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(Im)migrant Ecologies:
Relating Beyond Borders

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Guadalupe Arellanes

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Dissertation Committee:
Dr. Andrea Smith, Chairperson
Dr. Keith Miyake
Dr. Robert Perez

The Dissertation of Guadalupe Arellanes is approved:

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Committee Chairperson
University of California, Riverside

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Guadalupe Arellanes

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Ethnic Studies
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Dr. Andrea Smith, Chairperson

This dissertation examines the environmental activism of (im)migrants and their kin in the Inland Empire, CA to explore what their relationships might tell us about nations, borders, place, and relationality. As concerns about climate change and "mass migration" heighten in American discourse, a relational, no-borders approach to (im)migrant and ecological justice enables us to consider how borders organize societies and limit particular struggles within national lines. In order to demonstrate an alternative path forward, I asked: What kinship networks are formed between Latinx (im)migrants after migration/displacement and by extension, what are Latinx (im)migrants' definitions of place? What sorts of ephemeral ecological relations are formed between non-human and humans and what do these ecological kinship networks tell us about Latinx futurities and world-making projects? In order to address these questions, I engaged with existing migration and environmental scholarship in the following ways: 1) I argue that (im)migrants defy borders and citizenship claims, even while they remain

locally and nationally politically engaged by drawing particular attention to the ways that diasporic dialects are less about negotiating with states, and more about fleshing out the global from the local and national. 2) I also integrate the importance of the more-than-human world for diasporic dialects by paying particular attention to the ways that land, water, and non-human animals come to be represented, inform, and transform (im)migrant political struggles. 3) Finally, I analyze the ways in which (im)migrant kinship networks are imaginative and embodied calls for the abolition of borders and nations.

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Introduction

“Until society can be reclaimed by an undivided humanity that will use its collective wisdom, cultural achievements, technological innovations, scientific knowledge, and innate creativity for its own benefit and for that of the natural world, all ecological problems will have their roots in social problems.”

- Murray Bookchin

“How do you want to do something in a community when no one wants your project?...I really don’t understand it…I don’t care if that area stays open and pristine and yucca plants (keep) growing out there in that field, I like it like that…I go down there, I watch everyone walk down there with their dogs, it’s beautiful, serene,” Mayor Deborah Robertson remarked on a Tuesday in June during a City Council Meeting in Rialto. The ‘something’ being done was Howard Industrial Partners’ proposal to divide a piece of land within the 2017 Pepper Avenue Specific Plan into 2 areas and add zoning for light industrial use in order to build a warehouse in the area. Despite the Mayor’s questioning and opposition, the City Council meeting was resolved with a 3-2 vote in favor of Howard Industrial Partners, a vote which was controversial because it went against the Rialto City Planning Commission’s recommendations to only zone the area for a mixed-use project, including housing and a pedestrian pathway that would connect to a nearby park. One resident remarked, “I follow the money, the

money is always important…But, I want to remind you that this is something that the community really cares about…That money isn't going to be worth really much if the people decide that they don't trust you, don't believe in you and that you don't have their welfare in your heart and mind." Almost immediately, community members were working to raise awareness about the vote - some knocked door-to-door, others planned protests and workshops.

This was not the first time the community had come together against Howard's proposal for the Pepper Avenue Specific Plan. The Rialto City Council first approved the plan on April 25, 2023 and at the next City Council Meeting on May 9, 2023, Rialto residents and Inland Empire (IE) environmental activists gathered to advocate against the continuing development of warehouses within their community, demanding a reconsideration of the vote that took place two weeks prior. Despite the community's efforts, Howard Industrial Partners had successfully acquired the right to build their warehouse and would move forward with their plan. Despite the various blows they had endured, the community felt stronger than ever.

Over the last couple of decades, communities in the IE have experienced the rural land around them slowly become what some call the mecca or the warehouse capital of the United States. Global conglomerates including Amazon and Walmart have been welcomed by the local government to set up shop, resulting in over a billion square feet of land occupied by the more than 4,000

warehouses in the area.[1] These giant structures have significantly altered the quality of life for people living and working in the area - traffic and air quality have worsened, warehouse workers are exposed to hazardous chemicals in high stress environments, and community hubs such as schools have been threatened by encroaching capital.[2] While not all areas of the IE had remained rural prior to the warehouses, I am focusing on parts of the IE such as Bloomington which have been marked as under and undeveloped by corporations and by effect, alter the entire region.

For the City Council and others in positions of government power, the IE was an empty space. Over the years I had overheard such figures question, “What are people defending if there is nothing here?”, but as Mayor Robertson pointed out, non-industrialized land was not synonymous with being devoid. Since the late 1800s the IE has been a center of agriculture, drawing farmers and rural folk to the area’s agrarian lifestyle. Today, one in five or nearly 1 million residents in the Inland Empire are (im)migrants.[3] For those arriving, the agrarian lifestyle is appealing and the thought of horseback riding through a field of trees and plants reminds them of home. Long-time IE residents generally welcome

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[1] Newton, Jim.“California Warehouse Boom Comes with Health, Environmental Costs for Inland Empire Residents.” *CalMatters*, 26 Jan. 2023, calmatters.org/commentary/2023/01/inland-empire-california-warehouse-development/.

[2] Warehouse Workers United and UCLA Labor Occupational Safety and Health Program, Shattered Dreams and Broken Bodies: A Brief Review of the Inland Empire Warehouse Industry, 2011, https://warehouseworkers.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Shattered_Dreams_and_Broken_Bodies718.pdf.

[3] UCR Center for Social Innovation, The California Immigrant Policy Center, & The Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice. April 2018. *State of Immigrants in the Inland Empire.* https://live-ucr-socialinnovation.pantheonsite.io/sites/default/files/2022-09/ie-state-of-immigrants-web.pdf

newcomers who share their love and appreciation for the natural landscape. Ask anyone who lives there and you will hear about how the Inland Empire has been a place where residents can live slower lives, remain connected to non-human nature, raise their families in community, and maintain a more balanced lifestyle that does not revolve entirely around work. In fact, it was exactly the absence of things like big industry and warehouses that had for so long been appealing to residents and which today, threatened their culture and way of life. Only in the big, open fields could residents meet other equestrians and get to know one another while bonding over shared ideals. Importantly, for undocumented (im)migrant residents without U.S. citizenship, the ability to establish close bonds with their local community where people were in daily relation with one another established a sense of belonging that subverted the strict idea of nation-citizenship. In their struggles to preserve the character of the IE, many had drawn parallels between seemingly disparate movements such as (im)migrant rights, environmental rights, workers' rights, and more so that today, the IE has an active politically-inclined force of grassroots organizations and resident-led movements.

Despite being an (im)migrant-led movement however, activists in the IE do not consider their struggles neatly aligned within the (im)migrant rights movement. Despite their focus on environmental issues, activists in the IE do not consider their struggles neatly aligned with the environmental rights movement. Instead, they take a critical look at rights-based movements, borrowing bits and

pieces in order to create their own *rasquache* road towards freedom and (re)member the abolitionist world-making possibilities of (im)migrant-led struggles.[4] In the following sections, I will lay out the theoretical foundations which guide this dissertation as well as inform organizing in the IE.

