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Los Angeles

The Los Angeles Street Vending Campaign:
Visual Narratives of Contested Urban Terrains

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Chicana and Chicano Studies

by

LeighAnna Grace Hidalgo

2020

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Los Angeles Street Vendor Movement:

Visual Narratives of Contested Urban Terrains

by

LeighAnna Grace Hidalgo

Doctor of Philosophy in Chicana and Chicano Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2020

Professor Leisy J. Abrego, Chair

Decades before street food became trendy, People of Color overcame economic exclusion by creating their own livelihoods through street vending that brought low-cost goods and services into distressed Los Angeles communities. From 1994 to 2018, however, street vending was classified as a misdemeanor and street vendors were regularly fined, jailed, and deported. The Los Angeles Street Vendor Campaign—a coalition led by Latinx and Black street vendors—organized and fought to decriminalize street vending, culminating in the signing of the Safe Sidewalk Vending Act, which effectively legalized street vending in all of California. I analyze this Campaign on three intersecting levels: (1) the spatialization and reverberations of legal violence; (2) street vending as a healing and political praxis; and (3) the cross-racial alliances and arts-based resistance that mobilizes to achieve long-term political victories.

I draw on six years of multiple ethnographic methods, including longitudinal qualitative interviews, oral histories, and participant observation. Additionally, I developed a digital

humanities methodological component called “augmented fotonovelas,” which brings together an audio-visual comic format with augmented reality and text from interview transcripts to foreground how street venders transform everyday urban spaces. Through these interdisciplinary approaches, I study fifteen vendor-leaders involved in the Campaign.

Beyond neoliberal understandings of entrepreneurship, I analyze how street vendors are cultural workers who navigate sites of trauma while transforming parks and sidewalks into political and spiritual sites of healing and empowerment. I present street vendor narratives in conversation with Black and Latinx feminist geographies to broaden our understandings of street vendors’ placemaking through market exchange beyond Western capitalism and towards spaces that foster radical consciousness. This brings into view what I call “abolitionist marketplaces” that create economies of resistance where street vendors participate in inner and public acts of self and community-care as engaged political subjects. These public acts of resistance and care coalesced through visual culture productions such as graphic printmaking, murals, and music. Finally, I argue that parallel and intersecting experiences of criminalization and policing amongst Black and Latinx street vendors produced linkages and affective resonance between these respective groups; while not perfectly aligned, their mutual resistance facilitated the campaign’s successful decriminalization of street vending.

The dissertation of LeighAnna Grace Hidalgo is approved.

Gaye T. Johnson

Robert C. Romero

Daniel G. Solórzano

Leisy J. Abrego, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2020

DEDICATION

For Queen Yogita, May She Reign Supreme—

Yogita practiced ayurvedic medicine, gave wellness consultations, and sold raw foods at Leimert Park. I met Yogita in 2013, when she was a street vendor leader in the Los Angeles Street Vending Campaign. After being unhoused for two years, she became sick. Although she was sick, she made several trips north to Malibu, in order to provide fresh fruits and vegetables to some of the wealthiest families affected by the fires. In late November of 2018, she collapsed and was rushed to the hospital, where she slipped out of consciousness and died a day later from complications caused by pneumonia.

Yogita left me with pages of transcripts with her hopes and dreams, photographs of her beaming smile, and hours of footage of her describing her raw foods recipes and detailing her visions of a raw foods shop on every corner and replacing McDonald's throughout the city with her nutritious foods. She was on her way to accomplishing this dream. Though she herself was unhoused, Yogita gave away fruits and vegetables to other unhoused people at the farmers market twice a week at Venice and Leimert Park. In so doing, she inspired many others to join these efforts.

Yogita did not live long enough to celebrate the decriminalization of street vending that she and the Campaign worked so hard to realize. I dedicate my dissertation to Yogita's memory, because her vision of community-care perfectly encapsulates the aspirations of the Campaign—to cross racial and spatial divides in order to achieve justice for all.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION ii
DEDICATION v
LIST OF TABLES viii
LIST OF FIGURES ix
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS xi
VITA ii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE LOS ANGELES STREET VENDOR CAMPAIGN 1
The Rise of Informal Economies 2
Era of Legal Violence 5
Case Study: The Los Angeles Street Vending Campaign 7
Participants 11
Methods: Ethnography 12
Methods: Digital Humanities Approach to Augmented Fotonovela 13
Analysis 15
Rethinking Street Vending Through Woman of Color Feminisms and Black and Latinx Geographies 16
Theorizing Abolitionist Marketplaces 18
Significance 21
Chapter Outlines 22
CHAPTER TWO: STATE-SANCTIONED LEGAL VIOLENCE AGAINST STREET VENDORS 24
The Spatialization of Legal Violence 28
Carceral Regimes 33
Immigration Regimes 37
Family Separations 41
Housing Insecurity 48
Conclusion 58
CHAPTER THREE: COMMUNITY-SANTIONED LEGAL VIOLENCE AGAINST STREET VENDORS 61
Contentions with Brick-and-Mortar Businesses 63
Discrimination and Extortion 73
Physical and Sexual Assault 80
Conclusion 90

CHAPTER FOUR: "GET TO KNOW A STREET VENDOR": A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYZING STREET VENDING AS A HEALING PRAXIS 92

Woman of Color Feminisms and Street Vendor Corporeality 93

Ana Maria: "Vamos a seguir adelante" 98

Ronald: "You know I don't have much, but I can get the girls some shoes" 108

MariPosa: "I like to show my daughter that we're going to go out there and *chingarle*, because we can do it" 116

Conclusion 126

CHAPTER FIVE: ABOLITIONIST MARKETPLACES: EXAMINING STREET VENDING AS A POLITICAL PRAXIS 128

Abolitionist Marketplaces: Self-Care 129

Abolitionist Marketplaces: Radical-Consciousness 133

Abolitionist Marketplaces: Community-Care 140

Cross-Racial and Spatial Alliances 150

Conclusion 156

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION 158

APPENDIX A: CASES OF JUSTICE (ENGLISH) 165

APPENDIX B: CASOS DE JUSTICIA (ESPAÑOL) 166

REFERENCES 167

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. A timeline of the organizational structure of the Campaign and its evolution. The archival images represent the earlier days of the Campaign and were given to me by ELACC staff. 9

Report prepared by the Chief Legislative Analyst in 2014 on arrests and citations issued by LAPD to street vendors working on city sidewalks, parking lots, and parks. 30

Table 3. *Gloria* Anzaldúa's *seven "paths of conocimiento" as an analytical framework.* 96

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. This map shows how the Campaign grew to represent 10 different vendor communities that spanned widely across racial and neighborhood lines, and across linguistic and cultural communities. 11

Figure 2. I became a mother during my field work so both my kids, Paloma and Mateo, grew up in the movement. Because of the visual nature of my work, ELACC and the Campaign, would often call on me to document major events and actions for their social media outlets. Sometimes my husband Jeff joined me, so that we could alternated between photographing and filming. Many times, we were called upon on the weekends and our two children became our film crew and research assistants. 13

Figure 3. Me showing councilmember Curren Price how AR works in the Augmented Fotonovela at a Town Hall at the Maya Angelou High School in 2016, Jeri and Faustino at an exhibition we had at a community-based arts space in Boyle Heights in 2018 (top left and bottom right), Street vendor panel and exhibition at UCLA's Chicano Studies Research Center in 2018 (middle left and right, bottom left). 14

Figure 4. Map of Los Angeles demonstrating that LAPD issued the greatest number of arrests in neighborhoods experiencing dramatic gentrification processes. 31

Figure 5. Photograph of Caridad vending with daughter Esmeralda and her grandchild. 38

Figure 6. Chaveli stands beside Campaign lawyer Doug, as she shares her testimony with a television reporter during the Benjamin Ramirez Protest in July 2017. 44

Figure 7. Photograph of MariPosa vending with her mother Rosa sitting in a chair beside her. . 47

Figure 8. Deborah at Leimert Park passing flyers for an upcoming rally at City Hall. Whenever there is a lull in clientele, Deborah is organizing her community. 72

Figure 9. MariPosa and her daughter Zoe are joined by Esmeralda (Caridad's daughter) and they are both speaking out on International Women's Day in 2018 about the economic and sexual extortion that women street vendors are already subjected to and will be exacerbated by the business veto. Esmeralda's sign declares, "las calles son de quin las trabajan" (the streets belong to the people who work them). 88

Figure 10. Ana Maria with her fist up at a protest on International Women's Day in 2018. 104

Figure 11. Ronald vending his bracelets at Leimert Park on a Sunday in July of 2013 113

Figure 12. MariPosa leads a breakout group accompanied by her daughter Nahui, who listens intently and sits next to her mom, during a Town Hall at the Maya Angelou High School in June 2016 122

Figure 13. Humberto and his grandson regularly go to tend to Giselle's gravesite and give her updates on the campaign and I am invited to join them at least once a year. 130

Figure 14. Vending nearby the sounds of the drum circle at Leimert Park every weekend is described as a religious experience and family reunion. 132

Figure 15. Deborah arrives early at Leimert Park on Sunday mornings because she loves to take her time setting up her jewelry displays with care. 136

Figure 16. Jeri (left) buys used books from Lady Bluesologist (center), in order to make her buttons (right).. 142

Figure 17. During my third trimester of pregnancy, I sat down to eat (bottom) after a day spent with Mercedes (top left), observing how she, Miguelito (declined to be photographed), and a Latinx cab driver (top right) all three depend on each other to thrive. 148

Figure 18. Black-led anti-gentrification campaign leader speaks on steps (top left), Mercedes and Chaveli stand on steps after speaking (bottom left), and a community member holds a sign making it clear that no one in the neighborhood will continue attacking el eletoro (right)........ 153

Figure 19. Benjamin's joy at the overwhelming community support he receives is palpable (top left), Benjamin leads the crowd marching into the street and stopping traffic (top right), Guatemalan and Mexican flags are fly proudly (bottom left,, and street vendors are getting comfortable on the bullhorn and showing they are ready to continue on the path they are on of using civil disobedience as a Campaign strategy. 153

Figure 20. On International Women's Day in 2018, Caridad, Mercedes, Deborah, and Chaveli, went into City Hall and demanded to speak with council members to persuade them against giving property owners veto power over street vendors encouraging economic and sexual extortion. 155

Figure 21. Black and Latinx street vendors Deborah and Humberto (partially covered), allies, and advocates shared testimonies, marched, chanted, sang, and blocked the road until they were arrested, but promptly released with the support of the Doug and the National Lawyers Guild.156

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First and foremost, I want to thank my family. My earliest childhood memories are in El Salvador accompanying my grandmother to sell books and stationery at a sidewalk stall. Wars displaced our family and as an adolescent in the U.S., I navigated an unfamiliar city with my father selling CDs, delivering newspapers, and cleaning offices. All of these jobs are part of the informal economy that intergenerationally helped to sustain us. My research interest is born from my experiences and desire to better understand families like my own.

I want to acknowledge the street vendor leaders of the Los Angeles Street Vending Campaign who trusted me with their greatest fears, most painful moments, and their darkest truths in the hopes that I could amplify their experiences. It is my hope that this dissertation honors their stories. The staff from East Los Angeles Community Corporation (ELACC) was instrumental in connecting me with street vendor leaders, and as a result, The Los Angeles Street Vendor Campaign, ELACC, and I have enjoyed many years of fruitful collaborations.

Special thanks to my dissertation advisor, Leisy J. Abrego, for seeing me through this process from start to finish. Your dedication, as well as the tremendous sacrifice of your time and honesty in imparting wisdom to your first-generation students, is what I aspire to pass on to my future students. I have become a better scholar and teacher from all the years you have invested in not only me—but all of my cohortmates in our weekly writing meetings. Because of you we have all learned the value of working, celebrating, and mourning together, radically altering the academic culture of the Department. You did that!

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I have a wealth of friendships, I developed at UCLA. Angelica Becerra, Christine Vega, Jack Cáraves, Silvia Rodriguez Vega, and Rose Simmons—you are more than friends, you are family. We have carried each other through so many stages, not just academically, but personally. I am indebted to this circle of friendship for picking me up off the floor time and time again. Thank you for always reminding me and showing me that I am loved. To Christine Vega, JoAnna Reyes Walton, and Nora Cisneros—the sisterhood we formed during our activist work in Mothers of Color in Academia (MOCA)—got me through the most difficult and painful moments of this journey as I transitioned into motherhood. Thank you for organizing with me and giving me life.

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PUBLICATIONS

Peer-Reviewed Articles

2015	"Augmented Fotonovelas: Creating New Media as Pedagogical and Social Justice Tools." *Qualitative Inquiry, 21*(3), 300–314.
Under review	"Food Vendors of the Southwest: Embracing Pochteca Ancestors and Transforming Cities." *Human Organization.*
Under review	"'Show Them How They Treat Us': Legal Violence Against Street Vendors." *Latino Studies.*
Under review	"The Love Story Against Displacement." *Latino American and Latinx Visual Culture.*
Under review	Bell, E., Hunter, C., Benitez, T., Uysal, J., Walovich, C., McConnell, L., Vega, C., Cisneros, N., Hidalgo, L., Reyes Walton, J., & Wang, M. "Intervention Strategies and Lessons Learned from a Student-led Initiative to Support Lactating Women at a Large Public University." *Journal of Health Promotion Practice.*

Book Chapters

2019	Cisneros, N., Hidalgo, L., Vega, C., & Martinez-Vú, Y. "Mothers of Color in Academia: Fierce Mothering Challenging Spatial Exclusion through a Chicana Feminist Praxis." In *The Chicana M(other)work Anthology: Porque sin Madres no hay Revolución*, eds. C. Caballero, Y. Martinez-Vu, J. Perez-Torres, M. Tellez, & C. Vega, 288–308. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
2017	"Predatory Landscapes: Pedagogical and Social Justice Tools to Uncover the Racist Nativism in the Spatial Dimensions of Economic Exclusion." In *Critical Race Spatial*

	Analysis: Mapping to Understand and Address Educational Inequity, eds. D. Morrison, S. Annamma, & D. Jackson, 67–87. New York: Stylus Publishing.
Under review	Hidalgo, L., Cisneros, N., Vega, C. & J. Reyes-Walton. "The Chords that Bind Fierce Mothers to our Sisters, Children, and Community." In *Maternal Activisms*, ed. R. Shadaan. New York: Demeter Press.

Public Scholarship and Digital Humanities Projects

2018	"Reproductive Rebel," *Tales from la Vida: A Latinx Comics Anthology* (Ohio State University Press), ed. F. L. Aldama, 53-55.
2016	Chesney, P., Hidalgo, L., Ko, A., Kolder, B., Monteils, L., Rivera, D. K., Wendel, G. "Poesis as Intervention," *Urban Humanities in the Borderlands: Engaged Scholarship from Mexico City to Los Angeles* (University of California, Los Angeles, Urban Humanities Initiative), eds. D. Cuff, T. Presner, M. Zubiaurre, & A. Loukaitou-Sideris, 61-82.
2015	"Casos de Justicia: ¡Campaña para Legalizar la Venta Ambulante!," http://www.calameo.com/read/00055331407d5d052577d
2014	**"Desaparcid@s: A Fotonovela on Brown Bodies Disappeared and Divided by the Border,"** ***Bozalta, 1,*** **https://bozalta.org/desaparecids**
2013	"Desaparecid@s: A Fotonovela on Brown Bodies Disappeared and Divided by the Border," http://www.calameo.com/read/000553314a8af4af798ea
2012	"Mujeres Talk: A Fotonovela on Predatory Lending," *Mujeres Activas en Letra y Cambio Social Blog*, http://malcs.org/blog/2012/08/13/mujeres-talk-a-fotonovela-on-predatory-lending/

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2017-18	Institute of American Cultures (IAC) Graduate Fellow ($5,000)
2014	UCLA Graduate Research Mentorship Summer Grant ($6,000)
2012, 2014	UCLA Graduate Dean's Scholar Award ($10,000)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE LOS ANGELES STREET VENDOR CAMPAIGN

Decades before street food became trendy, low-income People of Color overcame structural exclusion from employment by creating their own livelihoods through street vending. This informal economy brought low-cost goods and services into distressed Los Angeles communities. Street vendors create dynamic economies that promote sociality, which enables them to circumvent the structural inequalities they experience while simultaneously generating opportunities to come together and resist. From 1994 to 2018, however, the Anti-Vending Ordinance (No. 169319) classified street vending as a misdemeanor and led to regular fines, jail time, and deportation of street vendors. In response, the Los Angeles Street Vendor Campaign—a coalition led by Latinx and Black street vendors—organized and fought for a decade to decriminalize street vending.

This dissertation analyzes the conditions that arose through the legal violence of the anti-Vending Ordinance and explores the ways Black and Latinx street vendors became placemakers and political urban actors in the Los Angeles Street Vending Campaign from 2008 until now. These efforts sought to name and dismantle the creation of Los Angeles as a carceral city, particularly by resisting surveillance and incarceration—two of the most powerful methods of racialized spatial control exerted by the 21st century city—against low-income Communities of Color in Los Angeles. The Campaign's work culminated in the signing of SB 946 Safe Sidewalk Vending Act into law, effectively legalizing street vending in all of California. At the forefront of this urban labor struggle are Latinx street vendors in alliance with Black street vendors, who are overwhelmingly women, undocumented, elderly, and disabled. Their narratives demonstrate how the most marginalized workers in our cities create intersectional movements to organize and fight against the most privileged in our society.

I analyze this Campaign in three ways, all of which intersect —first, exploring state and community-sanctioned legal violence; second, examining street vending as a healing and political praxis; and third, revealing how alliances across race and space mobilized to achieve political victories. In bridging these three intertwining levels of analysis, my research critically reimagines the informal economy through Black and Latinx geographies to theorize a term I call abolitionist marketplaces, that highlights how street vendors create spaces of resistance to enact social change. My research provides critical interventions across the fields of Latinx Studies, Informalities Studies, and Black and Latinx Geographies by examining how street vendor movements powerfully disrupt carceral landscapes at a time when informal economies are on the rise. This dissertation is inspired by how relentlessly street vendors persist in mounting an opposition against the city's efforts to erase them from urban space. Indeed, as the street vendors in my study declared, "*somos personas que se levantan*" (we are people who rise up). They have stories they are eager to share, stories which redefine urban space and history as we know them.

The Rise of Informal Economies

My training in informal labor began in my childhood growing up in between El Salvador and Guatemala, where informality permeated the world around me. My grandmother sold stationery, and bibles from home, and then a stall, where I would accompany her to sell products. In the U.S., my sisters and I accompanied my father in selling CDs, delivering newspapers, and cleaning offices. I use the term informality to describe a set of economic activities, jobs, and workers that are not regulated or protected by the state (Portes, Castells, and Benton 1989). In the 1970s, the informal economic activities that sustained families like mine were believed by the International Labour Office (ILO) to be a Third World phenomenon and deviant form of capitalist formation that would fade away with modernization (Moser 1978). On the contrary,

today 61% of the global workforce is informal (ILO 2018) and 25% of the U.S. workforce is informal (Manyika et al. 2018), permeating nearly every sector of the economy. In Los Angeles, we see the informal economy through street vendors selling both food and non-food items on sidewalks, parking lots, and parks. Street vendors in Los Angeles increased by 400% from 2001 to 2014 (Hamilton and Chinchilla 1996; Yen et al. 2015).

My work builds on informality studies in Los Angeles that demonstrate how prevalent informality is in what people often refer to as "First World economies." In fact, informal economies are burgeoning in metropolitan cities like Los Angeles, because of globalization, deindustrialization, migration, and exclusionary hiring policies that created the conditions that make informal labor preferable to wage labor (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; López-Garza and Diaz 2001; Valenzuela 2001). In addition, many Latinx immigrants are relegated to working in the informal economy because they are educationally disadvantaged and lack the skills needed to find employment in the formal economy (Cross and Morales 2007; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001).

Key informality studies in Los Angeles challenge elitist notions about informality by redefining informal workers as entrepreneurs emphasizing their upward or downward mobility and economic contributions to the region (Huerta 2007; Ramirez and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2009; Valenzuela 2001). This marked an important turning point in the literature on informality studies, where informal workers became redefined as entrepreneurs emphasizing their upward or downward mobility and economic contributions to U.S. society (Huerta 2007; Ramirez and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2009; Valenzuela 2001). While this argument is compelling because it pushes us to understand Latinx informal workers' agency and choice, Latinx Studies scholars like Leo Chavez (2008) make important critiques of entrepreneurial representations of informal workers that position them as "model" neoliberal subjects, namely by calling attention to what and who

this argument leaves out. David Harvey (2007) defines neoliberalism as: "…a theory of political economic practices proposing that human well-being can best be advanced by the maximization of entrepreneurial freedoms within an institutional framework characterized by private property rights, individual liberty, unencumbered markets, and free trade" (22).[1] Entrepreneurial representations of street vendors reduce people to mere workers, obscuring the myriad ways street vendors directly challenge neoliberalism through their practices and collectivities.

My approach humanizes street vendors and thinks of them as placemakers and powerful urban political actors. This account recognizes the full sociality of street vendors, some are cultural workers, some are formerly incarcerated, unhoused or in the process of becoming unhoused, and others are battling chronic illness, yet they organize to fight laws that normalize violence against them. My work is in conversation with new directions in street vendor studies that complicate entrepreneurial representations of informality (Duneier 2001; Estrada 2013, 2019; Muñoz 2012, 2016; Rosales 2013, 2020; Zlolniski 2006). Street vendor studies in Los Angeles have focused on informality as a Latinx immigrant phenomenon, to the exclusion of Black street vendors (Bhimji 2013; Estrada 2013, 2019; Rosales 2013, 2020).

There is a dearth of scholarship on Black street vendors in Los Angeles. Studies of Black street vendors have been relegated to New York City and Chicago (Duneier 2001; Venkatesh 2009). The Black and Latinx racial composition of the Campaigns' street vendor leadership, presents a unique opportunity for a race-relational study (Molina 2014; Molina, HoSang, and

[1] The seductive rhetoric of "freedom" and "liberty" was manipulated by U.S. economists and used to impose a global economic model of neoliberal "accumulation through by dispossession" along free-market lines. These include 1) the privatization of land and expulsion of peasant populations; 2) conversion of collective property rights to exclusively property rights; 3) suppression of rights to the commons, 4) commodification of labor power and suppression of indigenous forms of production and consumption; 5) colonial, neocolonial, and imperial processes of appropriating natural resources; 6) monetization of exchange taxation of land; 7) the slave trade; 8) usury, the national debt, and the use of the credit system as a means of accumulation (Harvey 2007:35).

Gutierrez 2019), that examines street vendors from subordinated groups in relation to one another. This study of street vendor leaders in the Campaign moves beyond single identity politics and towards explaining Black and Latinx street vendors' solidarity across difference (Johnson 2013; Pulido 2006). For this study, the intersection of race, class, and gender are central to understanding street vendors' everyday lives and struggles (Crenshaw 1989; Crenshaw 1991; Estrada and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2011).

Era of Legal Violence

Los Angeles is unusual in that it is one of the only major U.S. cities where street vending was illegal. Called the carceral capital of the world, Los Angeles has a $1 billion-dollar system of jails and immigration detention centers (Gilmore 2007; Lytle Hernández 2017). Los Angeles is a carceral city, where from 1994 to 2018, the sale of goods, wares, or merchandise on city sidewalks and parkways was classified as a misdemeanor with imposed penalties as high as $1,000 and/or jail, based on the judge's discretion. Following Los Angeles' lead, many cities in California implemented similar legal restrictions. Despite the importance to individual families and the immense community benefits, street vending is criminalized across the state. Many jurisdictions impose an outright prohibition on all vending, while others impose oppressive restrictions that severely limit vending and expose vendors to risk incarceration and deportation. As a result, vendors face a distressful catch-22: permits are impossible to obtain but vending without a permit is prosecuted as a crime – often a misdemeanor. In 2018, a review of the 30 largest jurisdictions in the state showed that all but one jurisdiction imposes criminal charges for sidewalk vending violations.[2]

[2] Leadership for Urban Renewal Network (LURN), "Where is Sidewalk Vending Criminalized in California?" http://lurnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/SB946_Info_Final.pdf.

Cecilia Menjívar and Leisy Abrego (2012), conceptualize “legal violence” as a framework to think about how contemporary society merges criminal and immigration law to enact legal practices that harm migrants. I apply this framework to analyze the Anti-Vending Ordinance (No. 169319) in Los Angeles. This legal structure made it possible to prosecute street vending as a misdemeanor. Through state-sanctioned legal violence, however, violence is meted out through multiple social institutions with reverberations into many other aspects of street vendors’ lives. Laws construct immigrants as illegal in the same way that laws construct street vendors as criminal. When laws dehumanize street vendors, then people feel permitted and even emboldened to carry out community-sanctioned legal violence.

Anti-Black racism and anti-Latinx xenophobia are embedded within legal systems that criminalize street vendors. Street vending is a highly racialized (Kettles and Morales 2009; Zlolniski 2006) and gendered economic activity (Bhimji 2013; Estrada 2013; Estrada and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2011; Hamilton and Chinchilla 2001; Muñoz 2008) that is heavily policed by authorities (Rosales 2013). According to the Census Bureau, 61% of the informal labor force in Los Angeles County is composed of undocumented immigrants (Haydamack and Flaming 2005). Scholars call attention to how cities disrupt unwanted immigration by cracking down on sectors in which urban poor immigrants are concentrated (Light 2006; Rosales 2013).

I draw on legal violence as a lens to analyze informality in response to Ananya Roy’s (2005) critiques that challenge scholars to analyze informality beyond a sphere of unregulated activity by which the marginalized survive. Rather, it must be examined as a site that reveals the states’ role in creating the informal. Roy concludes that the state exercises its power to deem what is formal and informal and decides what kind of informality will be tolerated and which will not (Roy 2005). To deal with informality, therefore, “means confronting how the apparatus

of planning produces the unplanned and unplannable" (Roy 2005:156). I turn to Roy's (2005) critiques in thinking about the role of carceral and immigration regimes in shaping the experiences of street vendors.

I analyze legal violence as a deeply geographical project and turn to Black and Latinx geographies (Bledsoe and Wright 2019; Cahuas 2019a; Hidalgo 2017; Johnson and Lubin 2017; Robinson 1983; Solórzano and Vélez 2016), to call out the role of racism and capitalism in the control and elimination of Black and Latinx people from public space. Legal systems are imbued with anti-Blackness racism and anti-Latinx xenophobia that dispossesses Black and Latinx street vendors from public space in the service of generating overdevelopment, accumulation, land ownership, and profits for powerful corporate interests. Los Angeles Police Department's (LAPD) records demonstrate how arrests were the preferred method of enforcement over citations. The Police Divisions with the highest level of arrests during the same time period were concentrated in neighborhoods surrounding Downtown Los Angeles that have been experiencing dramatic gentrification processes. Therefore, the surge of anti-Vending enforcement is fueled by racism and xenophobia but also by profits from urban real estate deemed highly valuable. It is within this legal context that what I call Black and Latinx street vendors' abolitionist imaginaries emerge to challenge laws and enforcement practices that for decades undermined their ability to stay free, remain housed, and keep families and vending communities together.

Case Study: The Los Angeles Street Vending Campaign

To best understand the experiences and forms of resistance of street vendors, I designed an empirical study. As an interdisciplinary labor scholar, I draw on ethnography, digital humanities, and spatial analysis to understand how informal workers living under legal forms of violence strategize to collectively organize and transform urban space. Through abolitionist

marketplaces, street vendor leaders in the Los Angeles Street Vending Campaign mobilized a long-term resistance that challenged state-sanctioned and community-sanctioned legal violence. This project is guided by the following research questions:

(1) How do Black and Latinx street vendors experience legal violence?

(2) How do Black and Latinx street vendors resist legal violence?

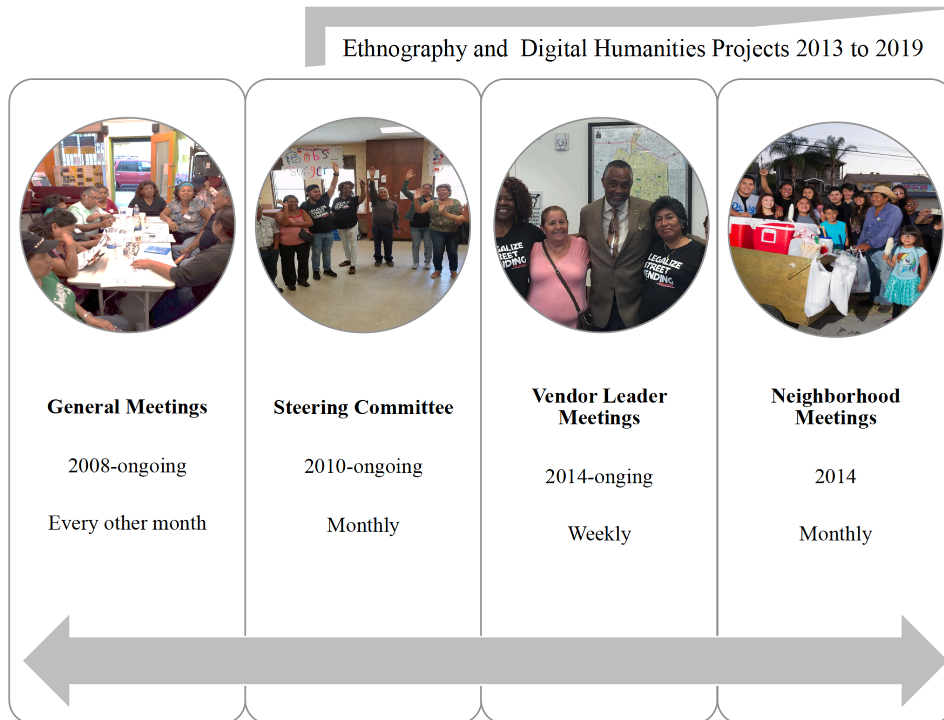
To answer these questions, I've spent the last 6 years working with and documenting The LA Street Vending Campaign. The Los Angeles Street Vending Campaign began in 2008 when Caridad, a street vendor in her late 50s decided she had enough of being chased by police and having her goods confiscated. She walked up to East Los Angeles Community Corporation (ELACC), an economic and social justice organization in her neighborhood, and demanded ELACC do something about LAPD. What began as a small group of street vendors meeting in Boyle Heights with ELACC staff, grew into a Campaign because street vendors from across the city were clamoring to be a part of these meetings and to have Campaign meetings in their own communities.

By 2010, ELACC and Caridad had brought together a small group of street vendors to hold General Meetings and establish a Steering Committee that pushed to decriminalize street vending in Los Angeles. The Steering Committee was comprised of street vendor-leaders, East Los Angeles Community Corporation (ELACC) staff, Leadership for Urban Renewal Network (LURN) staff, Doug from the pro-bono Public Council. In 2013, they successfully lobbied two city council members, Jose Huizar, who represented a historically Latinx district and Curren Price, who represented a historically Black district. After persistent organizing through Vendor Leader Meetings and Neighborhood Meetings political support grew, especially under new fears raised by the Trump administration. The city of Los Angeles passed the motion to decriminalize

street vending in January 2017. Street vending was no longer a misdemeanor in the city of Los Angeles.

Table 1

A timeline of the organizational structure of the Campaign and its evolution. The archival images represent the earlier days of the Campaign and were given to me by ELACC staff.



However, as noted earlier, street vending was criminalized across the state of California. So, rather than stopping there, the Campaign took their fight to the state level, when we all boarded a bus to the state capital to lobby senators in support of SB 946 Safe Sidewalk Vending. Inspired by the Campaigns years of resistance, Senator Ricardo Lara helped to advocate for SB 946, and it was signed by the Governor in September 17, 2018, formally ending the practice of criminalizing street vendors in California.

During the time I was involved with the Campaign, it grew from 2 to 10 street vendor communities.[3] Each of these sites is a cultural landmark in historically Black and Latinx neighborhoods where street vendor communities have congregated for several decades. The Campaign could quickly mobilize for a hearing or protest because of Vendor Leader Meetings where a street-vendor leader representing each community met weekly with other leaders in Boyle Heights, and then facilitated Neighborhood Meetings in their respective communities.[4] Vendors were of different races-ethnicities from across Los Angeles, with varying degrees of legality, literacy, and abilities. I want to underscore that in a vast, sprawling, and highly segregated city like Los Angeles, this was a tremendous feat.

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[3] Boyle Heights, Pinata District, Fashion District, Westlake MacArthur Park (Alvarado, 6th, 7th, Bonnie Brae), Main St. South LA (San Pedro and 31st), San Fernando Valley (pockets of Pacoima and Panorama City), Hollywood Blvd, Leimert Park, Exposition Park, and Placita Olvera.

[4] For context on Los Angeles geography and history, I briefly want to point out some sites as a frame of reference: The West Side is affluent and predominantly White, where Beverley Hills is located. The East Side, where Boyle Heights is located is a predominantly Latinx working-class and working-poor community. The South Side, where Leimert Park is located is a historically Black working-class and working-poor community that more recently has become a predominantly Latinx community, but still maintains a strong Black cultural and political presence (Hamilton and Chinchilla 2001; Rosas 2019; Sides 2003).

