zoochina band to go on and play for other Oaxacan brass bands and beyond the confinements of the U.S. settler state. For Zoochinense elders' memories and stories of war and childhood connect to those who are growing up in Los Angeles. Often one participates in both the band and in dancing and thus reinforces their understanding as Zoochinenses and *Serrana/os*, as well as their ties to the land and its people.

[370] They had on prior occasions returned to dance a popular folkloric dance that Zoochina used to perform in *La Guelaguetza*, *"Ya Llegarón los de Ejutla"* ("Here Come People from Ejutla"). Ejutla is another region of Oaxaca.

CONCLUSION

The central aim of this study is to understand how three-generations in the U.S. diaspora, Zapotec women and their U.S.-raised (1.5-generation) or born (second-generation) children in particular, play a pivotal role in sustaining transborder Indigenous communities. In order to do so, I have drawn on twenty-five oral histories and participant observation fieldwork in Zoochina, Oaxaca and Los Angeles, California to demonstrates how transborder communal relationships and practices are maintained and re-created. By analyzing their participation in the hometown association, traditional dancing, and the Oaxacan brass band, my work reveals how they challenge U.S. and Mexico attempts to assimilate, silence, and eliminate Indigenous peoples across time and place. I have argued that Zoochina Zapotecs shape their identities as Indigenous in ways that complicate their racial categorization as Latina/o, Hispanic, Chicana/o, as well as U.S. and Mexican notions of Indigenous authenticity. I further contend that their sense of Indigenous belonging and identity remains strong across settler colonial borders of the U.S. and Mexico, and across generations.

Theoretical Implications of Study

The interdisciplinary and transborder approaches of *Zapotec Generations Across Settler Colonial Borders: Gendering Belonging and Identity* intervenes and offers new ways of theorizing in critical Indigenous studies, Latina/o and Chicana/o studies, migration and transnationalism studies, and settler colonial studies through my theoretical framework—*transborder comunalidad. Transborder comunalidad* not only contests settler colonial practices of erasure, but also pushes us to consider Latin American Indigenous ways of knowing and practices. As a multi-border framework of consciousness, *transborder comunalidad* captures the

intersectional colonial borders and hierarchies of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and culture that structure Indigenous diasporas' lives in the U.S. and Mexico.[371]

Following Indigenous critical analysis, *transborder comunalidad* contests the foci of "transnationalism" by suggesting that Indigenous peoples have always been in transit[372] or mobile.[373] As well my work acknowledges that Native nations predate "nation-states" and therfore situates this in relationship to settler-nations. *Comunalidad* (communality or community collectivity), a way of being and practicing Indigenous Oaxacan collective survival, has been theorized among Indigenous Oaxacan intellectuals and Latin America at large. Despite more than thirty years of Indigenous Oaxacan transborder literature, my work is the first to build on *comunalidad* in the U.S. and to innovatively talk about *comunalidad* as a transborder (transnational) process; meaning that existing literature argues that *comunalidad* ends with migration and that it can only exist in the community.

As a theory that pushes beyond the confinements of Western knowledge and strictly defined boarders, I further suggest that *transborder comunalidad* is a practice carried out through oral histories (or storytelling practices). I see oral histories as storytelling because Zoochina Zapotecs are telling truths that they have witnessed and survived. As survivants of a twelve-year war, Zoochinense (Zoochina people) stories have never been written or heard (with the exception of an upcoming Zoochinense linguist based in Oaxaca who also interviews people in

[371] Lynn Stephen, *Transborder Lives: Indigenous Oaxacans in Mexico, California, and Oregon* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2007), 6.

[372] Jodi A Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

[373] Allen 2015; Clifford 1997; and Furlan 2017.

Zoochina),[374] in Mexico or in the United States. Retelling stories as a form of *transborder comunalidad* practice attempts to tell the experiences of past,[375] present, and future Zoochina Zapotecs as a way to disrupt notions that Indigenous peoples are dead, dying, or assimilated to mainstream U.S. or Mexican culture, or that Indigeneity ends with migration. Overtime, elders in diaspora and in Zoochina have passed down their knowledge about their pueblo that fuels the growing generations' love, involvement, and identity to Zoochina.

Area Focus Contributions

I bring emerging diasporic analysis in Mexican and Latina/o studies by looking at how Indigenous adult children of migrants and women overtime have navigated Latinidad and Mexicanidad. Aside from focusing on three-generations in diaspora, this dual-sited research focuses on new and emerging Indigenous diasporas that claim their identity and belonging not in the U.S., but with their parents' community. Whereas previous work has found that women and U.S.-raised or born children are completely absent or minimally involved in the hometown association (HTA), my study has found that women have been essential in sustaining their community's *transborder comunalidad* practices. Zoochina women founded their HTA, and like their male counterpart and their adult children, they continuously serve in all of the HTA's leadership positions in its fifty years of existence, or since the 1990s for children.