Conceptual Foundations/Literature Review

The U.S. (im)migrant rights movement grew out of a desire to imagine mechanisms of social belonging outside territorial legal citizenship and ventured to attain justice (legal and otherwise) for all (im)migrants regardless of their documented status. Ultimately, it also demanded legalization for the millions of undocumented immigrants already residing in the U.S. As the movement shifted attention toward pragmatic endeavors, the imaginary possibilities of the movement faded away. Today, (im)migrant rights movements and theoretical studies are rooted in a demand for national membership; these arguments presume that (im)migrants will benefit from a nation's acceptance and that access to citizenship is the logical end-goal.

By definition, nations are imaginary geographic spaces of exclusive communities for some. As no nation claims or wants all of the world's people, (im)migration and citizenship controls become necessary technologies for nation-making and maintaining. These controls manufacture consent by

[4] Ybarra-Frausto, Tomás. "Rasquachismo: A Chicano Sensibility". *Chicano and Chicana Art: A Critical Anthology*, edited by Jennifer A. González, C. Ondine Chavoya, Chon Noriega and Terezita Romo, New York, USA: Duke University Press, 2019, pp. 85-90. https://doi.org/10.1515/9781478003403-018

masquerading as ‘unity’ of the ‘people’ wherein the presumption is that people are the origin of a given nation’s political power and therefore, limiting entry to a national territory and rights within it is necessary in order to preserve the peoples’ power over their nation.

Critics of national sovereignty however point out how “the Postcolonial New World Order of nationally sovereign states thus ushers in a new governmentality, one which produces peoples as Nationals and produces land as territories in control (in the past and sometime in the future if not always present) of sovereign nation-states”[5] This sort of territorialization serves postcolonial governmentality and its ability to influence what might otherwise be autonomous peoples. Territories therefore are not simply the physical land a given state controls but rather they are the lands the state successfully appropriates as state space, transforming land, water, and all of nature into the domain of a given nation-state and by effect, forging a naturalized link between an exclusive group of people and the place in question. The border thus serves as a political site and tool for the benefit of imperial state formation and hierarchical social ordering with implications for all facets of life.

As citizens and especially Nationalists come to understand themselves as people belonging to a particular territory, (im)migrants are racialized as Other as they become foreign bodies threatening the national politic and established order. Those who move must become “people out of place” imagined as outside of the

[5] Sharma, Nandita. *Home Rule : National Sovereignty and the Separation of Natives and Migrants /*. Duke University Press Books, 2020, 3.

nation's Citizenship and all the rights afforded by this status, even as they live on national territory. (Im)migrants, regardless of their documented status, are legally denied the rights of national citizenship. I argue however that it is not the denial of rights or citizenship that harms (im)migrants, but rather, their inclusion within these frameworks reinforces the very biopolitical structures which threaten past, present and future (im)migrant lives.

Foucault's notion of 'biopolitics' states that the sovereign exercises their right over life by exercising their right to kill.[6] Biopolitics as population control involves the ratio of births to death, the rate of reproduction, and other issues of fertility in order to achieve the most 'optimal' outcome for the whole. Racism is then, he argues, transformed into a 'positive' that serves as a strategy of cleansing undertaken for the continuation of the Human race. He claims that discipline engenders 'docile bodies' and argues, "discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience)".[7] The docile body is understood as the ne plus ultra worker - bodies that are productive for factories, monasteries, and militaries. Discipline creates the individual from regulated bodies through its focus on the cellular, organic and genetic. Its techniques include the precise use of ever-expanding linear time and impeccable bodily movements within a sequestered space. Discipline coerces the individual's movements and their experience of space-time. The politics of (im)migration exemplify the imposition

[6] Foucault, Michel "Right of Death and Power Over Life" in The History of Sexuality. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.
[7] Ibid., 138.

of biopolitics through policy and practices which include forcibly moving (im)migrant bodies through detention or deportation as well as an encroaching border militarization. Through the coded language of security, the geographical border is stretched throughout the entirety of a nation. The social landscape therefore operates as borderlands.

Placing biopolitics in a disability framework, Jabir Puar contends that alongside the right to kill, there is the right to maim or to let live through debilitation.[8] Maiming is a valuable form of extraction at the expense of populations that are otherwise viewed as fungible and disposable. Puar utilizes the term 'debility' as a needed disruption of the ability/disability binary, recognizing that some bodies may be debilitated though not necessarily disabled - a tension which at times contributes to their very debility. Puar argues there is a "biopolitics of disability" where disability and debility operate as forms of biopolitical population control unto themselves for the purpose of defining which bodies are valuable as signifiers of progress and which bodies shall remain subjects outside of the realm of human rights.

Debility is endemic to marginalized communities, which is to say that it is regularly found and in many ways, strategically deployed as to harm. This debility can be physical and the result of forces like State-sanctioned environmental injustice and police violence, and it can be more-than-physical, such as the wide-spread debt as debility through neoliberal economic policies or the

[8] Puar, Jasbir. *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability.* Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2017.

perceived failure to meet certain thresholds of productivity. The discipline of space and movement as constructs of biopower that are woven throughout the physical structures of the border represent a way to “enable and constrain thought”, meaning they shape the way we conceptualize subjects and mutually the way subjects conceptualize themselves.[9] Biopolitics can be understood as “a government-population-political economy relationship, (that) refer(s) to a dynamic of forces that establishes a new relationship between ontology and politics”.[10] This relationship is characterized by national actors and policies having domain over the way people exist physically and socially and alters the ways in which we relate to ourselves as others. In the case of (im)migrants, the discursive construction of (im)migrant bodies as “illegal” or “alien” are socio-political cues that label (im)migrants as Other/non-Human. In addition to the threat of bodily injury, (im)migrants are debilitated by social exclusion through economic and political factors constituting an assemblage that states use to control populations.

Through the continued operation of citizenship and immigration controls, the Postcolonial New World Order produces a xenophobic racism in which political segregations are viewed as the natural spatial order of sovereign nation-states. The dogma of nationalism frames the enforcement of national borders separating them from incoming (im)migrants as integral to a Citizen's

[9] Martin, Reinhold. *Utopia's Ghost: Architecture and Postmodernism, Again.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010. p. xvi.
[10] Lazzarato, Maurizio, “From Biopower to Biopolitics’. Pli: *The Warwick Journal of Philosophy, 13(8),* 1-6.

duty and codifies this sentiment in national and international law. The nation-state's territorial border thus forms an affective border for a biopolitic which exploits the (im)migrant Other and the lands in which they live, even when those lands are territories within national boundaries. To be sure, as the (im)migrant becomes the individual ascribed culpability within neoliberal thought, the lands on which they live are viewed as sacrificial zones. In order to create the conditions necessary for biopolitics, the lands which encompass (im)migrant ecologies must be destroyed.