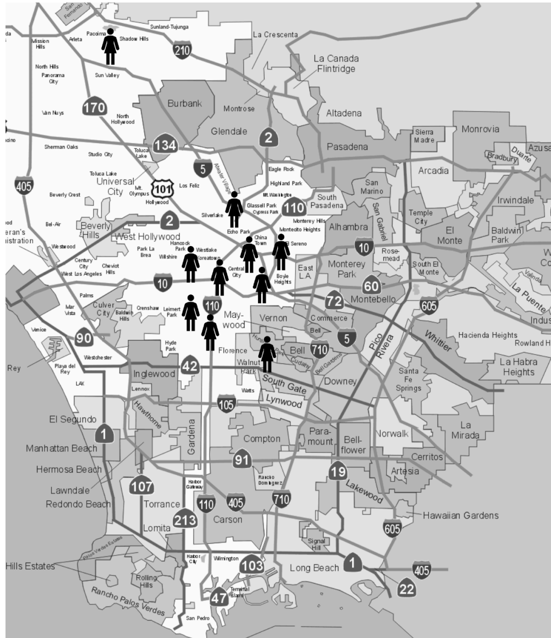

Figure 1. This map shows how the Campaign grew to represent 10 different vendor communities that spanned widely across racial and neighborhood lines, and across linguistic and cultural communities.

So, how did they do this? I want to share two key ways that ELACC contributed to supporting alliances between Black and Latinx street vendor leaders in the Campaign:

> (1) Counterplans: With the support of ELACC staff and Doug, street vendors collectively imagined what the just regulation of the future would look like. They were intentional about bringing Black and Latinx street vendors together for discussions, so that the 'counter-plans' were beneficial to both groups. These counterplans allowed them to quickly mobilize whenever the city proposed unjust policies.
>
> (2) Leadership Course: ELACC provided street-vendors with a free ten-week leadership course, where street vendors learned about public speaking, the Civil Rights movements, and had special guest speakers from Black Lives Matters-Los Angeles. This course became a space of inter-racial congregation where Black and Latinx street vendors shared and learned about their common struggles.

Participants

The street vendor leaders in my study are listed alphabetically as follows—Ana Maria, Caridad, Chaveli, Deborah, Esmeralda, Faustino, Humberto, Jeri, Mercedes, MariPosa, Nancy,

Ofelia, Ronald, Santa, and Yogita. To give you a sense of who they are and what their life and work conditions are: their ages range from 30 to 65, 12 out of 15 of the leaders are women, and of those 12, 5 are single mothers. Eleven of the street vendor leaders are of Pan-Latinx origins, representing the countries of Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Peru. Within this group, members self-identify as Latina, Hispano, Mestizo, or Chicana. Four of the street vendor leaders are Black, and they all self-identify as Black. It is important to note that the categories Black and Latinx are not necessarily mutually exclusive, for instance Yogita is Caribbean from Guyana, but self-identifies as Black. As street vendors, they all reported earning under $15,000 a year and nearly half of them became unhoused during the course of my work with them.

Methods: Ethnography

In the six years of this project, I conducted hundreds of hours of participant observation of street vendor leaders vending practices in the home and work site, court hearings, meetings, and protests. I conducted 30 in-depth longitudinal qualitative interviews and 15 life histories with the 15 Black and Latinx street vendor leaders (for a total of three interviews per participant). The interview protocol followed the Seidman (2013) three-part phenomenological approach. During the first interview, I focused on life history questions. The second interview asked questions about present experiences of vending and political activism to legalize street vending. Finally, the third interview asked vendors questions about the meaning of space, membership and belonging. Each interview was designed to be conversational and allow vendors to freely craft their own narratives. In addition to the street vendor leaders, I conducted qualitative interviews with 3 community organizers from East LA Community Corporation—Isela, Janet, and Carla and Doug—the Campaign lawyer from the Public Council, a pro-bono law firm.

I also draw on archival data from the Los Angeles City Clerk—containing over 50 court reports, letters in favor and in opposition of legalization, and transcripts from hearings at City Hall. My data also includes a visual archive I collected over the years of thousands of photos and fifty-eight hours of video footage from field sites, meetings, events, and protests. The visual archive comes from 3 sources: Photos and video collected by either myself or my partner; Photos and video given to me by ELACC staff; And photos and video given to me by street vendors.

Figure 2. I became a mother during my field work so both my kids, Paloma and Mateo, grew up in the movement. Because of the visual nature of my work, ELACC and the Campaign, would often call on me to document major events and actions for their social media outlets. Sometimes my husband Jeff joined me, so that we could alternated between photographing and filming. Many times, we were called upon on the weekends and our two children became our film crew and research assistants.

Methods: Digital Humanities Approach to Augmented Fotonovela

In addition to these traditional research methods, I also developed a digital humanities methodological component called augmented fotonovelas, which brings together an audio-visual comic format with Augmented Reality (AR) and text from interview transcripts. What is really exciting about these fotonovelas is that participants were directly involved in creating them. It is

a medium that allows them to speak about how they experience legal violence in the spaces they move through, and how their abolitionist imaginaries contest this violence. I have been able to publish on this methodology (Hidalgo 2015) and share these fotonovelas in academic and public forums with students, professors, city staff, politicians and funders to advance just legislation. Through a collaboration with the Los Angeles Unified School District, my projects helped teachers develop a K-12 curriculum on street vendors lived experiences and contributions to Southern California. It is my sincere belief that these pedagogical interventions will influence future generations of learners, urging them to "get to know a street vendor," and make the biggest impact in dismantling the community-based violence street vendors experience.

Figure 3. Me showing councilmember Curren Price how AR works in the Augmented Fotonovela at a Town Hall at the Maya Angelou High School in 2016, Jeri and Faustino at an exhibition we had at a community-based arts space in Boyle Heights in 2018 (top left and bottom right), Street vendor panel and exhibition at UCLA's Chicano Studies Research Center in 2018 (middle left and right, bottom left).

Analysis

For me it was important to not only center the lived experiences of street vendors in my research, but also include street vendors' cognitive repertoire into my analysis. Thus, I used the phenomenological coding and narrative profile (Seidman 2013) approaches to analyzing my data in a way that describe a person's experience in the way they experience it. In order to do this, I read each transcript in its entirety to gain insight into the whole story. Each interview was read several times and coded in Dedoose to better understand what participants experienced at various stages of journey into street vending and activism. The themes that emerged were tracked and recorded, following the phenomenological approach that allows for participants' voices to emerge from the data. I created narrative profiles about each participant, allowing me to see when common themes emerged across my participants. Similarities across participants' stories guided the development of key themes that reflected what street vendors experienced: State and community-sanctioned legal violence; street vending as a healing and political praxis; and alliances across race and space.

In line with the phenomenological approach, meaningful participant statements informed the development of themes and textual descriptions of themes. Upon reviewing the themes in the findings, I began to analyze and write study findings.

I took four steps to ensure the rigor of research:

(1) Memoing: After interviews and throughout data analysis phase of research, I wrote reflections paying attention to make connections to social structures and street vendors relationships to systems of power.
(2) Dedoose: I did first and second level coding to ensure accuracy of the analytic categories I developed.
(3) Critical Self-Reflection: I engaged in a critical self-reflection writing process to acknowledge biases.
(4) Member Checks: I conducted member checks with 10 research participants and 3 ELACC organizers.

Through the augmented fotonovela and traditional research methods, I was able to engage my research questions about street vendors' experiences and resistance against legal violence.

Rethinking Street Vending Through Woman of Color Feminisms and Black and Latinx Geographies

Drawing on rich, multi-method data, this dissertation moves away from a neoliberal understanding of entrepreneurship towards an abolitionist marketplace, to present an alternative view of informality that accounts for how Black and Latinx street vendor collectivities ultimately led to a hope-building and emancipatory Campaign. In order to do so, this dissertation focuses on how Black and Latinx street vendors experience legal violence through state-sanctioned and community-sanctioned violence and how Black and Latinx street vendors resist legal violence. This dissertation bridges Black and Latinx geographies with Woman of Color feminisms around notions of corporeality, healing, and wholeness.

In analyzing street vendors' everyday lived experiences, I came to understand that they perceive some aspects of street vending activities as central to coping and healing from the cumulative trauma of legal violence through what bell hooks (1989) calls "self-recovery," a journey towards wholeness through knowledge and self-love. These findings challenged me to rethink street vending beyond neoliberal understandings of entrepreneurship, and how this practice serves as a healing strategy and sensibility. To understand how a healing praxis emerges from street vending, I turn to Women of Color feminisms (Anzaldúa 2002; hooks 1993; Lorde 2007), primarily Gloria Anzaldúa's (2002) *paths of conocimiento*, to examine street vendors' narratives revealing the myriad ways street vendors remake their feelings of brokenness into alternative spaces of hope, light, brilliance and radical possibility. Almost every street vendor I spoke to had a story of chronic illness, disability, addiction, depression and anxiety that they associated with traumatic events they had accumulated throughout their lived experiences with

war, migration, racism, xenophobia, policing, sexual assault, and domestic abuse. Street vendor leaders expressed how the practices and spaces they embody allow them to find wholeness; through the process of creating and congregating, many vendors find ways to resist the injurious consequences of anti-Street Vending laws and policies.

I turn to lessons from Black geographies (Gilmore 2017; Johnson and Lubin 2017; McKittrick and Woods 2007) and Latinx geographies (Cahuas 2019a; Hidalgo 2017; Johnson 2013; Lara 2018; Muñoz 2016a, 2016b; Solórzano and Vélez 2016), specifically focusing on Ruth Gilmore's (2017) concept of abolitionist geographies in order to situate my study of how Black and Latinx street vendors remake sites of legal violence into abolitionist marketplaces. I theorize the term abolitionist marketplaces to advance a new framework for analyzing how Black and Latinx street vendors work across differences to build a political praxis that holds radical possibilities. This dissertation highlights how Black and Latinx street vendors' abolitionist imaginaries emerge, in order to challenge unjust laws and policies that threatened street vendors' ability to stay free. Black and Latinx street vendors create economies of resistance that remake sites of terror into joyful celebrations of their ethnic-racial identities.

This dissertation strives to celebrate street vendors' humanity—and is inspired by how adamantly street vendors vocalized that they had stories, ones they are eager to share and have heard. Their narratives and daily struggles are a true testament to the resilience of the human spirit and its ability to imagine liberation in landscapes of legal violence, where unfreedom persists. Vendors' stories demonstrate how to hold the burden of past and current trauma, while maintaining hope in the possibility of a more just future. Such a feat is critical for the political times we are living in. The number of street vendors has risen from 10,000 to 50,000 (Hamilton

and Chinchilla 1996; Yen et al. 2015) at a moment when illegality permeates the lives of People of Color in landscapes of legal violence.

Theorizing Abolitionist Marketplaces

> Who then was or is out of place? Unfree people who sold things they made or grew on the side, hiding the money in an emancipation pot. People who couldn't say where they work, or prove that they are free, or show a ticket or a pass, a document to save their skin, or save themselves from the narrative that their skin, stretched in particular ways across muscles and bones, seemed or seems to suggest something about where they shouldn't be—caught. (Gilmore 2017)

The passage above is from Gilmore's (2017) discussion on abolitionist geographies and the emancipatory possibilities during enslavement. She describes the strategies of enslaved peoples in the selling and hiding of money to be stored away in an emancipatory pot with the foresight and hope of gaining freedom. In applying an abolitionist geographies lens to the experiences of Black and Latinx street vendors today, the passage takes on a new meaning when analyzing the informal labor, racialization, and immobility that street vendors in my study experience due to the ever-present carceral and immigration regimes that intersect with anti-Vending laws to cause intense human suffering when street vendors are caught, jailed, or detained. Gilmore's "emancipation pots" moves me to theorize around street vendors' narratives and what I am conceptualizing as abolitionist marketplaces. In reconceptualizing emancipation pots as abolitionist marketplaces, I analyze street vendors leaders in the Los Angeles Street Vendor Campaign as placemakers and powerful urban actors. I acknowledge the way that criminalized street vendors invent, conspire, and organize within landscapes of legal violence to envision marketplaces of freedom where they articulate alternative democratic futures.

Geographers and urban planners identify the practice of organizing people, land, and resources as placemaking. Placemaking is a normal human activity that begins with people working to improve their local environment (Lara 2018). This chapter draws on Latinx

geographies to analyze street vendors as placemakers, who utilize memory of place to construct new "urban cultural landscapes," as Lorena Muñoz (2016a) explains, blending traditions from the Spanish plaza and the Meso-American mercado to create ephemeral marketplaces. Lara (2018) describes Latinx placemaking as whenever Latinx people "transform physical spaces into areas that support human interaction, economic exchange, and well-being" (30).

I analyze street vending as a practice of Black and Latinx placemaking, where poor People of Color take vacant and neglected public spaces, sidewalks, and public parks and remake them into arenas where human interaction occurs to intimately intertwine the physical, social, ecological, cultural, and even spiritual qualities of a place, thus tying meaning and memories to a place (Glaser 2012; Lara 2018). Like Lorena Muñoz (2016a), I argue that these community transformations materialize spatially, and it is within carceral and immigration regimes that street vendors *paths of conocimiento* emerge to create abolitionist marketplaces. Street vendors desire to live and work free of danger. Their abolitionist imaginaries transform sidewalks, parking lots, and parks in the city, into marketplaces that reinvent political movement in neighborhoods across Los Angeles.

Abolitionism has been conceptualized in the context of abolishing slavery, abolishing the death penalty, and abolishing prisons (Davis 2005), and I extend this framework to examine street vendors' attempts to abolish the criminalization of street vending. I draw on Black geographies to analyze how street vendors navigate displacement and dispossession, by thinking through first how Blackness has been viewed as a-spatial and thereby Black spaces as open for appropriation (Bledsoe and Wright 2019) and second how Black people are in fact central in reimagining a sense of place and possibility for a more just present and future (McKittrick and Woods 2007; Cahuas 2019b). Drawing on the work of McKittrick and Woods (2007) on a Black

sense of place, I argue that street vendors in the campaign reimagine geographies of dispossession and racial violence as emancipatory sites through which street vendors create a radical Black and Latinx sense of place and belonging in Los Angeles. In making these connections, I put Black and Latinx street vendors' narratives in conversation with the Black Radical Tradition (Johnson and Lubin 2017; Robinson 1983) and Black and Latinx geographies (Lara 2018; Johnson 2014; McKittrick and Woods 2007; Wilson 2017) to broaden understandings of market exchange beyond Western capitalist accumulation, but as abolitionist marketplaces where the seeds of emancipation are sown.

It is important to note that Black and Latinx geographies are not mutually exclusive, but deeply entangled. In putting Black and Latinx geographies in conversation to theorize abolitionist marketplaces, I am guided by Gilmore (2017) who writes that "abolition geography is capacious (it isn't only by, for, or about Black people) and specific (it's a guide to action for both understanding and rethinking how we combine our labor with each other and the earth)" (238). Applying an abolitionist lens to Black and Latinx street vendors allows me to examine how their narratives demonstrate a radical consciousness in the ability to imagine themselves in the world as people who are not limited by laws and policies that subjugate them, but rather as empowered people full of possibilities, deserving of rights, and protections. In doing so, my dissertation underscores that street vendor leaders demonstrate an endless capacity for hope in the unfettered pursuit of justice.

Gilmore (2017) conceptualizes abolitionist geographies, as places where consciousness and action blend to liberate. In that vein, I theorize the term abolitionist marketplaces to advance a new framework for analyzing how Black and Latinx street vendors work across differences to build critical consciousness and create economies that hold radical possibilities. Abolitionist

marketplaces form in urban spaces that are highly contested and heavily surveilled. These spaces are governed by anti-Vending laws and policies that normalize the incarceration and deportation of Street Vendors of Color. I define abolitionist marketplaces as spaces that form when Street Vendors of Color congregate, oppose unjust laws and create economies that generate opportunities and circulate resources that are by, and for the betterment of Communities of Color. Abolitionist marketplaces are necessary because of deep structural inequalities that exclude Street Vendors of Color from nearly all social institutions—employment, education, housing, and medical care. Street vendors create abolitionist marketplaces by remaking sites of state-sanctioned and community-sanctioned legal violence in three ways I will expand upon at length in Chapter Five: (1) self-care, (2) radical consciousness, and (3) community-care.

> (1) Self-Care: finding alternative ways of healing and wholeness through the creative processes of making products to vend, as well as creating alternative wellness centers in the marketplace through the exchange of ideas, remedies, and services.
>
> (2) Radical Consciousness: marketplaces are learning centers that elicit critical reflection and dialogue on racism, gentrification, and policing that embolden their collective claims to space. The wisdom that emerges through shared knowledge, visual culture, and products and services affirm one's family, community and ancestral histories, identity and Women of Color feminisms.
>
> (3) Community-Care: enacts practices and strategies that privilege the communal well-being over the individual by circulating capital, goods, and services throughout their community in order to ensure that even the most marginalized among them are supported and cared for.

My conceptualization of the defining features of abolitionist marketplaces are centrally informed by street vendor's narratives, which I analyze through the writings on healing and trauma recovery by Women of Color feminists Gloria Anzaldúa (2002), Audrey Lorde (2007), and bell hooks (1993).

Significance

Earlier in this chapter, I wrote about the debates happening in informal economy studies and specifically pointed to the critical interventions that Black and Latinx geographies are making. They call for researchers to consider the role of racism and capitalism in the elimination of Black and Latinx people from urban space, while also foregrounding the important role that Black and Latinx people have in resisting and creating alternative spaces.

By moving away from a neoliberal understanding of entrepreneurship towards an abolitionist marketplace, I present an alternative view of informality that accounts for how Black and Latinx street vendor collectivities mobilize self-care, radical consciousness, and community-care that ultimately led to a hope-building and emancipatory Campaign.

Chapter Outlines

Over the course of six years, I studied fifteen street vendors who led the LA Street Vending Campaign. I heard them articulate their stories multiple times and across multiple settings—like their homes, their work sites, and their organizing sites—to distinct audiences—such as their peers, researchers, students, community-based organizations, Councilmembers, senators, and the press. During that time, I learned that street vending is indeed spurred on by economic survival, but it is also about so much more. In fact, street vendors have developed a complex understanding of the role and function of street vending in their lives, their family's lives, and society at large. I explore this topic through the lens of abolitionist geographies by centering how street vendors make meaning and create beauty out of difficult circumstances through what I theorize as abolitionist marketplaces. I reveal how street vendors' abolitionist marketplaces promote self-care, raise radical consciousness, and foster community-care.

In Chapter Two, "State-Sanctioned Legal Violence Against Street Vendors," I address how legal systems in the everyday life of street vendors reverberates with injurious consequence

resulting in, family separation and housing insecurity. Chapter Three, “Community-Sanctioned Legal Violence Against Street Vendors,” explores how legal violence becomes internalized by the racial-ethnic groups street vendors belong to, thus making them vulnerable to attack, harassment and exploitation from brick-and-mortar business, priests, and neighbors. “Get To Know A Street Vendor”: A Framework For Analyzing Street Vending As A Healing Praxis,” Chapter Four, draws on Women of Color feminisms, specifically Gloria Anzaldúa’s (2002) *paths of conocimiento* (paths of consciousness), to share how street vendor leaders unique healing strategies and sensibilities remake feelings of brokenness into alternative spaces of hope, light, and brilliance. In Chapter Five, “Abolitionist Marketplaces: Examining Street Vending as A Political Praxis,” I theorize a new term, “abolitionist marketplaces” to reveal how street vendors’ abolitionist imaginaries promote self-care, raise radical consciousness, and foster community-care, thus creating economies that hold radical possibilities. I argue that inter- and cross-racial dialogue between Black and Latinx street vendors created a shift in the Campaign, from community-care over a single identity politic to community-care extended to a shared vision for cross-racial and cross-spatial justice that in turn centrally informed the success of the Los Angeles Street Vendors Campaign. The concluding chapter summarizes the overall findings and suggests future directions.

CHAPTER TWO: STATE-SANCTIONED LEGAL VIOLENCE AGAINST STREET VENDORS

Street vendor leaders in this study come from "constellations of struggle" (Johnson 2013) rooted in their class, education, and migration backgrounds. Race, ethnicity, ability, citizenship status, and distinct geographic location comprise their multifaceted identities. Chapters Two and Three explore my first research question: How do Black and Latinx street vendors experience legal violence? In this chapter I demonstrate the myriad ways that street vendors experience what I call state-sanctioned legal violence. Black and Latinx street vendors share experiences of persistent legal violence in relation to their vocation because their work on city sidewalks, parking lots, and parks makes them highly visible in urban public spaces.

This chapter stems from the dozens of requests I received during meetings, workshops, and informal conversations, when street vendors specifically emphasized that they wanted my work to show people the dehumanization that they face. "Show them how they treat us" is a phrase I heard often during the course of this work. In some of these conversations, street vendors wanted me to capture police arrests and the verbal and physical harassment they experience. In one such conversation, a vendor asked me to carry video cameras and audio equipment to record the verbal abuse from the Health Department, Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), and LA Sherriff's Department during raids of street vendor communities. I declined due to concern about putting vendors at further risk by angering the authorities being recorded since around that time there were several high-profile murders of Black street vendors captured on camera (Badger 2016). Cases of legal violence against street vendors, including ones

in which vendors are beaten and robbed by authorities and community members, continue to be documented and are available to viewed by the general public across multiple media platforms.[5]

For other vendors like Caridad, "show them" means raising awareness about how much of the legal violence is perpetrated by People of Color on other People of Color. Perpetrators of violence and surveillance include other Entrepreneurs of Color who own brick-and-mortar businesses, community-based leaders, owners of radical and so-called progressive community-spaces, and priests from local churches. In some cases, they also include other street vendors. The testimonies I have gathered during my time with street vendors confirm substantial legal violence by perpetrators from within and outside of the community—for instance, I have received calls from vendors alerting me about homes that were illegally confiscated by authorities, or listened to testimony of demeaning arrests, possessions cruelly destroyed, and excessively militarized police presence and intimidation. I have heard testimonies of the legal violence and observed how the stress it produces manifests in the body, as street vendors I have known for some time start to physically deteriorate, become ill, or lose their mobility. While I am unable to directly intervene in some of the extreme cases of despair,[6] I can honor street vendors' repeated requests by documenting the legal violence they endure.

In detailing the legal violence street vendors experience, this chapter demonstrates how the daily legal violence Black and Latinx street vendors experience is interconnected and stems from structural inequalities on two-scales: (1) state-sanctioned legal violence that dispossess

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[5] A google search for "street vendor attack" recently generated 23.5 million hits.

[6] However, as discussed in Chapter One, the *fotonovela* and exhibition I have developed with street vendors has been utilized to build public awareness and consciousness on why street vending should be legalized. Since 2016, I have become the on-call documentarian of the movement at the behest of East Los Angeles Corporation and the LA Street Vending Campaign. Sometimes accompanied by my husband and freelance photographer, Jeff Newton, and other times by myself, we take turns alternating from still, audio, and motion to document and pass on the visuals primarily for social media outlets.

Black and Latinx street vendors through hyper-militarized enforcement; and (2) criminalization through systems of banking, real-estate, and Child Protective Services rooted in policies that are anti-Black and anti-Latinx immigrant. As outlined in Chapter One, the majority of vendors in this study are Latinx, whose oral histories reveal the reach of U.S. empire in Peru, El Salvador, and Mexico. In these countries, a matrix of political and financial interventions led to forced migration to the U.S.: upholding conservative dictatorships, stamping out dissent, and fueling civil wars; financial technologies of wealth accumulation, debt, and ruin, and extreme labor exploitation.

In this chapter I draw on the framework of "legal violence," a framework developed by Cecilia Menjívar and Leisy Abrego (2012). This framework examines how contemporary society merges criminal and immigration law to enact legal practices that harm migrants. I apply this framework to anti-Street Vending laws in Los Angeles in order to analyze the incarceration, dispossession, and displacement of street vendors by authorities. The legal violence framework draws on theories of structural violence (Farmer 2003) and symbolic violence (Bourdieu and Wacquant 2004) to develop a new lens. I argue, parallel to the migration policies explored in their original article, that contemporary society merges criminal law with public policies to enact legal practices that harm street vendors. Legal violence—in tandem with the expansions of the carceral and immigration regimes (Alexander 2012; Gilmore 2007; Lytle Hernández 2017)—has disastrous effects on Black and Latinx street vendors.

Street vending is a highly racialized and gendered economic activity that is heavily policed by authorities (Hamilton and Chinchilla 2001; Kettles and Morales 2009; Rosales 2013). Previous scholars call attention to how cities disrupt unwanted immigration by cracking down on occupations concentrated by urban poor immigrants (Light 2006; Rosales 2013). From 1994 to

2018, the sale of goods, wares, or merchandise on city sidewalks and parkways was classified as a misdemeanor with imposed penalties as high as $1,000 and/or jail, based on the judge's discretion. U.S. immigration laws construct immigrants as illegal in the same way that laws construct street vendors as criminal. In Los Angeles, this is particularly consequential as street vendors must face fear of overzealous police whose actions could lead to their elimination through incarceration or deportation. Analyzing street vendors' experiences through the lens of a legal violence framework allows me to do the following: First, I am able to examine how criminal and immigration law intersects with anti-poverty laws, in this case I focus on the Anti-Vending Ordinance (No. 169319) in Los Angeles. Second, this permits the addition of a spatial analysis to illuminate how legal violence takes place in space and is historically rooted in colonial process of eliminating racial undesirables from the land (Hidalgo 2017; Solórzano and Vélez 2016; Vélez and Solórzano 2017).

I draw on spatial analysis and bridge it with legal violence, using the term dispossession to highlight how national and local policies predatorily eliminate racial outsiders for the purpose of land development and wealth accumulation. Local and national policies like Anti-Vagrancy laws, the War on Drugs, anti-Immigration laws, and anti-Vending laws are related in that they are concerted attempts to control and eliminate Black and Latinx communities from the land. This dispossession is not new to street vendors, in fact it is linked to a series of dispossessions that forced many of them to migrate to the Global North. Many of the street vendors in this study come from the Global South where decades of neoliberal policies have been embedded in colonial and racial capitalist accumulation of land, exploitation of labor, and appropriation of resources (Chakravarty and Ferreira da Silva 2012; Harvey 2005, 2010; Roy 2010). Dispossession continues to permeate street vendors' lives as they migrate to U.S. cities, where

the processes of gentrification increase police presence and street vendor arrests, dispossessing them from their homes and work sites. In looking at the spatial dimensions of legal violence, I connect the loss's street vendors experience in physical space as street vendors are dispossessed of city sidewalks, parking lots, and parks—that by extension robs them of their ability to create livelihoods and therefore cheats them of their right to exist. In making this claim, I acknowledge the relationship between capitalism with incarceration and deportation regimes, where the elimination of racial undesirables is an ongoing project. I assert that vast wealth has been created through the dispossession of street vendors.

For street vendors, the stigma of "illegality" (Abrego 2014; Genova 2005; Menjívar and Abrego 2012) often results in their criminalization and incarceration, or the threat of incarceration and deportation. These interactions and the precarity of street vendors lead to further involvement with institutions like banking, real estate, and Child Protective Services (CPS) that further harm them and lead to new forms of dispossession. Anti-Street Vending laws are ultimately carried out by carceral and immigration regimes that continue to fine, arrest, imprison and deport Black and Latinx street vendors to eliminate them from public space and generate overdevelopment, accumulation, land ownership, and profits for powerful corporate interests.

The Spatialization of Legal Violence

LAPD records about street vendor arrests are typically not made public. With pressure from street vendor leaders, the LAPD released 2-years' worth of records. It is important to know two things—first, arrests were the preferred method of enforcement over citations. The LAPD's own records demonstrate that arrests rose from 795 in fiscal year 2012-2013 and nearly doubled the next year to 1,235. In the same corresponding years police issued 271 citations and 286

citations the following year (Miller 2014). If you were a street vendor in LA during that time period, you were 2 to 4 times more likely to be arrested than to receive a citation, signaling that elimination was a key strategy. Note that LAPD is not the only agency that charges sidewalk vendors. The same report indicates that the City's Bureau of Street Services issued hundreds of additional citations in these years.[7] What these numbers point to is a concerted strategy on behalf of law enforcement and policy makers to practice human caging as the preferred mechanism for eliminating poor Black and Latino street vendors. While the Los Angeles Street Vending Campaign was actively fighting to decriminalize street vending through the city courts, all signs pointed to an escalation in LAPD's efforts to criminalize street vendors.

In 2015, the *LA Times* profiled a 79-year-old immigrant woman who received seven citations from the same officer in just a month and a half.[8] When the Campaign lawyer, Doug, did a review of court dockets, he found that in the course of just a 2-month period in 2017, over 100 misdemeanors for violation of the LA County code section that prohibits "peddling" were charged and set for arraignment. While there are no records of how many children have been present during these altercations, my observations and those of previous street vendor studies indicate that the children and grandchildren of street vendors are often present (Estrada 2013, 2019; Estrada and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2011). For that reason, it is important to think about how these policies of enforcement impact multiple generations of families.

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[7] http://clkrep.lacity.org/onlinedocs/2013/13-1493_rpt_cla_5-13-14.pdf.

[8] http://www.latimes.com/local/great-reads/la-me-c1-street-vendor-court-20150427-story.html.

Table 2.

Report prepared by the Chief Legislative Analyst in 2014 on arrests and citations issued by LAPD to street vendors working on city sidewalks, parking lots, and parks.

LAPD Report	2012-2013	2013-2014
Arrests	795	1,235
Citations	271	286

Second, it is important to understand the spatialization of legal violence (Carpio 2019; Herrera 2016; Vélez and Solórzano 2017), in other words, how laws and policies that harm racialized workers materialize spatially. The Police Divisions with the highest level of arrests during fiscal year 2012–2013 were concentrated in Central Rampart, Newton, and Hollywood (Miller 2014). These police divisions are in neighborhoods surrounding Downtown LA that have been experiencing dramatic gentrification processes. Scholars in the field of Black geographies assert that racism and capitalism are inextricably linked and carried out in racialized spatial practices (Bledsoe and Wright 2019; Hawthorne 2019). In other words, anti-Vending legislation and the surge of enforcement is fueled by racism and xenophobia but also by profits from urban real estate deemed highly valuable.[9] It is within this context that what I call Black and Latinx street vendors' abolitionist imaginaries emerge, discussed in Chapter Five, in order to challenge

[9] Rampart Police Division: (Echo Park, Silverlake, Pico Union, Westlake; Newton Police Division: (North-End Business District, Fashion District, South Park District, Pueblo Del Rio Housing Development; Hollywood Police Division: (Argyle, Cahuenga Pass, East Hollywood, Fairfax, Hobart, Hollywood, Hollywood Hills, Hollywood/La Brea, Little Armenia, Los Feliz, Melrose District, Mount Olympus, Sierra Vista, Spaulding Square, Sunset Strip, Thai Town, Vine/Willough).

laws and enforcement practices that for decades undermined their ability to stay free, to remain housed, and to keep families and vending communities together.

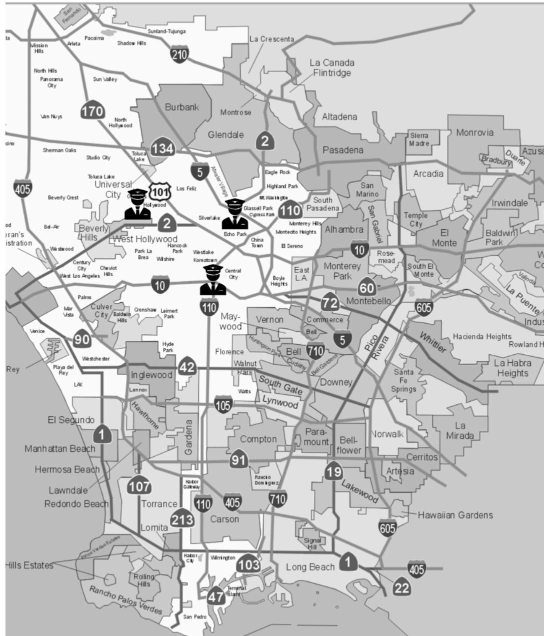

Figure 4. Map of Los Angeles demonstrating that LAPD issued the greatest number of arrests in neighborhoods experiencing dramatic gentrification processes.

This dissertation draws on a spatial analysis (Hidalgo 2017; Vélez and Solórzano 2017) to understand the lived experiences of legal violence reported by street vendors in Los Angeles, where the escalation of arrests coincides with targeted development projects throughout the city. The spatial theorist, Lefebvre, referred to capitalism as a deeply geographical project. Lefebvre (1996) argued the wealthy elite, who controlled the social production of space, reproduce space to maintain their dominance and power over others. Urban geographers (Crossa 2009; Setšabi and Leduka 2008) call attention to how street vendors undermine the neoliberal cities' attempts to privatize urban public space, creating "counterspaces" (Lefebvre 1996) of resistance. They analyze street vendor resistance as a class-based struggle between urban elites and urban poor.

These accounts often hide issues of race and gender inequality. For this study the intersection of race, class, and gender are central to understanding street vendor contestation.

The ban on street vending and three decades of arrests, fines, and confiscation by LAPD and LA Sheriff's Department are contemporary examples of how carceral and immigration regimes work together to eliminate Black and Latinx people from public space. Dominant practices "racialize space and spatialize race," thus racialized spaces impose exploitation, exclusion, and criminalization on aggrieved Communities of Color (Lipsitz 2011:6). A great deal of the misery experienced in the following set of street vendor narratives stems from the ways that street vending is a highly racialized and gendered economic activity (Hamilton and Chinchilla 2001; Estrada and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2011) that is heavily policed by authorities (Rosales 2013) and neighborhood vigilantes (Muñiz 2011). From the 1990s to the present, U.S. Black and Latinx families in Los Angeles have been exposed to the dismantling of the welfare system, expansion of the carceral and immigration system, and waning labor markets (Alexander 2012; Gilmore 2007).