By looking at migration as a multiracial and multicultural gendered process, my work unravels the colonial traces of race and assimilation. My participants' participation in dances, Oaxacan-brassbands, and their immigrant hometown association (HTA) reaffirms their

[374] Oscar López Nicolás, "Estudios en la fonología y grámatica del zapoteco de Zoochina" (PhD diss., Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social," 2016), 1-610.

[375] Some of the elder participants I include in this chapter have since transitioned to the spirit world. I honor their strength and support.

Indigeneity, while at the same time complicates racial categorizations they have been ascribed. At the same time, Indigenous diasporas contest state notions that look at Indigenous migration as an assimilationist process.

Chapter Summary Findings

Chapter 1 provides a historical and transborder approach to structural racism and gender expected roles towards Indigenous peoples in Mexico. As a settler colonial state, Mexico has shaped, maintained, and/or reconfigured Indigenous peoples, especially women, into a national imaginary that attempts to make Indigenous Mexicans invisible, silent, and vanished. I contend two things: (1) that Mexico's settler colonial logic of Indigenous elimination takes place through what I refer to as settler colonial racial-gendered processes of erasure. This racial and gender violence then gets passed on and used by the larger non-Indigenous mestizo children of migrants towards Indigenous peoples. And (2), that Indigenous identity does not end when one migrates or as Indigenous generations grow in diaspora. Indigenous Oaxacan (adult) children in California show that to be Indigenous goes beyond settler rigid and fixed notions of Indigeneity.

In chapter 2, I speak as a Zoochina Zapotec critical ethnographer and as an interdisciplinary scholar. This chapter shows how as Indigenous community-engaged scholars, neutrality and "research for research sake" is not an option. There is a set of Indigenous protocols: accountability, respect, lifetime commitment and responsibilities that are expected of us from both the community in Zoochina and those in diaspora despite our relationship with them. I propose that we consider Indigenous protocols as responsibilities that are informed by practices in the homeland and the lands we come to settle as a process of doing and undoing—a transborder Indigenous research method. Because my work is both transborder and generational, oral histories (or storytelling) with elders are the particular research scope that shapes this

chapter. In critically looking through methodological approaches, it is essential here to discuss the shortcomings of Chicana/o studies (and Latina/o studies) when thinking through Indigeneity and working with Indigenous communities.

Chapter 3 has shown how in the Zoochina hometown association—*Centro Social San Jerónimo Zoochina* or "*la unión*" (as the community commonly refers to it)—women and children have continuously participated and held leaderships positions for over fifty years and since the 1990s. I argue that the Zoochina hometown association is an ongoing site of resistance against colonial infrastructures that continuously govern Indigenous identities and gender exclusion. It is through "la union" that Zoochina Zapotecs and adult children have solidified and sustained their relationship and knowledge with the community. However, while women's participation is unique compared to other Mexican and Latina/o HTAs, there are discrepancies in how often women accept more demanding positions and how they often contribute to their male relatives position behind closed doors.

Lastly, chapter 4 argues that traditional dancing and Oaxacan brass band music have been the primary ways in which children have directly integrated themselves as members of Zoochina. It is here where over time children's love for their pueblo and their identity as Zoochinense and/or Oaxacan begins to take shape. Oaxacan music is the backbone of Indigenous Oaxacan life. Similarly, traditional dancing are ways in which immigrants have facilitated knowledge about Oaxacan community life to their sons and daughters. Therefore, one cannot exist without the other in the everyday sociocultural practices of the community, nor Indigenous Oaxacan sociocultural studies.

Future Studies

Going forward, future studies in Indigenous, Latina/o, and migration studies are needed to consider how state-based notions of race have traveled overtime.[376] These state-based notions however, should be understood within settler colonial studies that bring into dialogue Mexico, and other countries where European settlement and Indigenous elimination has occurred. In Latin America, state policies, national projects of whitening (mestizaje) and Indigenous elimination (*Indigenismo* or Indigenism) should be looked at as state practices of elimination. These practices should also be considered within transborder frameworks as force displacement of Indigenous peoples has severely impacted many Indigenous peoples collective survival. Settler colonialism *is not* only a way of study, it has real life experiences that show up in multiple ways—assimilation (culturally and racially), genocide, lack of basic resources, forced, wars, racial, gender, and class violence, and migration/displacement, etcetera. If future Indigenous studies cannot grasp these logics, it risks reproducing settler complicity that too often reproduces state-based inclusivity.