Furthermore, Katherine McKittrick draws attention to "the ways 'the lands of no one' came to be bound to a geographic language of racial condemnation."[11] In other words, the imagining of (im)migrants as outside-of or other-than Human is produced and reproduced through geographic processes: if being Human is a requirement for proper inhabitation of space and dominion over land, this is not a possibility for those deemed not properly Human. McKittrick writes, "the uninhabitable creates an opening for a geographic transformation that is underscored by racial and sexual differences. To transform the uninhabitable into the in-habitable, and make this transformation profitable, the land must become a site of racial-sexual regulation".[12] The uninhabitable, then, according to McKittrick, becomes inhabitable for the Human-as-Man (i.e. white capitalists) through such processes of racial and geographic domination. To be sure,

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[11] McKittrick, Katherine "Plantation Futures". *Small Axe* 1 November 2013; 17 (3 (42)): 1–15. doi: https://doi.org/10.1215/07990537-2378892

[12] McKittrick, Katherine. *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*. NED-New edition, University of Minnesota Press, 2006. p.127-136.

land-as-nature becoming useful to colonizers in the Americas required a reification of racial hierarchies through which such land could be taken and made profitable through settlement, plantations, and extractive practices (land-as-commodity). McKittrick continues, “this normal way of life is rooted in racial condemnation; it is spatially evident in the sites of toxicity, environmental decay, pollution, and militarized action that are inhabited by impoverished communities—geographies described as battlegrounds or as burned, horrific, occupied, sieged, unhealthy, incarcerated, extinct, starved, torn, endangered.” These processes therefore are not unique to (im)migrants, but are the outgrowths of technologies used against Indigenous, Black, Asian, and Otherized communities. Hence, those deemed Other, the wretched of the earth (as Katherine Mckittrick and Clyde Woods by way of Frantz Fanon put it), are always the sacrificial offerings in already racialized spaces of uneven geographies.[13] This is not to be confused with ‘sacrifice zones’ in localized spaces, but rather entire populations, human and more-than-human, which are marked for premature death regardless of migration away from the perceived areas of danger.[14] A critical (im)migration justice movement must address the problem with citizenship and adherence to nation-imposed physical and theoretical boundaries.

[13] McKittrick, Katherine and Clyde Adrian Woods. *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place*. University of Michigan Press, 2007.
[14] Pellow, David N. *What is Critical Environmental Justice? Cambridge,* UK ; Malden, MA, USA : Polity Press, 2018.

In its shift towards pragmatic approaches, the (im)migrant rights movement has focused on expanding the boundaries of U.S. citizenship to include access to legalization and eventual citizenship for 'good' immigrants while simultaneously reinforcing the structures working against 'bad' immigrants, including those criminalized and/or imprisoned.[15] This narrative obfuscates the United States' role in (re)producing documented and undocumented (im)migration by further naturalizing the boundaries drawn.[16] When U.S. culpability is centered, it is often in an attempt to access refugee and asylum status and protection for (im)migrants or in service of empowering outside nation-states to create the conditions necessary for their citizens to flourish without U.S. influence. Both of these arguments however reinforce the idea that nation-states are natural and that their perpetuation is desirable.[17]

As Nicholas De Genova suggests, "If there were no borders, there would be no migration—only mobility."[18] Importantly, not all people moving across national borders are regarded as (im)migrants. Today, nationals of imperial, wealthier states are more likely to be granted permission to enter other nation-states, often being labeled as 'expats' or 'backpackers', adding to the classed and racialized character of the figure of the (im)migrant. All the while,

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[15] Escobar, Martha D. *Captivity beyond Prisons: Criminalization Experiences of Latina (Im)migrants.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016.
[16] Molina, Natalia. *How Race Is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts*. 1st ed., University of California Press, 2014.
[17] McNally, David. *Another World is Possible: Globalization and Anti-Capitalism.* Canada, Arbeiter Ring Pub., 2002.
[18] De Genova,Nicholas "Introduction: The Borders of 'Europe' and the European Question," in The Borders of "Europe": Autonomy of Migration, Tactics of Bordering, Nicholas De Genova, ed. Durham: Duke University Press, 2017, 6.

American politicians and media have spread fear of an unfolding ‘border crisis’. Along the political spectrum, (im)migration policy is viewed as an issue of reform to be handled by the state. Fear mongering around the impending ‘invasion’ supports stronger border securitization, detention, and deportation. Activists like Harsha Walia have argued however that said crisis is actually a crisis of displacement and immobility, preventing both the freedom to stay and the freedom to move.[19] (Im)migrants are not the cause of mass migration, but instead, a long history of dirty colonial coups, capitalist trade agreements extracting land and labor, and environmental destruction have displaced people while marking them as (im)migrant Others.”[20] Furthermore, the criminalization of (im)migrants and hierarchy of citizenship become components of border imperialism “by which the violences and precarities of displacement and migration are structurally created as well as maintained”.[21]

Migration studies presumes the primacy of geographic space, however, when we confuse the community or relational as national, a hardening that further restricts membership in the national political community takes place. It is worth noting that ‘citizen’ is not only a state (juridical) category but also a social one.[22] If being an (im)igrant is synonymous with lacking lawful claim to territory or political membership, it becomes impossible for (im)migrants to socially belong

[19] Walia, Harsha. “There Is No ‘Migrant Crisis.’” *Boston Review*, Nov. 2022. https://www.bostonreview.net/articles/there-is-no-migrant-crisis/
[20] Walia, Harsha. *Border and Rule: Global Migration, Capitalism, and the Rise of Racist Nationalism.* New York: Haymarket, 2021.
[21] Walia, Harsha. *Undoing Border Imperialism.* Oakland: AK Press, 2013, 5–6.
[22] Molina, Natalia. *Fit to be citizens?: Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879-1939.* Berkeley, University of California Press, 2006.

within the confines of a nation-state.[23] As citizens are sold on the idea that their culture and identity is rooted in their nationality, they are less inclined to welcome non-citizens who they have been told will upend the current order.[24]

A prevailing assumption is that while harsh immigration restrictions are inhumane and racist, too much immigration would threaten cultural values and inundate labor markets. However, borders do not protect labor nor do they stand with workers; the border is a mode of governance segmenting labor and manufacturing divisions within what might otherwise be a unified, international working class. Instead of helping workers, borders are exploited by capitalists to manage outsourcing and insourcing while weakening working-class power and resistance. Effectively, open borders exist for capitalists who benefit from outsourcing and insourcing while strict border regimes weaken working-class resistance to transnational capital.

Key Terms and Central Questions

At this moment of heightened U.S. nationalism coupled with continued capitalism and imperialism leading to environmental catastrophe, it is important to interrogate anew public conceptions of (im)migration. While much work has been done to outline the economic and political push and pull factors that fuel immigration from Latin America to the United States, my project rejects the idea

[23] Abrego Leisy J. “Relational Legal Consciousness of U.S. Citizenship: Privilege, Responsibility, Guilt, and Love in Latino Mixed-Status Families.” Law & Society Review. 2019;53(3):641-670. doi:10.1111/lasr.12414

[24] Mendoza, José Jorge “Go Back to Where You Came From!”: Racism, Xenophobia, and White Nationalism. American Philosophical Quarterly 1 October 2023; 60 (4): 397–410. doi: https://doi.org/10.5406/21521123.60.4.07

that ‘(im)migrant’ is a stable identity rooted in citizenship and national origin elsewhere. While (im)migrants of all sorts come together in support of perceived (im)migrant rights, the ‘(im)migrant’ identity is less of a unified social group and more a byproduct of state-regulated relations of governance and difference. When (im)migrants advocate for rights however, it is not the inclusion within citizenship itself that they are concerned with, but rather, what citizenship has come to represent about their place in a world dominated by nation-states. Therefore, I propose that migration studies should center on relationality. For too long, migration studies have presumed the primacy of geographic space, however, peoples’ sense of belonging is rooted in their ability to foster relationships wherever they may go.