The spatialization of legal violence is nothing new, rather it is rooted in historical colonial practices in Los Angeles of eliminating racial outsiders for the purpose of land development and wealth accumulation. As Kelly Lytle Hernández (2017) writes about nineteenth-century anti-Vagrancy laws in Los Angeles, their purpose served as a mechanism of "Caging the houseless, landless, and underemployed for living in public was to tantamount to denying their 'right to *be*' within public space" (30). By applying this spatial analysis, I connect the anti-Vending Ordinance (No. 169319), in place from 1994 to 2018, to a colonial past, to argue that anti-Street Vending laws are modern systems of controlling and dispossessing poor Black and Latinx people from urban spaces, thereby attracting a new gentry of white settlers

through the process of gentrification. Indeed, in notable ways, anti-Vending ordinances mimic the anti- Vagrancy laws of the past, by continuing the long practice of caging poor People of Color to eliminate their presence and deny their "right to be" within Los Angeles.

In making this claim, I am bridging spatial analysis with the concept of legal violence to demonstrate there is a temporal and spatial continuity in the way legal systems are created to normalize state-sanctioned violence on targeted racialized groups. Street vendors are keenly aware of how they are perceived by political stakeholders and policy makers as undesirables. For example, Deborah, a Black street vendor from Leimert Park shares, "They see us, the vendors, as a nuisance instead of being a positive economic force. They deal with them [vendors] like they're vagrants or criminals. They consider the vendors like the homeless." In the 19th century, laws that governed public space were created to eliminate vagrants, and for the last thirty years, street vendors have been classified as a public nuisance, the racial undesirables to be eliminated from public space.

As Roy (2005) argues, we must contend with the role of the state in determining informality and the role of informality in urban resistance and politics. The state exercises its power to deem what is formal and informal, as well as decides what kind of informality will be tolerated and which will not (Roy 2005). In the case of street vending, the state determined that this type of informality will be criminalized, and punitive measures will be taken in the elimination of Black and Latinx street vendors. Lytle Hernández (2017) demonstrates how the expansion of carceral and immigration regimes in Los Angeles follows a longer pattern of colonialism and the persistent attempt to target, criminalize and erase Black, Latinx, and Indigenous people from the land.

Carceral Regimes

Los Angeles is unusual in that it is one of the only major U.S. cities where street vending was illegal. Los Angeles, geographically located on the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, is the carceral capital of the world with a $1 billion-dollar system of jails and immigration detention centers (Gilmore 2007; Lytle Hernández 2018). In order to understand why Los Angeles jailed street vendors for the last three decades, it is necessary to understand the context in which Los Angeles became a carceral city. Gilmore (2007) writes, during the 1970s California expanded the number of prisons built, making it possible for Los Angeles to become the city that imprisons the most people in the U.S. (Alexander 2012; Gilmore 2007; Lytle Hernández 2018). The 1980s and '90s were characterized by "get tough on crime" legal policies (Gilmore 2007).

The War on Drugs was a national policy that began during the Regan-era, triggering millions of arrests on both drugs and violence charges (Alexander 2012; Gilmore 2007; Lytle Hernández 2017). The flood of investment in policing during the War on Drugs resulted in a 975 percent surge in drug-related convictions between 1982 and 1999 (Gilmore 2007). Alexander (2012) interrogates the racial dimensions of mass incarceration and finds that in cities wrecked by the Drug War, "as many as 80 percent of young African American men now have criminal records and thus are subject to legalized discrimination for the rest of their lives" (7). Contrary to sensationalized media accounts, the explosion of the drug-related prison population occurred during a moment when drug use among all racial groups was on a decline (Alexander 2012; Gilmore 2007).

Behind this carceral system of unfreedom is a money-making scheme, as Gilmore (2017) elaborates:

> Today's prisons are extractive. What does that mean? It means prisons enable money to move because of the enforced *inactivity* of people locked in them. It means people extracted from communities, and people returned to communities

> but not entitled to be of them, enable the circulation of money on rapid cycles. What's extracted from the extracted is *the* resource of life—time. (227)

Carceral regimes also extract street vendors from communities and when street vendors are returned, their lives remain restricted. In this next section, I turn to my study to show how carceral regimes play out in lives of street vendors.

Ronald is a Black street vendor in his early 50s but looks young for his age. He is slight in frame and wears oversized clothing. He is a father of two, who sells beaded jewelry at Leimert Park, often accompanied by his daughters who are 12 and 11 years old. Ronald is a formerly incarcerated street vendor; whose criminal record condemns him to labor market exclusion for life. In this carceral city where the wealthy actively seek to accumulate land and eliminate Black and Latino people, Ronald was never meant to be free.

As a young boy growing up in South Central Los Angeles, Ronald dreamed of being an athlete and playing baseball or football professionally. As an elementary school student, he remembers his brother and him having to fight who he refers to as "gangbangers," older middle schooler youths who tried to take Ronald's lunch money. During the 1970s and the later part of the Civil Rights Era, though, everything changed. Ronald recalls being bussed-out during the period of desegregating urban schools. For Ronald, one of the benefits of busing was his exposure to other races and ethnicities. On the other hand, though, he felt the constant pressure of having to prove that he was good enough and smart enough—still he felt like he never measured up. Being bussed out of his Black community and into a predominantly white community, caused young Ronald to experience deep insecurities and felt like he did not have anyone to talk to about what he was experiencing.

Even though Ronald grew up in a two-parent household, he had a complicated relationship with his father. Ronald's father was a lithographer and printmaker, but emotionally

he was closed off. Ronald described, “I eventually got into drugs and for a while I blamed my parents, especially my father for that.” While Ronald spent much of his youth blaming his father for his addiction, Ronald is currently in the 12-step program and has been sober for the last decade. Taking responsibility is an important theme in Ronald’s life and part of his journey as he transitioned from addiction and incarceration into sobriety and fatherhood. Ronald shares, “After a while, you know, I had to get that out, you know, not blame him, but to know I made the choice of putting the crack pipe to my mouth, you know what I’m saying? I can’t blame my father for not talking to me or guiding me for a decision I made.” Like many young Black men during the War on Drugs, Ronald found himself serving time in prison rather than in a drug rehabilitation program.

For Ronald, a criminal record predisposes him to labor market exclusion and restricts his ability to financially provide for his family. I asked Ronald how he became a street vendor at Leimert Park, and he reflected upon the time in his life when he was an addict and the path that led him to a criminal record:

> Oh well, you know, I mean, you know coming up during the ’80s when crack cocaine hit Los Angeles, I was part of that. You know, and I struggled with crack cocaine for 20 years or so. Up to around 2000 from the early ’80s. Up to around 2000, I struggled with crack. You know but then you get a record and you're older now you're in your forties and fifties and you also have a record. You’re not so much of a commodity, a high commodity anymore. People aren’t looking at you like, “Hey let me bring your skills into my employment,” because you know they’re looking for younger people, and without records. So, I had to hustle down to some type of way to make a living, to make ends meet.

Ronald’s account highlights how the War on Drugs affected a generation of Black and Latinx people, who were incarcerated and given the stigma of “drug felon,” rather than receiving care for the addiction that got them into trouble. For Ronald and many Men of Color of his generation, the stigma of being formerly incarcerated prevented him from re-integrating into the

wage economy for the remainder of his life (Alexander 2012). In addition to discrimination due to his formerly incarcerated status, Ronald is also excluded from the labor market because of ageism and the barriers to the types of economic opportunities available to older people. For a short time, he was working at CVS, but in 2006, he relapsed. And in 2008, he was incarcerated again due to addiction and a violent dispute with his ex-wife. In 2010, he found himself out of prison once more, but again without job prospects, and still responsible for two young daughters.

The stigma of criminality is so far-reaching that in 2013, five years after his conviction, Ronald asserted that he could not find anyone willing to hire him because of his felony and his age. Ironically, the stigma of being labeled as a drug criminal is what pushed Ronald into street vending. Anti-Vending laws also deem this practice as illegal. Street vending is highly criminalized as a misdemeanor; which puts Ronald at risk of more jail time. Although, Ronald receives cash assistance and food stamps, which sum up to $440 per month—that is not enough for a single person, let alone a person with children in one of the most expensive cities in the U.S. Where the system failed Ronald, incarcerating him rather than rehabilitating him he counts himself fortunate that his loved ones did not turn their back on him. His ex-wife taught him how to bead jewelry and this became a fountain of support for Ronald. As a recovering addict, beading kept his hands and mind occupied. He was living with his grandmother and she believed in his craft enough to loan him money to start collecting the materials he needed to start selling his beaded jewelry. Today his profits go towards supporting his grandmother and his kids.

Immigration Regimes

For many of the Latinx street vendors' in this study, their undocumented status and the labor market exclusion they experience as a result, forces them into street vending. Anti-

Immigrant national policies like E-verify [10] make it difficult for Latinx vendors without legal citizenship status to get better-paying jobs as janitors, for instance, relegating them to make an income solely in the street (Rosales 2013). On the other hand, some vendors in my study, like Caridad's daughter Esmeralda, were paid so little through wage work at McDonalds that they realized they could make a better income working on the street. Both scenarios reveal that for many undocumented people, anti-Immigrant laws create labor market exclusions so that there are few job opportunities that afford immigrants a livable wage.

Figure 5. Photograph of Caridad vending with daughter Esmeralda and her grandchild.

In the case of Latinx undocumented immigrants, systematic exclusion from access to upwardly mobile jobs has resulted in vendors like Caridad making their livelihood off the street. Caridad is a single-mother in her 50s and was herself a child street vendor providing for her elderly and disabled mother when she was only 4 years old. Caridad and her mother lived off of

[10] E-Verify is an Internet-based system that compares social security information entered by an employer from an employee's Form I-9 to records available to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the Social Security Administration to confirm whether the employee has a valid social security number and is valid for employment.

the tamales she sold on crowded buses in Colima, Mexico. In 2004, Caridad was in her forties and she had been working as a bar server for over a decade. She had built a relationship with the bar owner and she loved her job, but the bar was shutting down. As an undocumented worker, Caridad did not qualify for unemployment. She was trying really hard but failing to find employment and again, a much older Caridad found herself turning to the street for her livelihood. Upon discussing why street vending is necessary for people like her, Caridad explained, "Oh yes, because a source of work for us that are in the streets. Almost all of us a people who do not have higher education. We don't have a specialty and I have noticed that most of my vending mates are seniors in age about 35 to 40 years and up. We have all worked a lot since we were kids." Like Ronald, Caridad highlights a significant pattern of ageism that makes it difficult to find work after a certain age. In addition to being discriminated against by her age, Caridad found her job prospects limited by her lack of her age and undocumented status.

Every day that Caridad street vends, she knows that she is exposing herself to the risk of deportation. The criminalization of sidewalk vending carries severe and unjust immigration consequences. Throughout my time studying the Campaign, I got to know the Campaign lawyer, Doug. In 2016 Trump was elected and the Campaign began emphasizing how the new presidents anti-Immigrant policies would negatively affect street vendors. As Doug explained to me through informal conversations in 2016 and 2017, immigrant vendors who are arrested or incarcerated face the risk of being transferred to or picked up by federal immigration officials after being released from custody. A misdemeanor conviction can also potentially jeopardize a vendor's eligibility for certain immigration benefits for which they must demonstrate "good moral character."[11] If a vendor is disqualified from—or dissuaded from seeking—such

[11] E.g., 8 C.R.F. § 316.10 ("An applicant for naturalization bears the burden of demonstrating that, during the statutorily prescribed period, he or she has been and continues to be a person of good

immigration benefits based on a misdemeanor conviction, they may be denied work authorization and prevented from finding employment in the formal economy. As I learned from Doug, undocumented vendors were at heightened risk for deportation regardless of whether they were ultimately charged or convicted. Under a new executive order on immigration enforcement from the Trump administration, immigration officials are instructed to prioritize for deportation those that have merely "committed acts that constitute a chargeable criminal offense."[12] What this means for vendors is that they were at heightened risk across the state, even if not charged or convicted. The mere possibility of criminal prosecution puts low-income immigrant workers at risk.

During the time I spent with undocumented street vendor leaders of the Campaign, none of them underwent deportation proceedings as a result of arrests, yet they were undeniably at risk. Something that Doug emphasized to me was that these risks are not merely hypothetical. He pointed out a series of cases in Southern California in which street vendors were facing deportation. These included a mother of five in fighting deportation after spending months in a detention center, separated from her family. This situation stems directly from a simple sidewalk vending citation.[13] While her example was the most recent, hers is by no means the only example.

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moral character"); 8 U.S.C. § 1229b (requires "good moral character" to issue a cancellation of removal order).

[12] See "Executive Order: Enhancing Public Safety in the Interior of the United States,"

https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/01/25/presidential-executive-orderenhancing-public-safetyinterior-united.

[13] Liset Marquez, "Street vendor facing deportation after Rancho Cucamonga arrest," Daily Bulletin, October 23, 2017. https://www.dailybulletin.com/2017/10/23/street-vendor-facing-deportation-after-rancho-cucamonga-arrest/.

Doug pointed out two more examples that received media attention where sidewalk vending criminalization triggered deportation threats: Jesse Morales, 17, has been helping his mother sell *chicharrones* (fried pork) ever since his father was deported 5 years ago after being caught street vending,[14] and Bianca Perez, mother of three, was detained, handcuffed and subjected to the deportation process for selling ice cream without a vendor license outside a school in Van Nuys, a neighborhood in Los Angeles. The case of Perez is particularly egregious because she was separated from her 9-month-old baby for 10 weeks — first confined to a detention center in Los Angeles County, then transported to a detention center in Lynwood, then taken to a jail in the city of Santa Ana, and finally sent back to Los Angeles. Upon her release, Perez said, "she was forced to wear an ankle monitor and that a judge put her on probation for a year."[15]

I want to highlight two important points that these cases bring to light. First, legal violence makes it possible for street vendors, who have not committed violent crimes to be labeled as criminals, thus justifying their subjection to the deeply entangled carceral and immigration systems. Second, legal violence does not only affect individuals, rather it subjects entire families to intergenerational violence. It is clear that federal immigration enforcement practices are currently threatening to tear immigrant families apart, and local policies that prohibit and criminalize sidewalk vending are enabling and exacerbating these risks.

Family Separations

[14] Brittany Mejia, Los Angeles Times, "Street vendors scrape together a living, always watching for police" December 21, 2014. http://www.latimes.com/local/crime/la-me-street-vendors-20141222-story.html.

[15] Jorge Luis Macias, Huffington Post, "Immigration Activists Call for End Of Secure Communities Program," August 20, 2011. https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/08/18/immigration-activists-secure-communities-program_n_930637.html.

Similar to the examples of family separation referenced by Doug, this became a recurring theme among street vendors in my study. Family separation is a form of legal violence—where family life is disrupted by law enforcement. Chaveli migrated to the U.S. with her husband, leaving her two eldest daughters in Cuernavaca, Mexico. In the U.S., Chaveli soon conceived her third child, a boy named Joshua [pseudonym]. Her marriage dissolved, and she found herself as a single parent, in need of a job where she could bring her child along with her when he was not in school. I have known Chaveli, a fruit vendor, for 5 years and have seen her tell her story with the police at press conferences and rallies at least half a dozen times. Although she is recalling an event that happened over a decade ago, every time she describes this past trauma her lips tremble, she bursts into tears, and she struggles to finish telling her story.

Her story goes like this. When Joshua was 8 years old, he accompanied Chaveli on weekends when she sold fruit. In her own words Chaveli describes the most traumatic altercation she had with authorities:

> I was working in Lincoln Heights, 2nd and Broadway. I was selling fruit on a Saturday when a *prepotente* (high-handed) police officer came. What barbarity. I have not been able to overcome that experience. He exited his police car, I had clients I was tending to. He told me to move, that he was taking me. "Why" I asked? I was not doing anything bad. But, he treated me like a criminal, he treated me like I was the worst person. And the worst part of it was that he handcuffed me and put me in the back of his car. My son got scared. There was no one for me to leave him with. There was a client who said, "I will take responsibility for him," but the police officer said, "no." By chance there was a pastor. When I was placed in the police car, the pastor came to talk to me. He asked me, to ask the police officer for forgiveness. But I told him, "I did nothing to offend the police officer." My clients were saying, "Leave her alone, she isn't doing anything bad." The police officer took my son's scooter away and was also putting him into the back of the police car with me. My bag was emptied, and all my things were dumped everywhere. The pastor told me, "my daughter, ask this police officer for forgiveness or they will separate you from your son, just tell him you're sorry." That is when I started to cry and I felt impotent, angry, and rage, but I told the pastor, "Okay."

In that moment, Chaveli begged the officer for his attention. The officer refused to look at her in the face, but Chaveli continued, "I am sorry, I am not sure in what moment I offended you, but I am sorry." The officer never addressed her, instead he addressed the pastor indicating he was satisfied, and would leave Chaveli in peace. He let her out of the car and took off her handcuffs, but in many ways Chaveli remains cuffed to that memory.

Even today, she cannot free herself of the fear, shame, and impotence of that experience. Her son was very afraid. Chaveli had taught him that if anything ever happened to her, he was to call the police officer and his older sisters living in Mexico for help. On the impact of this experience on her son, Chaveli shared: "In front of him, they handcuffed me. It was something traumatic for him because he wanted to be a police officer. But seeing that situation took his desire away." At that impressionable age, her son previously believed the police were there to help, and helping others was his aspiration, but he could not reconcile his previous image of police officers with what he had witnessed an officer do to his mother. This experience with police officers was traumatic for both mother and child. Yet for three decades, this experience has been commonplace.

For parents, the fear of arrest is exacerbated by the fear of family separation through processes set in motion by Child Protective Services (CPS). This was not the last time Chaveli was traumatized, in her line of work. She has endured several more altercations with police officers that have resulted in approximately $1,200 in citations, being booked and fingerprinted. She says her greatest fear in each of those moments was, "losing my son." I asked her about those confrontations with officers and what she thought would happen to him. "Well, I couldn't say, but it was a feeling of despair thinking about what could happen to him. Where would he go and where would he be? So many things go through your mind that I can't explain it, others can't

imagine it." Chaveli elaborates, "It is the feeling of being impotent because you have not committed a crime. The only crime I've done is to be a vendor." Here, Chaveli is stating a phrase that is often repeated by vendors, which is that street vendors are selling goods and services that under normal circumstances would not be considered criminal, yet because street vending is classified as a misdemeanor, police officers treat them as though they are violent criminals and pose a dangerous threat to the public. Despite the trauma of these events, in the spring of 2018 her son graduated from high school, and aspires to go to college to study business administration. Chaveli is overcome with joy at her son's success.

Figure 6. Chaveli stands beside Campaign lawyer Doug, as she shares her testimony with a television reporter during the Benjamin Ramirez Protest in July 2017.

Losing a child, simply for trying to provide a livelihood for that child, would seem itself as if it should be unlawful. Yet it is a reality experienced by many street vendors whose status as

immigrants and working parents is criminalized. The story of MariPosa and her mother Rosa is one example. MariPosa is in her thirties and currently works as a street vendor. She is also a single mother of two girls. MariPosa is Guatemalan and Salvadoran, but she was born in Mexico City as her parents made the arduous voyage to the states. MariPosa knows Rosa escaped violence in the Salvadoran Civil War, but her mom has remained silent about her past, so much so that MariPosa identifies more as Mexican or Chicana than with her Central American heritage. Street vending is intergenerational in MariPosa's life as her mother Rosa and father were both street vendors. MariPosa shares a memory of being in her childhood home when she experienced legal violence. Her parents used to sell pirated CDs at the time and the police came to her home to confiscate the CDs and arrest her parents.

> They took my dad, my mom and me and I couldn't do anything about it because I was a kid. There were a lot of cops. A lot of people and they dropped the door with something huge and I just remember crying and they said, "Get on the floor!" I was crying and remember them taking me, I was just 5. It was about a year. My mom would come and visit me but it took a long long time for us to be reunited.

While MariPosa's mother Rosa was incarcerated, MariPosa was taken by Child Protective Services. Family separations like these are state-sanctioned legal violence that reflect common themes in the study. A study by pediatricians on family reunification shows that when a child is separated from their mother, chronic stress manifested in increased levels of cortisol, which has long term biological consequences in terms of growth and development, in addition to the psychological damage of traumatic separation (Barnert et al. 2015).

Even after Rosa was released from jail, MariPosa languished in the foster care system; and it was not easy for Rosa to regain custody due to her status as an undocumented refugee, her lack of linguistic and economic resources, and difficulty navigating the foster care system. While a ward of the state, she was abused by her foster parents. MariPosa and Rosa were reunited, but

the marriage between her parents dissolved. Rosa struggled to get back on her feet after being incarcerated and they were unhoused and living in her car for a period of time.

> There were times when we were on the street. We were homeless. But she had a car so we would sleep in the car. That was a sucky experience for me because I would get bullied at school. I didn't have nowhere to shower so I didn't smell that perfect. My clothes were always dirty. I remember one time they kicked me out of the class because my feet smelled. I couldn't take a shower and they didn't know.

In school, MariPosa was bullied for being a street vendor, for having dirty clothes and smelling bad. Instead of experiencing compassion, she remembers her teachers kicking her out of the classroom when her feet smelled bad. Over the years, things stabilized for MariPosa. They switched to selling toys, then cut fruit in the Boyle Heights area, but running from the police with her mother was a constant.

I argue that the work of the LAPD and the Health Department constitutes state-sanctioned legal violence because laws construct street vendors as criminal in order to justify their elimination. Street vendors pose a threat to the 21st century city's notions of law and order. This vision of Los Angeles is built on interlocking systems of racism, xenophobia, and capitalism, which are contingent upon the removal of Black and Latinx people in order to extract profits from urban real-estate projects. These workers were treated like they posed a violent threat; they were dragged from their homes in front of their child; their family was separated; and their child was placed in the foster system where she suffered various other forms of violence. And all of this had long-term intergenerational repercussions on the family, which included becoming unhoused. Legal violence like this is likely to target street vendors because their work makes them hyper-visible in public spaces.

Figure 7. Photograph of MariPosa vending with her mother Rosa sitting in a chair beside her.

While Los Angeles classified street vending as a misdemeanor, we rarely discuss the impact that criminalization has had on Black and Latinx families for the last several decades. Much of the pain that MariPosa describes in her childhood stems from how Los Angeles created punitive policies to fine, arrest, and incarcerate the most marginalized workers in the city, who were overwhelmingly women, undocumented, elderly, and disabled. Mother and daughter Rosa and MariPosa were forcibly separated because of legal violence, where the law creates an environment that normalizes, justifies, and maintains punitive practices that equate street vendors to violent criminals. In this carceral state, we have created a system where poor people struggling to make a living are classified as "criminal" and not afforded the rights of human beings.

I argue that Caridad and MariPosa's experiences with LAPD, Health Department, and Child Protective Services constitute state-sanctioned legal violence because laws construct street vendors as criminal in order to justify their elimination from highly valuable urban real-estate, but also by imposing family separation or the threat of breaking apart families. Both Chaveli and MariPosa are single mothers and as noted previously, street vending is a gendered economy,

where women, children, and the elderly are disproportionately represented (Hamilton and Chinchilla 1996, 2001). Very often, these women are mothers or grandmothers who have children in their care. Such level of violence has gone on for decades; for the participants in my study family separations or the threat of family separations were commonplace in Los Angeles.

Housing Insecurity

Although devastating, the impacts of state-sanctioned legal violence are not limited to formal prosecution. In addition to family separation, street vendors experience another form of legal violence that caused great housing insecurity through the confiscation of their products, and subsequent devastation to their livelihood and the dispossession of their homes. One of the most common experiences vendors described was being displaced from not only their places of work sites, but also from their homes, motorhomes, and apartments. Black geographies scholarship provides the analytical tools to examine race and space and analyze how street vendors navigate displacement and dispossession by positing Blackness as a-spatial and thereby Black spaces as open for appropriation (Bledsoe and Wright 2019). Inspired by Black geographies work, I examine the dispossessions of street vendors as spatializations of legal violence. Indeed, the Campaign leaders in my study reported earning under $15,000 a year and nearly half of them became unhoused during the course of my work with them. These state-sanctioned forms of legal violence serve to reinforce racial inequality, whereby Black and Latinx street vendors are systematically removed from work and home by lawful means. Given their precarious situation in a capitalist system that leaves them unprotected in multiple ways, the main causes of dispossession were the confiscation of goods and products that decimated their livelihoods; the financial losses resulting from subprime loans; skyrocketing rent prices; and unforeseen tragedies and health issues that made it impossible for them to pay their rent or mortgages.

Encounters with law enforcement commonly involve seizure and confiscation of a vendor's property. And the unjust criminalization and exclusion from the formal economy leaves vendors vulnerable to attack and increases the likelihood that they become victims of crimes themselves through what I call, community-sanctioned legal violence, which will be discussed in Chapter Three. Scholars who critique the harm that legal violence causes street vendors have shown the economic burden that confiscation and arrest have on small enterprises like fruit vending; they are tremendous and represent a huge setback for these small enterprises (Rosales 2013, 2020). Compounding the financial and emotional strain of this criminalization, many vendors report their equipment and other property is confiscated during enforcement encounters, in some cases without receipt or instructions on how to retrieve. Aside from the unwarranted humiliation, this amounts to the loss and destruction of a vendor's livelihood.

A report produced by the National Lawyer's Guild (NLG) on the confiscation of vendor's property in Los Angeles[16] includes numerous first-hand accounts of vendors describing the loss and or the destruction of their livelihood as a result of anti-Vending laws. The following is an example of the interviews described in the NLG report:

> On April 22, 2014, Rosa E. was selling used clothing near the intersection of Wilshire and Alvarado. [A police officer] approached her and asked for her ID. He then stated that she had an outstanding warrant for a prior arrest for Illegal Vending/Street Sales [LAMC Section 42.00 (b)]. The officer confiscated all her goods and did not provide her with a receipt for her confiscated property. Rosa E was taken into custody and incarcerated for two days until she was brought before a judge who released her for "time served." However, upon receiving her personal effects she noticed there was another ticket for Illegal Vending/Street Sales [LAMC Section 42.00 (b)] among her belongings which she must now pay. These fines and her incarceration have left her unable to pay her rent of $750 a month and take care of her disabled adult son who she supports financially. Rosa E

[16] Doug, the Campaign lawyer pointed me towards the National Lawyer's Guild report; http://www.nlg-la.org/sites/default/files/NLGat%27s%20Street%20Vendor%20Report%20-%20LAPD%20Illegal%27s%20Confiscation%20of%20Property%20.pdf.

suffers from diabetes, high blood pressure and depression. Her health is deteriorating as she struggles to support herself and her son.

My study of street vendor leaders in the Campaign revealed similar themes as the NLG report. Caridad shared how in the 2000s, she and several other dozen vendors had been selling in the Big Buy parking lot in Boyle Heights. However, there came a moment when the neighborhood was starting to change in anticipation for the building of the Metro Gold Line,[17] as well as the Hollenbeck Police Station.[18] With those coming changes, efforts to eliminate street vendors in the area began increasing steadily. Caridad shares her experience working at the Big Buy parking lot and getting her goods confiscated by police.

> We spent about 2 years, 3 years selling there and then the moment arrived when the City (Health Department) would not let us. I remember that in 2008 about 20 patrol cars arrived on the side of Soto and Cesar Chavez Avenue and on the side of that… what's it called…bridge. It's as if we had been criminals. Twenty patrol cars there and the City there to take everything and they took everything and told us that we could not vend.

This event, was not an isolated incident and Caridad calculated that each time the police confiscated her belongings, she lost $3,000 in food and equipment:

> For that reason, those of us who sell in the street try to not use expensive dishes and materials. We instead use items from the 99-cent store. They have taken my vending items 3 times already by Cesar Chavez St. All the food, $300 for the cart and the pots, it was a lot back then in 2008 and in 2009. In 2010, they took away my belonging right here on 4th and Breed St.

For street vendors like Caridad, the economic burden of these losses is tremendous. To recuperate these losses and start over can be next to impossible for undocumented vendors

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[17] Los Angeles Times Blog. 2009. East L.A. Hails Arrival of Gold Line: Activities are to be Held Today at Four Stations," November. Accessed 5 September 2019.

[18] Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD). 2009. "Grand Opening of the Hollenbeck Area Community Police Station," September. Accessed 5 September 2019. http://www.lapdonline.org/hollenbeck_community_police_station/news_view/42888.

(Bhimji 2013; Rosales 2013). Recall that street vendor leaders in the campaign reported earning under $15,000 a year, so for Caridad, this confiscation decreased her annual income by 20%. Now imagine this happening to Caridad three times between 2008 and 2010.[19] The economic losses Caridad experienced were exacerbated by the Great Recession in 2008 that caused the housing market to collapse. Even though, for a decade Caridad had faithfully paid her mortgage on her home in Boyle Heights, the intensification of street vendor elimination put her in a predicament where she was struggling to cover her mortgage payments.

Desperate for a solution, she tried to refinance her home hoping this would bring down her monthly mortgage payments on the high-interest subprime loan she took to purchase her home. But during the time that Caridad purchased that home and the time she tried to refinance the home, the country had radically shifted and created anti-Immigrant laws policies meant to diminish the rights of undocumented immigrants. This time, when her social security number was run through E-Verify, it did not pass muster. Within thirty days, she, her daughters, and grandbabies all had to leave a place where they had laid down their roots and invested tens of thousands of dollars. This was a tremendous blow for Caridad and many other street vendors have suffered extensively by the lawful dispossession of their homes.

The loss of home, or struggle to stay housed, was a consistent theme that repeated itself throughout my years working with street vendors. Black and Latinx street vendors in the Campaign found themselves linked through similar housing struggles which facilitated their cross-racial alliances in the Los Angeles Street Vending Campaign. While Caridad lost her home due to forces that compounded the subprime loan crisis, like the economic burden caused by the

[19] Caridad experienced confiscation of her livelihood by authorities 2 more times since that initial interview in 2013, for a total of 5 times.

confiscation of her products and E-Verify's stricter immigrant verification processes, Deborah Hyman, a middle-aged Black single-mother and street vendor, experienced a similar home loss because of the subprime loan crisis. When I visited her during the fall of 2016, Deborah shared:

> I haven't been able to pay the mortgage in some months and the rest of my bills. It may not be worth as much as I owe on it. I got caught up in the Countrywide home housing thing. I've managed so far and am here. I'm fortunate that I did become a homeowner. Many say I shouldn't be here and be a homeowner. At this time, I'm trying to keep it, but I don't know what's going to happen.

In this passage Deborah references the public discourse that blames the victims of predatory subprime loans. The racial-ethnic and gendered discourse of the housing crisis links the "welfare queen" and the archetypal subprime borrower as the "single Black woman," condemning her while condoning the bailout of Wall Street (Chakravarty and Ferreira da Silva 2012). Contrary to the public discourse, it is "race rather than class or creditworthiness" that determined who received a subprime loan (Lipsitz 2011:9). The housing market collapse disproportionately robbed the wealth of Black and Latinx people (Nicolaci da Costa 2017).

Some vendors were impacted by these national policies, that predatorily targeted Black and Latinx families, specifically single-mother heads of households like Caridad and Deborah, for subprime loans (Chakravarty and Ferreira da Silva 2012). These loans had high interest rates that forced families into crippling debt that they were unable to pay off, causing a nationwide housing market collapse in 2006 and an economic downturn in 2008. Black and Latina single mothers, recipients of predatory subprime loans, were vilified for the economic crisis drawing on the discourses of "welfare-queens" and "illegals," when they were in fact the victims in the lawful seizure of their homes (Chakravarty and Ferreira da Silva 2012).

Homeowning street vendors were not the only ones who experienced dispossession. Motorhome owners and renters in this study also became displaced. Humberto is in his 50s and

he a survivor of the Civil War in Peru—as he aged he was no longer able to get construction jobs in his home country, prompting him to migrate to Los Angeles with his daughter Giselle, where they both became street vendors in Santee Alley and on Main Street in South Los Angeles. In 2014, Giselle and his youngest grandson Dillon were brutally murdered in a home invasion. As a result of these losses, Humberto struggles with mental health issues. Humberto lived alone in a motorhome, which he parked nearby where he vended. But he received several parking tickets he could not afford to pay. His economic circumstances are such that instead of paying the parking tickets, he had to prioritize co-pays and medication for his physical and mental health care. Below is a conversation between Humberto and I that took place in 2017, where he describes how he came to lose his motorhome permanently:

> H: Well, it was a problem I had because I had pending tickets. I didn't pay because I was seeing a psychiatrist at St. John and my income wasn't great. My city tickets continued to accumulate because of my expired license plates. And I am currently in that problem and some people want to help me out with that problem, but I am currently on a waiting plan. When the police arrived, they took out all the merchandise that I sell. Normally, wherever I park is the place where I sell. That is why I didn't need to pay rent because I kept the merchandize in there (the motorhome). I bought the motorhome for $6,000. I understand that the job of the police is to issue tickets for having expired plates. The only thing I don't know is why they did that to me when I was parked? I lived in the motorhome for 2 years in the street and I never had a problem.
> L: So, they took away your motorhome and your merchandise?
> H: Well, they opened the doors and they started taking out at their will. Some items included bicycles, tools, personal artifacts, batteries that I needed. They took all my batteries. It hurt me and I was very angry because I had everything stored and the police did not have to do that.
> L: Yes, because that is a terrible abuse of power.
> H: They also took away the television. Not the police, but I think it was the civilians that work there (in the towing business). They say things like this always happen in those places, but no one dares to report it.

In this conversation, Humberto details how not only were his dwelling and form of transportation taken from him, but also the place where he stored the used wares he sells. While the motorhome was in a secured lot, the possessions he owned were taken and destroyed, likely by the very

employees working there. Humberto attempted to start a GoFundMe campaign to crowdsource the necessary capital to reclaim his motorhome, but he was unable to raise even a quarter of the cost to recover his motorhome. The matter of his belongings being stolen and destroyed was never resolved.