Generational and *transborder comunalidad* experiences recognize how Zoochinense relation to land is a way of living, being, and understanding land through collective memories and practices that draws us closer to our relationship with one another. As a mechanism of survival, Indigenous community life does not stop at the settler borders of Mexico or the U.S., rather it moves across state borders and into urban and other Native lands to make the Indigenous experience complex. To claim and be claimed by a Zapotec community is to complicate racially categorized labels, making Zapotec identity or Zoochinense identity not only a collective process of consciousness, but a political one as well. Consequently, this work is not about inclusivity into

[376] Maylei Blackwell, Floridalma Boj Lopez, and Luis Urrieta, "Critical Latinx indigeneities," (July 2017): 126-137.

racial categories and other settler colonial structures. Rather, it seeks to unsettle, disrupt, and complicate Western notions of where we come from, who we are, and where we hope to go.

EPILOGUE

INDIGENOUS TRANSBORDER COMUNALIDAD IN THE AGE OF CORONAVIRUS AND IN THE WAKE OF ONGOING RACIAL VIOLENCE

I am finishing this dissertartion in the most globally unprecedented and toughest moments where in the U.S. to be Indigenous, Black, or Latina/o are disproportionately subject to death far beyond whites at the hands of the settler-states and nation-states.[377] City of Los Angeles officially went into a three month quarantine on March 29, 2020. It has now been four months since the World Health Organizatoin declared Coronavirus (or COVID-19) a global pandemic. We have seeing how countries, people, and over all the world has re-organized, strategized, copped, and suffered human loss. Despite a global pandemic that has largely taken the lives and threatened the livelyhoods of moslty Indigenous, Black, and Brown communities, these unprecedented moments became all too worse. On May 25, 2020 George Floyd, another Black man, this time in Minneapolis, was killed by a police officer who kept his knee, and the rest of his body weigh on Floyd's neck for 8 minutes and 46 seconds; of these, 2 minutes and 53 seconds were after the father of two became unresponsive. This was only one of three recent murders of Black folk since the pandemic started where the killings of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and Robert Avita were also unjustifiably and viciously taken away. Colonial violence is visibly and structurally present where through the manifestation of white supremacy "genocide,

[377] "Health Equity Considerations and Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups," Center for Disease Control and Prevention," last modified July 24, 2020, https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/race-ethnicity.html; APM Research Lab Staff, "The Color of Coronavirus: Covid-19 Deaths by Race and Ethnicity in the U.S.," *APM Research Lab Staff*, July 22, 2020, https://www.apmresearchlab.org/covid/deaths-by-race; Mélissa Godin, "'We Know What is Best for Us:' Indigenous Groups Around the World are Taking Covid-19 into Their Own Hands," *Time* May 2020, https://time.com/5808257/indigenous-communities-coronavirus-impact/; Danielle DeLuca, "Covid-19s Growing Impact on Indigenous Communities Globally," *Cultural Survival* (April 2020), https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/covid-19s-growing-impact-indigenous-communities-globally; Sherita Hill Golden, "Coronavirus in African American and Other People of Color," *John Hopkins Medicines*, April 20, 2020, https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/covid19-racial-disparities.

slavery…incarceration… [illegality, and deportation have] extended beyond U.S. borders through imperialism."[378]

At the time of writing this epilogues, it is May 31, 2020, six days after Floyd's murder and only the police officer who kept his knee on Floyd's neck has been arrested and charged with murder. A few days later, however, the other three remaining officers who took part by either restraining the rest of his body, face down, and one who stood a few feet from Floyd's head and simply looked on, have now been fired and arrested. Across the country unrest is at its highest, and even around the world, others have protested in solidarity. The California governor has now declared Los Angeles in a state of emergency both due to the virus and the unrest that followed Floyd's murder. Minneapolis City Council Vice-President, Andrea Jenkins, the first Black openly transwoman elected to a U.S. public office, asked the State of Minnesota "to declare a state of emergency. Declaring racism as a public health issue."[379] "Black Lives Matter! Indigenous Lives Matter! Indigenous Solidarity with Black and Brown Lives!" Over and over again these chants are broadcasted by Indigenous protesters on social media. As one young Black man put it plain and simple, "stay at home orders were lifted in the name of profit over people. and now curfews are being ordered in the name of property over people. we stayed inside to save our lives and we went outside to save our lives."[380]

How do the current situations relate to what I have spoken to throughout this dissertation? Both the pandemic and the racial turmoil against Indigenous livelihood, like Black livelihood, and Latina/o/x livelihood, has demonstrate the ongoing racial injustices of the U.S. setler state.