For the purposes of this dissertation, relationality refers to relationships that humans have with each other and the more-than-human natural world. Therefore, rather than understanding humans as separate from, relationality understands humans are situated within a dense series of relationships that extend beyond the human. Discourses on relational ontology such as process philosophy and new materialism are emerging developments within Western thought, however, within Indigenous ontologies we can see a wide range and deep discussion of interrelated, interdependent aspects of ecosystems and their cultures.[25] Unlike Western environmentalism, these traditions refuse the idea that environment and nature are something ‘out there’, but rather, highlight the role of

[25] Walsh, Z., Böhme, J. & Wamsler, C. “Towards a relational paradigm in sustainability research, practice, and education”. *Ambio* 50, 74–84 (2021). https://doi.org/10.1007/s13280-020-01322-y

humans in ecosystems in order to flesh out our responsibility as 'part of'. Scholars such as Shawn Wilson have argued that for Indigenous people, a "grounded" sense of identity places connection to the land and fulfillment within that ongoing relationship as of the utmost importance.[26] To be sure, rather than viewing ourselves as being in relationship with other beings, we *are* the relationships.[27]

The importance of relationships was stressed by many of the activists and community members present at the IE actions discussed within this dissertation. Several stated relationality as being at the heart of environmental struggles in the IE. For example, when asked what being from the IE meant to participants at a town hall meeting, one youth responded

> It's a community - that is built on our relationships... but it's more than the people here…it's the animals too, and the land. There's a connection to the land, too. We live here, we work here, and go to school here. So we are learning and changing in relation to the land itself and to the people and animals around us. It's all interconnected.

Additionally, I was greatly inspired by Murray Bookchin's work on ecology, social ecology, and the differences between environmentalism and ecology.[28] For Bookchin, environmentalism is too often akin to biological engineering where nature is viewed through a Human-centric hierarchical approach and valued only

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[26] Wilson, Stan. "Self-as-Relationship in Indigenous Research". *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 25(2), 2001, 91-92. Retrieved from https://calpoly.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/self-as-relationship-indigenous-research/docview/230306501/se-2

[27] Wilson, Shawn. *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods.* Canada, Fernwood Publishing, 2020.

[28] Eccli, Eugene, and Murray Bookchin. "Environmentalists Versus Ecologists: An Interview with Murray Bookchin." *The Anarchist Library*, 1973, theanarchistlibrary.org/library/eugene-eccli-murray-bookchin-environmentalists-versus-ecologists.

as natural resources. Ecology however is a holistic approach concerned with relationships of humans to the natural world, including each other. Importantly, ecological outlook is a worldview that does not operate via hierarchies or domination. Therefore, Bookchin's term "social ecology" names ecological problems as arising from social problems. In other words, economic, racial, gender, and other conflicts lie at the core of the ecological concerns we are faced with.[29] Immigrant activists in the IE echoed these distinctions

> We don't really think of ourselves as environmentalists, although we love the land like our family. Environmentalists aren't bringing the types of solutions we want. In environmentalism, everything is sterile and separate, but we like to get messy in the dirt and with the animals. We value that relationship.

Regardless of the specific concern, community members repeatedly cited concerns for their relationships as central to their activism. In listening to community members, I constructed the following research questions: What kinship networks are formed between Latinx (im)migrants after migration/displacement and by extension, what are Latinx (im)migrants' definitions of place? What sorts of ephemeral ecological relations are formed between non-human and humans and what do these ecological kinship networks tell us about Latinx futurities and world-making projects? In order to address these questions, I engaged with existing migration and environmental scholarship in the following ways: 1) I argue that (im)migrants defy borders and citizenship

[29] Bookchin, Murray. *The Philosophy of Social Ecology: Essays on Dialectical Naturalism.* AK Press, 2022.

claims, even while they remain locally and nationally politically engaged by drawing particular attention to the ways that diasporic dialects are less about negotiating with states, and more about fleshing out the global from the local and national. 2) I also integrate the importance of the more-than-human world for diasporic dialects by paying particular attention to the ways that land, water, and non-human animals come to be represented, inform, and transform (im)migrant political struggles. 3) Finally, I analyze the ways in which (im)migrant kinship networks (human and non-human) are imaginative and embodied calls for the abolition of borders and nations. With a focus on relationality, I engaged with affect studies along with a host of other fields including critical legal studies and geography in order to advocate for a more interdisciplinary move in Latinx and migrant studies.

Furthermore, I am intent on rejecting the public consumption of migrant bodies. Over the last few years, stories, photographs, and videos displaying dead migrants attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea, the Pacific Ocean, the Rio Grande, and the Sahara and Sonoran Deserts have been circulated to summon pity upon death in order to obfuscate our global callousness towards each other in life. This discussion is timely as it addresses the growing concern around climate-induced (im)migration and climate refugees. My approach is distinct in that it is not a study of (im)migrants as environmental “problems” but as theorists in their own right who are working against bordering systems and in that process, fighting for freedom against all forms of captivity and control. What has

been dubbed the ‘border crisis’ and ‘climate crisis’ are actually crises of capitalism and imperialism that must be reframed and understood as such. There is nothing inherently dangerous about (im)migration - it is the mechanisms of nation-state bordering regimes that are fatal. Furthermore, rather than focusing on death in order to appeal to human emotions, I will be focusing on kinship networks in the context of diaspora and understandings of home which I believe are not only emotionally resonant but also clearer pathways towards international empowerment through collective struggle. I don’t intend to romanticize kin or (im)migration, but I also refuse to rely on pain narratives. The effects of environmental trauma are felt most acutely in our relationships, but it is these very relationships that (re)create our ecologies.

This argument is rooted in what I am calling a methodology of relationality. Rather than engaging in mere ethnographic research that operates from a researcher/object of study lens, I challenge the participant observer practice by arguing that in order to detect relationality, you have to be in relation yourself. I entered this work not quite understanding exactly what my connections to the research topic were. I first became interested in migration studies because I am the child of Mexican immigrants and grew up in a mixed-status family. Most of my family had crossed into the U.S. undocumented, but had relied on support from transnational communications to plan their crossing and situate themselves in Los Angeles upon their arrival. Throughout my young life, I was constantly told by my older siblings that I had it better because I had been born in the U.S. and

therefore I was ‘American’. I didn’t quite understand why my status as a U.S. born citizen was that important - we went to the same schools, consumed the same media, spoke the same languages, and shared the same cultural traditions, so why was I different and more importantly, why did my place of birth matter that much?

The difference between my siblings and I would become much clearer when I was 10-years-old. I was in the habit of falling asleep on the living room couch rather than retreating to the shared, cramped single bedroom when late one night I was awoken by chatter. My then 16-year-old brother had been arrested after attempting to rob a gas station with a few of his friends where he played a role as the getaway driver. Almost immediately there were concerns about what would happen to him because of his status - he was a legal resident, but not yet a citizen of the U.S. My parents hired an attorney that they couldn’t afford because they knew that more than prison time, my brother would be facing deportation. Despite being a minor, my brother was being tried as an adult and the stakes were high. A year and thousands of dollars in legal costs later, my brother was sentenced to three years in prison which would end in deportation and a life-long permanent expulsion from the country. It did not matter that my brother had been in the States since he could remember or that he did not have anywhere to go or know anyone in Mexico - in the eyes of the judicial system, he could not be American because he was an immigrant.