Humberto's experience with housing insecurity occurred because he is a street vendor and the apparatus of the city decided street vending is informal and therefore criminal and will not be tolerated in areas where there are tremendous profits to extract from urban real-estate. What began with Humberto being issued exorbitant parking tickets on his mobile home, was exacerbated by the eventual confiscation of his home and livelihood, culminating in his continuous housing insecurity. In 2017, Humberto was living with his son-in-law's family and sleeping on their couch. As of December of 2018, he has worked out a new living arrangement where he sleeps in a used car store and provides security for the business owner during the evening.

The rising cost of rent and housing displacement impacted both Black and Latinx street vendor families indiscriminately. During my time conducting this study with the street vendor leaders of the Campaign, many reported not earning enough to pay their rent. Take for instance Yogita, a Black woman in her 50s who had migrated to Los Angeles from Guyana and specialized in raw foods, ayurvedic medicine, and other healing practices. In 2014 she shared, "I really don't make any kind of money at Leimert Park. Some days I am happy if I go home with like $30. That's a good day." Here, Yogita highlights the small amount of money many street vendors earn in a day, making paying their mortgage and rent a constant struggle. In 2016, Yogita's rent increased and she could not pay for her apartment. For the next two years, Yogita began living in her van, which she parked near Leimert Park in the neighborhood where she used

to rent. In December of 2018, she was still living in her van when she became gravely ill. Yogita was hospitalized and regrettably died soon after from pneumonia. The beloved healer of Leimert Park, donned Queen Yogita by those mourning her, died from a treatable illness. The loss of Yogita continues to be felt throughout the city.

Because the city deems street vending a crime, Yogita was limited in terms of where and how often she could vend. This exacerbated her housing insecurity and culminated in her death. For Yogita, what began as a simple cold, progressed into pneumonia because living in a van makes it hard to rest and get well, even for a knowledgeable healer like Yogita. Poverty and the resulting experience of becoming unhoused is linked to negative health outcomes (Desmond 2017).[20]

Jeri, a Black, middle-aged street vendor who sold glasses and buttons at Leimert Park, found Jeri, a Black, middle-aged street vendor who sold glasses and buttons at Leimert Park, found herself priced out of her apartment in that area and moved 22 miles away, all the way to the San Fernando Valley to live temporarily on a friend's couch. Mercedes, a Mexican migrant living in Boyle Heights, fears that she may soon find herself in a similar situation. She shares:

> Well, unfortunately, we are being displaced little by little. There are more people interested in our rich neighborhoods. They want to take possession of our neighborhoods. They don't want us Latinos to be here because we are only 15 minutes away from Downtown. That has caused us to have rent issues. For one apartment next door, they are asking for $2,500 monthly.

[20] When thinking about the ways that laws undermine street vendors health and wellbeing, it is useful to think on Jasbir K. Puar's (2017) definition of debility. Puar argues that debilitation is an expression of colonial violence and exploitation, where maiming, debilitation, and disabling are instruments used to uphold colonial power structures. In other words, debility reflects "the slow wearing down of populations" (xiii). In the case of street vendors, laws systematically exclude many of them from healthcare and social services because of their status as immigrants or formerly incarcerated people, contributing to their debility.

In 2017, Caridad's daughter, Esmeralda, and MariPosa's mother, Rosa, all street vendors in East Los Angeles and Boyle Heights areas, revealed they had to move suddenly because their landlords had raised the rent on them from one month to the next. This section reveals how the housing market crisis devastated street vendors, who were already economically dispossessed.

As the death of Yogita reveals, housing insecurity adds multiple levels of precarity to street vendors' lives. One question to ask is why there has been such a concerted effort to dispossess poor Black and Latinx workers of their livelihoods and homes? I take lessons from Black geographers (Bledsoe and Wright 2019; Hawthorne 2019) and argue that racism and capitalism are inextricably linked and carried out in the spatialization of legal violence. In other words, anti-Vending laws and the surge of enforcement is fueled by racism and xenophobia, but also by profits from low-income urban real estate deemed highly valuable. Latinx geographies reveal how for generations, low-income neighborhoods suffered from policies of disinvestment, and then in the 2000s there is a moment of hyper investment, but those resources are not for the current inhabitants of the neighborhood, rather they are for the future inhabitants who will be willing to pay more (Huante 2019; Huante and Miranda 2019).

Black and Latinx street vendors have been paying a devastating price for the future inhabitants of East and South Los Angeles, as they were dispossessed both from living in their neighborhoods and making their livelihoods on those streets. In informal conversations with Doug, the Campaign lawyer, we discussed how housing redevelopment is a driving force behind street vendor dispossession, yet rarely are these links discussed. The street vendors in this study were encumbered simultaneously by dispossession of livelihood, and dispossession of home. While these seem like two different issues, they are linked. Doug highlights these links between housing dispossession and the criminalization of street vending:

> I think you see that play out in housing and gentrification where, all of a sudden, you've been living in this sort of substandard rent controlled apartment and now the land values have shifted so much that its lucrative to tear it down and build condos instead. That means that the people who have been living there for a long time are pushed out and displaced. The same thing happens not only with respect to your living space but with sidewalk vending. Vendors have been meeting the needs of the community for a long time and also individual venders doing it to generate income when they're excluded from other opportunities, but now that the neighborhood starts to change, there's this new perception that maybe this isn't what we would like the sidewalk to look like. Maybe we want it to have a different appearance so as to attract a different sort of investment. And that's why you start seeing criminalization and street vendor's sort of being pushed out. So seeing the criminalization of street vending at one scale looks different than somebody being evicted from their home or displaced but if you sort of zoom back, you see these forces as to why all of the sudden this neighborhood is changing and why there are these new policies and marketing investments that are sort of not being responsive to people's needs. I think, then you see these just being different symptoms of the same bigger problem.

In this passage, Doug mentions the ideas of zooming out, in order to make these broader connections between the anti-Vending laws and the criminalization of street vendors and real estate corporations and capitalist investments. It is important to point out that street vendors are not the only groups that have been targeted, anti-Vagrancy laws have morphed, as Doug says, "I think you tend to see increasing criminalization in a lot of different realms. Not just with sidewalk vending but with homelessness, I think a lot of that is part and parcel with the sort of bigger gentrification displacement forces."

It is important to note that in all the years that I accompanied street vendors at City Hall proceedings, the opposition was represented by a handful of wealthy businesses and real estate corporations who sent their lobbyists to give testimony in opposition to decriminalizing street vending, meanwhile the street vendors and their allies were in the hundreds, so that they overflowed and had to go into adjoining court rooms and wait to be called on to give testimonies in favor. As Doug stated, "At the city level there was consistent push back from the quote, unquote business community. So, a lot of Business Improvement Districts would show up to

either oppose [legalization] or to advocate for much tighter restrictions"[21] When Doug says, "quote, unquote business community," he is being facetious because as much as the opposition tried to present the aggrieved as being small brick-and-mortar (mom-and-pop) business owners, it was really wealthy business corporations who fought the legalization efforts in the courts. As Doug clarifies, "A lot of the opposition, it came from the Business Improvement Districts and entities that work with the Business Improvement Districts."

During my many years of participant observation at hearings at City Hall I saw wealthy Business Improvement District entities like the Beverly Hills Neighborhood Association, the Hollywood Walk of Fame, and the Staples Center give testimony or write letters in opposition to legalizing street vending. Street vendors' experiences with state-sanctioned legal violence, signal that much of the misery recounted in this chapter stems from racism, xenophobia, and how these intersect with neoliberal capitalism's insatiable greed in consuming and disposing of Black and Latinx people. For three decades it has been profitable to jail Black and Latinx street vendors, dispossess them from their homes, from public sidewalks, and parks.

Conclusion

In Los Angeles, street vendors are embedded into the fabric of the city's economic and social life. For many Angelenos, street vendors are present 24 hours a day, selling cut fruit outside of the workplace, flowers in the freeway median, and tacos on the corner every evening and weekend, when their fellow Angelenos take their families out to visit the parks, museums, and many cultural attractions across the city. Angelenos consume the products street vendors

[21] Business Improvement Districts (BID) are private-sector initiatives established by property owners to enhance the economic vitality of a specific business district. List of BIDs in Los Angeles https://clerk.lacity.org/business-improvement-districts/find-business-improvement-district.

sell, but do Angelenos really *see* the vendors behind those products, goods, and services? Scholars have shown that street vendors experience a great deal of harm caused by their conflicts with the state over who has a right to public space (Bhimji 2013; Crossa 2008).

In this chapter, I have expanded notions of legal violence by applying it to Black and Latinx immigrant street vendors. I demonstrate how legal violence takes place in space and is historically rooted in colonial process of eliminating racial undesirables from the land. This view presents a rich picture of the myriad ways that street vendors experience state-sanctioned legal violence in their daily lives, and how this is linked to greater processes rooted in the capitalist accumulation of land and wealth. This chapter outlines the material costs that legal violence has had on street vendors ability to stay free, to remain housed, and to keep families and vending communities together. My research sample included street vendors who came from multiple generations of vending, allowing me to view the gendered and intergenerational experiences of legal violence that occur in criminal and immigration regimes. Across the fifteen street vendors I worked with, the confiscation and dispossession vendors endured were carried out by a wide variety of state-sanctioned actors—banks, child protective services, police, jailers, immigration officers, and the health department. The criminalization of street vendors affects more than just their enterprises, as these narratives demonstrate criminalization has real and lasting consequences that include family separation and housing insecurity. These stories collectively show us the human toll that state-sanctioned legal violence has on Black and Latinx street vendors.

This chapter conveys what many street vendors I have worked with since 2013 have urged me to do with this dissertation work, which is simply to *show* the hardships street vendors overcome. The experiences of state-sanctioned legal violence recounted in this chapter are

painful. It hurts street vendors to tell, and it hurts to write and read these words. Over six years, street vendors shared their greatest fears, most painful moments, and their darkest truths in the hopes that I could, in the words of Caridad, "show them how they treat us." Chapters Three will describe another painful facet of legal violence, which is community-sanctioned.

CHAPTER THREE: COMMUNITY-SANTIONED LEGAL VIOLENCE AGAINST STREET VENDORS

Chapter Two explores state-sanctioned legal violence through an Anti-Vending Ordinance (No. 169319) in place from 1994 to 2018. This law made it possible to prosecute street vending as a misdemeanor and the previous chapter examines how structurally, through multiple social institutions, that violence has reverberations into many other aspects of street vendors' lives. Chapter Three focuses on another kind of violence that is also frequent and consequential—community-sanctioned legal violence. Chapters Two and Three are informed by a legal violence lens that is conceptualized by Cecilia Menjívar and Leisy Abrego (2012), to argue that individuals are criminalized by formal structures of power that are publicly accepted, thus legitimizing "legally sanctioned social suffering" (1413). This framework examines how contemporary society merges criminal and immigration law to enact legal practices that harm migrants. They assert, that legal violence is both structural and symbolic. It is symbolic because the violence is "so thoroughly imposed by the social order that it becomes normalized as part of the cognitive repertoire of those exposed" (1413).

Menjívar and Abrego (2012) hypothesize that legal violence becomes internalized by migrants and the racial-ethnic groups they belong to.

> …Immigrant workers are not undervalued (and underpaid) because of the work they do; rather, they are limited to labor sectors rampant with abuse precisely because they are undervalued. This is accomplished through the legal regime in place, media portrayals, and the public discourse that depict them as outside the law, as undeserving, and as law breakers, which together erase their contributions to society. This type of treatment, sanctioned by the law, sets the stage for further mistreatment. (1404)

In this chapter, I expand on this notion to demonstrate how further violence is enacted on the lives of street vendors. Street vendors in this study expressed how they struggle with surveillance, extortion, and reporting by priests, business-owners, and other members from

within their own racial-ethnic group. Through a legal violence lens, I analyze how this phenomenon was made possible because legal systems imposed hierarchies of inequality that were unquestioned and accepted as normal.

Much of the scholarship on street vending focuses on state-sanctioned legal violence, in other words, violence as a dichotomous point of contention between the state versus street vendors (Estrada and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2011; Bhimji 2013; Crossa 2008; Kettles 2004). In Doug's legal brief, he argued that SB 946, the bill the Campaign championed, was necessary because sidewalk vending was criminalized throughout the entire state and the injurious consequences of criminalizing street vending were not limited to formal prosecution. The unjust criminalization and exclusion from the formal economy left vendors vulnerable to attack and increased the likelihood that they became victims of crimes themselves.

In just the year of 2017, Doug referenced several violent attacks and harassment of sidewalk vendors that made headlines in places like the Bay Area,[22] Los Angeles,[23] Berkeley,[24] Alameda County,[25] Silicon Valley,[26] the Central Valley,[27] Fresno,[28]

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[22] https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/sep/19/tech-industry-street-vendors-disruption-california.

[23] https://medium.com/@PublicCounsel/the-city-of-la-can-protect-street-vendors-by-honoring-its-commitment-8b6fbd56a364.

[24] https://www.facebook.com/martin.flores.1257/posts/10214545742817741?pnref=story.

[25] https://www.eastbayexpress.com/SevenDays/archives/2017/05/12/alameda-sheriff-deputys-arrest-of-street-fruit-vendor-goes-viral-and-draws-criticism.

[26] https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/may/02/mark-woodward-facebook-fruit-vendor-comments.

[27] http://www.yourcentralvalley.com/news/caught-on-camera-madera-street-vendor-attacked-police-search-for-suspect/1049260057.

[28] http://abc30.com/vendor-attacked-and-robbed-in-southeast-fresno/2681268/.

Orange County,[29] San Bernardino County,[30] and many others. In his legal brief, Smith argued that these attacks were not just isolated incidents – they are part of a broader legal system that delegitimizes sidewalk vending. When vendors are forced into the informal economy and criminalized for their work, they are isolated from legal protections and more vulnerable to attack, harassment and exploitation. In the case of street vendors in Los Angeles, for thirty years communities accepted and internalized the hierarchies of inequality to such an extent that the injurious treatment of street vendors was not only completely justified, but in many cases community members became complicit in that violence. When laws dehumanize sidewalk vendors, then people feel permitted and even emboldened to do the same.

By highlighting the internal tensions between street vendors and other members from within their own communities—such as brick-and-mortar businesses, neighbors, religious figures, and gang members—I hope to help make communities accountable for the ways in which members have internalized legal violence and are complicit in state projects of elimination that have injurious consequences on street vendors. This chapter focuses on street vendors' stories of community-sanctioned legal violence and explores how members from their own community, contributed to their elimination from their homes and work sites. This chapter exposes how restrictive bodies of law are intertwined with structural and symbolic violence, when the law constructs street vendors as criminals.

Contentions with Brick-and-Mortar Businesses

[29] https://www.ocweekly.com/santa-ana-begins-war-on-street-vendors-before-any-ordinance-is-heard-7898879/

[30] https://www.dailybulletin.com/2017/10/23/street-vendor-facing-deportation-after-rancho-cucamonga-arrest/

The public discourse on street vendors is that they compete with brick-and-mortar businesses and have an unfair advantage because they do not have the overhead of brick-and-mortar businesses. As Doug Smith, the Campaign lawyer, argues the perceived conflict between street vendors and brick-and-mortar businesses is overemphasized. In an interview at the Public Council in December of 2018, he shared, “I think that the idea of competition is overstated. I don’t actually see that.” For decades street vendors studies have demonstrated how street vendors do not compete with brick-and-mortar businesses, rather they help brick-and-mortar businesses by increasing foot traffic (Chinchilla and Hamilton 1996; Muñoz 2008; Yen et al. 2015).

Recall that in the previous chapter, I demonstrated how the true opposition to legalizing street vending was not brick-and-mortar businesses, but rather Business Improvement Districts and entities that work with the Business Improvement Districts. Carla, the Director of Community Organizing at ELACC points to these perceived contentions. She is Guatemalan and Salvadoran and grew up in the South Gate area of South Los Angeles. In a conversation with Carla, she stated how even after legalization came in 2018, the contention between brick-and-mortar businesses and street vendors continues to be in the public discourse as many Business Improvement Districts, lobby Councilmembers to become no vending zones:

> Carla: Like, fast forward, legalization...things have happened today, 7 no vending zones, mostly because businessmen lobbied Councilmen to not allow vending in these areas. The Hollywood Walk of Fame is one of those areas.
> Leigh-Anna: Now these are like big businesses [Business Improvement Districts], right?
> Carla: I think it’s bigger businesses but in some of these areas, the smaller businesses were used as like the face of “why.” Does that make sense? I remember being in City Council and seeing these like Brown folks saying we are business owners and we’re poor. We don’t make money. And you have like the representative of the business [Business Improvement District] saying, “go speak.” They’re [People of Color owned brick-and-mortar] being used like the face of the opposition.
> Leigh-Anna: White person in a suit [Business Improvement District representative]?

> Carla: Yeah, and then, even today we are still having that conversation, like at the Hollywood Walk of Fame, the Guinness World Record Museum, you know those big entities on Hollywood, we had to sit with them and ask them, "What is the issue? You can't just say no." You can't just tell people that you don't belong here, people that have been here for years, that they have no right to this. You know, there has to be a conversation. And it's us pushing on our city, our council members, the public representatives, to represent everyone. We are not asking them to pass a law to force something down the throats of the business community, but we are asking them for a seat at the table. Let us have conversations with people and remind people that we are human, we exist, we are not just this thing like street vendors that's far away from you, where you don't have to look at us or think about us.

As the conversation above unfolded, Carla painted a very complex picture of the capitalist accumulation of land and how it intersects with racial and class-based politics behind the struggle to legalize street vending in Los Angeles. As the end of this chapter will demonstrate, when street vendors and small brick-and-mortar businesses share a seat at the table, street vendors prove that they have situated knowledge on capitalist land accumulation, city policies, and gentrification that can be powerfully leveraged for the benefit of both groups. Too often, however, private-sector Business Improvement Districts hide behind small brick-and-mortar businesses that are often owned by People of Color. Lobbyists for Business Improvement Districts succeed in pitting small brick-and-mortar businesses against street vendors because of community-sanctioned legal violence, where small brick-and-mortar business owners accept that street vendors are criminals who benefit from unfair advantages and are therefore undeserving of rights and protections. Small brick-and-mortar businesses have more to gain by aligning themselves with street vendors.

Small brick-and-mortar businesses that align themselves with Business Improvement Districts at the expense of street vendors, do so at their own peril because it is highly likely that in the future, Business Improvement Districts and the wealthy property owners they represent will not hesitate to raise the rent on small brick-and-mortar businesses, which will eliminate

them in favor of corporate brick-and-mortar businesses. While street vendors may be the scapegoat, small brick-and-mortar businesses are used as pawns. In the following section, I highlight examples from my study where there were tensions between street vendors and small brick-and-mortar businesses owners. In doing so, however, I want to be careful that I am not perpetuating the public discourse that pits street vendors against small brick-and-mortar businesses. This is in many ways a false narrative that is frequently perpetuated to disguise the wealth and power behind the Business Improvement Districts that oppose street vending.

Importantly, however, street vendors did report conflicts between themselves and brick-and-mortar businesses and these cases reveal community-sanctioned legal violence. I highlight these conflicts, while simultaneously acknowledging that the real enemy of both street vendors and small brick-and-mortar businesses are neoliberal policies and the capitalist accumulation of land. To be fair, not all such relationships were contentious. Street vendors also reported harmonious relationships consistent with the findings of other street vendor scholars (Crossa 2009; Chinchilla and Hamilton 1996), but here I want to underscore a disconcerting pattern of contentions between brick-and-mortar businesses and street vendors that merits exploration.

Both Caridad and Deborah highlight how people from within their respective communities actively seek to eliminate them. Furthermore, they described many instances of people reporting them to the police that endangered their lives. As I have demonstrated in Chapter Two, the consequences of policing can lead to arrest, family separation, housing insecurity, and the threat of deportation. For Black and Latinx street vendors, using the police force against other People of Color is particularly egregious given how altercations between police and Black and Latinx people often end in excessive use of force and even death. These examples demonstrate how People of Color are active participants in the surveilling, reporting,

and eliminating of street vendors, who are among the most marginalized members of the community. Notably, street vendors in this study are predominantly single-mothers with disabilities and chronic illnesses, who are elderly and lack legal status—they report earning under 15,000 a year, and many of them became unhoused during my time working with them.

Brick-and-mortar businesses and street vendors operate in tightly woven web of economic exchange, where increased foot traffic generated by street vendors benefits brick-and-mortar business. Unfortunately, not all brick-and-mortar businesses owners acknowledge how mutually beneficial these relationships can be. Over the last five years, Caridad has been vending with her daughter, Esmeralda, by an elementary school in Boyle Heights. The owner of the *panadería* [bakery] has been in constant conflict with Caridad and Esmeralda. The *panadería* owner, also a Latina immigrant, has called the police on Caridad on numerous occasions. To minimize contentions with the brick-and-mortar owner, Caridad sells on that corner only on Saturdays and Sundays, severely restricting her ability to make a livelihood. Caridad is aware of how both her business and the bakery mutually benefit each other: "The bakery benefits from me, and I benefit from it, because a lot of clientele comes to me and asks me about the bakery and I send them there, and others go to the bakery and then come to me." This is consistent with studies that find that street vendors benefit brick-and-mortar businesses (Crossa 2009; Hamilton and Chinchilla 1996; Miller 2014).

I have known Caridad since 2013 and in the past 6 years, she had her goods confiscated by authorities on 2 different occasions because of calls placed by the *panaderia* owner, causing her $6,000 in losses and greatly compromising her livelihood and increasing her housing insecurity. Caridad recalls feeling frustrated when she confronted the owner and asked, "*Mija* [my dear] how have I been a bother to you? I don't want to be rude with you, I know you are

within your right. I know you need your parking, but I have tried to disturb as little as possible. I am vending illegally, you're telling me, and a police officer will tell me, *pero déjame hacer la lucha* [but let me do my hustle]. How am I bothering you"? Despite trying to reason with the bakery owner, the woman continually called the police on Caridad.

Caridad does her best to be a good neighbor. She does not sell bread, so as not to negatively impact the baker, yet the baker has started selling *tortas*, *tacos*, and *arroz con champurrado*—all things that Caridad sells in order to sabotage her sales. One of the numerous occasions when the police officers came at the behest of the baker, the police officer and Caridad had the following exchange: "We have more important things to do than to talk to you, but the baker keeps calling and calling us." The policing of street vendors is not purely relegated to police officers; as this story demonstrates, brick-and-mortar business owners also participate in surveilling street vendors. As co-ethnics, one might expect the brick-and-mortar business owner to aid a struggling street vendor, however, the *panaderia* owner relies on the arms of the police force to displace street vendors. This behavior on the part of the baker puts Caridad at a very real risk of being arrested and deported. I did not interview the *panaderia* owner personally, but based on her continual calling of police and the economic capital required to start-up a small brick-and-mortar business, it is safe to assume that there is a difference in terms of both class and legal status between Caridad and the *panaderia* owner.

Caridad's narrative shows a conflict within the Latinx community, where Latinx brick-and-mortar business owners have internalized legal systems that uphold a hierarchy of inequality ranging from racism and sexism to expressions of class power. Some brick-and-mortar business owners have accepted a false narrative of street vendors as undeserving criminals who benefit from unfair advantages. These community divisions over who has a legitimate right to public

space in the neighborhood are enacted through community-sanctioned legal violence that has injurious consequences in the lives of street vendors. As Carla highlighted earlier, the real threat to small brick-and-mortar business, is the property owners who might double the *panaderia's* rent at any moment. Another threat could come from the agenda set by other property owners in the area and the Business Improvement Districts, that represent property owners' interests.

As I noted in Chapter One, Leimert Park has been a popular vending site for decades. Deborah is a Black vendor who has been a leading organizer of a group of vendors at Leimert Park and also organizes with vendors from ELACC as part of the larger Legalize Street Vending Campaign. Although she currently lives in the Valley—violence in the 1990s displaced her from living in Crenshaw, near Leimert Park—Deborah faithfully "goes back home" to vend every Sunday at Leimert Park. She remains involved in what is happening in the area and attends Leimert Park neighborhood meetings every Monday at the Vision Theater. At these meetings community members, business owners, and people with political clout in Leimert Park discuss neighborhood politics and upcoming events.

As in much of Los Angeles, Leimert Park is undergoing many changes, and many of the earlier inhabitants and even small brick-and-mortar businesses in the neighborhood can no longer afford the rent increases. In the following example, Deborah's narrative below reveals a conflict in the Black community, similar to the tension in Caridad's community, it is primarily on class hierarchies and the perception that street vendors are undeserving criminals. This contention manifests as a struggle over who has legitimate right to be within this historically Black cultural center: the earlier inhabitants of the park are poor-Black street vendors and unhoused people.

In 2016, a Martin Luther King (MLK) celebration was organized on Sunday by Mr. Brooke (pseudonym), a prominent Black business-owner with lots of political clout. Leading up

to the MLK parade, the street vendors, including Deborah, made it a point to ask questions at the neighborhood meeting about how the parade at the park would impact the local population of vendors. Mr. Brooke and the other entities organizing the Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) event told them that nothing would be different. Street vendors at Leimert Park are accustomed to arriving very early to claim their parking spots closest to the park in order to easily unload all of their wares. When many of them were arriving it was still dark, but they noticed new signs posted up: "no parking after Sunday at 4:30AM." For these street vendors, the "no parking" sign was the first indication that the MLK event was actively seeking to displace the vendors who had been setting up there every Sunday for decades.

At that moment, all the vendors looked to Deborah to see what they should do next. Deborah devised a plan. They were each going to pay the homeless park dwellers to watch their tents, while the vendors parked a distance away and carted over their merchandise. However, as the unloading was taking place, two MLK event organizers approached the street vendors and began to threaten the street vendors if they did not vacate the premise. Deborah says the altercation went as follows:

> Deborah: "I said, 'Yeah well, what's going on?'"
> MLK organizer: "We have an event here and we have a permit, so you guys are going to have to get out of the park."
> Deborah: "I have a permit for this park too and there is nowhere on my permit that says your permit overrides my permit, so we have a problem. I'm not going nowhere."
> MLK organizer: "Yes you are if I got to call the police if you don't get out of the park."

Deborah shares how that morning tensions escalated between Mr. Brooke, MLK organizers, and the Leimert Park street vendors. According to Deborah, Mr. Brook threatened them all, "If you don't get out of the park, we are going to have to give you a situation (a problem) and we can confiscate your stuff, and have you arrested." In that instance, something snapped in Deborah,

and she decided she was not going to turn around and go home. She was going to stay there and fight, albeit at a safe distance.

When huge white trucks pulled up with all the tents and stage for the MLK parade, the vendors were pushed to the sidewalk on the other side of the park, replaced by younger Black street vendors who sold a different caliber of products. Below Deborah shares how other street vendors felt about the events that unfolded that day:

> The vendors got a taste for themselves of how they were wanting to displace us, and we resisted to a degree. We wasn't part of their event but they didn't exactly kick us out. They moved us out of the park but across the street. We were still a part of the event, but they saw that we were resisting, they called the police. I got the video. They had about 15 police cars. All these people were staring around to see what we were going to do.

As the passage above demonstrates, Mr. Brook and MLK organizers called the police in an attempt to eliminate the street vendors from the park. As Deborah shows, what began with just two officers arriving on scene quickly escalated to a sergeant being called, and before long Deborah recounted 15 police cars present.

Ultimately the MLK organizers succeeded in displacing the earlier inhabitants of the park that day, but Deborah refused to cede the space altogether. She led her community of street vendors over to an adjoining sidewalk, where all the vendors were crammed together on the sidewalk. They were all so packed in, that Deborah could not properly display her wares and neither her nor her peers really sold anything during the MLK parade. But for Deborah, it was not about selling things that day. To Deborah, this move was about standing their ground and sending a clear message to Mr. Brooks, MLK organizers, and the police: the earlier street vendor inhabitants of Leimert Park would not be erased from the space. This moment helped solidify Deborah's role as a street vendor leader at Leimert Park and made clear to her peers in the Black

vending community why it was important for Leimert Park street vendors to be involved in the Los Angeles Street Vending Campaign.

Many vendors believed they would never be displaced as they had held their respective spaces at Leimert Park for generations. But now, neighborhood changes were affecting South Los Angeles inhabitants in tangible ways. Deborah believes, this event shook up her peers and helped her convince them that the Campaign was not about single identity politics. Deborah had been saying this for a while and met a lot of resistance—the Campaign was not only a Latinx issue—it was a Black issue too. After the MLK parade, Deborah had a lot more success recruiting her peers to join the neighborhood meetings she facilitated as a leader in the Campaign.

Figure 8. Deborah at Leimert Park passing flyers for an upcoming rally at City Hall. Whenever there is a lull in clientele, Deborah is organizing her community.

Deborah's experience with community-sanctioned legal violence shows how people like Mr. Brooke may align with the interests of Business Improvements Districts and exercise class power against vendors. These actions are particularly revealing and hurtful to street vendors when more privileged community members can put on cultural heritage events that ironically commemorate Civil Rights figures while simultaneously not supporting the current Black inhabitants of the Park. Instead, wealthier business owners are keen on stimulating economic

growth by eliminating street vendors from the park and making room for development projects that will attract wealthier residents. Through the following statement, Deborah makes sense of the capitalistic motivations underlying attempts at displacement of street vendors from Leimert Park:

> Mr. Brooke all about Gentrification. We want to keep it on the small mom and pop level [small brick-and-mortar and street vendors]. He wants to see corporate dollars coming into the neighborhood. As we speak there are a couple of merchants [brick and mortar businesses] close by that cannot afford their rent and that is how they get them out so that they can bring big corporations into the neighborhood.

The current inhabitants of the park are economically vulnerable Black street vendors and unhoused people. Various scholars have demonstrated that these groups are not viewed as legitimate inhabitants (Hunt 2009; Setšabi and Leduka 2008). In fact, for decades street vendors legally constructed as criminals, have been represented as an ever-present danger to be dealt with through the full force of the law.

Under the logic of dispossession, space must be recuperated for legitimate inhabitants to enjoy access to public space, for leisure, retail shopping, and parades. The public space of Leimert Park must be recuperated from street vendors and unhoused inhabitants and sold off to a different class of gentry, people with full rights, and corporate brick-and-mortar businesses, whose class and privilege grants them full rights. People like Mr. Brooke use the arms of the LAPD to eliminate street vendors with injurious consequences and they do it because it is profitable. Caridad and Deborah's narratives' show how community-sanctioned legal violence normalizes the elimination of street vendors through policing. Legal violence threatens street vendors' ability to remain housed, to remain a family, and to exist within public urban space.

Discrimination and Extortion

When times are tough, communities should be able to expect compassion from our neighbors and our cultural and religious institutions. Churches are often sites of sanctuary for the poor and downtrodden. In fact, dating back to the 1980s in Los Angeles, many Catholic and Christian churches have histories of participating in the Sanctuary Movement and taking in immigrant refugees, giving them refuge and safety from immigration enforcement officers (Chinchilla and Hamilton 2001). However, many street vendors are excluded from such community protections. Legal violence scholars (Menjivar and Abrego 2012) have hypothesized that the subjugation of the targeted group becomes normalized to such an extent that even members of the targeted group internalize and adopt their "illegality." Community-sanctioned legal violence is an example of the way that the laws link "vending goods and services" to "criminal activity," justifying the stripping away of vendors' rights to actively participate in the life of the community.

Caridad recollected an altercation she had had with a school security guard, outside of where she was vending in Boyle Heights. The guard asked her, "Why aren't you looking for a job?" She answered, "At my age, nobody will give me a job. And I don't have papers." The guard responded, "Go to a church." Caridad responded, "Look, sincerely, I don't mean to be disrespectful, but the churches also don't want us there. The church on this corner, the father ran me out." Sadly, in Caridad's neighborhood not even her local priest would let her vend on the street corner outside of the church.

In another example of how legal violence is community-sanctioned, MariPosa shared how her mother Rosa accompanied her to attend mass and they left their oranges outside. However, Rosa wore an apron and the priest assumed they were attempting to vend inside the church. The priest treated Rosa and MariPosa very poorly and demanded they leave the church

immediately. While MariPosa still identifies as Catholic and participates in prayers, she no longer attends mass because of the discrimination she encountered by this priest solely because she is a street vendor.

According to Robert Chao-Romero (2013), "love for the poor is truly at the center of God's heart," as evidenced by more than 2,000 verses in the Bible dedicated to this topic (14). How, then, can a priest in good conscience deny any member of the community access to entering the church for the purpose of prayer and worship or from making a livelihood from the sidewalk outside its doors? A church does not own the sidewalks outside of its doors, any more than a brick-and-mortar business owns the sidewalk outside of its storefront. Sidewalks are by definition, public space and for priests to deny street vendors access to making a livelihood on the sidewalks is unconscionable. The imposition of legal systems intersects with symbolic violence becoming so deeply internalized that even priests perpetuate unequal structures.

After describing some of the positive things about being a street vendor, Humberto reveals some of the negative aspects in a related incident with a local priest in South Central, Los Angeles:

> We are our own bosses, but we do have to pay the church, the church charges us rent for using the bathroom. $1 per person and we want to see if they will at least lower the cost a little, if we show our shirts [with slogan: legalize street vending] that identify as street vendors to lower the cost of using the bathroom to something more economical. Because imagine, the street vendors who are diabetic and go to the bathroom 4 or 5 times. It's like $4 a day! I think we are going to make a committee to go talk to the priest or the person in charge of the church to offer us a better price.

Note, it is not only street vendors working nearby the church who are being charged "rent" to use the restroom, unhoused people were also "taxed." This behavior on the part of church taxes the poor, the chronically ill, unhoused, and the people, who like street vendors, make a living off of the street. Priests and churches in Communities of Color have a scarcity of resources because

they rely on the donations of impoverished parishioners. Yet, priests and churches have histories of offering sanctuary for the poor and downtrodden, including participating in the 1980s Sanctuary Movement, where Los Angeles churches housed immigrant refugees, protecting them from immigration enforcement officers (Barba and Castillo-Ramos 2019; Chinchilla and Hamilton 2001; García 2018; Romero 2020). However, many street vendors and unhoused community members are seemingly excluded from such protections. There are instances in which street vendors reported good relationships with religious clergy, such as Faustino who is permitted to prepare and store the *bolis* [frozen treat] he makes in the church and Maria, who is granted permission to sell her breads on the sidewalk in front of the church. However, not all street vendors have these positive experiences with religious institutions.