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[378] UCLA American Indian Studies Center, "Faculty Statement for Justice," 2020, https://amindian.ucla.edu/faculty-statement-for-justice/.

[379] "George Floyd: Minneapolis Official Sings Amazing Grace to Bereaved Family," *Guardian News*, May 28, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oM5GySnvJMs.

[380] Ociele Hawkins, Facebook public post, May 31, 2020.

Indigenous peoples and people of color have been the most hit and dead with the virus, along with state violence at the hands of multiple agencies. In essense, our lives continue not to matter. There is practically underestimates by the government that account for Indigenous lives affected by the virus and violence inflicted by the settler state—that is for Natives, like Latin American Indigenous peoples, as racialized Latina/o or Hispanic subjects, we continue to suffer the consequences of elimination through a global pandemic and policies that render us illegal and invisible.

In the Sierra Juárez, the State of Oaxaca has placed military checkpoints at the entrance of the Sierra. Public transportation has been canceled, while private transportation has been restrained to "protect," but also to restrain how often rural communities request services and purchase necessities that the government is unwilling to provide. With neoliberalism many communities have been largely dependent on the purchase of basic goods because it is no longer sustainable to grow their own maize, beans, and other food for consumption or to make a living out of it. At the moment, *Centro Social San Jerónimo Zoochina* was able to financially support the pueblo in order to provide nourishment for the more than 115 people that live there, but the ongoing restraints jepordize how long and how much *la unión* is able to provide as many have lost their jobs. To make matters worse, in Zoochina, they have had to travel to the city to obtain these and other immigrant family funds from money transfer houses because the few available in the Sierra are temporarily unavailable. As they now make their way to *La Central de Abasto* (main supply center), where about 70%, if not more, of local and surrouding people rely on their food purchase, they put their lives at risk and those of their pueblo as *La Central de Abasto* has

been declared by government officials as *"zona de alto riesgo"* (zone of high risk) for contamination.[381]

With the pandemic, transborder comunalidad lives[382] have also been affected. Indigenous systems, customs, and overall ways of being across migratory circuits have been canceled, stand at a still, or have no way of reversing the devestating outcomes. Diasporas in Mexico and the United States have been infected and died and are uable to return to be buried in their pueblos or receive any burial at all. And, for the first time in Zoochina's history, at least that they are aware of, annual celebrations that welcome migrants and allow families to reunite have been canceled.

These cancellations and standstills are also reflected in Los Angeles where hometown associaton meetings, *kermeses* (party fundraisers), *convivios* (social gatherings), and dance and music rehearsals that sustained *comunalidad* have been suspended. While youth have turned to social media and online meeting platforms to virtually connect and even rehearse dances and music with their young *paisana/os* (townswomen/men), others do not have the ability or skills to use these channels. More so, Indigenous Oaxacans, many who barely make ends meet as housekeepers, restaurant employers, or garderners find it specially difficult during this time to provide food, pay bills, and maintain a roof over their heads and those of their family. Still others are unable to get unadequate health services because of the lack of resources, including Indigenous interpreters that hospitals and government agencies simply do not invest money or time and for which undocumented Indigenous migrants are disproportionately affected.

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[381] Fernando Miranda, "Central de abastos es zona de alto riesgo de contagio de covid-19: gobierno de la ciudad de Oaxaca," *El Universal*, May 21, 2020, https://oaxaca.eluniversal.com.mx/metropoli/21-05-2020/central-de-abasto-es-zona-de-alto-riesgo-de-contagio-de-covid-19-gobierno-de-la.

[382] Lynn Stephen, *Transborder Lives: Indigenous Oaxacans in Mexico, California, and Oregon* (Duke University Press, 2007). I figuratively use Stephen's expression here.

Undocumented status and ongoing deportation in the era of Trump, further pushes Indigenous undocumented immigrants to the fringe of survival, and mixed-status families and communities separated. Many were unable to qualify for the stimulus relief funds and often do not have government aid because of the lack of legal documentation that the U.S. is unwilling to provide. This has created fear among undocumented and mixed-status families to ask for any form of aid and support for the fear of being deported or having their loved ones deported.

There is no conclusion to an ongoing worldwide pandemic and state murder on Indigenous, Black, and Brown lives. There are however, histories of "inquest and inquiries"[383] into state approved genocide, killings, incarceration, and illegality of Indigenous peoples and people of color overall. *Zapotec Generations Across Settler Colonial Borders* has everything to do with how we address violence of colonial presence and racial legal violence.

[383] Sherene Razack, *Dying from Improvement: Inquests and Inquiries into Indigenous Deaths in Custody* (University of Toronto Press, 2015). Razack's work is helpful here in understanding how the state permits ongoing racial legal violence and death of Indigenous bodies.

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