More than three years, my brother was sentenced for life via his deportation, and my entire family was sentenced with him. My parents were forced to work 16-hour days and multiple jobs to pay off legal fees that had been unsuccessful and as my oldest sisters moved out of the house, I was left alone to parent myself while also helping my parents with bills and legal documents that they as monolingual Spanish-speakers were not equipped to handle.

Despite being a U.S. born citizen myself, my citizenship status did not protect me from the force of bordering regimes. My proximity to non-citizens rendered me an Other as the economic and emotional stability of my family was ripped away. During my Master's program, I turned to Latin American studies because I wanted to learn more about myself, and in effect, about my family, kin, and home. I thought that learning more about Mexican and Latin American culture would connect me to my roots, but what I found was so much more. I was fortunate enough to be a part of a department that really cared about fostering a sense of belonging and throughout my two years in the program, I became a part of a community that I continue to call home today. It was this sense of belonging and community that I brought with me to my Ph.D. studies and while I initially planned on building upon my MA thesis work on femicides at the U.S./Mexico border, I found myself drawn to the more immediate concerns of the communities situated where I was studying. In the following section, I will detail the parameters for this dissertation research along with methods and methodology.

Method and Methodology

The central component of my research is based in the Inland Empire, a region of California that has increasingly suffered from a warehouse takeover of land and resources which creates a significant impact on the community members' health and quality of life. Interestingly, my oldest sisters both live in the area with their families, however, having not immersed myself in the community through them, it was not until I started to form connections with the Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice (CCAEJ) in Jurupa Valley that I began to feel intimately connected with the community in the IE. CCAEJ is a non-profit organization that focuses on environmental health to achieve social change by working within communities to develop and sustain participatory decision-making and community empowerment. Importantly, the Center is non-hierarchical in its approach to organizing and is made up of people who are actually connected to the area. Their endeavors are often community-led and they operate according to collective needs.

I was first exposed to CCAEJ through a professor at University of California, Riverside who himself had grown up in the IE area and worked with CCAEJ and other local nonprofit organizations and community groups. As I became closer with the community, I understood that I could not produce a traditional anthropological ethnography if I were to adequately tell this story. I had moved from observer to community member and a relationship had formed - it is only through this relational lens that certain knowledge can be understood.

Importantly, this dissertation is not about the Inland Empire, but about relationships that exist everywhere and that are not contained by geographic space or borders. It is a dissertation about the connections that all beings make and need in order to live well together.

This dissertation describes the cultural processes which come to characterize a place and the relationships which make these connections possible. While large pieces of this dissertation stem from my work organizing with CCAEJ and within the IE, this is not a story that should be confined to a particular location - rather, it is a story concerned with global networks which aims to flesh out the important connections which hold us together. I build on this concept first presented to me within anthropologist Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing's *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection* where she introduces a way of thinking about the history of social projects which centers and highlights the frictions, collaborations, and interconnections that makes such projects possible.[30]

In the current hegemonic order, aspirations for global connection come to life through friction in markets. Capitalism and neoliberalism spread through aspirations to fulfill what are considered to be universal dreams and desires which are then enacted in the sticky materiality of applied encounters. Gayatri Spivak describes these universals as those things we cannot not want, even as those universals so often exclude us.[31] In other words, what is considered

[30] Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. *Friction: an Ethnography of Global Connection.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005.
[31] Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (1st ed.). Routledge, 2008.

universal is that which was conceived of through colonial encounters and has become the global thread of humanity and cultural dialogue. However, even as universalism from above seeks to create a globalized localism, everything everywhere is not in fact the same and universals such as Rights discourses are often weaponized to deny the rights of Others.

I began this research with the intention to create a more traditional ethnography, relying heavily on participant observation and interviews gathered from my work as a student researcher at CCAEJ. However, I became increasingly concerned about the researcher/object of study divide and what this might do to representations of community members who should be understood as authorities on their environmental, social, and political struggles. Historically, individuals from marginalized communities have been the de facto subjects of research; this process can have the negative effect of othering and dehumanizing those already living on the peripheries of society as objects to be deciphered for the researcher's consumption. Scholars Karen L. Potts and Leslie Brown state, "from an anti-oppressive perspective most research is organized with a gaze facing the wrong way, towards those who suffer from inequities rather than those who benefit from them or those who are indifferent".[32] Studies related to (im)migrants overly rely on narratives of "Third World" poverty and threat - associations that present the migrant as an object (as opposed to subject) in need of rescue and therefore, an undesirable and ignominious problem for the

[32] Potts, Karen & Brown, L. "Becoming an anti-oppressive researcher" in *Research as Resistance: Critical, Indigenous, Anti-Oppressive Approaches* (2005). 255-286.

receiving countries. These studies, either intentionally or inadvertently, tend to further the image of the United States as a land of opportunity while omitting the role of U.S. power structures intimately responsible for the conditions destabilizing (im)migrants.[33] Though “researching up” would encourage a scholar to shift their gaze and investigate those in positions of power, I was also compelled by community activists who wanted to raise awareness about what was going on in their communities and who were already sharing their stories publicly.

In contemporary academic settings, research and publishing expectations push academics to take deeply personal and meaningful information, usually from marginalized communities, and present it to a reader which is typically made up of a removed, highly educated academic and/or government audience. The extracted knowledge is rarely intended for consumption by participants or “informants”. This extractive methodology fails to acknowledge the researcher or reader’s responsibility to the community which theorized and shared their expertise. While the extractive methodology of “good academics” is rewarded with degrees, research funding, and tenured employment, community-based research that is not directed towards academics is devalued. Not wanting to recreate extractive practices, I employed what Adam J.P. Gaudrey calls “insurgent research” rooted in Indigenous methods and methodologies.[34]

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[33] Espiritu, Yen Le. *Body Counts: The Vietnam War and Militarized Refuge(Es)*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014.
[34] Gaudry, Adam J. P. "Insurgent Research." *Wicazo Sa Review*, vol. 26 no. 1, 2011, p. 113-136. *Project MUSE*, https://doi.org/10.1353/wic.2011.0006.

Insurgent research refocuses research in ways that explicitly employ Indigenous worldviews, understands a researcher's responsibility as directed almost exclusively towards community/participants, and promotes anti and decolonial community-based actions. While much academic research could be viewed as a method of translation intent on legitimizing Indigenous and marginalized worldviews to the liberal and capitalist gaze through perceived parallels, this research fails to recognize knowledge from the margins as valuable in their own right and stifles the intended decolonial goals of these communities in service of universals.

While this dissertation is not focused on Indigenous communities, it is rooted in Indigenous epistemologies around relationality and shares within a decolonial and Indigenous praxis of relationality. Shawn Wilson argues that relationships don't just inform Indigenous reality, they are the reality. Therefore, Indigenous researchers understand research as ceremony when it facilitates the maintenance of and accountability to relationships.[35] Furthermore, Indigenous relationality is built upon the interconnections that bind a group - the basis of which might be considered the land. In other words, knowledge is held in the relationships and experiences on and with land. Throughout this text I consider research as ceremony in that this dissertation is concerned with the maintenance and accountability of relationships. Furthermore, in chapter 4 I discuss in more

[35] Wilson, Shawn. *Research Is Ceremony,* 2020.

detail the implications of this research for Indigenous decolonial struggles as well as respond to autochthones arguments.