Priests, unfortunately, are not the only people in the neighborhood who take advantage of street vendors. Several street vendors reported being extorted by local gang members. To protect the vendors who reported the extortion, I write of one example shared with me in general terms. One day a group of young men approached their vending site and told them that they needed to pay them a weekly lump sum in order to continue operating their business. Because they feared for their safety if they did not adhere, they began to pay the young men. The payment was high in comparison to what they actually earned from vending at that site and they were able to negotiate with the young men, requesting that the payment be made through food rather than cash. So, for the last several years the vendors must give the young man and all of his friends free food. This example demonstrates the way that the legal vulnerability of street vendors makes them vulnerable targets for exploitation and harm on behalf of other community members.

I had some hesitations in sharing examples of extortion of street vendors by gang youth for two reasons. First, gang members, like street vendors, are a vulnerable group that are highly

stigmatized and dehumanized in public discourses. Black and Latinx juveniles experience institutional racism, disproportionate policing, and social criminalization, that impairs and deprives them of the ability to succeed at school and employment, often pushing them to become career criminals (Rios 2011). Second, the links between street vendors and gang members are over-stated in order to justify the elimination of both groups. In the dozens of letters I analyzed from neighborhood associations in opposition to the legalization of street vending in Los Angeles, they often cited how street vendors attract other "undesirable groups" such as gang members and sex workers. Street vendor studies show a consistent pattern in the way public discourses frame street vendors as criminal and thereby link them to other stigmatized criminal activity such as selling drugs and participating in sex work (Chinchilla and Hamilton 1996; Hunt 2009; Muñiz 2011; Muñoz 2008; Setšabi and Leduka 2008).

These associations are used to further stigmatize street vendors, implying that criminalized street vendors attract other criminal elements and invite less desirable vice into the neighborhood. As a labor scholar, I believe all workers should be decriminalized now, including gang members, sex workers, and street vendors. Yet, the legal system imposes hierarchies of inequality where some informal work is ranked on a scale of more or less stigma. I want to note that all of these workers—gang members, sex workers, and street vendors—are human beings, worthy of rights and protections. It bares mentioning that several of the street vendors in my study lamented to having children grow up to become involved in gang activity, and they worried about their children's safety and sometimes blamed themselves for their kids' outcomes. I mention this as a reminder that gang members are also someone's child and a part of the community. Throughout the course of the day, these workers traverse the same spaces where a

complex web of formal and informal, licit and elicit economic exchange occurs (Venkatesh 2009).

While public discourse eagerly calls attention to street vendors and gang extortion, I want to call attention to a group that extorts street vendors and is seldom acknowledged for doing so—small brick-and-mortar businesses. Seen as one of the bastions of the middle-class, small brick-and-mortar businesses, were exposed for extorting street vendors by the Los Angeles Street Vending Campaign in 2018. This was an important moment in the Campaign that laid bare the corruption in the city. While the city and opposition, painted street vendors as a threat to small brick-and-mortar businesses and property owners, the Campaign reminded Councilmembers that some of these very businessmen and property owners were predatorily extorting street vendors demanding payments in cash or in sex. In exchange for street vendors compliance with these demands, the businessmen and property owners, promised to "allow" them to continue vending. If the vendor refused to comply, the businessmen and property owners threatened to call the police and remove them from the sidewalks outside their storefronts. Business Improvement Districts were lobbying Councilmembers to allow brick-and-mortar businesses and property owners the ability to veto street vendors, however, the Campaign boldly reminded Councilmembers that women were extremely vulnerable to sexual extortion by predatory businessmen and property owners.

In Campaign organizing meetings, brave women vendors shared their testimonies, and these stories became the impetus for the International Women's Day protest in 2018 that aligned with the #MeToo Movement and urged Councilmembers Jose Huizar and Curren Price to reconsider support for the business veto. On her observations of brick-and-mortar business extortion of

street vendors, Mercedes shares her account of this issue in the Piñata District and *Los Callejones*:

> There are vendors that are being extorted by the owners [brick-and-mortar businesses and property owners] around them. They [street vendors] have to pay for selling to vend in front of their businesses. That is a total injustice. The owners are preventing the use of a sidewalk that doesn't belong to them. They are doing it right now. Many vendors don't want to talk about this because they know if they do, they will lose their space to vend. If they don't like something, the owners take their own things out onto the sidewalk so that no one can vend there. Almost shutting down the street, too, and not allowing any space for the ambulatory vendor. One person I know is paying $1,500 per month for their space to sell food outside of a business. But when enforcement comes, they [brick-and-mortar businesses and property owners] don't defend them [street vendors]. It doesn't guarantee them that police won't remove you.

Many other street vendors reported similar claims of extortion that result in a loss of livelihood for vendors already struggling economically.

For example, Ofelia reported being extorted by a man named Marcos [pseudonym] from the neighborhood, a self-appointed "community-organizer," who is not himself a street vendor and is not affiliated with East Los Angeles Community Corporation. Marcos has taken it upon himself to "organize" street vendors to decriminalize street vending for the past five years.[31] His approach to organizing, however, is not based on egalitarian solidarity or horizontal leadership, rather it is very top down and authoritative.[32] It has been rumored that if vendors do not pay their dues they are threatened with violence. Ofelia shares, "He [Marcos] and his partner, want to

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[31] I do not disclose the neighborhood here for the protection of Ofelia and other street vendors in the area.

[32] One experience I had there gave me pause. In 2016, I noticed that he has people who work for him and heavily surveil the area paying attention to who is speaking to the vendors. I experienced this surveillance personally, when I went to visit some street vendors hoping to make more contacts and a man approached me asking me what I was doing. After I explained the purpose for my visit, he used his phone to communicate with someone. After a pause, and when he got a reply, he left me to continue my conversation with the street vendor.

charge a quota to all vendors every day and we [Los Angeles Street Vending Campaign] don't want to charge anybody. He wants to make personal gains."

These examples demonstrate how members of the community—priests, gang members, and neighbors—all internalize street vendors' illegality and participate in community-based legal violence. Indeed, even people who would normally garner respect as integral community members, participate in fear tactics of surveillance, intimidation, and extortion.

Physical and Sexual Assault

The previous sections recounted instances where street vendors reported contentions between street vendors, brick-and-mortar businesses, and neighborhood members. In this section I discuss the instances where such attacks result in physical and sexual assault. My findings depart from other studies that focus on state-sanctioned legal violence (Bhimji 2013; Estrada and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2011), specifically by looking at how elimination and dispossession are also community-sanctioned through a hierarchy of inequality ranging from racism and sexism to expressions of class power. Street vendors demonstrate the various ways in which even while residing within and belonging to Black and Latinx communities, they are often viewed as non-members and excluded from community-care and legal protections. In some cases, law enforcement is substituted by community-based practices and individuals who take it upon themselves to police, surveil, and abuse street vendors. In these examples, conflicts over space are carried out by members of the same racial-ethnic group.

Violent attacks on street vendors have become commonplace. From 2017 to 2018, the news cycle has highlighted various examples of brutal beatings and destruction of property, among them Benjamin Ramirez, Pedro Reyes, and Rodolfo Rodriguez.[33] In 2017, Benjamin

[33] Rodolfo Rodriguez: http://abc7news.com/woman-arrested-in-beating-of-elderly-man-in-los-angeles-county/3744691/; Pedro Reyes: https://losangeles.cbslocal.com/2018/03/28/south-la-street-

Ramirez, age 26, was selling *elotes* and *raspados* (corn and shaved ice) from a cart on a street corner in the Hollywood area. For several weeks he continued to be harassed by a neighborhood member. Benjamin's father encouraged him to video record the verbal abuse he was experiencing by the neighborhood member. On July 24, Benjamin begins a recording on his cellphone where you see the neighborhood member, an Argentinean immigrant known locally as Carlos Hakas, appears to be walking his dog in the company of a woman. Carlos Hakas begins shouting at Benjamin in Spanish and repeats the phrase in a menacing tone, "Move it or I'll move it for you. Move it right now! Move it right now! Move it right now!" Benjamin does not move, Carlos Hakas hands his dog on a leash over to the woman, gets into Benjamin's personal space and tips over his cart destroying his family's livelihood. Next, the woman, who also appears to be filming Benjamin, begins shouting in English to Benjamin, "Don't even try it. Stay the fuck away!" In the face of this harassment and intimidation tactics, Benjamin bravely responds, "*me vale madre, de aqui no me voy a quitar*" (I don't give a fuck, I won't move from this place.) Benjamin then turns the phone camera onto himself and says in Spanish, "I am here to tell you that this *puto racista* (fucking racist) came to throw my stuff. He came to throw my stuff, pendejo (dumb ass)." Carlos Hakas, who was not yet out of earshot comes back, gets in Benjamin's personal space again, and shouts, "I am not a racist, I am Argentinean, retard!" Benjamin uploaded the video to YouTube and much to his amazement the video went viral[34].

Juan Herrera's concept of racialized illegality (2016) is particularly useful for thinking about the racialized constructions of difference between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Latinx. I did not interview Carlos Hakas or Benjamin Ramirez, so I cannot speak to their racial or ethnic

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vendor-vigil-pedro-reyes/; Benjamin Ramirez: http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-hollywood-street-vendor-dispute-20170724-story.html .

[34] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mHIXlSaKMBQ&feature=emb_logo.

backgrounds, or how each of these men self-identifies, however in my assessment, Carlos Hakas is a light skinned or white-passing Latinx man, while Benjamin Ramirez is a very dark-skinned Brown man. Although Carlos Hakas denies being motivated by racism, his actions speak to how deeply normalized the criminalization of street vendors has become, such that Hakas feels completely justified in his attempt to eliminate Ramirez from public space. Anti-Vending laws are legal systems that uphold a hierarchy of inequality, in this case racial inequality.

The cases covered in media often depict violence against male street vendors, but selling in isolation exposes women street vendors, particularly more vulnerable vendors who are undocumented, elderly, and physically disabled to additional forms of legal violence. On October 13, 2014, I interviewed Caridad at her work site. Half-way through our interview, an elderly woman street vendor approached us. Caridad warmly introduced her to me as Alma, and told me she sold *tejuino*, a cold beverage made from fermented corn, a few blocks from where we were. Caridad saw the bruises on Alma's face, and consequently I witnessed the following conversation:

> Fieldnote: Alma proceeded to recount the awful experience she had last week where a young Salvadoran man has been following her around. He came to her cart and knocked it over onto her, purposefully injuring her badly. She showed me her bruise on her knee and her side ached when Cari hugged her. She said blood came gushing from her nose. She has no idea why the young man targeted her for this attack, October 17, 2013.

It pained me to see an elderly woman, with wrinkles all over her face and so frail, looking so marred by green and yellow bruises all over her face and body. I realize now, that part of what shocked me about seeing Alma's injuries was that it was the first time I had ever witnessed an elderly person wounded. Not only was Alma physically assaulted, but she also lost her livelihood when the young man knocked her cart over.

This section is focused on the gendered aspect of legal violence and how it is internalized within the Black and Latinx community to reproduce harm. Many of the street vendors in this project reported experiencing sexual assault. MariPosa shared how two male street vendors were sexually assaulting her when she was a teenager street vending. As a high school student, MariPosa wanted to make money independently for school clothes and prom. She asked her mom and stepdad if she could begin vending on her own to earn some extra income. Since MariPosa's mother Rosa, and her new stepfather were both vendors, she was comfortable selling oranges and delivering fruit on her own. But working alone as a teen girl made MariPosa vulnerable to predatory men who worked with her parents. These men began sexually assaulting MariPosa whenever she was vending alone, and they had the opportunity. MariPosa described how things became unbearable for her: "I just wanted to get away. I guess I was going through a lot of personal issues with worker abuse. Because, when I was selling, my mom had workers. The workers sexually abused me."

When this was going on, MariPosa did not feel like she could confide in anyone. She was her mother's only daughter, but she felt like the "black sheep." MariPosa shared about the times when she tried to get help:

> Yeah. You know I had friends, but I really didn't have anyone I could talk to about that issue because I felt like I was going to get judged. There was one time I talked to my school counselor and she said, "Well, It's your fault. Why are you letting that happen?" So, I just gave up. I thought, maybe they're right. I'm not doing anything about it, because the guys would tell me, this is normal, we are going to teach you how to be a woman. And I would say, okay, whatever. So, I just got tired. I didn't want to tell anyone else about it. I would cry and just hide in my room. I had a little tiny room and I called it my box. I told my mom, I'm going to stay there and I'm going to put a lock, and I felt safe. Even from the inside I would put a lock, a *candado*.

This painful recollection shows how multiple people failed MariPosa, from school counselors to her co-workers. Instead of helping out a fellow street vendor, those men chose to take advantage

of her vulnerability and preyed upon her. When MariPosa tried to get help, she was blamed for the sexual abuse she was experiencing. MariPosa wanted to get away and join the military, to get far away from her situation, but the ROTC sergeant told her she could not enlist because she was undocumented. MariPosa felt like she had very limited options. When she could not take the sexual abuse anymore, she ran away from home and she went to live with an older woman who introduced her to danza. Through *danza*, she met an older boy and she began living with him and his family, and she became pregnant with her eldest daughter Nahui shortly afterwards.

This narrative of sexual assault perpetrated by other street vendors is important because in both academic literature and advocates' framing by the Los Angeles Street Vending Campaign, street vendors often rely on entrepreneurial discourse that positions them as "model" neoliberal subjects who are hardworking, creating jobs, and contributing to the local economy, and therefore deserving of full rights and protection. The danger in this discourse is that it erases the full humanity of street vendors and ignores the gendered violence and sexual assault that many street vendors experience, sometimes at the hands of other street vendors. While this chapter argues that all street vendors are deserving of rights and protection, I cannot reinforce "model" entrepreneurial representations that hide the machismo, sexism, and misogyny that many women street vendors have experienced at the hands of other street vendors.

MariPosa is very critical of sexism in the Latinx community and how the community supports male street vendors, to the detriment of women vendors. In making these critiques, MariPosa points to how the plight of women street vendors is often ignored, yet there are several cases where crowdsourcing websites go viral for male vendors who are either very elderly or badly beaten. MariPosa says:

> My mom, she has been selling forever, but I feel like other people, they get more help. I'm not trying to bash at them or be mean but, what happened when I got

robbed at gunpoint in 2007. My mom got robbed in 2009 by some *cholos*. And then 2014, I was robbed by a homeless person.

MariPosa is making an important critique here, pointing out that women street vendors are often victims of crimes, yet these instances do not garner the level of community support that she has seen male vendors receive. It is important to note that she is making this critique after the Benjamin Ramirez protest, detailed in Chapter Five, garnered a lot of media attention and community support. MariPosa is speaking from personal experience, as someone who tried to crowdsource when she was going through a difficult time with medical complications during pregnancy. In 2016, when MariPosa was pregnant with her second daughter, she set up a GoFundMe campaign because she was experiencing pregnancy related medical complications that made it difficult for her to sell cut fruit and be on her feet all day.[35] She asked for $3,000 in order for her to go on maternity leave, support her daughter and newborn, and her mother Rosa, whose ailing health had forced her into early retirement from street vending. Although MariPosa is a very well-known street vendor leader with a big network, her efforts at crowdsourcing were barely noticed. Amongst the backdrop of several crowdsourcing campaigns that went viral, MariPosa only managed to raise $300.

More than anything, MariPosa received deeply misogynistic and xenophobic messages admonishing her for becoming pregnant a second time and calling her sexist and denigrating names. MariPosa shared that what hurt her the most was that many of the people leaving her hurtful messages were people from her own community. By contrast, in the same year "Relief for Fidencio the Paleta Man" in Chicago received $384, 285, and in Los Angeles the "Benjamin

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[35] I helped MariPosa keep her campaign updated. MariPosa liked for me to help her with her writing. She would dictate what she wanted to say, and I would turn it into sentences that MariPosa would upload when she approved of the message. Because of my involvement in supporting her in this way, I was privy to a lot of the verbal harassment and taunts she experienced on this platform.

Elote Man Ramirez" fundraiser raised $8,365.[36] For MariPosa, the vitriolic messages, combined with the economic despair, and physical pain she was in pushed her deep into a depression during her third trimester and after Zoe was born she suffered from post-partum depression. MariPosa is rightfully critical of the double standard in how, within her community many are willing to support male vendors but remain less willing to support single mothers who vend. As a poor single mother, MariPosa was villainized and told "she should have kept her legs closed." Rather than respecting MariPosa's reproductive choices and the special needs she had as a single mother, she was perceived as undeserving of compassion and community-care.

MariPosa is now a single mother of two daughters, and she continues to rely on street vending to support her children and now her ailing mother. MariPosa struggles with two kids and without a car; she works hard navigating public transit every day with both kids to support her family. While her eldest, Nahui, is at school she takes her youngest downtown to buy goods at wholesale prices, then she carries little Zoe on her back, with her arms full of her merchandise, table, and umbrella, and finally she sets up to vend near her eldest daughter's school. MariPosa wishes people would focus on how back breaking this work is for her, so that people would have more respect for what she is doing to sustain her family.

During an interview with MariPosa, she challenged my research by urging me to show everyday depictions of street vendors that present vendors as full human beings, who are doing extraordinary physically demanding work and are sometimes getting verbally, physically, or sexually assaulted in the process. MariPosa wants to see representations of street vendors who are women, children, and elderly, because she believes that representations of street vendors are

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[36] https://www.gofundme.com/2am4q7kk and https://www.gofundme.com/benjamin-elote-man-ramirez

dominated by males and that public discourse only notices street vendors when they are badly injured. Rather than representations of male street vendors or depicting vendors only when they are badly injured, MariPosa walks me through what she believes is a holistic representation of street vendors that accounts for their everyday lived experiences:

> MariPosa: You will see me going across the street with my kid, with my baby, with my table with 2 hands. You don't see a picture like that of somebody hustling. Like the man that I saw selling, who is elderly with his big basket. He didn't have a cart. He carried his churros on his shoulder. He's very old. Things like that, they only take pictures if somebody gets beat up and got robbed. Unless something really violent happens. There are not a lot of stories out there about the lady at the corner that sells *raspados*.
> LeighAnna: You mean, capturing the everyday struggles of the vendors, the everyday hustle like you said?
> MariPosa: Yeah. That's what I would like to see. Yeah, I would like to be in a movie . . . I wake up at…. Just kidding!

MariPosa asks us to consider why public discourse only pays attention when male vendors are beaten and killed. What about the Black or Latina single-mom, who carries her baby on her back and travels on public transit to get downtown to buy cheap wares, and then gets back on the bus to vend on the street corner carrying her baby and her heavy products around for several hours? Indeed, why are the plights of women street vendors less publicized and circulated in our community, when the majority of street vendors are women (Hamilton and Chinchilla 1996; Yen et al. 2015)?

We had this interview in 2017, and in 2018, MariPosa got her wish to a certain extent. As the implementation of legalizing street vending was being debated in courts, Los Angeles City officials kept trying to impose two policies that would harm street vendors, and in particular women street vendors. The first policy was an arbitrary limitation of four street vendors permitted to sell their wares per city block. As the stories of Alma and MariPosa demonstrate,

this type of regulation exposes vendors, in particular women vendors, to physical and sexual violence. In addition, it breaks apart the networks of self-care, radical consciousness, and community-care in abolitionist marketplaces that I will describe in Chapter Five. The second policy was to give property owners veto power over street vendors, thus encouraging economic and sexual extortion. In a powerful display of force, the Los Angeles Street Vending Campaign, mobilized around the #MeToo Movement and International Women's Day to demand that council members stop imposing regulations with injurious consequences for women. As I will discuss in Chapter Five, this became a pivotal moment for women in the Campaign.

Figure 9. MariPosa and her daughter Zoe are joined by Esmeralda (Caridad's daughter) and they are both speaking out on International Women's Day in 2018 about the economic and sexual extortion that women street vendors are already subjected to and will be exacerbated by the business veto. Esmeralda's sign declares, "las calles son de quin las trabajan" (the streets belong to the people who work them).

By Speaking We Can Understand Each Other

In 2013, The Los Angeles Street Vending Campaign, with the support of East Los Angeles Community Corporation (ELACC), was able to get hundreds of small brick-and-mortar business owners in the area to sign a petition that brick-and-mortar businesses support the legalization of street vending.

Carla, the Director of Community Organizing at ELACC, played a key role in the efforts of intervening in the public discourse and facilitating talking circles between brick-and-mortar businesses and street vendors:

> So, we went out and we collected 600 petitions from small businesses that would support street vending. We collected the letters that they wrote to city council and we had about 100 small businessmen call City Hall and say like, "I actually think that this is a good idea." I organized 6 talking circles between small businesses and street vendors in the city. They met and they talked about the issues, "This is why I don't like you setting up, and these are the problems." It was to show that "*hablando se entiende la gente*" [by speaking we can understand each other].

Like Carla believes, *hablando se entiende*, in speaking to each other 600 local brick-and-mortar businesses realized that street vendors were not the enemy. Carla elaborates:

> The city's narrative at the time and the opposition's narrative, a lot of it was like small businesses just don't care for this. And I think that, overall, small businesses are worried about it [legalization]. There is like a concern. But we were also able to find people who, even with the concerns, thought, well, I used to be a street vendor, or I know someone who is in my family who is a street vendor. There was this story of a business lady, she sold watches. And she had an agreement with a fruit vendor because she had been robbed twice, assaulted, she had been left for dead in her business and it made her feel safe to have a fruit vendor outside her business. There are eyes on the street. There's someone there to kind of watch out for her. So, we found all these stories and even in those stories, there were still some businesses that were, as a first reaction, against street vendors and then you start talking and asking why are you against? And they say, "I have to pay rent. My rent went up and now you're taking business away from me" and... the vendor says, "I'm not really making that much money." The vendor says, "I'm making like $25 a day. I can't possibly be taking that much business away from you. The issue is that your rent went up $800. That's not anything to do with me." So, we start having these conversations about gentrification and displacement. And we start having these conversations. The *pupusería* down the street is not your biggest competition but it's the fast food restaurant that just moved in on that side of the street.

Through dialogue between brick-and-mortar businesses and street vendors, enough brick-and-mortar businesses came forward in support and without the opposition of brick-and-mortar businesses as a pretext, there was enough pressure on Councilmember Curran Price to convince him to sign the motion along with Councilmember Jose Huizar, formally introducing the motion to decriminalize street vending in 2013. However, the motion stalled for five years before it passed. There are many factors that contributed, and a big one is that despite the Campaigns best efforts to gain the support of small brick-and-mortar businesses, the opposition—led by Business Improvement Districts—continued to push the false narrative that brick-and-mortar businesses were in opposition to street vendors.

Conclusion

This chapter brings attention to community-sanctioned legal violence where Black and Latinx street vendors struggle to deal with threats to call law enforcement, surveillance, and extortion by priests, business-owners, and other members from within their own racial-ethnic group. This chapter reveals how the unjust criminalization of street vendors leaves vendors vulnerable to attack and increases the likelihood of community-sanctioned legal violence where street vendors become victims of violent attacks and harassment from members of their own communities. For thirty years, communities accepted and internalized the hierarchies of inequality to such an extent that the injurious treatment of street vendors was not only completely justified, but in many cases community members became complicit in that violence. This chapter argues that when laws dehumanize street vendors, then people in communities internalize street vendors' illegality and feel emboldened to do the same.

Chapter Two and Three underscored how street vendors in Los Angeles experience great hardship and pain and I could have written an entire dissertation just about legal violence. But I

have worked with the street vendor leaders in the Campaign long enough to have learned about the resistance that is possible in these contested spaces. In Chapters Four and Five, I turn to the healing and political strategies and sensibilities that also emerges from their work.

CHAPTER FOUR: "GET TO KNOW A STREET VENDOR": A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYZING STREET VENDING AS A HEALING PRAXIS

While the previous chapters focused on the way street vendors experience legal violence through state-sanctioned and community-sanctioned violence, Chapters Four and Five explore my second research question. How do Black and Latinx street vendors resist legal violence? I find that street vendors' narratives reveal their ability to cope and heal from the cumulative trauma of legal violence through what bell hooks (1989) calls "self-recovery," a journey towards wholeness through knowledge and self-love. Almost every street vendor I spoke with had a unique story of brokenness because of legal violence and the intersecting anti-Black, anti-Latinx, and anti-Vending laws and policies they were subjected to. However, they also shared their unique experiences of remaking feelings of brokenness into alternative spaces of hope, light, brilliance and radical possibility. These findings challenged me to rethink street vending beyond neoliberal understandings of entrepreneurship.

I turn to Women of Color feminisms, specifically Gloria Anzaldúa's (2002) *paths of conocimiento* (paths of consciousness), to examine street vendors' narratives revealing the myriad ways street vendors are physically and psychologically broken and put back together again. I argue that through the practices and spaces street vendors embody, they strive to find wholeness. To that end, this chapter draws on notions of corporeality, healing, and wholeness (Anzaldúa 2002; hooks 1989; Lorde 2007).

The embodied process of creating is an outlet for many vendors struggling to deal with chronic illness, injuries, and the emotional trauma that comes from lives lived on the margins due to legal violence of anti-Street Vending laws and policies that criminalized street vendors. Chapter Four celebrates street vendors' humanity—this chapter is inspired by how adamantly street vendors vocalized that they had stories, ones they are eager to share and have heard. Their

narratives and daily struggles are a true testament to the resilience of the human spirit and its ability to heal its brokenness. As the street vendors in my study declared, *"somos personas que se levantan*" [we are people who rise up]. They have urban stories they are eager to share.

Woman of Color Feminisms and Street Vendor Corporeality

Bringing street vendor studies into conversation with Woman of Color feminisms, provides a more nuanced understanding of how through the practices and spaces they embody, they find a way of healing their wounds and soothing their minds. Before discussing how street vending promote healing and wholeness, it is important to examine street vendors' corporeality. For that, I rely primarily on six years of participant observation and a close cataloguing of what I have noted about street vendors' corporeality, what they have shared with me about their bodies, and how their bodies have changed over time. This section follows the premise that a lifetime of legal violence, discussed at length in Chapters Two and Three, has a physical manifestation that is written onto the bodies of street vendors. Living in racialized spaces imposes a "racial tax on People of Color" (Lipsitz 2011:7). This "tax" is extracted from the health and well-being of Black and Latinx bodies. Vendors share the impact of anxiety, depression, and illnesses and theorize from the body on the impact of violence on their physical bodies.

Woman of Color feminisms (Moraga 1993; hooks 1989; Cruz 2001), strive to create holistic representations of women where they are "…more than the bent back in the fields, more than the assembly-line fingers and the rigid body beneath him in bed, more than the veiled face above the rosary beads. She is more than the sum of all these fragmented parts" (Moraga 1993:72). In that vein, entrepreneurial representations of informality reduce people to mere workers and position them as "model" neoliberal subjects, whose citizenship claims revolve around their economic contributions to society (Chavez 2008). I am in conversation with new

directions in street vendors studies (Duneier 1999; Zlolniski 2006; Rosales 2013, 2020), that complicate entrepreneurial representations of informality. My approach describes street vendors' narratives wholly in relation to their life histories, their bodies and space, thus representing street vendors as more than the sum of their fragmented parts. Cruz (2001) builds on Moraga's analysis: "each component of the brown body has its own story to tell—the lesbian mouth, the bent back in the fields, the dismembered daughter—and its deconstruction is a necessary process of reclaiming and re-imagining the histories and forms of agencies of women who are unrepresented and unheard" (663).

Black and Latinx street vendors' embodied narratives have the power to create closeness between people in shared struggles (hooks 1994) and cultivate a sense of security and sanctuary by naming the trauma and the road towards healing (Morrison 2004). This study of street vendor leaders in the Campaign moves beyond single identity politics and towards explaining Black and Latinx street vendors' solidarity. The experiences of trauma and recovery outlined in this chapter foreshadows Chapter Five, where abolitionist imaginaries emerge among Black and Latinx street vendor leaders in the Los Angeles Street Vending Campaign around shared experiences of gentrification, criminalization, racism that mobilizes cross-racial and spatial solidarity.

The corporeal approach of Women of Color scholars (Anzaldúa 2002; hooks 1989; Lorde 2007) allows me to understand how street vendors' remake landscapes of legal violence into alternative spaces of hope. They do so by reclaiming their stories of brokenness and sharing their journeys towards wholeness of being:

> The insistence… that a wholeness of being… is present, possible, that we have experienced it, that it is a state to which we can return…. The whole existed prior to exploitation and oppression, [it is a] a self that could indeed be restored, recovered. (hooks 1989:30)

Thus, embodied narratives become a powerful source for recognizing street vendors' journeys towards self-recovery. Street vendors' embodied knowledge provides insights into how healing is connected to both the economic and creative processes of street vending. This lens portrays a picture of how street vendors living in landscapes of legal violence face the persistent and cumulative stress of poverty, dispossession, and illegality, that wears the body down. But the brilliance of street vendors' is how they remake their feelings of brokenness into alternative spaces where healing and wholeness occur.

I analyze street vendors' embodied narratives through Gloria Anzaldúa's (2002) *paths of conocimiento*. This framework has been used as an analytical and pedagogical tool to mark students' pathway towards healing in an English classroom (Cariaga 2018a, 2018b). Similarly, I draw on *paths of conocimiento* to analyze 5 of the 15 street vendor leaders' experiences in this study, which are composited from participant observation, life history interviews, and semi-structured interviews conducted from 2013 to 2018. *Paths of conocimiento* is a holistic framework to analyzing street vendors' embodied narratives of pain, healing, and transformation that ultimately yields a unique set of life histories or paths that molded each street vendor into the leaders they became. The seven *paths of conocimiento* framework is non-linear, as multiple paths intersect and interrupt each other. As an analytical tool, *paths of conocimiento* marks street vendors' personal journeys towards wholeness and collective pathways toward empowerment.

Anzaldúa (2002) identifies seven *paths of conocimiento*: (1) *Arrebato*: a sudden rupture or fragmentation; (2) *Nepantla*: being torn within ways, ideologies, people, places and emotions; (3) *Coatlicue*: a third space of despair and isolation; (4) Call to action: breaking free from habitual coping strategies; (5) *Coyolxauhqui*: reintegration after being split apart; (6) Blow up: desire to share a story, but words fail ideals; and (7) Spiritual activism: holistic alliance by

connecting through wounds (Anzaldúa 2002; Carriaga 2018a, 2018b). This analytical framework allows me to demonstrate how street vendors' create social and physical spaces where they can cope with feelings of powerlessness, depression, anxiety, and physical ailments—to shift towards self-care, radical consciousness, and community-care. However, I want to be clear that these spaces are born out of struggle. Carceral and immigration regimes exclude street vendors from access to mental health services and formal health care, thereby making it imperative that street vendors develop personal pathways towards healing and wholeness. In the absence of formalized structures of care, street vendors have adapted and created their own alternative ways to heal and care for themselves. Street vendors' placemaking generates spiritual growth, kinship, and healing through a retelling of what it means to be a human, to create, and to vend. To understand how street vendors embodied narratives generate healing and wholeness, the following section draws on Black and Latina/x feminist scholarship, especially Gloria Anzaldúa's (2002) *paths of conocimiento*.

Table 3.

Gloria Anzaldúa's *seven "paths of conocimiento" as an analytical framework.*

Anzaldúa's (2002, 2015) "Paths of Conocimiento"						
Arrebato A sudden rupture, fragmentation, ending, and/or beginning	**Nepantla** Torn between ways, ideologies, people, places, emotions	**Coatlicue** A third space of despair, hopelessness, and isolation	**Call to Action** Breaking free from habitual coping strategies	**Coyolxauhqui** Re-integration after being split apart	**Blow Up** Desire to share story but world fails to live up to ideals	**Spiritual Activism** Holistic alliance by connecting through wounds
"In all seven spaces you struggle with the shadow, the unwanted aspects of the self . . .All seven are present within each stage, and they occur concurrently, chronologically or not." (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 542; Cariaga, 2018, p. 88).						

In the first interviews with street vendors, I adapted a life history approach to interviewing that would allow vendors to tell their whole stories freely. Street vendors' narratives remind me that wholeness is central to their work, as they vehemently argue that they are more than workers with disembodied hands serving and preparing food. The following passage by MariPosa challenges carceral and immigration regimes that produce legal violence and the dehumanization of capitalism that is all too eager to consume street vendors' labor, while simultaneously eliminating them from public space:

> I always tell them [non-vendors], get to know a vendor. Sit down with them have a chit chat and ask them their story. What made them decide to do this? Ask them about their family, show an interest. Make him [street vendor] feel like he's acknowledged. Most people just buy and leave. Even when you go to a McDonalds or anything, it's a worker, it's the same thing. They are working for their families. I always try to say "hi" and greet them [street vendors]. Don't think just because the vendor is not formally dressed that he is not *humano* [human]. They are doing the work for somebody, even if it is to support himself.

In this passage, MariPosa challenges society to recognize the humanity of street vendors. MariPosa and many vendors in this study are critical about the way our society consumes and discards street vendors and the products they sell, without thinking about the humanity of vendors.

I align myself with MariPosa's vision through an approach that humanizes street vendors as more than neoliberal entrepreneurs, but as people with embodied stories to tell about overcoming feelings of brokenness into recovered wholeness. This account recognizes the complex experiences of street vendors, who are cultural workers, formerly incarcerated, unhoused or in the process of becoming unhoused, and battling chronic illness. Yet street vendors organize to do community-enriching work by providing fresh food and affordable goods and services in food deserts where employment opportunities and resources are scarce, all while

being endangered and exploited. I explore the way street vendors have come to view their practices as a healing praxis.