As this dissertation is concerned with environment and ecologies, it became necessary to invite land and other more-than-human life into conversation in order to gain a deeper relationality. Throughout this dissertation I make reference to non-human animals and a sense of place which are integral components to the relationality I describe. Through my experiences walking the land alongside non-human animals, I gained insight into 'ephemera as evidence'.[36] Ephemera, as José Esteban Muñoz describes it is, "alternative modes of textuality and narrativity like memory and performance: it is all of those things that remain after a performance, a kind of evidence of what transpired but certainly not the thing itself". Indeed, the 'evidence' that (im)migrant ecologies materialize in fleeting moments enabled me to queer my understanding of attachment. Having been educated in Western institutions, I had lived most of my life with a sense that attachment is rooted in geographic location and nation. However, it is not an attachment to geographic location, but rather, an attachment to something that transpired or is transpiring. It is to be affected by affect in flux and in relation which is important for knowledge creation.

Through my own relationality in IE struggles, I became acutely aware of how lived experiences of (im)migration and environmental injustice at a time of heightened (im)migration alarmism provide community activists with a unique

[36] Muñoz, José Esteban. "Ephemera as Evidence: Introductory Notes to Queer Acts", *Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory*, (1996) 8:2, 5-16, DOI: 10.1080/07407709608571228.

perspective and knowledge rooted in relationality and place. Furthermore, community activists are in the public, sharing their knowledge at open events and accessible for all. By framing the dissertation through the lens of relationality built on participation/observation, I was interested in highlighting how anyone who has participated in these events would hold the same amount of knowledge as I am sharing here. The goal is not to substitute active engagement with academic text, but rather to invite readers into an analysis of relationality and therefore, prompt readers to notice and invest in the relationships around and between them. I also intend to build a relationship with the readers of this story, for it is only through the building of this relationship that the reader will be able to understand.

Indeed, the closer I became to the communities discussed and to the topic at hand, the less interested I was in producing an ethnography exposing a particular group. Instead, I push forward a method and methodology of relationality. Ecology teaches us that anything that is possible is possible through relationality. Furthermore, our relationships provide the foundation of knowledge necessary to affect and be affected.

Being in relation requires an ability to read beneath the surface; with intimacy comes a certain knowledge and the ability to affect and be affected. Hence, during my participation/observation I was keenly aware of affects. Affect studies are concerned with the becoming and un-becoming - the transmission of energy across bodies. To be sure, it is in the becoming or un-becoming (not yet) and precedes any good/bad distinction. It exists in the collective and is capable

of touching all life-full (not to be confused with living) bodies. Here, bodies are defined not as skeletal and fleshy beings, but by their potential to co-participate in the passages of affect. They're things that happen, but not the things themselves. Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth add that affect arises in the in between-ness.[37] Affect is typically understood as ephemeral but may also exist in a more sustained state of relation. Patricia Ticineto Clough adds that the import of resistance to the human/nature and living/nonliving divide as these dichotomies exist at the boundaries of autopoiesis and do not consider the assemblages that may be formed between and amongst.[38] Put in conversation with Clough's understanding of affect in relatedness, Gregg and Seigworth also maintain that affect can be impersonal when it is found in the interruptions. Therefore, affect can also be the un-becomings. Indeed, there is a 'yet-ness' to affect. Still, one of the strengths of affect studies is its ability to illuminate futures and otherwise possibilities through its 'yet-ness'. Kathleen Stewart adds the concept of 'ordinary affects' where the 'ordinary' is a "shifting assemblage of practices and practical knowledges, a scene of both liveness and exhaustion, a dream of escape or of the simple life".[39] Following, ordinary affects are the potentiality to affect and be affected that make up the quotidian. Stewart points to the impulses, longing, daydreams, and expectations of the everyday as ordinary affects. Indeed, they do not await rational thought and may not be neatly

[37] Gregg, Melissa, and Gregory J. Seigworth. *The Affect Theory Reader.* Durham, NC : Duke University Press, 2010.
[38] Ticineto Clough, Patricia. "Afterword: The Future of Affect Studies." *Body & Society,* vol. 16, no. 1, Mar. 2010, pp. 222–230, doi:10.1177/1357034X09355302.
[39] Stewart, Kathleen. *Ordinary Affects.* Ukraine: Duke University Press, 2007.

explained - they simply exert force to be felt and experienced but not necessarily named, known, or understood. Affects move along, picking up texture as they make their way through bodies but also dreams and world-making projects. Affects express themselves through thoughts and feelings, supporting new modes of relating and knowing. Therefore, Stewart understands ordinary affects as contact zones that map connections. Similar to Clough, Stewart is advocating for a pause before representational thinking.

The ordinary affects of (im)migrants can be understood as contact zones that map becoming and un-becoming connections between (im)migrant kinship networks and the pleasure-full otherwise. Extending (im)migrant kinship networks beyond the human, affect studies also troubles the human/nature and living/nonliving divide as these dichotomies exist at the boundaries of autopoiesis and do not consider the assemblages that may be formed between and amongst. Rather than being overly concerned with specific, individual stories, this dissertation bridges individual with collective stories to provide a narrative that elicits social change through a shift in perception which includes the reader in this living history as an active participant and potential accomplice. While most academic texts position the reader as outside of the conditions being described, I understand the reader as within them and therefore capable of altering the course.

Affect theory was integral to my own work by helping me to understand affect as linked to vibrations, movement, and (im)migration at the U.S./Mexico

border and beyond. While the two countries purportedly seek to create balance through border enforcement, this physical and philosophical division in fact disrupts, alters, and seeks to contain the naturally occurring vibrations, the affect. However, (im)migrant ecologies share in ordinary affects experienced as a flow of pleasure and pain, disorientation and recognition. Furthermore, they carry the potential for something else - the yet to be that is still always coming. By centering affect within my participation/ observation, I was able to recognize how (im)migrant-led social movements open up possibilities for environmentally responsible and reciprocal futures without borders and nations, paving the way and setting examples through their relationships.

Nishnaabeg Radical Resurgence teaches that “knowledge is intimate” and that we ought to “wear our teachings”, meaning that “one has to be the intervention, one has not only to wear the theories but use them to navigate life”.[40] Following this logic, life itself, the practice of living, can serve as method when the internal work of generating meaning through a combination of emotional and intellectual knowledge is theoretically anchored to ancestral and communal knowledge. Therefore, it is necessary to look beyond embodied knowledge of the individual presently (and for many reasons, impossible). To this end, I am not interested in, and actively resist, an ethnography that appeases Western academic conventions. Kinship networks produce theory daily, without

[40] Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, University of Minnesota Press, 2017. p. 28-31.

regard to and oftentimes opposing academic standards - these daily practices are what sustains communities and their dreams.

While this dissertation may read as an ethnography, it is not an ethnography which exposes marginalized people nor is it an ethnography centered on people at all - it is an ethnography about relationality. In order to avoid recreating extractive research practices and methods, I have centered the information of this research around information that participants willingly put out into public view regardless of scholarly influence. I refused to conduct interviews in order to counter the idea that any single individual holds knowledge or authority over the rest of the community - it is the sum of relationality which is the knowledge. Furthermore, I did not want to guide the information by creating research questions in a vacuum nor did I want to tarnish the work by highlighting the researcher/researched dichotomy within the interview process. Instead, I listened to, walked with, and joined community. The research questions guiding this dissertation shifted as my engagement with community members strengthened.

To be sure, my position in academia inherently means there is a power differential between myself and the community I have observed/participated in. Creating a written account of activism in the IE means there are questions of what to include/exclude and how to frame events within this dissertation. Throughout the research and writing process, I have shared my findings with community members and encouraged them to challenge my perspective. The

end result is a dissertation which has been heavily edited and influenced by community members.

Finally, I pushed myself to listen to the decolonial silences rather than leaning on liberal readings of organizing. While publicly groups may at times appeal to liberal thoughts of inclusion, their quotidian interactions reveal decolonial struggles that push the boundaries of what is possible. Indeed, their struggles are not about inclusion within the nation-state (even when on the surface they may appear to be) but rather, their struggle is inherently challenging the importance of nations, citizenship, and other elements of colonialism which have been inherited and normalized. Importantly, immigrant community members in the IE are engaging in activist work with an ethos that aligns with Indigenous rematriation efforts, stressing a reclamation of relationship to place and a practice of reciprocity.[41] This reveals opportunities for further dialogue between Latinx and Indigenous scholars regarding ecology, borders, and nations.

As the child of immigrants, I utilize my familial knowledge and relationality whenever appropriate throughout this dissertation. As a community activist, I lean on my communal knowledge and present the evidence materialized by relationality throughout this dissertation. Similar to grounded theory, I was interested in building theory from this data rather than merely describing the ethnographic experience and allowing theories to evolve through social research

[41] Hill, Kyle X and Lyla June Johnston, Misty R Blue, Jaidyn Probst, Madison Staecker, Lydia L Jennings, “Rematriation and Climate Justice: Intersections of Indigenous Health and Place”, *The Journal of Climate Change and Health,* 2024, 100314, ISSN 2667-2782, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.joclim.2024.100314.

which I engaged in.[42] However, I have not chosen a focus on grounded theory as I am bringing my personal background and connection to the subject at hand into the research and I want to leave space for the unknown and unseen connections that participants are also bringing into the web of research and theory. Furthermore, this is a study of connections rather than merely a study observing a particular community. If the object of this research had been to discuss a community, I would have followed the individuals within the community more closely. However, as that is not the case, I have presented my findings based on public participation and chosen interactions.

Finally, I center the teachings gained through relationality within this text. While academic spaces can be sterile and lack relationality, there are some spaces where insurgent researchers break boundaries. I have been fortunate enough to receive the gift of education, knowledge, and guidance from these types of scholars. It is my relationship with them, not the university, which fuels me to incorporate those teachings into this dissertation.

This dissertation merges different forms of theory that are often viewed as existing in separate spheres and divided by disciplinary borders: academic, activist, and experiential theories. While academic discourse and research is legitimized as the highest form of theory, I argue that knowledge and change require all three in tandem. Taken together, these forms help us to understand what's at stake and explore epistemological questions for future worlds. The

[42] Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative* Research. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press, 1967.

praxis of organizing and living in resistance/with community make tangible otherwise theoretical, academic insights.

The first chapter, “The Problem with Citizenship” discusses the problem with citizenship. In response to migrant studies, queer studies, and other otherwise critical fields who do not question the nation/state entity, I explore what it means to do away with the presumption of a fixed geographic space as a natural right. If border imperialism is the direct result of violences such as colonialism, racial chattel slavery, capital accumulation, labor stratification, and structural hierarchies of citizenship, then taking an intersectional lens to (im)migration issues is directly in conversation with anticolonial, anticapitalist, antinationalist struggles. Rather than arguing along the good/bad immigrant dichotomy, this chapter rigorously challenges the very notion of a nation’s borders.

The second chapter, “Belonging through Relationality,” maps out what would happen if we did away with the presumption of citizenship through fixed space and instead thought about ongoing relationality that can change at any time. Through my own participation in (im)migrant-led activist spaces, this chapter argues that Nations and capitalism preach a false sense of relationality meanwhile creating distance, however, by coming into contact with one another, we create ‘place’ wherever we go. This chapter also addresses strategies for social movements grappling with how to form relationships with seemingly

independent social movements and how we might expand movements to create transformative change.

In the third chapter, “ The Poetics of the Plea”, I build on chapter two to discuss how approaches to (im)migrant rights can move forward if we center relations as the lens. While some scholars and activists have argued for the inclusion of categories such as ‘climate refugee’ into legal systems, I argue that the poetics of the plea lies in relationality and the formation of ‘place’, rather than in legal recognition.

The fourth chapter dives into questions of environmental destruction and justice. If we understand that people form connections to unfixed ecosystems, then environmental discussions can also be expanded to move past the notion of fixed space. Here I also address autochthonous discourses. White Nationals within the nation-states in Europe; Indigenous National-Natives within colonized, unceded territory; and National-Natives in national liberation states in Asia, Africa, and the Americas each mobilize a discourse of autochthony with the goal of national sovereignty, yet I in no way am arguing that those claims are the same. White Nationals demanding stricter border enforcement in Europe as a result of being the ‘indigenous people of Europe,’ for example, are not the equivalent of various Indigenous or Aboriginal claims to national sovereignty in the Americas or Australia. Hence, even though at times I deconstruct the idea of indigeneity, this chapter demonstrates solidarity with Indigenous peoples through a deeper understanding of collaboration in decolonial struggles. By challenging

human and more-than-human people's placement in fixed categories such as Native or Migrant, I challenge the power of a strategic move like laying claim to national sovereignty and land as territory. Such claims have been increasingly wielded by global powers to enact violence against a perceived Other. Meanwhile, global connections are hindered by nationalist imaginations.

Finally, I end with what I am proposing is a theory of a relational, no-borders and internationalist approach to (im)migrant justice. We cannot allow nation-states and capitalist forces to name the problems they have created and continue to exacerbate in order to extract profit. More than ever, it is imperative that we become ungovernable and recognize bordering regimes as existing far beyond what we call a nation's border. As Murray Bookchin argues with his concept of social ecology, the domination of non-human nature by humans is directly related to the subjugation of some humans by the other humans.[43] Capitalism has centered market relationships at the expense of true relationality, reducing people and the planet itself to commodities and resources for exploitation and extraction. In the face of climate change and a growing number of (im)migrants, the nation-state's discourse attempts to label such rising cases as accidental problems and isolated phenomena. But despite the particularities, historical continuity teaches us that such occurrences are inevitable rather than accidental and more than inevitable, they are created, desired, and profitable. In every aspect of life, from family, school, to the workplace, and even in our

[43] Bookchin, Murray. *The Philosophy of Social Ecology: Essays on Dialectical Naturalism*. AK Press, 2022.

organizing spaces, capitalist society conspires to foster obedience to hierarchy in the working class. Bordering regimes are a manifestation of this hierarchy which we must dismantle. This is exactly what the community member voiced that June at the Rialto City Council Meeting when she said, “That money isn’t going to be worth really much if the people decide that they don't trust you, don’t believe in you and that you don’t have their welfare in your heart and mind.” A government is meant to be made up of its people - there can be no government without citizens who give over their power to it. The power exercised by elites must be returned to all people and in effect, the citizen must become a person with the ability to recognize other people (internationally, non-human people) as interrelated to their own survival. To center our relationality would mean to be ungovernable and ungoverning, instead, turning to our relationships to lead the way towards collective horizons for the benefit of all.