Street vendors described the act of creating their goods and services, as well as the congregating of street vendors on city sidewalks, parking lots, and parks as generating personal and community transformations that materialize spatially (Muñoz 2016a). Gloria Anzaldúa's (2002) *paths of conocimiento* (paths of consciousness) lens allows me to uncover the wisdom that emerges from street vendors' adverse experiences as they rescript narratives of personal pain into healing, and community transformation. For vendors who are highly stigmatized in both law and practice and have limited access to health care and mental health services, street vending is life giving, even as at the risk of being unfree through arrest and imprisonment. These embodied narratives offer a new account of street vending beyond neoliberal understandings of entrepreneurship, where informal workers are seen as mere workers. Instead I analyze how street vendors create meaning around their practices remaking feelings of brokenness and sites of trauma into spaces of healing and transformation.

Ana Maria: "Vamos a seguir adelante"

Ana Maria grew up in a small town in Michoacán. Her dad was a *peluquero* and her mom a housewife. Ana Maria's mom began making her own *gordita de napas* [sweet bread] recipe in the hopes of selling it to generate extra income, but her father refused to allow it arguing, "What will people say if you are selling bread? They will say that I don't provide for you and the children." Ana Maria's mother rebelled and made the bread anyways, but only for her family to enjoy. The gordita recipe is a family treasure and she told Ana Maria, "daughter don't share this recipe with anyone." Ana Maria migrated to the U.S. and is living in the Valley where she is famed in the neighborhood of Pacoima for her gorditas, made from her mother's secret recipe,

which she sells Wednesday and Thursday outside of an elementary school, and every Sunday outside of the Santa María Iglesia Católica.

Ana Maria has nine siblings. Growing up Ana Maria was painfully shy because of experiences in her childhood and adolescence. In a society that was deeply embedded in anti-Blackness and anti-Indigenous sentiments, Ana Maria was keenly aware that in her community her skin color was not beautiful. When in public, Ana Maria noticed how everyone would compliment her younger sister, "*ay que bonita.*" By her sister's side Ana Maria felt so ugly: "She was white, and I am dark-skinned. She has light brown eyes and mine are dark brown." Although her sister was younger, she moved up two grades ahead. Since Ana Maria graduated at the same time as her younger sister, her siblings would taunt Ana Maria by calling her dumb. Ana Maria felt as though she was worthless. To make matters worse, Ana Maria's father had sexist views on women and education. He declined to pay for his two daughters to pursue higher education yet funded the studies of Ana Maria's brothers instead.

As her path to higher education was cut short, Ana Maria experienced an *Arrebato*, a state of despair and hopelessness. Her life became fragmented as her dreams of becoming something more were crushed by her father's sexist views. Ana Maria went into a *Coatlicue* state, where her emotional and physical well-being deteriorated drastically when she inadvertently caught the eye of a much older neighbor who started sexually harassing and assaulting her during a period of three years. Several times this older man would force himself onto her body. As he grabbed her tight and ran his hands all over her body, she would fight off his attack with all of her might. Her personality shifted, as she went from being a relatively happy person to an angry person. She confided how this took a toll on her health and caused her stomach to churn painfully:

> When I was 15 years old, I was sexually harassed from someone who tried to marry me. He was about 30 years old. I ran to my house. I almost couldn't get out of my house for nearly 3 years. It was driving me crazy. He tried to take me by force. And that generated fear, anger, stomach pain, and pain in my gallbladder. And that is how I developed stomach pain until I could no longer tolerate the pain, so they took out my gallbladder.

For Ana Maria, the emotional toll of years of sexual harassment and assault manifested itself not only in anger, but also in a fear of men, inability to look at people in the eyes, and in her physical illness. When Ana Maria reached the age of thirty, she experienced the path of a Call to Action, where she begged her father to let her travel to the US for a vacation with her brother and his family. For Ana Maria, this trip was like being set free, she extended her trip to three months and started working as a seamstress. Ana Maria met, fell in love, and married a Salvadoran man named Miguel.

Consequently, Ana Maria found herself back in a *Coatlicue* state, feeling so betrayed when she discovered that her husband Miguel *"se estaba portando muy muy mal"* [he was behaving very very badly], and he already had another family. Ana Maria had been married to Miguel in a church and now she felt stuck. Although she never imagined herself as a mother, she had three children with Miguel: two boys and a girl.

The important role of gorditas de napas made by her rebel mother came back full circle in Ana Maria's life. When her father died, her younger brother living in Mexico wanted to become a lawyer, and he asked Ana Maria for help. She was sewing and making clothing alterations from home, but that was scarcely enough to support her brother's studies. That's when she got the idea to bake her mother's gorditas, the same ones that her mother had been forbidden from selling. Ana Maria began selling the bread on the sidewalk outside of her church to help her brother become a lawyer. Through selling her baked goods, she overcame her fear of strangers, strange men in particular, because in vending she had to look at people in the eyes and heal the parts of

herself that were afraid of being abused outside of her home. It was out of necessity that she entered a *Coyolxaulqui* state where the broken parts of herself healed to mend from her trauma and become assertive, offering both her gaze and a smile to invite strangers to buy her baked goods.

Her husband Miguel took a job as a truck driver and after 15 years of marriage she experienced another *Arrebato*, when he came to tell Ana Maria he had fallen in love with another woman. Ana Maria believes that the men in her life are *mal formados* [poorly formed]; as she felt her world break apart, she resented that family members expected her to tolerate infidelity. She felt a Call to Action, a pathway towards breaking free from old patterns in her life. As Anzaldúa (2002) describes this stage, "You begin to define yourself in terms of who you are becoming, not who you have been" (560). Ana Maria threw out his clothes and told him to leave. She had little support during this time, as her parents-in-law and sisters-in-law could not understand why she was unwilling to share her husband. Her husband Miguel was helping financially for a period of time, but he stopped suddenly as a ploy to make her feel that she was dependent on him in order for her to take him back. Ana Maria shared her sentiments about shifting from becoming economically dependent to independent below:

> Now I had to make the bread with greater effort. Now it was for my children and for the living expenses. My husband helped me for three years, he would pay the rent and other living expenses. He later stopped helping so I said to my self—*ándale!* [come on] We shall work with joy and in the name of the Lord we will shall carry on. We have survived ten years since my husband left us. My daughter was 8 years when he left. My son was 10 years old and my other son was 14. And I said to them, "Young ones, your dad is leaving our house. He will visit you all and you all will be able to hang out with him but for now we will only be a family of 4. Nevertheless, *vamos a seguir adelante*" [we will press forward].

The passage above reflects her motivation to move on independently from her husband and also her deep spiritual devotion. Ana Maria's credits her courage to *"seguir adelante"* [move

forward] on her own to her faith. Ana Maria refused to play the role of submissive wife that was expected of her, and her mother's *gorditas de napas* recipe played a role in her rebellion. Although she was under a lot of financial stress, and there was hardly any food in her fridge, she relied on her faith in God and renewed her efforts in selling bread and sewing. For a period of time, she struggled to put food on the table, but miracles kept occurring and gave her the strength to persevere.

Here is an example of Maria recollecting the critical role that miracles played in helping her survive those difficult moments on her journey towards independence from her husband:

> Yes, I do have faith and I feel God's grace, that he is with me and will not abandon me. In one occasion my children came home and my oldest son opened up the fridge to look for something to eat and he says to me,— "Mom, there is no milk"—I said, "Oh, yes son, there is no milk, bread, rice, or tortillas but you know what son, I will wait until sunset and I will walk three blocks to where my sister lives so that she can lend me $20 so that we can buy milk and tortillas." He said, "Ok, mom." At that time, he was 16 years old. It was late now and by the time I came out of my house there was a vehicle parked right in front. I started to walk towards it, and it was a man asking me if I lived around here. I told him I did, and he let me know that someone told him that I fix jeans [alterations]—"Yes, of course I do."—"Well, I brought you five jeans when can you have them ready by? I leave for Mexico tomorrow at 8:00 am."—"That's fine, leave them here I will fix them for you." "How much will it be?"—5 jeans, $4 each pair, a total of $20. He said, "I will pay the cost now" and opened up his wallet. I no longer had to go to my sister's house. I came back into my house and I said to my son, do you know what just happened? And who do you think sent us that money?—"I don't know." God placed his hands on us. I didn't have to seek after your Tia Lupe. I have the $20 and will buy what we need. In those details and other, I have seen the works of the Lord and that he is always protecting us. And I tell my children, I want all of you to notice that the Lord sent us those $20. That is what has kept us rising to our feet with our heads held high and the trust that the Lord does not abandon anyone.

Ana Maria relied on her faith, her mother's bread recipe, vending bread on the sidewalk and sewing at home, but also on miraculous interventions to make it through the darkest of times. However, Ana Maria's pathway to *Coyolxauqui* is non-linear. *Coyolxauqui* is the Meso-American symbol that represents the "ongoing process of making and unmaking" (Anzaldúa

2002:20). As Ana Maria was struggling to remake her life, she cried alone and became depressed. The churning in her stomach returned, just as it had when she was sexually harassed and assaulted as a teenager. Ana Maria felt faint and she experienced painful cramps. She was hospitalized for three days and discovered that she had diabetes.

On becoming chronically ill, Ana Maria shared:

> …My husband left me, and I developed diabetes. That is all, and I have had it for 11 years. I felt awful, dizziness, my skin would itch a lot, and I would get cramps. They helped me control it and now I am managing my diabetes. I take pills, cut back on some foods and candy. Sometimes it goes up because the food is so good. These last 6 years I don't feel I have been stressed as much. I have a lot of faith and that helps me to be positive.

For Ana Maria, emotional pain is linked to the chronic illness in her body. Ana Maria returned to her mothers' sweet bread recipe to cope with her emotions, the stress, and depression that she still felt at times. In healing her wounds, through making bread, Ana Maria tapped into the creative powers and processes of *Coyolxauhqui* deep in her soul, allowing her to work through her intense emotions and traumas. Managing stress is important for Ana Maria to maintain her wellness. As Ana Maria said to me, "Sometimes I get a little depressed and I start making my bread. That makes me relax. I pick up a rhythm doing it and it relaxes me." In making the biscuits she vends; Ana Maria works through her intense emotions and traumas. For Ana Maria, the various steps she takes to make the bread is a healing praxis that carves out a space to create wholeness in her life.

As Ana Maria shares, baking bread to vend, while crucial to her economic survival as an undocumented street vendor, also has a medicinal quality that acts like a balm to sooth her depression away. In other words, the embodied process of creating is an outlet for her to deal with chronic illness and stress. For Ana Maria, making bread is a healing praxis that carves out a space to create wholeness in her life. The void that Miguel left inside of Ana Maria was filled

with her love for God, her children, and her community. Ana Maria said that some people looked at her with disgust, as though she was less than a person because she was a street vendor. However, Ana Maria refuses to feel shame. Through her informal work, she was able to fund the studies of two of her brothers in Mexico. She raised three children—ages 24, 22, and 20—each of whom is currently pursuing higher education. The shy young woman who was denied access to higher education had grown into a rebel woman selling her bread and caring for others with such a fearlessness that she was recruited to become a street vendor leader advocating for the rights of vendors in Pacoima—a predominantly working-class immigrant Latinx community. In the Los Angeles Street Vending Campaign, she has the respect of her colleagues who admire and listen to her voice.

Figure 10. Ana Maria with her fist up at a protest on International Women's Day in 2018.

Deborah: "My Depression Lifted…"

Deborah is a Black middle-aged woman and a single mom to four children, who are all adults now. She grew up in a middle-class family in the Crenshaw neighborhood of South Los Angeles. Deborah became a street vendor because she had made so much jewelry that she

needed to sell it in order to keep being able to buy more beads. Although she lives in the Valley, for the last eight years she vends in Leimert Park, a cultural landmark in Crenshaw that serves as not only a marketplace but as a sacred Black space of cultural and spiritual renewal.

Deborah's mother was a schoolteacher and a conservative woman who migrated from the South to Los Angeles. Growing up, she always saw vendors selling their goods near Slauson and Crenshaw, but she did not think much about those vendors and her mother would never take her to Leimert Park. As a child, Deborah was accustomed to vacations every summer and 8 presents just for her under the tree every Christmas. When the family went to the movies, they did not go to the mall in Crenshaw; they went to White neighborhoods to see the films. Deborah said that her mother had sheltered her children because this was her way to protect them from the violence associated with vices. Deborah graduated from high school in 1979 just as the crack epidemic was beginning in her community. By the time Deborah had her first-born, she was living in what she referred to as the "the Jungle" on La Brea and King, and there was increased policing, violence, and tension in the neighborhood.

During the 1992 Uprisings, Deborah experienced an *Arrebato*, when she was forced to move from Crenshaw, in South Los Angeles—where she had been born and raised—to the San Fernando Valley. Deborah was displaced in her desperation to protect her kids and raise them in an environment she perceived as less violent. She experienced the path of *Nepantla* where she went from living in a Black neighborhood to living in a predominantly Latinx neighborhood and having to adapt to being around a group of people with different customs, language, and ideologies. In her new environment, she had to become accustomed to being the only Black family. That isolation was hard, but Deborah has a big heart even though her personality is more reserved, she loves and cares deeply about people around her and in no time, she built

community with Latinx people. This process was facilitated by her children, as Deborah became pregnant with twin boys and as they got older and went to school, they formed friendships with Latinx children. Her children always brought other children home, and Deborah found that in addition to her kids she was caretaking for up to 10 children, so she became a foster parent. That is how her fourth child came into her life, her foster daughter.

About a decade ago, Deborah went through a series of devastating events that led her the *Coatlicue* depths of loneliness and despair where she battled chronic depression. First, she had a falling out with her foster daughter. Then, her hair braiding business that had sustained her died down because braiding was no longer a popular hair style. And finally, the housing crisis of 2008 hit home, and she was unable to pay the mortgage she had purchased with a subprime loan. Since then, Deborah has been fighting in court to hold on to her home. The culmination of these factors led Deborah into a deep depression. During this difficult time, Deborah found herself paralyzed and bed-ridden for weeks at a time.

Beading saved Deborah's life, as she explained, "You know, I don't know what it is. Getting into that creative zone. It takes my mind off all the things in my head. How I decided to make jewelry one day is I was watching "Basketball Wives" and I liked the earrings they were wearing." Deborah was pulled out of depression through what Gloria Anzaldúa identifies as a *Call to Action*, "You break free from your habitual coping strategies of escaping from realities you're reluctant to face, reconnect with spirit, and undergo a conversion" (545). Deborah was inspired to get out of bed for the first time in a long time to try to make those earrings. She continued, "I just started to walk around downtown, and someone said to go to the wholesale district. And there were so many swap meets in the alleys and I found this place where they sell costume jewelry really cheap." In Los Angeles, the wholesale district is called Santee Alley in

English, and *los callejones* in Spanish. Deborah continued, "I would buy many necklaces and take them apart to make earrings from the necklace components. My depression lifted." For Deborah, beading became an embodied pedagogy that helped her understand and utilize emotions as a tool for learning, connection, and transformation. Instead of suppressing emotions, Deborah felt her sadness, her paralysis end. This speaks to how even painful emotions can propel us into transformation. As Lorde (2007) writes, there are "ways to use [emotions] to fuel actions, actions that could alter the very circumstances of oppression feeding [those emotions]" (44).

Deborah is in the process of foreclosing on her home because of the subprime loan crisis. Since this process began, she has been battling chronic depression. I visited her one day after her court appearance and we talked about how she was feeling. She shared, "To get my mind off of what happened in court today I'll make jewelry. I feel strange if I don't get to make any for a time. It keeps me going and keeps me sane." Deborah laughed to make light of it and said, "Beading is my therapy, I'm a beadaholic."

Many street vendors struggle with physical health and mental wellness, and street vending often becomes a journey towards self-recovery. For Deborah, beading is medicine. She shared, "every week I need to make some new pieces, or the depression comes back. It takes my mind off of everything. I just shut the door and watch CNN while I pump out 5 to 10 pieces. I have a drawer where I put jewelry that I'm going to take apart." I interpret Deborah's need for taking jewelry apart to make new jewelry, as a way to physically manifest the healing cycle of *Coyolxauhqui,* who is in the constant state of being broken and remade anew. Anzaldúa (2002) describes this process as a way of "connecting the disparate parts of information from a new perspective, you re-member Coyolxauhqui in a new composition, temporarily restoring your balance and wounded psyche" (562). The physical act of tearing down and rebuilding through

intricate beadwork helped restore Deborah's mind, giving her temporary respite from the worries that ail her, but it was just the amount of reprieve she needed to keep going on. In the absence of affordable and accessible mental health services, Deborah found the process of creation is a way of healing her wounds and soothing her mind.

Like Deborah, others use chopping fruits, making buttons, and mixing ingredients as ways to heal their wounds and sooth their minds in the absence of affordable and accessible mental health services. Their narratives show that despite being physically and psychologically broken, street vendors find myriad ways to put themselves back together again, through the practices and spaces they embody.

Ronald: "You know I don't have much, but I can get the girls some shoes"

One of the Sundays, I interviewed a Black street vendor at Leimert Park named Ronald. His youngest daughter was vending alongside him. Ronald shares how being able to be present in his daughter's life is an additional benefit of street vending. He says, "My daughter's here with me. You know it [street vending] allows me to do that." Beyond sustaining himself and his family economically, street vending has allowed Ronald with opportunities to mend relationships that suffered during his *Arrebato*, a period where he was absent from his children's lives and struggling with addiction and incarceration. That period of time in Ronald's life was like living in the land of the dead. Shifting to his newfound freedom, was like waking up and putting his life back together again. On returning from the land of the dead, Anzaldúa (2002) writes:

> You've passed a turning point-decided not to drag the dead self into the present and future just to preserve your history. Instead you've chosen to compose a new history and self-to rewrite your autohistoria. You want to be transformed again; you want a keener mind, a stronger spirit, a wiser soul. Your ailing body is no longer a hindrance but an asset, witnessing pain, speaking to you, demanding touch. (559)

For Ronald, street vending is an opportunity to write a new history, an autohistory that requires his body and touch for the creative process of beading. For Ronald, beading is the integration of "bodymindsoul" (Anzaldúa 2002:554), where hands join mind and spirit to create. Ronald carried wounds from his own father's lack of attention, and through street vending and his hands-on parenting approach, he was like *Coyolxauhqu*i on the path of healing those childhood wounds. Ronald's beading practice is Spiritual Activism—he created collectivities and connections through wounds drawing out the creativity from the generations before and behind him. Ronald was like a "hero in a myth or fairytale, after an arduous struggle in the dark woods," and he returned, "bringing new knowledge to share with others in his community" (Anzaldúa 2002:563). As a father, he engaged with his two daughters by co-creating jewelry designs and vending to maintain a relationship with his daughters. It is also a way that he stayed connected to his own mother and worked to heal that fragmented relationship. As a cultural worker, Ronald promoted creativity and facilitated the expansion of a craft among three generations of his family. "Coyolxauqui's luz" (553) pulled Ronald away from his grief and the paralysis he experienced as a formerly incarcerated man. As a consequence, he brought that light to his children through his creative approach:

> I found an interesting way to do it. My mother, she helped design some of the bracelets and stuff. She does that. She helps me with that point. But you know, also I get my children and kids that aren't doing anything you know, I just get them to make a bracelet or something and let them do their own designs, and their own kinds, and I'll watch them and see what they do. And most of the time I let what they do go on the table or see what they're doing, and I twist that design and do it another way. Because you know they [kids] see things differently than I see things, and so I put the same materials in front of them and see what they do, so I get different ideas from what they do in that way.

In this passage Ronald describes how his designs are inspired by his children and the young people in his life. Creating in this way is a collaborative effort that reinforces feelings of

connectivity to the people around him. This method of collaborative creations is critical in fighting the legal stigma of incarceration and the injurious feelings of loneliness and isolation.

Through the creative skill of beading, Ronald breaks apart, reassembles, and reworks a new narrative for himself. Ronald believes in teaching his daughters beading because the act of beading jewelry works on the unconscious, it goes deep into the soul. He believes that by learning how to bead he teaches his daughters to have a strong sense of self and what they can accomplish in this world with their own two hands. He viewed sharing the skills of beading, as an activity that will help his daughters persevere in many aspects of their lives. In reference to his youngest daughter present with him, he described:

> She the one that's here now has actually done quite well. She's had about two or three designs that have actually sold, that people have . . . she's actually seen her work on other people. I just try to inspire her to continue it because it's a skill that is now onto her, that she can always use or fall back on, but she doesn't see it that way. Now it's just something our dad do; I don't want to make a bracelet I want to go play. But actually, she doesn't see the benefit of what she's actually doing until maybe one day in her life, it's like wow what Dad was taking me and is actually doing something that I'm using today. But actually, when she's older.

Ronald was not exploiting his children in forcing them to work. His approach was to encourage them to create, when they are interested, and allowing them to play with their friends when they are not interested. Although he recognized that right now, they may not see the skill they are learning as valuable, he believed that in the future, his daughters will look back on the lessons he had taught them on being self-reliant and using their skills to create, in order to ultimately help them nourish their wholeness.

He elaborated on his philosophy about how beading and vending benefits his daughters:

> My children also have the ability to create things themselves, and that people can appreciate it. It shows them that they can do this also. They have something in them that somebody else…that's attractive to other people. And that's one thing I like about it. It is instilling…to me…instills hope and dreams and desires in my children. Not even just for street vending, in their lives period, and their goals

> period. In their schooling. That they can achieve you know and that's been the biggest thing.

This passage demonstrates how street vending, the practice of creating and selling art, has transformed his relationships with his children. While vending is largely perceived to be an income-generating activity, Ronald demonstrated how vending is also informing his parenting practices. Beyond generating a supplementary income, the activity allowed Ronald to spend time with his family, and it gave each of them a chance to feel that their talents were acknowledged and valued within the community. In Ronald's view, vending creates a space for himself and his daughters to feel affirmed. His daughters will succeed in many aspects of their lives because they have learned that they are valuable, independent, and creative.

As a father, Ronald felt affirmed in being able to provide for his daughters. He was making up for the time he lost behind bars and felt great pride in being able to give them food and clothing. Ronald street vends to supplement his income and help support his children. He described his outlook:

> I personally, I'm not trying to shy away from my responsibilities or my child support, you know what I'm saying? I'm trying to help in any way I can to support my children. And so, this [street vending] has helped along the way to help provide not only for them but help me make it from one end to the month to the next and so forth.

As a formerly incarcerated Black man recovering from addiction, Ronald did not feel very good about himself. He was in a *Coatlicue* place of pain and isolation for a long time, but that shifted when he began making his creations and selling them. Suddenly, not only could he meet his family's needs, but also, the need he felt to be validated as a human being was finally being met.

Ronald shared how vending creates an opportunity for him to feel acknowledged as someone with talent: "To see other people appreciate my work. You know because if I have it on a table, there's something about it that I like, and I'm going to see who else likes it. And that's it,

the appreciation for what I have [jewelry]. The joy to see other people like what I have."

Regarding what street vending had done for Ronald, he summarized:

> It allows me to… Those shoes she actually got on [points to daughter's shoes], I bought those. I was able to buy those shoes, but if it wasn't for my street vending, I wouldn't have done it. I couldn't have done that. That's been the biggest support being able to go to their mother and say, here, it's not much, but, here. You know I don't have much, but I can get the girls some shoes. It's not much you know, but I can get you guys a little hamburger meat, a loaf of bread or something this week you know what I'm saying? Today, you know, I can do that for them. You know it's allowed me to do that, to be a father you know?

Although in this passage, Ronald was sharing how street vending afforded him with the ability to provide materially for his children, what he was also describing is how providing for them made him *feel* like a father and that gave him a strong feeling of pride.

For much of his life, Ronald was behind bars, and so in being able to meet his children's needs, he felt that he had finally become the kind of father he wanted to be. For Ronald, it took more than creating a life to be a father. To him, fatherhood entailed providing for that child and also being present and involved in that child's life. Ronald had dedicated himself to be a devoted father to his girls. He carried the wound of being a boy whose father was not emotionally attentive. Street vending was a vehicle that allowed Ronald to work through that hurt and ensure that he was the type of father that met the emotional needs of his children. That commitment to parenthood, moreover, extended beyond the material and was practiced in the day-to-day interactions that were facilitated through street-vending practices.

Ronald came to street vending as someone who had undergone difficult circumstances. Ronald was struggling with addiction, imprisonment, and the stigma associated with being in and out of prison. As a result, of these traumatic life experiences he felt broken and regarded his life as having little value. Through the process of becoming street vendors, Ronald and other vendors gained the ability to exercise their agency and independence, thus gaining the self-esteem in

being able to stand up for themselves and fulfill their obligations to themselves and to loved ones.

Figure 11. Ronald vending his bracelets at Leimert Park on a Sunday in July of 2013.

Street vending allowed Ronald to heal his wounds by maintaining a routine between going to buy his products and stopping at sobriety and therapy meetings, and then keeping his hands and mind occupied as he is making his jewelry. Ronald actively sought to align the "bodymindsoul" (Anzaldúa 2002:554) where transformation and healing take place. During Ronald's *Coatlicue* phase he developed strategies to escape the isolation he had previously experienced because of the stigma of incarceration (Alexander 2012). Ronald faced his "shadow-beast" (Anzaldúa 2002:553), the dark parts of himself, his addiction, allowing him to break out and reclaim his life as a father and creator. How many shops he went to in order to supply his

jewelry designs really depended on how much he was struggling with sobriety on that particular day. When it came to his routine for buying products, he elaborated, “I try to make that quick. I try to do it within an hour a day, but sometimes I may shop anywhere from 1 day to almost 4 days a week, up to 4 days a week.”

When he was struggling to stay sober, Ronald packed his week in with lots of shops in order to keep his hands and mind occupied during the day. And in the evenings, Ronald relaxed and gained inspiration with the process of creating jewelry. Ronald attested to how street vending and the opportunities it created had allowed him to stay sober:

> I shop at about five different Michael’s stores as well as different vendors downtown. So that’s like eleven stores that I actually [go to]. Some stores where I get some materials, I may spend 5–10 dollars on material then some stores the items all cost me 10 dollars and buy 3 or 3 items there so I may spend 30 dollars in a store. So, it happens over several days.

Surprised by the number of Michael’s stores he frequented, I asked him for specifics on which locations:

> They’re all downtown. I guess it’s more than that if I count all the Michael’s stores because I shop at about 5 different Michael’s stores depending on where I’m at. You know in the city I may hit a different Michael’s store. You know so I shop at about 4 or 5 different Michael’s stores along with another 5 or 6 vendors downtown so that’s like 11 stores I actually…

He surprised himself when he accounted for all the shops he went to and the number of hours he spent pursuing different beads, “Wow. About 10 hours. 10 to 15 hours a week of my time because I also take the bus, so that’s time consuming itself. More than that actually so I would say about 10 to 20 hours a week shopping.” Out of all the vendors I have interviewed, none went to 11 different locations to get the pieces they needed to make their product.

On average, street vendors in my study rely on 3 to 5 suppliers for their products. But for Ronald, who spent up to 20 hours a week collecting the materials of his trade, filling his day with

places to go to acquire beads to make his products kept him busy and moving around the city using public transportation throughout the day. On how he stayed on his path of sobriety, he emphasized his busy weekly and daily routines, where buying products, making meetings, and keeping his hands busy were a critical component to his own wellness. Through these acts, he "sweeps away the pain, grief, and fear" of his former life, thus "severing the chords that bound him to it" (Anzaldúa 2002:554). Ronald shifted his perceptions and beliefs by staying positive and looking to the future, insisting that it was his duty to his children and keeping a busy routine that accounted for this sobriety:

> I have my children, or I have appointments, or I go to a community center, Weber's Community Center. That's helped me with my sobriety, helped me maintain my sobriety. I get a lot of support. I also knit now you know so that's another skill that I have, I knit. Then I have my psychiatrist, my mental health issues that I deal with also. So, I try to get out at least 3 days a week. You know that's my goal and if I can, more.

Ronald's self-care manifests in filling his days with purchasing the materials to make his products and on meetings to help him cope with addiction and mental health challenges.

Anzaldúa (2002) writes, "Depression is useful-it signals that you need to make changes in your life, it challenges your tendency to withdraw, it reminds you to take action. To reclaim body consciousness tienes que moverte-go for walks, salir a conocer mundo, engage with the world" (553). Rather than withdraw into the temptation of despair and isolation, Ronald did not take his freedom lightly. He paid attention to his body's needs while moving throughout the city. Ronald healed his wounds by actively engaging with the world around him. On making his sobriety meetings and therapy, he shared, "Mondays and Wednesdays I try to set 4 appointments, but then also I have other things down at Weber's with the psychiatrist and my one-on-one group." In addition to all of these therapeutic and wellness activities, as well as creating jewelry and vending, he still needed to find more ways to keep his hands and mind occupied. Ronald did so

by knitting. He loved to knit and learn more difficult and intricate patterns. Currently his favorite technique was the challenging raspberry stich. He kept these knitted goods for himself or gave them away because as he self-consciously admitted, the knitted creations were special to him. Ronald then quickly rationalized his sentimentality by adding that there was not much of a demand for selling knitted products in perpetually sunny Los Angeles.

Ronald's testimonial reminds us that vending is essential to his economic survival and also his physical and emotional wellness. Ronald must prioritize vending: "Because it's so important to me along with all my other appointments, you know, but this is the only one out of my appointments that draws me an income. Sometimes I made but $3 a day you know, but I have to be out there in order for things to happen." This creative work also affirmed him as a human being. On the amount of time he put into street vending, he conceded, "Yeah, it's been time consuming you know and everything, but I enjoy putting the product. People call it art, and I enjoy doing the art. I enjoy creating something you know?" Ronald's embodied narrative acknowledges the healing power that creating has in improving one's life.

MariPosa: "I like to show my daughter that we're going to go out there and *chingarle*, because we can do it"

MariPosa, mother of two girls—ages 10 and 6 months—vended fruit, *aguas frescas* [fresh juice], toys, and jewelry in East Los Angeles. She is in her early thirties and of Salvadoran and Guatemalan descent but identifies as a Chicana. MariPosa encouraged her eldest daughter Nahui to vend because she wanted her daughter to have a strong sense of financial independence. MariPosa was in a complicated relationship with her children's father that meant in many respects, she had to rely solely on herself to sustain her daughters and her elderly mother. She saw street vending as a safety net because it was a skill-set she could fall back on no matter what happened with her children's father. In her view, a mother has to be responsible for her kids,

whereas a father does not. She explained, “even though the dad helps out, I need to have something because what if later on he leaves me or something. As a woman you still have to do something.” To MariPosa street vending teaches her daughters not to rely on a man to support you, rather to have a skillset where you can support yourself no matter what obstacles you encounter. Similar to Ronald, MariPosa blended her feminist stance around her street-vending practices into a pedagogical tool for her daughters. She shared, “I like making jewelry. I like doing all these things. I like to show my daughter that we’re going to go out there and *chingarle* [hustle], because we can do it. What my mom and my stepdad taught me. It probably wasn’t the perfect family but at least they taught me something.”

However, there were key differences around autonomy in how MariPosa was raising her kids in the street vendor life, versus how her mother Rosa, raised MariPosa in the life. MariPosa experienced *The Call*, the desire to break free of outmoded beliefs around vending as a means of survival. When MariPosa was a child vendor, she did not get to keep any of those funds for herself. She compared her experience as a child vendor to her daughter’s experience:

> I was basically, and it’s sad to say this to myself, I was more like a slave. Even though she [mother] was a very good person to me, not the perfect mom, we all have our own experience. But I felt like a slave at my mom’s house . . . waking up, going to school, selling fruit, then I could do my homework, then you could eat. It was a routine, every day, every day.

As a child vendor, MariPosa felt wounded by her parents and the lack of agency she had in her vending practice. With her daughters, her approach to street vending is about nurturing a consciousness amongst her daughters that is grounded in self-reliance, self-love, and feminism. This is distinct from the values her parents had instilled in her around street vending. MariPosa’s parenting approach began with open communication with her daughters and erasing the stigma around vending practices. She teaches her daughters that vending was not something to feel

ashamed about. On the contrary, it is a positive force to create agency, independence, and survival skills.

MariPosa was aware that people judge her harshly for bringing her children to vend and encouraging them to vend alongside her. She shared, “Some people will tell me, you shouldn’t do that with your kids, that is child exploitation. But I don’t see it like that. I am teaching my kids that *todo cuesta*” [everything has a price]. In her view, it was critical to engage children in conversations about the economic value of material goods and its link to labor, so that ultimately labor and by extension laborers are valued in this world. With her eldest daughter, she drew on vending as a pedagogical practice to teach her the value of financial independence and saving. In thinking of street vending as a pedagogical practice with her kids, she elaborated:

> Of course, if we are ever in a financial crisis or something, we can *chingarle* [hustle]. If we have a debt, we will sell and earn $100 and pay off our debt. We’re going to produce and produce. And she [daughter] will see that money doesn’t come easily. If she sees a dress she wants, let’s see if we can pay for it from our earnings. Everything has a price and to pay for it, they must vend. She even asks me, mom, do you have money on your card? Because I almost never use one. She will ask, does it have $10. No, maybe next time. Or we check how much we have sold. Okay *mija*, we can use $10 and save $10. She knows, when we can we will, when we can’t we won’t.

This passage exemplifies how MariPosa is teaching her children to have an awareness about earnings and savings, through her vending practice.

MariPosa is open with her girls about what material goods cost and how much they earn through vending. She shares:

> Sometimes my kids will say, I wish everything was for free. And I tell them straight out, I wish things were for free, too, like pampers, but everything has a price. Sometimes the parents are not doing their job in teaching their children this. When they come up to me, I try to teach them that, *mija, tienes que comprar con lo que está a su alcance* [live within your means].

By MariPosa being transparent about their finances, her girls are learning to have what Estrada (2016; 2019) calls "economic empathy," where the children of street vendors learn to be responsible in administering their finances.

In addition to instilling the value of hard work and fiscal responsibility, she wanted her daughters to have agency in their vending practices. Her eldest chose the items that she wanted to vend alongside her mother. The money that her daughter earns belonged to her, and she used her earnings to enjoy in academic enrichments and luxuries like soccer practice, Disneyland trips, and extra clothing. For MariPosa, it was very important that her eldest daughter be able to administer her own earnings. She contrasted her own experiences as a child vendor to her daughters' experiences:

> Yeah, at that time when I was small, I didn't have the luxury that my daughter has now. At home she has a chair to sit in, her own space where she can do her homework. She has her own little bed, five pair of shoes. Two boxes of clothes. Those to me are a luxury . . . She saves money to go to Universal Studios, things like that.

MariPosa believes that her daughter is gaining a sense of personal achievement in working, earning, and saving to meet her goals.

Additionally, MariPosa sees herself answering The Call through what Anzaldúa (2002) describes as:

> Your passion motivates you to discover resources within yourself and in the world. It prompts you to take responsibility for consciously creating your life and becoming a fully functioning human being, a contributing member of all your communities, one worthy of self-respect and love. You want to pursue your mission with integrity, to honor yourself and to be honored (557).

MariPosa's daughter Nahui was learning about self-reliance and self-love. She saw that the street-vending lessons that she had taught her daughter were paying off in how strong and

confident her daughter was becoming, especially when she compared her daughter's experience to her own.

When MariPosa was an adolescent, street vending was a source of shame and bullying:

> I didn't want my friends to know where I was selling fruit because I would get bullied at school. They would say, "Ya viene la Naranja" o "Ya viene la vendedora de fruta" things like that. My mom didn't get this. My mom was the type of woman that would say…" Okay, they tell you something, go kick their Ass." but no, that isn't a solution. Yeah, I could do that but that is not a solution. It's not going to get better; it's going to get worse because I'm going to school. All this started happening when I was in junior high at Belvedere. And I was hoping I would not end up going to Roosevelt or Garfield, because that's where all those same students were going to go. And I felt like my high school years were going to be terrible because they knew that I was a street vendor.

MariPosa felt shame about being a child street vendor. In order to instill pride in vending in her daughters' lives, MariPosa always takes both of her daughters with her to the Los Angeles Street Vending Campaign meetings. In part, her children join her out of necessity. MariPosa lacks access to childcare, so if she wants to organize, they must accompany her. However, MariPosa is intentional about her parental choices and her desire for her daughters to involved in justice for street vendors. MariPosa mothers to heal the wounds of her childhood. On a *Coyolxauhqui* path, MariPosa's parenting and street vending practices personify her desire to heal her past traumas. MariPosa was driven by "the wish to repair and heal, as well as rewrite the stories of loss and recovery, exile and homecoming, disinheritance and recuperation, stories that lead out of passivity and into agency, out of devalued into valued lives" (563).

MariPosa is a prominently known leader in the campaign. For example, she starred in a music video called "Coyote Hustle" with the Latin Grammy Award-winning band Quetzal where she played the role of herself, a street vendor who relied on comedy and dry wit to inform others of her humanity. Having observed Nahui, MariPosa's daughter, grow from a 5-year-old to a pre-teen in the movement, I can attest to how Nahui is proud of her street vendor lineage. Nahui was

actively engaged and carried her protest sign with pride and a huge smile, all the while understanding that street vending is not a crime. Rather, it is an honorable profession that both her mother and grandmother have engaged in for decades. Nahui asked her mother, MariPosa, to vend outside her junior high school in East Los Angeles. MariPosa shared:

> I'm very happy because now, in 2018, kids are very open about it. It's awesome. I wish my years were like that where you could be open, and you didn't need to be ashamed of what you do. I was scared to get bullied, I was scared to get my ass kicked or they would pull my hair. It was something all the time. A lot of kids now embrace it. Even my daughter Nahui. We ain't ashamed. I would ask her, Nahui. Are you sure you want me to sell because I don't want you to go through the same crap that I went through?

MariPosa elaborates more about her conversation with her daughter on vending in front of Nahui's school, she says, "I ask her, you're not going to be embarrassed or ashamed with your friends? And she says no, I tell them that you sell stuff and they are looking forward to buying from you and I say, well that's cool. I wouldn't sell in front of the school if that embarrassed her but at the same time, she doesn't care." MariPosa did not make the connection that it was her own involvement and prominence in the Los Angeles Street Vending Campaign that had caused that cultural shift in her community. As a street vending activist, MariPosa had successfully changed the narrative about street vendors and created a protective barrier shielding her daughter from stigma. Through MariPosa's fearlessness in fighting to bring awareness to street vendors' humanity, a whole generation of young people in the neighborhood have been exposed to vending as a source of community pride. The seeds MariPosa has sewn in this movement have blossomed—as Nahui has—into a young girl who is challenging stigma around vending in her own right.

Figure 12. MariPosa leads a breakout group accompanied by her daughter Nahui, who listens intently and sits next to her mom, during a Town Hall at the Maya Angelou High School in June 2016.

Caridad: "I feel like a woman, like a human being"

Caridad identifies as Mexican and is in her late 50s. As a 6-year-old, Caridad was a street vendor selling tamales on buses in Mexico to support her elderly and ailing mother. Not knowing about pregnancy prevention, Caridad became a mother as a 16-year-old; within a short time period, she had three girls. Caridad reconstructed her memory of past trauma, and her narrative gives insight into how street vending became a meaningful and liberatory practice for her. Recalling a stage of *Arrebato* in her life, she described, "…I had bad luck because my daughters' father would hit me and humiliate me…" Caridad's mother worried for her daughter: "she saw how he beat me, and after one episode when he used a stick, my mother intervened, "*hija*, go to Los Angeles to visit your sister." Physically and emotionally, Caridad's body was broken, she had experienced fragmentation. In 1998, while on a presumed vacation in LA, Caridad explained what happened:

> I experimented with liberty and I saw that things here were very different. My sister took me dancing, she took me to *discotecas* [dance clubs], and I saw that I was equal to men. When it was time to leave, I decided I wouldn't go. My sister cautioned me "he [husband] will kill you," but I didn't care, I was earning my

> own money and I knew my husband would provide economically for my daughters… My sister taught me how to fix myself up, and my nieces would tell me, "You look beautiful, Tía."

In this passage, Caridad is describing a *Nepantla* stage, where she is introduced to a new world, where she experiences greater equality between the sexes, contrary to her old way of being controlled by her husband.

In learning to style her hair and makeup and through experiencing the joy of dancing, Caridad is gaining autonomy over her body and nourishing her spirit through self-care. For Caridad, these acts are not about vanity, but about self-recovery. As Anzaldúa (2002) writes on the *paths of conocimiento*, "In nepantla, we undergo the anguish of changing our perspectives crossing a series of cruz calles, junctures, and thresholds, some leading to a different way of relating to people and surroundings and others to the creation of a new world" (310). As Caridad's narrative shows, she has learned to relate to herself and the world in a new way.

In *Epistemology of the Brown Body*, Cindy Cruz (2001) writes, "The most profound and liberating politics come from the interrogations of our own social locations, a narrative that works outward from our specific corporealities" (659). For Black and Latinx street vendors, the body is the target of violence. In a carceral state where legal violence is the law of the land, street vendors' bodies are an ongoing site of trauma, but vendors' embodied narratives reveal how the body is also a vehicle for healing. For Caridad, earning her own money, allowed her to gain autonomy in many other ways. Caridad was able to buy clothing, makeup, and go dancing. On the surface, these may seem like superficial things, but Caridad was denied the agency to make choices over her body for most of her childhood and adult life.

Caridad described earning a living and the material things it facilitated as a critical part of her gaining her sense of self, her independence, and establishing her autonomy on her journey towards independence:

> As I always say, some come here for an American dream, but not me. I didn't come for an American dream. I came out of necessity to establish myself as a person. It is thanks to this country that I feel like a woman, like a human being. I learned to be a woman because in Mexico I was an animal doing what others said. Now I live independently off of what I do [street vending], and what I have done without having to account to anyone.

Caridad directly challenges the rhetoric of the "American dream." This is because Caridad understands that this dream is elusive for immigrants, especially undocumented immigrants like herself. Caridad came to this country, not dreaming, but rather with her eyes wide open to the economic reality that she would not attain a better station in life. As a child in Mexico, she had been a street vendor and now as an elderly woman in the US she remained a street vendor.

Although Caridad renounces the American Dream in the passage above, she also expresses the complex emotions and inherent contradictions of being an undocumented immigrant in relation to the U.S. nation. When Caridad says above, "It is thanks to this country that I feel like a woman, like a human being," I interpret this as Caridad expressing the *Nepantla* stage she entered when arriving here and finding herself torn between two ways: the person who she was in Mexico and the person who she was becoming in the US. Caridad came to the U.S. to escape an abuser who was eventually going to kill her. In other words, Caridad found life here and created a new world for herself, despite legal violence and the persistent attempts to eliminate her. For Caridad, this new world is one of freedom and sovereignty over her body. In this world, Caridad earns a living of her own accord, answering to no one. Moving across borders gave her the opportunity to be autonomous and wholly independent from an abuser.

Upon her transition to becoming a taco vendor, Caridad was on the *Coyolxauhqui* path, aptly named after the Mesoamerican lunar goddess that continually seeks wholeness. Caridad never had access to a formal education, therefore she celebrated the knowledge she gained when coming to the US and learning to navigate and make a living in the vast city of Los Angeles. She shared the affirming qualities that her path towards gaining knowledge as a street vendor has been:

> I didn't know how to read or write because I didn't go to school, so for me it was a satisfaction to learn to read by figuring out the bus routes… I have educated myself in this business, I know exactly the quantity of meat and vegetable to put on each taco, and what to charge for it, so that my customer is happy, and I make a profit . . .

Vending in the U.S. allowed Caridad to learn to add and subtract, something that made her feel proud and accomplished. Upon learning enough to navigate the city and run her business, Caridad found wholeness and independence brought on by street vending. Caridad embodied the goddesses "symbol for reconstruction and reframing, one that allows for putting the pieces together in a new way" (Anzaldúa 2002:20).

Street vending helped to nurture Caridad's sense of autonomy. She articulated what she learned through her vending life experience: "my values matter, my ideas matter, for me it is a satisfaction." Through autonomous language in her embodied narrative, Caridad tells her narrative on her own terms: "creating a new description of reality and scripting a new story" (hooks 1994:123) that transforms indignity into audacious pride. In earning a living and gaining independence in deciding how she administered her earnings and her time; Caridad came to see herself as a human being. Street vending became a way for Caridad to establish her economic independence and gain the self-esteem and self-worth that she had lost during years of domestic abuse.

Despite the healing transformation in her personal life, Caridad is keenly aware of the precariousness of her situation as both a criminalized immigrant and street vendor. Having experienced in the flesh what it means to be undocumented and working in a highly racialized and heavily policed industry, Caridad asserted, “I am conscious that in this country I am nothing and nobody.”[37] Here Caridad is referring to the way that her identity as an undocumented person and a street vendor—two categories that mark her as criminal—strip her of both rights and personhood. As such, Caridad experienced state-sanctioned legal violence in the form of being verbally abused, having her things confiscated, and being chased away by the police. For years, she daily faced the ever-present threat of arrest, deportation, and fines. But Caridad was not content to stand there with her arms crossed. In Chapter Five, I share how Caridad’s became the instrumental spark that lit the Los Angeles Street Vending Campaign.

Conclusion

Dominant representations of street vendors as entrepreneurs are rooted in abstractions of street vendors’ lives that present them as mere workers and model neoliberal subjects distorting and silencing street vendors’ embodied experiences. Almost every street vendor I spoke to had a story of chronic illness, disability, addiction, depression and anxiety that they associated with traumatic events they had accumulated throughout their lived experiences with war, migration, racism, xenophobia, policing, sexual assault, and domestic abuse. Black and Latinx street vendors express the trauma of legal violence and reveal how this violence has real, material impacts on their mental and physical wellbeing. Yet, they persist in telling embodied narratives

[37] As described in Chapter Three, financial struggles led her to try to refinance her home to lower her mortgage payments, her social security number did not pass the extra layers of screening. Because the bank saw her as a “nobody,” she was evicted from her home, along with her children and grandchildren, losing her entire investment.

about what it means to be a Black or Latinx street vendor in Los Angeles. I write street vendor narratives through a *paths of conocimiento* framework to share embodied stories of how feelings of brokenness are remade into alternative spaces of hope, brilliance and radical possibility. I discuss that radical possibility in Chapter Five, where I argue that street vendor leaders resist legal violence through abolitionist marketplaces that mobilize self-care, radical consciousness, and community-care to fight laws that normalize violence against them. Cross-racial and spatial alliances centrally inform the success of the Los Angeles Street Vendors Campaign.

CHAPTER FIVE: ABOLITIONIST MARKETPLACES: EXAMINING STREET VENDING AS A POLITICAL PRAXIS

Chapter Five argues that street vendors are placemakers and powerful urban actors often overlooked and misunderstood by scholars of 21st century cities, particularly in Los Angeles. This chapter is inspired by the liberatory and abolitionist imaginaries of street vendors that emerge and are intentionally regenerated despite landscapes of legal violence, where unfreedom persists. This chapter draws on Black and Latinx geographies to explain how Black and Latinx street vendors' sense of place builds what I theorize as "abolitionist marketplaces," where vendors create economies of resistance that challenge carceral and immigration regimes and remake sites of terror into joyful celebrations of their ethnic-racial identities. I explore this topic through the lens of abolitionist geographies by centering how street vendors make meaning and create beauty out of difficult circumstances through what I theorize as abolitionist marketplaces.

I define abolitionist marketplaces as the spaces that form when Street Vendors of Color congregate, oppose unjust laws and create economies that generate opportunities and circulate resources that are by, and for the betterment of Communities of Color. Abolitionist marketplaces are necessary because of the deep structural inequalities I have written about in previous chapters, that exclude Street vendors of Color from nearly all social institutions—employment, education, housing, and medical care. I reveal how street vendors' abolitionist imaginaries remake sites of state-sanctioned and community-sanctioned legal violence. The instances I examine demonstrate three ways in which street vendors enact these practices: self-care, radical consciousness, and community-care.

These findings challenged me to rethink street vending beyond neoliberal understandings of entrepreneurship, and how this practice serves as a political praxis. I take lessons from Black and Latinx geographies (Gilmore 2017; Johnson 2013; Johnson and Lubin 2017; Lara 2018;

McKittrick and Woods 2007) specifically focusing on Gilmore's concept of abolitionist geographies in order to situate my study of how Black and Latinx street vendors remake sites of legal violence into abolitionist marketplaces. I theorize the term abolitionist marketplaces to advance a new framework for analyzing how Black and Latinx street vendors work across differences to build critical consciousness and create economies that hold radical possibilities. Therefore, this chapter highlights how Black and Latinx street vendors' abolitionist imaginaries emerge, in order to challenge legal violence that for three decades has threatened street vendors' ability to stay free, to remain housed, and to keep families and vending communities together.

Abolitionist Marketplaces: Self-Care

How do street vendors create abolitionist marketplaces in the face of persistent legal violence? One way was by transforming parks and sidewalks into cultural and political sites of empowerment. As I mentioned earlier, abolitionist marketplaces promote self-care. I draw on Woman of Color feminisms to define self-care as finding alternative ways of healing and wholeness (Anzaldua 2002; hooks 1989; Lorde 2007). This can include the creative processes of making products to vend, the creation of alternative wellness centers in the marketplace that permit the exchange of ideas, remedies, and services. Almost every street vendor I spoke to had a story of chronic illness, disability, addiction, depression and anxiety that they associated with traumatic events they had accumulated throughout their lived experiences with war, migration, racism, xenophobia, policing, sexual assault, and domestic abuse.

Black and Latinx street vendors I spoke to share a unique perspective that vending is part of self-care and therapy for vendors with limited access to health care and mental health services. The work of self-care occurs not only in private space, as street vendors create their goods and services, but also in abolitionist marketplaces that foster self-care in public urban spaces where

street vendor leaders organize their fellow vendors in the struggle to decriminalize street vending. Street vendor leaders facilitate meetings at their vending sites, and this form of community organizing and activism, is as much about self-care, as it is about economic survival and a community's struggle to exist. When street vendor leaders facilitate meetings with fellow vendors on sidewalks, parking lots, and parks, these meetings are described as restorative in that they allow street vendors to recover individual and collective hope, that is sometimes lost through the overwhelming legal violence they experience. Organizing meetings in the park became a critical aspect of self-care that mobilizes political action to transform street vendors relationships to each other and legal policies. The story of Humberto exemplifies how organizing is a part of self-care. In 2014, Humberto suffered a tremendous loss when his daughter Giselle, also a vendor and mother of two, was brutally murdered along with her youngest son during a home invasion. Giselle was survived by her devoted husband, eldest son, and adoring father.

Figure 13. Humberto and his grandson regularly go to tend to Giselle's gravesite and give her updates on the campaign and I am invited to join them at least once a year.

Humberto shares that in the absence of access to quality mental health services to cope with this loss, he finds organizing to be therapeutic and vital to his mental well-being. Humberto says:

> All of us poor people [street vendors] have a story. Some sadder than others. We carry a cross, all of us. Some of our kids or in gangs or on drugs. And sometimes you can't do anything about it. In spite of this luchamos and we want to help others. And you know what, maybe we are egotistical, but this help that you give is part of your therapy. With this you are helping yourself. This is what happens to me. God helps me through this… Helping with this, will help me forget a little about what's happening to me. Understand? This is therapy for me!

For Humberto, coming together with other vendors on a weekly and sometimes daily basis has been a healing and restorative practice for him. His efforts towards justice are in honor of Giselle, who suffered so much as a young mother and street vendor constantly running from police while she worked vending in Santee Alley with her two little ones beside her. Humberto believes that if Giselle was alive today, she would be fighting beside him in the campaign, therefore every meeting, every action, and each win, is one step closer to justice for Giselle.

These abolitionist marketplaces also facilitate a joyful celebration where visual productions like drumming and dancing help affirm racial-ethnic identities and redefine family and home. As discussed before, many street vendors suffer from chronic illnesses and experience isolation through a lack of social and familial support, so the sidewalk, parking lot, and parks and the relationships that Black and Latinx people create become meaningful sites of hope. As George Lipsitz (2011) writes, "…Black negotiations with the constraints and confinements of racialized space often produce ways of envisioning and enacting more decent, dignified, humane, and egalitarian social relations for everyone " (6). Below, Jeri reveals the healing qualities of "fellowshipping" facilitated through abolitionist marketplaces. She specifically references how being around other people, in communion near the drum circle is a part of her self-care, which she lives out through the collective gathering that occurs in public space.

> I was very sick and so I was working and doing a lot of things, working a lot of hours a day—overworking. And so I was on the job and then I had to go out sick and so after I was out for a year my job was removed from the budget so I had to think about, when I got ready to pick myself up and stand up and get on my feet

again, what I could do now. So that kind of motivated me to get into the buttons. I'm creative, I love creating things so yeah. So that's what I love about being here in the park on Sunday. I love the culture. It's religious for me babe. I enjoy the drums. I feel them in my spirit. So, I'm encouraged out here every Sunday. And so, I like to sell, but I like to connect with people more so that's what I do a lot of and I'm always talking. But it's a lot of love in that circle and I don't know for me it's like a Black family reunion every weekend. You know all the people getting together, you know folks barbecuing, and bringing their family, and everybody talking and fellowshipping and having fun together. Yeah, I grew up in a big family and we always had family reunions, so this is what this park represents to me. It is a family reunion for me every week. So, I'm loving it you know? Because I have a huge family, but me and my 2 daughters moved out here and nobody else is out here in my family so yeah, I miss my family, so this is my family.

Figure 14. Vending nearby the sounds of the drum circle at Leimert Park every weekend is described as a religious experience and family reunion.

In the excerpted quote above, Jeri describes the healing and spiritual aspects of abolitionist marketplaces, which she describes as a "Black family reunion," where she is made to feel whole again through a Black sense of place that is created at the park every weekend when she gathers with others. Self-care for Jeri happens through human connection, "fellowshipping," to use her own words. For Jeri, self-care is generating through the familial bonds that occur in abolitionist marketplaces. The feeling of not being alone, and of having a chosen family in the absence of Jeri's blood relatives, is more important than the money she generates at the park.

Money is fleeting for street vendors at the park. Some days you earn it and other days you do not, but what being in that space does for Jeri in terms of helping her feel connected through a "family reunion" is precious beyond compare.

Abolitionist Marketplaces: Radical-Consciousness

Street vendors create abolitionist marketplaces because they reimagine sites that produce unfreedom as liberatory spaces. Rather than experiencing their sites of vending merely as sites of economic exchange, street vendors understand them to be schools—where radical consciousness develops, and hidden histories are revealed. Abolitionist marketplaces produce radical consciousness through the wisdom that emerges when visual culture and products and services blend with critical reflection and dialogue amongst street vendors. For example, when I asked Black and Latinx street vendors what these urban parks and sidewalks mean to them, all spoke about how the spaces help strengthen their families, communities and ancestral histories. Their work as street vendors has allowed them to reclaim their identity and learn about Women of Color feminisms to move them towards social justice.

This can be seen in Caridad's narrative, which as Chapter Four described, centers on her experience as someone who received no formal education and is a domestic abuse survivor. She learned how to read and count by street vending in the U.S. Upon reflecting on what learning math and reading did for her, Caridad answers, "my values matter, my ideas matter, for me it is a satisfaction." The more Caridad learned as a street vendor, the more her radical consciousness developed, until she became intolerant to injustice. Learning nurtured Caridad's Woman of Color feminism. After years of having her things confiscated, Caridad was the first person to go knocking on East Los Angeles Community Corporations' door in 2008, to demand they do something about LAPD harassing her. From Caridad's perspective, if she was no longer willing

to allow her husband to lay hands on her, she certainly was not going to continue to allow the police to chase, abuse, and confiscate her products. She had enough! Caridad went knocking on East Los Angeles Community Corporation's (ELACC) door, a non-profit in her neighborhood specializing in community and economic development and demanded that the non-profit take action in stopping the police harassment of vendors like herself. In doing so, Caridad was the spark that burned into a full-scale movement nearly a decade later.

Over the years, I have heard Caridad speak at dozens of protests and meetings. Caridad tells her story as a survivor and she always starts her speech by saying something like, "I didn't come for an American dream." During Caridad's *Spiritual Activism*, she engages in reflective dialogue with the audiences and denounces the American Dream by delivers those words, sometimes in a righteous fury yelling into the microphone, megaphone, or my audio recorder. Often, in her discourse she will repeat the phrase multiple times, "*Como les vuelvo a repetir, yo no vine por el sueño Americano*." Caridad does not care who is in the audience—if it is Councilmember Jose Huizar or my students at UCLA—she wants audiences to understand that she emphatically rejects the dream.

Caridad's discourse reveals the radical consciousness that can arise in abolitionist marketplaces. Her anti-American Dream stance is important to note, because in it, Caridad is challenging the neoliberal rhetoric of the "American Dream," that many Latinx immigrants hold dear (Chavez 2008; Dávila 2008; Harvey 2007). The emotion she brings to her discourse, recalls Audre Lorde's (2007) words: "Anger is loaded with information and energy . . . Focused with precision, it can become a powerful source of energy serving progress and change" (127). As a *Spiritual Activist*, Caridad challenges legal systems of violence that uphold racism, xenophobia,

and patriarchy. Caridad remakes the negatives forces in her life into spaces of transformation with radical possibility.

Through Caridad's personal journey and the process of the campaign, she became a leader whose vision for freedom extended beyond herself and to the larger community of street vendors in Los Angeles and then all of California. Here, it is useful to consider Lipsitz's (2011) writings on "spatial imaginaries" (19). Whereas the White spatial imaginary promotes privatism and localism, Caridad advances a "democratic and egalitarian ethos" of the Latinx spatial imaginary (Cahuas 2019a; Muñoz 2016). Caridad shows the power of the *Coyolxauhqu*i state—through her process of self-recovery she came to value herself as a person, someone with values, and ideas. Caridad became someone who would not tolerate abuse and injustice for herself or her collective community. Despite how she expresses being seen as "nothing and nobody," Caridad *knows* she is somebody. Caridad's story shows us how a woman who learns her value can enact change on multiple levels and across multiple struggles.

Deborah shares a related story about what she learns from being at Leimert Park—a Black cultural center in the city. She says:

> It's a good thing being Black. It shows me how important it is to be Black in this society, even when we are not liked. I'm learning stuff, as far as why we shouldn't use certain words, being Black and being in a culture that's been suppressed from us. Black Wall Street. I learned a lot in Leimert Park. Black history was very vaguely taught in school. I'm learning about things about our history, what products to use as a Black person. I'm finding myself is how I look at it.

Abolitionist marketplaces foster a political praxis by exposing street vendors to ancestral histories in ways that affirm their racial-ethnic identities. Abolitionist marketplaces embody the strategies and sensibilities Lipsitz (2011) describes as the Black spatial imaginary, that guides "efforts to turn segregation into congregation, to transform divisiveness into solidarity, to change

dehumanization into rehumanization" (19). Caridad and Deborah's narratives highlight the radical consciousness that can arise in abolitionist marketplaces. Their stories reveal how abolitionist marketplaces are bridges to move from bondage to liberation, from isolation to unity, from a split bodymindspirit to a reclaimed wholeness.

Figure 15. Deborah arrives early at Leimert Park on Sunday mornings because she loves to take her time setting up her jewelry displays with care.

On what it means to vend at Leimert Park, Deborah remarks, "Just being around Black people, I miss being around my people. I like it and it feeds my soul. When they play the drums in the drum circle each week it does something to my soul and I learn what it means to be a Black person. Things that were in a sense hidden from us when I was growing up, I'm learning about now." In other words, this alternative space is like a site of learning, where Deborah feels nourished and revitalized whenever she is in that space. What I want to foreground here is how these spaces grant street vendors opportunities to heal the severed parts of themselves that became broken through failed educational systems that do not adequately teach Black history. Deborah is learning about the brilliance and beauty of Blackness as an adult at Leimert Park. As Deborah learns about the ancestral history and culture of Black people in diaspora, she confronts

the oppression she experienced as a working poor, Black, single mother, in order to become whole again.

Working at Leimert Park becomes part of Deborah's political praxis, as she works with other street vendors towards social transformation by healing oneself and community from violent, intricately connected power systems like colonialism, sexism and xenophobia and channelling one's pain and anger into social justice activism. Analyzing how Deborah's articulates the political significance of Leimert Park, through a *paths of conocimiento* framework it becomes clear that building knowledge in the marketplace answers the imperative of putting *Coyolxauhqui* together again. At Leimert Park, vendors gain a Black sense of place where personal and collective stories are uncovered that raise consciousness, hope, and prayer.

Street vending helps restore racial-ethnic identities by creating sites of knowledge where wholeness and healing can occur. On the healing power of personal stories, Anzaldúa writes, "they depict your struggles, recount your losses, re-ignite your hope for recovery, and celebrate the workings of the soul that nourish us with visions" (562). Being surrounded by the collective stories of other Black vendors allowed Deborah to reclaim wholeness. For Deborah, coming to Leimert Park to vend, is not only about economic survival. Sundays at Leimert Park are like going to church for Deborah. She elaborates, "Yes, Sunday you hear RBB music, then the Reggae music, and then comes the drums in the afternoon. Everyone looks forward to it. It does something for you if you're in tune to your spirituality. Sometimes I hear choir music when they play." What Deborah and many of the other vendors describe, is how the experience of being in a Black space congregating on Sundays is *Spiritual Activism*, it nourishes the soul as a restorative practice, where wounded people can lay down their pain and be made whole again. Both beading and vending at Leimert Park are a part of maintaining Deborah's mental and spiritual wellness.

Deborah presents a vision of street vending, as a collective of Black people who redefine what it means to be Black, on their own terms.

MariPosa's identity is complex, because although she is Central American, she was born in Mexico City when her parents made their journey north fleeing Civil Wars. Rosa, MariPosa's mother, refuses to speak about El Salvador and her experiences during the war. This silence around Rosa's identity as a Salvadoran has left a void in MariPosa's life, which she has filled through her connection to other Chicanx people who participate in *danza* (Aztec dancing). MariPosa, like Deborah, describes street vending as a place where her radical consciousness develops by uncovering hidden histories and recovering the missing parts of one's identity. MariPosa's main source of income is selling cut fruit, but she also vends aguas frescas (fresh squeezed juice) when she participates in *danza* at Lincoln Park on the weekends. MariPosa not only goes to Lincoln Park to vend, but also to connect with her ancestral history and seek out friendships of support. MariPosa, draws on *danza* as a spiritual tool to cope with the emotional wounds of racial and gendered oppression in her daily life. MariPosa vends and dances at the park, and through these collective actions she has found a spiritual home.

MariPosa's journey to *danza* began when she and her mother Rosa were prohibited from attending mass by a Catholic priest who incorrectly assumed MariPosa and her mother were trying to vend. In actuality they were there for Mass. This experience of community-sanctioned legal violence gave MariPosa an aversion to organized religion, although she still reluctantly considers herself as Catholic. During a low point in MariPosa's life as a teen runaway she found a new spiritual home when an older woman housed her and invited her to practice *danza* at Lincoln Park near *Plaza de la Raza.* On MariPosa's first time experiencing danza, she shares:

> As soon as I got out of the car, I heard the drums and I thought, "what is that it's so cool!" I was never involved in anything like that. Just parties and drinking and

> stuff like that. And she said, "this is the real Aztec dancing." So, I got really excited and I felt like chills all over. It was literally calling me. So, she said, "if you want to dance with them, go ahead and check it out. Just raise your hand and they'll call you in." I immediately threw off my shoes and joined in. Since then I have never quit *danza.*

MariPosa elaborates further on what *danza* means to her spiritual community and what it means for her as a site of learning and self-recovery.

> It's kind of like their own spirituality. I like it because you do not have to pray to a specific saint like Catholics do. You get close to nature of what we're living right now. We are connecting with mother earth. We want to feel the son. As Catholics were praying to a statue but they haven't done anything for us. I'm not against it, but I have done that so many times and I would still get abused [sexually abused by other street vendors as a teenager, as discussed in Chapter Three]. And I've never gotten anything. And so, when I go outside and dance, I feel better, I'm feeling something. Connecting to my culture, mother earth, mother nature, knowing where I come from, passing it on to my kids. Sharing it with my kids because I dance with both of them. It's something more. Connecting to my people. Learning how to make *tortillas de elote.* It has been more of a learning for me. I learn how to take care of myself with medicine. How to work with plants.

MariPosa describes how street vending at Lincoln Park allows her to gain a radical consciousness through learning alternate ways of healing and coping with trauma, illnesses, and mental health challenges brought on by complications during labor and post-partum depression.

For an undocumented street vendor like MariPosa, learning about alternative herbal remedies is often her only access to health care. The added benefit of this knowledge is that she perceives herself and her daughters as gaining ancestral knowledge that affirms her racial-ethnic identity. For the most part, MariPosa feels accepted, although occasionally some of the *danzante* women have called MariPosa names because she is of Central American and not Mexican descent. While that bothers MariPosa, she does not let that stop her from participating because dancing gives her joy and makes her feel free. MariPosa smiles as she describes how upon hearing the drums, she gets excited and feels chills all over her body. MariPosa shares that no

matter how difficult things are in her life, she feels better when she takes off her shoes and joins in the dancing.

For the past 19 years, she has continued to practice *danza* at the park, alongside her two young daughters. At the park, she can vend her *aguas* (fresh juice) freely, because her fellow *danzantes* support her and many other street vendors. She does not have to fear that the other dancers will try to eliminate her from the space like the priest from so long ago. On how her spiritual home is a site of learning with spiritual and economic ties to other danzantes, MariPosa reflected:

> To me practice [dancing] is important because that is where I get some of my income. I love *danza*. And I love their support. And they always say, "MariPosa, you always have the best aguas!" For me it's a happy day. I like pleasing them. I don't sell a lot. I offer my aguas frescas for a $1–$3, I'm cheap. I should sell them for more maybe, but why? They're supporting me and I'm making them healthy.

Through an abolitionist marketplace, MariPosa has found a spiritual outlet where she gains a radical consciousness and feels whole again through danza, where the relationships she has garnered with other *danzantes* are more important than maximizing her profits. Similar to Jeri's experience, MariPosa described abolitionist marketplaces as spaces that create a Chicanx or Latinx sense of place. For MariPosa, this site is a celebratory one—as she dances to recover herself and redefine her ethnic identity on her own terms. In this abolitionist marketplace, MariPosa celebrates that she is a street vendor capable of providing her community with nourishment. At Lincoln Park MariPosa revels in her identity as someone who honors her ancestors through both her vending and spiritual dancing practices.

Abolitionist Marketplaces: Community-Care

Being able to practice healing and self-care opens them up to the development of radical consciousness that, in turn, has moved all of the street vendors in my study toward a vision of

community-care. I define community-care as enacting practices and strategies that privilege the communal well-being over the individual by circulating capital, goods, and services within their community in order to ensure that even the most marginalized among them are supported and cared for. During my fieldwork, all of the street vendors referred to the importance of prioritizing the collective well-being, over individual profits.

At Leimert Park in the summer of 2013, I observed Jeri, a Black street vendor in her early 60s who sells buttons at Leimert Park, exchange money with a used-book vendor who went by the moniker "Lady Bluesologist." Jeri explained to me that she was paying Lady Bluesologist for a book that Lady had set aside with some images of Angela Davis. Jeri explained she would be turning the images of Angela Davis from the used book into buttons. About her spending practices at the park, Jeri elaborated with the following:

> You know when you make some money and you run and take it to the west side it never makes it back over here, babe. So, I eat in this park. When I eat, I buy my food in this park. I support these people in this park. So, I may make some money [vending], but I don't come home with it because I'm back supporting them and making sure I give donation to the homeless guys who clean up the park for us. We appreciate that, you know.

Jeri articulates a keen awareness that in buying from other vendors, she is supporting the people from within her Black community. As Jeri states, this practice of "circulating Black dollars" is a way of "showing love" in the park because it allows everyone to go home with a little bit of profit. In Jeri's perception, distributing wealth evenly is preferable than a select few vendors accumulating income. While consumers of street vendor goods and services may have preferences over one street vendor's wares over another, vendors find strategies to support one another. Abolitionist marketplaces support community-care. Jeri's experiences embody an abolitionist marketplace where community-care is mobilized through economic strategies of

mutual support that circulates capital amongst a collective of street vendors, so that each of them can continue vending another day.

Figure 16. Jeri (left) buys used books from Lady Bluesologist (center), in order to make her buttons (right).

Latinx street vendors expressed a similar consciousness around supporting fellow street vendors. When I asked Humberto, a used-appliance vendor in Compton, he articulated a similar sentiment. “Sometimes, everyone takes their own food but other times we have to buy food. Sometimes, we exchange things. Sometimes we exchange used wares for food or sometimes we pay for it. It’s a type of help that we give one another. And we sell in an economic way to each other.” Abolitionist marketplaces support community-care. Jeri and Humberto’ experiences embody an abolitionist marketplace where community-care is mobilized through economic strategies of mutual support that circulates capital amongst a collective of street vendors, so that each of them can continue vending another day.

Community-care in abolitionist marketplaces thrives on market cooperation. Western capitalist accumulation is based on competitive markets where rivalries are won according to profit and loss mechanisms over who is best able to fulfill the needs of consumers. On the contrary, abolitionist marketplaces pride themselves on a high-level of organization in order to

avoid direct competition and thus distribute capital evenly among street vendor communities. These strategies and sensibilities place an emphasis on the unity of sidewalk and park inhabitants, where street vendors are encouraged to be “contributive not competitive” (Lipsitz 2011:154).

Both Caridad and Deborah shared stories of when they first began street vending—they did not initially understand the logic of the park or sidewalk and how spaces were allocated within the market. Deborah and Caridad shared how they naively showed up and began selling in a spot believing it to be unclaimed only to get “cussed out” by the vendor whose space that belonged to. Street vendors had to learn about market cooperation and the rules of spatial arrangements, consensus, and seniority, and this process was painful and often embarrassing. This speaks to a similar finding by Sudhir Venkatesh (2009) who writes that there is a structure to the informal economy and a set of rules that must be adhered to, which clearly defines who can work and where and what price and revenue can be earned. These structures help determine what can be sold and by whom. Street vendors are highly organized with their own set of rules that may seem harsh to new vendors, but ultimately are designed for market cooperation in order to promote community-care. However, these structures are democratic, meaning they are determined by consensus among street vendors themselves, rather than being imposed by a city or formal regulation. These structures are created through lengthy public mass meetings, where sidewalks and parks become sites for deliberative talk and face-to-face decision making.

Through these structures abolitionist marketplaces sustain community-care that engenders both “solidarities of sameness and dynamics of difference,” where uniformity promotes egalitarian solidarity amongst vendors at the same time that there is ample room for individual improvisation and expression (Lipsitz 2011: 154). Vendors benefit from working

together. This cooperation allows them to circulate capital, goods, and services better and there is more trust working together in the marketplace. For instance, on the sidewalk where Chavela vends sliced fruit, she observed, “Here there is unity, respect, and business. Work in which we are able to vend in peace because we are organized.” Chavela argues that having rules and structures in place is the key for market cooperation and establishing community-care through good relationships with her street vending peers. Rather than having rivalries, she is in a community of mutual support in an abolitionist marketplace. She shares, “The majority of the time, when I tell them [street vendors] I was a little late and tell them that I vend in the spot they are at, they move. There is a new lady who recently came from Guatemala, she doesn’t have a place to vend so I let her borrow my spot. It doesn’t hurt me in anything if I am able to help others.”

Similarly, Esmeralda describes a Latinx abolitionist marketplace in Boyle Heights—it had existed for years in a Big Buy parking lot during the weekends—but recall in Chapter Two it was eliminated by militarized police enforcement in 2008. As Esmeralda, Caridad’s daughter and street vending companion, recollect, there were around 40 people selling in that parking lot on Friday through Sunday:

> At that time there were a lot, a lot, a lot of sales. So, we would respect each other’s vending items. I don’t know how that got organized but if my mother would sell pozole, then only my mother could sell pozole. If someone would sell quesadillas, then no one else could sell quesadillas. If I sold waters, no one else could sell waters. That way sales would flow for every one of us. That is when I decided I would stay and sell fresh juices (aguas frescas) because in reality I would profit a lot during those times. I would make a person’s 2-week paycheck’s and I would make that in about 2 to 3 days.

What this passage illustrates is how abolitionist marketplaces are spaces where consensus is used to determine who vends and what item they will vend so that the entire community of vendors is able to gain a profit, albeit a small one. For Esmeralda, a former McDonald’s employee, these

earnings were still more profitable than operating in the capitalist system of wage work. In abolitionist marketplaces, street vending practices opt for egalitarian solidarity and inclusion that distributes wealth equitably. While relationships between vendors can sometimes be contentious, market cooperation undermines traditional Western models of capitalist accumulation that are based on hierarchy and inequality because the goal of abolitionist marketplaces is harmony versus rivalry.

Community-care is not only extended to street vendors peers, it is spread out to other inhabitants of the city sidewalk, parking lot, or park. One example of this can be seen through Jeri, who talks about unhoused inhabitants at Leimert Park:

> That’s one of the things is I’ve really come close to a lot of these homeless people and they’re very sweet people and they do things like help us get our canopy up and help us bring our things over here so we do things for them in return. I remember Father’s Day me and my friend Debra we really made sure they had a special Father’s Day and so they had a good time. We’re knowing more and more of them. Talking to them. Saying good morning to them. Not acting like they’re invisible but knowing their name. Being kind to them and they’re kind to us. And they really know this territory. There was a night when the next day it was going to be a big sale day and we wanted to get here. We wanted to make sure we had the right space, and those homeless guys said, “Just leave the canopy here. We’ll sleep under it tonight and you’ll have your space in the morning.” I love it. Yeah and they didn’t say, “Pay me!” But you know you always give them a l'il somethin' somethin’ ’cause it’s love to do that. You know I could be having to come out here and figure out where could I setup and my stuff is here where I want it to be, so I love them for that. I have good relationships with the people out here. A lot of friends out here.

Jeri’s relationships in the park extends beyond other vendors like herself, as she makes clear unhoused people are also integral members of abolitionist marketplaces. Jeri’s narrative about the relationships of community-care that she has developed with unhoused people living at Leimert Park. The mutual support between the unhoused and street vendor communities cohabiting public spaces reveals a great deal about how community-care operates within abolitionist marketplaces. Jeri understands that street vendors depend on the labor and services of

the unhoused people living in the park. This reflects something that Sudhir Venkatesh (2009) found in his study of a Black informal workers in a neighborhood in Chicago where everyone in the community was connected through a web of underground economic exchange. Indeed, unhoused people, often labeled by mainstream society as idle, actually were integral to the economic social life happening around them. Consequently, attempts to sanitize street vendors as savvy business entrepreneurs miss how street vendors do not always operate under the individual logics of capitalism. In practice, street vendors often favor a collectivity where no one in the park is considered disposable. Whether they are unhoused, or struggling with addiction, inhabitants of public space all have critical roles to play in the economic, social, and political life of abolitionist marketplace. I argue that this extended community-care also stems from street vendors awareness that their own housing situations are precarious, and my observations over time reveal how street vendors in my study were one punitive arrest, confiscation, and fine, or rent increase notice, or health emergency away from facing eviction themselves.

Mercedes, a Latina street vendor who sells hats, shirts, and sunglasses on a sidewalk in the Piñata District, described a similar harmonious relationship with unhoused people as Jeri detailed in Leimert Park. Both women described relationships of mutual respect between themselves and the other inhabitants of the sidewalk. In the following passage, Mercedes reflected on her relationship with Michael, whom she endearingly refers to as Miguelito, a Black elderly man who has been living on Skid Row and working for Mercedes for the past nine years:

> There are many homeless here. We share our food with them. Or if they want my glasses, I tell them to take them. When they begin to take the hats, I tell them to only take one and leave. I don't want to have any conflicts with them. There are some who are drugged or drunk, so we try not to bother them, not hurt or hit them. There are some [homeless] who we have given them small jobs. I have a homeless man that helps me Saturday and Sunday and has now 9 years of helping me. His name is Miguelito. He speaks about 10 words in Spanish and I also speak about 10 words in English, so we understand each other perfectly! He is a very

> good person with us. One day he came and asked for food. He told me he had just gotten out of the hospital and that he was hungry. I don't sell food, but my compañera does sell food and I sent him to her and told him to get two and that I would pay for whatever she gave him. Then he said, "I don't want you to give me food for free, I want to do something to help you all." Then I told him, "You want to work with me?" He said, "Yes. Can I help you pack up your merchandise and tarp?" I said, "Okay, I can pick up my merchandise and you can pick up my tables." He then came back in the evening. We gave him again food, water, and ice cream. He ate and then came to help us sweep and pick up the trash. And he stayed. We [street vendors] paid him and he also helps 5 other compañeros when he has time but always comes to me first. In December, my daughter buys him shoes, a sweater, some clothes, things like that. I give him his hat or whatever he needs. I always try to share with him some food. I pay him $10 dollars every time that he picks up my merchandise and tables. When I tell him, "Miguelito I had a slow day selling today," he tells me, "Okay," and I pay him $8 dollars and he understands. It's still money for him.

Mercedes is poor, undocumented, and suffers from chronic health issues, but the little that she does earn, she is reinvesting and circulating throughout her community. Where many might see an unhoused person as idle, Mercedes saw someone who could support her and she in turn could support him. Mercedes proudly shared that her business supports Michael (Miguelito) and also a Latinx cab driver who she has been hiring for the last five years to drive her and her things from her home to her vending site.

Figure 17. During my third trimester of pregnancy, I sat down to eat (bottom) after a day spent with Mercedes (top left), observing how she, Miguelito (declined to be photographed), and a Latinx cab driver (top right) all three depend on each other to thrive.

Deborah argues that the community-care that takes place at Leimert Park is radical, therefore perceived as a threat to neoliberal geographies and capitalist interests. Recall that in Chapter Two, I wrote about how capitalist investments accompany a heavy presence of policing and enforcement that escalates violence in increased efforts to eliminate a Black and Latinx presence. For Black vendors, creating a Black sense of place is difficult because of how anti-Blackness is embedded in carceral regimes and racialized forms of spatial control. Deborah eloquently argues that street vending is an inherently radical and political act that undermines white supremacist control over People of Color:

> If they [Government] are not making a profit. We are not benefiting their own need. We are recycling our Black dollars in our Black community. Government doesn't like that… Too political. It means too much. No, we can't go down that road. How many Black communities do you know work together and support each other? None! Every time there is one, they take it apart. Anytime we try to come together to do something positive in our community, they take it away from us. It has happened and been proven throughout history.

When Deborah stated that street vending "means too much," she is articulating how vending is about more than just generating a livelihood for individuals. In this account, street vending is a communal act of rebellion. Abolitionist marketplaces are full of street vendors who refuse to give up on themselves and on each other, even when it seems that most of society has turned its back on them. The social importance of the abolitionist marketplace in Black and Latinx life in urban public spaces cannot be overstated. These spaces are precious and worth defending, motivating Black and Latinx street vendors in this chapter to unite and become politically engaged in a cross-racial movement called the Los Angeles Street Vending Campaign. Together, these street vendor leaders collectively fought to decriminalize street vending in Los Angeles.

Collectively, these narratives by Black and Latinx street vendors signal how community-care is central in reimagining urban spaces of legal violence into abolitionist marketplaces. These abolitionist marketplaces oppose neoliberal business logics and Western capitalist models that promote privatism, individualism, and localism. Instead, street vendors sustain multiple communities by recognizing that every person in urban spaces has value and is linked through space and social and economic relationships based on community-care, or as Jeri would say, love. I offer a new framework, abolitionist marketplaces, in order to show how street vendor leaders in the Los Angeles Street Vending Campaign often undermine neoliberal entrepreneurship and directly challenge carceral and immigration regimes. I find that rather than experiencing their vending sites merely as marketplaces for capitalist accumulation, street vendors understand abolitionist marketplaces as emancipatory by reimagining sites of trauma as spaces of liberation. Through abolitionist marketplaces, Black and Latinx street vendors create a sense of place, even while the city actively seeks to eliminate them. They organize envisioning beyond the possibilities, to a world where their rights matter and their lives are valued. For

vendors, highly stigmatized in law and practice, and with limited access to health care and mental health services—street vending *is life.* Street vending *is freedom,* even when participating in this act puts them in harm's way and at the risk of being un-free through arrest incarceration, detention, and deportation. There is much to learn from street vendors' abolitionist imaginaries—their strategies and sensibilities can inform continuing struggles over power and place.

Cross-Racial and Spatial Alliances

Recall that I was drawn to this work because I wanted to understand how informal workers resist legal violence. I was interested especially in the organizing work of these street vendors across race and space. I found that the community-care in abolitionist marketplaces was transferred across racial and neighborhood lines, across linguistic and cultural communities to centrally inform the success of the Los Angeles Street Vendors Campaign.

In a racially segregated city like Los Angeles, Black and Latinx street vendors sold separately, the Campaign created "spaces of inter-racial congregation" (Johnson, 2013), where street vendors had the opportunity to engage in dialogue across race, in some cases for the very first time. Some of the most meaningful relationships were built through a free 10-week Leadership Course offered by East Los Angeles Community Corporation, where street vendors learned about public speaking and the history of Civil Rights movements. Cross-racial dialogue between Black and Latinx street vendors created a shift in the Campaign, from community-care over a single identity politic to community-care extended to a shared vision for cross-racial and cross-spatial justice.

I want to focus on one key observation. During a class in 2016, Deborah was visibly sad and had very low energy. Through translation, Caridad asked her what was wrong. Deborah said, "You guys would not understand." Deborah asked if it would be okay to share a little bit about

what she was going through, and the Latinx street vendors affirmed, “Yes,” and Deborah began sharing about how she bought her home with a subprime loan and now her home was in foreclosure. Deborah was on the brink of becoming unhoused. At this point, Caridad started to cry. Through translation, Caridad shared that she had lost her home a few years prior. Caridad tried to refinance her home, but immigration checks were more stringent than when Caridad first purchased her home. When Caridad’s social security did not match, the bank seized her home, giving her 30 days to vacate. Caridad lost a decade of her investment. That day Deborah and Caridad could see themselves reflected in each other’s stories, which laid a foundation for cross-racial solidarity in the face of forces that sought to erase both of them from urban space. Through my fieldwork, street vendors I spoke to describe this course as an empowering and healing space that allowed them to create networks of cross-racial care and support.

Through inter-racial congregation, Latinx street vendor leaders confronted stereotypes that were rooted in anti-Blackness. For example, Mercedes, who is in her mid-50s and identifies as Mexican, shared what she learned about police brutality in the Black community by listening to Deborah share her experiences.

> I have heard it from Debbie. She has expressed that to us in our meetings. Policemen have stereotypes of African-Americans being robbers. But not all people are that. There are some that [rob] because they can't find a job or have lost their houses or any other reason, they are now street vendors. And it’s not because they are drug addicts or are selling drugs. Unfortunately, for Afro-Americans and Latinos, the majority of police authority have a stereotype of us. If you are African-American either you are thief or a drug addict and a burden to the government. And it's not even like that at all.

Mercedes calls out racial stereotypes about Black people and references a shared experience of policing between Black and Latinx people. Throughout my fieldwork, street vendor leaders shared intersecting experiences of gentrification, criminalization, policing and surveillance and engaged in continued activism across the span of the Campaign.

Cross-racial and spatial alliances led to powerful political activism. The Los Angeles Street Vending Campaign and larger Los Angeles community rallied behind Benjamin Ramirez after he was attacked, as mentioned in Chapter Three. Four days after the incident, on July 28, 2017, we joined him on the corner where he was attacked. This was a pivotal moment in the Campaign because street vendor leaders were getting bolder with practicing civil disobedience and the Campaign coalesced with anti-gentrification campaigns in South and East Los Angeles that were prominent at that time. There were several street vendor leaders who spoke at the rally, in addition to anti-gentrification leaders. Together these campaigns represented a critical mass, and instead of taking over a sidewalk, which is what the Campaign had always done previously, they took over an entire street. Those that were physically able marched with Benjamin Ramirez, carrying the Campaign mural around a one-mile perimeter that circled the site where Benjamin Ramirez was attacked. The Benjamin Ramirez protest was a testing ground for the street vendor leaders, many of whom have mobility issues, are elderly and undocumented, and quite frankly have the most to lose if they were arrested. This was an entry point for street vendor leaders in the Campaign to become comfortable with the bolder acts of civil disobedience that were to come in 2018. Hollywood became a nexus point between Black-led anti-gentrification and Latinx-led anti-gentrification campaigns, joining forces with the Los Angeles Street Vending Campaign. This was the first time the Campaign developed a media toolkit, clearly linking state-sanctioned and community-sanctioned legal violence against street vendors with gentrification in Los Angeles.

Figure 18. Black-led anti-gentrification campaign leader speaks on steps (top left), Mercedes and Chaveli stand on steps after speaking (bottom left), and a community member holds a sign making it clear that no one in the neighborhood will continue attacking el eletoro (right).

Figure 19. Benjamin's joy at the overwhelming community support he receives is palpable (top left), Benjamin leads the crowd marching into the street and stopping traffic (top right), Guatemalan and Mexican flags are fly proudly (bottom left,, and street vendors are getting comfortable on the bullhorn and showing they are ready to continue on the path they are on of using civil disobedience as a Campaign strategy.

To be clear, the topic of gentrification and displacement was ongoing in Campaign meetings, but they had never adopted a discourse around gentrification. In addition, the Benjamin Ramirez incident tapped into two important conversations that were brimming in the public discourse and became incorporated into the Campaign. First, Latinx people also contribute to gentrification, and second, many White Latinx people are racist towards Brown or Indigenous Latinx people. This conversation gave many street vendor leaders a new framework to interrogate past experiences of community-sanctioned violence. This violence previously was thought of as an expression of class power, but with this new lens, they interpreted how community-sanctioned violence intersects with race and inequality within the Latinx community.

Another example of how inter-racial congregation resulted in powerful political activism, was on International Women's Day in March of 2018, the LA Street Vending Campaign coalesced with the national #MeToo movement participating in their first act of civil disobedience, laying their bodies on the street and blocking a major intersection. In preparation, street vendor leaders spent weeks beforehand making signs, writing chants, and memorizing songs that were made for that protest to highlight the precarity of being a woman street vendor. The Campaign is led predominantly by women, but on that day women's presence was heard loud and clear. The signs and every chant sang was rewritten to center women. As an example, for several years a popular chant in the Campaign was, "Vendedores luchando, al mundo transformando [Vendors fighting, transforming the world]. But for that morning the optics had changed, first with Caridad, Mercedes, Deborah, and Chaveli wearing white shirts with red letters that said, "Las mujeres luchando, al mundo transformando" [Women fighting, transforming the world]. This phrase was written on posters and chanted out loud. This action came as the city was considering a proposition that would give property owners veto power over

street vendors, thus encouraging extortion of street vendors at the hands of businessowners. In the years that Black and Latinx street vendor leaders been in organizing meetings, they had recounted shared stories of either themselves or a vendor they knew experiencing either economic and or sexual extortion by businessowners. This proposed policy galvanized street vendor leaders, and throughout the morning, Black and Latinx street vendors, allies, and advocates shared testimonies of street vendors who have been experiencing this type of economic and sexual violence connecting their shared experiences of sexual assault to the #MeToo movement. They insisted that a business veto would play into the hands of sexual predators. They called out council members by name, and asked councilmember Joe Buscaino directly to protect women vendors by opposing the business veto.

Figure 20. On International Women's Day in 2018, Caridad, Mercedes, Deborah, and Chaveli, went into City Hall and demanded to speak with council members to persuade them against giving property owners veto power over street vendors encouraging economic and sexual extortion.

Figure 21. Black and Latinx street vendors Deborah and Humberto (partially covered), allies, and advocates shared testimonies, marched, chanted, sang, and blocked the road until they were arrested, but promptly released with the support of the Doug and the National Lawyers Guild.

I want to emphasize how important these spaces of inter-racial congregations were when the city tried implementing divisive policies—like criminalizing vending in parks but not sidewalks—that threatened to divide the unity of Black and Latinx street vendors, as the Black street vendor leaders in the Campaign sold in parks whereas the Latinx vendors sold in city sidewalks and parking lots. These attempts were ultimately unsuccessful because Black and Latinx street vendor leaders had a vision of justice that expanded to solidarity across difference (Pulido 2006; Johnson 2013). None of this would have been possible had these vendors not come together in shared spaces, to share stories, make protest art and music together, and manifest their shared visions of community-care.

Conclusion

Through abolitionist marketplaces street vendors congregate and create economies of resistance that generate opportunities, circulate resources, and organize for more just futures. Abolitionist marketplaces persist in carving out urban spaces that are by, and for the betterment of street vendors and Communities of Color. Street vendors see abolitionist marketplaces as convivial sites of learning, congregating, and "fellowshipping" to use Jeri's words. As this

chapter argues, street vendors understand abolitionist marketplaces to be spaces that promote self-care, radical consciousness, and community-care. Abolitionist marketplaces are schools, where learning occurs, as well as wellness centers, sites where healing and restoration occurs. Street vendors claim spatial entitlement (Johnson 2013) through abolitionist marketplaces that loudly and visibly proclaim their right to exist. Abolitionist marketplaces nourish safety and protection where street vendors gain a sense of self-love and empowerment, propelling them to shift from vendors to activists in the Los Angeles Street Vending Campaign. By mobilizing an abolitionist marketplace praxis, street vendors sustained long-term resistance within and beyond the Los Angeles Street Vending Campaign.

To describe this work—and the work itself—is not enough to counter the effects of the state-sanctioned and community-sanctioned legal violence exacted upon these workers. Abolitionist marketplaces require a collective belief and support that extends beyond the organized Los Angeles Street Vending Campaign. My study reveals more than the history of this mobilization: it is intended to allow the voices of these powerful urban actors to instruct us on how to sustain unexpected alliances and coalitions, how to value people over property, collectivism over individualism—because there is a global network of struggles for dignity and justice that can benefit from these lessons.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

On January 31, 2017, the city of LA passed a motion to decriminalize street vending so that it is no longer considered a misdemeanor. All of the Campaign strategies came to head the following year, on April 17, 2018, The Los Angeles Street Vending Campaign—including 50 street vendors, 2 adolescents, 3 babies, 3 ELACC community organizers, Doug and Katie from the Public Council, and I—boarded a bus for an overnight trip to the capitol to introduce SB 946 Safe Sidewalk Vending Act to Senators in Sacramento. The following morning Sacramento-based street vendors joined us at the capitol. There were hundreds of us dressed in our matching "Legalize Street Vending" shirts lobbying Senators in support the bill.

By the afternoon, Mercedes was prepared to give her testimony before the Senators. Our hearing was delayed because the Senate Bill slotted before us was prolonged. Interestingly, the Senate Bill was for the Entertainment Industry, and proposed a multi-million-dollar tax-break to the industry. Many of us stood on the outer edges of the room as our presence filled the space to capacity. We anxiously awaited, while lobbyists from Fox, Disney, and NBC made their cases. The lobbyists from Disney included a petite blonde woman dressed in an impeccable suit, who coincidentally sat beside Mercedes, while the Senators deliberated on their bill. From where I stood, I saw Mercedes sitting and waiting patiently, accompanied by both her daughter, Nancy, and 9-year old granddaughter, Alma. Restlessness overtook Alma, and Nancy handed her a backpack full of activities to keep her occupied. Alma laid on the floor in between the court benches and took out her coloring pencils and a Disney Princess coloring book.

Finally, our hearing was underway, and Mercedes went to the front of the room to share her testimony. Alma continued to color in her Disney princess book, oblivious to the historic moment her grandmother was taking part in. Mercedes gave a heart wrenching testimony

expressing the myriad ways legal violence has impacted her family and health. She shared that although her business was small, it provided employment opportunities for others in her community. Mercedes said SB 946 would allow her to work without the constant threat of arrest and deportation. Because of street vendor power, the room was full of supporters for the bill and the line to voice support was capped by the Senators in the interest of time. Now it was the opposition's turn. The Disney lobbyist sitting beside Nancy and near Alma stood up and to my surprise, joined the other lobbyists from the Entertainment Industry to object to the bill.

This should not have amazed me; I have been at every hearing at Los Angeles City Hall for the past 6 years. The opposition to legalizing street vending included groups representing the Business Improvement Districts, the Hollywood Walk of Fame, the Staples Center, and the Beverly Hills Neighborhood Association, to name a few. But something about the innocence of sweet Alma, coloring and dreaming about being a Princess, unsettled me. Her presence, in particular, served to contrast with the insatiable greed of a mega-corporation like Disney on display that day. Disney commodifies fairytales, yet all the while objecting to the dismantling of a legal system that has been a living nightmare to street vendors for decades. I share this anecdote because it lays bare the role of racism and capitalism in the elimination of Black and Latinx people from urban space, and as the street vendor leaders' narratives reveal throughout this dissertation, anti-Vending laws have dispossessed, incarcerated, deported, maimed, and killed.

But the Entertainment Industry and Business Improvement Districts, with all their wealth and power, could not contend with the political will of the Los Angeles Street Vending Campaign and the amassing number of supporters. All of the Campaign strategies were successful. The Campaign's vision for justice extended far beyond street vendors in Los Angeles

and to vendors in all of California. On September 17, 2018, Governor Jerry Brown of California passed SB 946 Safe Sidewalk Vending Act, effectively decriminalizing street vending throughout the state. The street vendors in my study fought for themselves and for each other; they refused to compromise on issues that would have divided them across categories and experiences based on race and space.

On January 1, 2020, the city of Los Angeles rolled out an official permit system through the newly created LA Bureau of Street Services. The Bureau has hired 24 employees tasked with patrolling the streets and ensuring that vendors are in compliance with the new laws. While at the moment, the task force will not be filing criminal charges, these exorbitant civil fines start at $250 and can reach $1,000. Many street vendors will not be adequately informed of the new laws (Cabral 2020); street vendors and their allies are critiquing the way the city's plan has invested heavily on enforcement, rather than on street vending education and outreach.

The process of becoming a legal street vendor requires several steps and prohibitive costs. Street vendors must obtain a seller's permit and a business license, which are both free. Yet the cost of street vendor permits is $291 prior to July 2020, and then it increases to $541. Food vendors are in a precarious situation, as there are additional concerns, such as the fact that most grills used by vendors are out of compliance with the new laws. While grill manufacturers are willing to work with the county to meet permit requirements, there is legitimate fear of monopolization of city-legal grill carts that could price out food vendors and threaten their livelihoods (Cabral 2020).

Despite great efforts by the Campaign and ELACC to bring small brick-and-mortar businesses and street vendors to the table to work together, as discussed in Chapter Three, there has been a rise in brick-and-mortar businesses using the divisive rhetoric citing the unfair

advantage street vendors have over restaurateurs. Recently, the So-Cal Restaurant Association.Org, predominantly comprised of Latinxs business owners, have been very vocal at City Hall meetings. What is most alarming is council member John Lee's motion to bring back criminal charges to street vending "crimes," which would effectively dismantle the hard won victories of the Campaign (Cabral 2020). These new challenges signal that the work of the Los Angeles Street Vending Campaign is far from over.

My study analyzes the lives of Black and Latinx street vendor leaders from the Los Angeles Street Vending Campaign through three key themes: (1) state-sanctioned and community-sanctioned legal violence; (2) street vending as a healing and political praxis; and (3) cross-racial alliances.

Black and Latinx street vendors expressed the trauma of legal violence and how it plays out in space through processes of elimination. An abolitionist lens offers me a way to make sense of street vendors' narratives that on the surface appear contradictory. While on the one hand, street vendors describe the embodiment of legal violence as producing unfreedom through incarceration, deportation, housing insecurity, and family separation, and corporal and psychological trauma. On the other hand, street vendors describe the same spaces that produce such violent inequalities as emancipatory. To understand these complexities, the concept of abolitionist marketplaces allows me to analyze how Black and Latinx street vendors in Los Angeles, persisted in creating a sense of place, even while state-sanctioned and community-sanctioned legal violence actively sought to eliminate them.

Their narratives reveal how this violence has real, material impacts on their mental and physical wellbeing. This dissertation draws on Woman of Color feminisms, specifically Gloria Anzaldúa's (2002) *paths of conocimiento* (paths of consciousness) to analyze street vendors'

narratives to uncover the wisdom that emerges as street vendors rescript narratives of personal pain into healing. Street vendor leaders transformed feelings of brokenness into alternative spaces of hope, light, brilliance and radical possibility. The street vendor leaders in this study formed cross-racial and spatial alliances and fought relentlessly for a decade to sustain abolitionist marketplaces because as Deborah shared, "it means too much." For people working in city sidewalks, parking lots, and parks, abolitionist marketplaces are necessary because of deep structural inequalities that exclude Street Vendors of Color from nearly all social institutions—employment, education, housing, and medical care. They persist in creating abolitionist marketplaces by, and for People of Color.

Through abolitionist marketplaces street vendors congregate and create economies of resistance that generate opportunities, circulate resources, and organize for more just futures. Abolitionist marketplaces persist in carving out urban spaces that are by, and for the betterment of street vendors and Communities of Color. I saw street vendors mobilize this praxis in three main ways:

(1) Self-care
(2) Radical consciousness
(3) Community-care

This dissertation highlights how Black and Latinx street vendors' abolitionist imaginaries emerge, in order to challenge unjust laws and policies that threatened street vendors' ability to stay free. Black and Latinx street vendors create economies of resistance that remake sites of terror into joyful celebrations of their ethnic-racial identities.

Earlier in this dissertation, I wrote about the debates happening in informality studies and specifically pointed to the critical interventions that Black and Latinx geographies are making. They call for researchers to consider the role of racism and capitalism in the elimination of Black

and Latinx people from urban space, while also foregrounding the important role that Black and Latinx people have in resisting and creating alternative spaces. My study of street vendor leaders in the Los Angeles Street Vending Campaign directly answers this call by moving away from a neoliberal understanding of entrepreneurship towards an abolitionist marketplace that presents an alternative view of informality. This accounts for how Black and Latinx street vendor leaders are placemakers whose political collectivities led to a hope-building and emancipatory Campaign.

As the informal sector continues to grow in our local, national, and global economies, the street vendors in my study serve as an example of how to fight for social protections for the most vulnerable workers in the city. My study takes on a view of Black and Latinx street vendors leaders, most of whom are women, disabled, undocumented, and elderly, as powerful urban political actors capable of winning against the likes of Disney, the Beverly Hills Neighborhood Association, and some of the wealthiest Business Improvement Districts in Southern California. Their cross-racial movement, inspired by both their traumas and healing practices, allowed workers to develop powerful alliances that are also possible and necessary for other urban struggles in this historical moment. Ultimately, my study demonstrates that Black and Latinx street vendors are people who rise up, "*personas que se levantan*."

Future Directions

I believe there is so much more to do in this rapidly growing and ever-evolving area of Street Vendor Studies. The Los Angeles Street Vending Campaign's hard-won victories continue being challenged in the courts by powerful Business Improvement Districts and wealthy property owners. As street vendors rise to face these new challenges, labor scholars have a critical role to play in supporting Black and Latinx urban struggles. Through ethnography, digital humanities,

and spatial analysis, I will advance the field of Informality Studies by continuing to study informal urban politics and contributing to the struggles that lie ahead.

I am interested in historicizing the study of informal economies. I want to explore how street vendor economies first came to be criminalized in the Los Angeles borderlands from 1880 to 1940 and how the contemporary anti-Street Vending Ordinance from 1994 to 2018 is historically rooted. Through archival research, I wish to examine how racist sentiments motivated anti-Vagrancy and anti-Peddler regulations, and engage with "rebel archives" (Lytle Hernández 2017), like materials from litigation cases with incarcerated Black, Chinese, and Latinx informal workers. This will be an important contribution in adding a historical breadth to the study of the informal economy.

APPENDIX A: CASES OF JUSTICE (ENGLISH)

Cases of

JUSTICE !

PRESENTING: REAL LIFE STORIES

THEY ARE UNSUNG HEROES…
LEGALIZE STREET VENDING IN
LOS
ANGELES…
THEY GENERATE JOBS
OFFER FRESH AND AFFORDABLE
FOOD
SUPPORT SAFE AND VIBRANT
NEIGHBORHOODS

APPENDIX B: CASOS DE JUSTICIA (ESPAÑOL)

SON LOS HEROES NO RECONO-
CIDOS...
LOS ANGELES DEBE LEGALISAR
LA VENTA AMBULANTE EN LAS
BANQUETAS...
GENERAN TRABAJOS
DESAROYAN COMUNIDADES
SALUDABLES
CULTIVAN CALLES MAS SANAS

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