Chapter 1: The Problem with Citizenship

R decided to attend the November 2023 Fontana City Council meeting much like she decided to attend many other local meetings - she was from the IE area and passionate about her community's rights so whenever possible, she would enroll her boyfriend, C, to drive the pair to meetings so that they could show their support. The two had grown up in the area, graduated high school early with good grades, and unable to enroll in their respective universities until the fall, spent their free volunteering for local nonprofits and serving the IE community. R and C were not connected to any particular organization in attendance at the Fontana City Council meeting, but they were eager to listen to their community members' opinions and express their own in regards to the two large projects for industrial commerce centers and regulations on street vendors which the Council planned to vote on. Community groups including CCAEJ were also in attendance to oppose the commerce centers and support street vendors - two issues they understood as connected. In fact, a lot of the community was in attendance and as should be expected, their resistance to the measures being discussed was palpable.

Frustrated at what she perceived to be disruption on behalf of community members at the meeting, Mayor Acquanetta Warren called the meeting to an early halt and exited the chambers. Immediately, local police were standing at the front of the room as confused community members asked what was going to happen. City Council meetings had been halted before only to resume once the

bulk of the community members had gone, so the people weren't going to be convinced to leave so easily. Suddenly, C was surrounded by police officers and was being handcuffed. Despite not knowing why he was being arrested, C did not resist and yet, six police officers circled him while pulling at his arms. R was in shock as she came to her boyfriend's defense, only to be held back, dragged out, and arrested by two other officers. Community members watched in shock - the two had done nothing to provoke the officers. As pleas to "leave them alone" rang out, others in the crowd attempted to defend the young couple and were also arrested. By the end of the night, seven community members had been taken into custody.

Neither R nor C had previous criminal records - they were A-grade students and national, church-going citizens who loved their community. R had even completed a police cadet program when she was younger and was now in her first semester as a major in criminal justice - she believed in the law and legal systems and wanted to contribute to what she believed was a structure that helped and protected people. Despite fitting neatly into the category of "good citizen", R was a first generation child of immigrants and her skin color meant that she was always vulnerable to being Otherized.

Just a few days earlier, residents of unincorporated Bloomington had planned to ride their horses through the neighborhoods and raise awareness about the Bloomington Business Park Specific Plan - a 213-acre plan to rezone agricultural and residential land into industrial and commercial land - which the

San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors would be voting on November 15. Similar to the blow Rialto residents had suffered earlier in the year, the decision was part of an ongoing push by local governments and developers to increase warehouse space in the area. One resident remarked, “(The developers) just think it's okay to put these giant walls of warehouses right between a community…It's right in the middle of our neighborhoods.” I knew I was getting close when I started to see the horses. Almost all of them traveled in groups, carrying their people on their saddles over the hills and towards our meeting place. In Los Angeles, where I live, horses are not commonplace. In Bloomington however, just 60 or so miles away, horses are integral members of the community. When discussing upcoming actions to raise awareness and draw support for the environmental issues people in the IE were facing, everyone knew that a *cabalgata* would have to be involved. The word *cabalgata* simply translates to cavalcade or horse ride, but it also connotes a pilgrimage and/or ceremony. Over a hundred people attended the event, most of which dressed as *charro/as, or* a style of dress associated with Mexican ranchers.

For many of the participants, this was not their first cabalgata - they had participated in religious, festive, and activist processions in Mexico and continued these traditions in California. In response to encroaching warehouses and capitalist forces, the cabalgata was intentional for a number of reasons: 1) by bringing the horses into the act of civil protest, communities in the IE were visibly displaying the more-than-human struggles and resistance taking place, 2) the

cabalgata's invocation of a pilgrimage represented the importance of (im)migrants in the community, and 3) their familiarity with cabalgatas enabled the participants to protest in ways that were culturally relevant and based on ways the community was already relating to one another.

As the rhythmic beats of music, horse hooves, and chants filled the air, I reflected on what a great turnout the event had inspired. Similar events I attended in regards to warehousing in the area but that were framed around (im)migrant rights, access to citizenship, and voting had not drawn these types of crowds (nor had they been as festive). Notably, not everyone present was Mexican, Latin American, or an (im)migrant. There were community members of all races, ethnicities, and documented status present, demonstrating that while this was a largely Latinx community, the threat the warehouses pose impacts every single member of the community regardless of these identities. As the procession made its way through the streets, residents who were still home eagerly joined us after learning our cause.

Despite the wonderful turnout, on November 15 the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors voted in favor of the Bloomington Business Park Specific Plan. Some of the same community members who had been present at the cabalgata expressed their frustration in the process and system that was failing them. While some who were undocumented lamented their inability to vote for adequate representation or to have equal input on propositions and measures

impacting them, those who did have the ability to vote expressed feeling duped by politicians and powerlessness in the face of large corporations. As one participant stated

> When I was undocumented, I thought that getting papers would fix everything. They tell us that if you're a U.S. citizen, you have rights. Now I know that is not true. My family has built a home here, but they want to move us out so that they can build their warehouses. Well, maybe they can do that since they are rich and powerful, but they can't destroy the connections we have to each other. Bloomington will be Bloomington somewhere else, as long as we are together. Of course we would like to stay here, but many of us have migrated before. Mobility is always an option. It is hard to be an immigrant, but mobility is natural - it's something our ancestors have always done and that we will continue to do.

The dialogue and events I witnessed this week exposed a mostly unspoken truth - legal citizenship had not protected IE residents from capital encroachment nor had it equipped them with the power to stop unwanted development. Importantly, in the case of R and C, their status as "good" citizens had not prevented them from being criminalized and subjected to harsh police treatment. Furthermore, the participant's statement that "mobility is always an option" evoked what critical migration scholars such as Nicholas de Genova have been arguing, "if there were no borders, there would be no migrants – only mobility".[44] Indeed, human mobility only appears as a 'problem' once it is framed within bordering, colonial regimes of mobility control and large-scale immobilization is naturalized through citizenship and nationalism. In this regard, migration studies is implicated in a continuous reification of migrants as a distinct

[44] Genova, Nicholas de. "'We are of the connections': migration, methodological nationalism, and 'militant research'." *Postcolonial Studies* 16 (2013): 250-258.

category of human mobility. However, as the participant alludes to in their statement that “mobility is natural”, we must conceive anew the relation between the human species and space as a whole, outside of the confines of nations and citizenship. In the following chapter, I explore what it means to do away with the presumption of a fixed geographic space as a natural right and instead, focus on mobility as a natural right. In other words, I want to problematize well-meaning arguments that tether communities to a fixed space and inadvertently align with nationalist arguments.[45] If we can understand that communities should have the ability to stay (as opposed to forced displacement), we might also consider the value of the ability to move (as opposed to forced entrapment). This chapter rigorously challenges the very notion of a nation’s borders while simultaneously exploring opportunities of growth for migrant and environmental studies.

Migration studies, particularly work focused on Mexico, have covered extensively the criminalization of Mexicans as tied to the War on Drugs and a lack of access to citizenship. The criminalization of (im)migrants has occurred since the nineteenth century, starting with the Page Act of 1875 which marked an end to open borders and officially beginning in 1882 with the Chinese Exclusion Act, aligning with the continued needs of the American capitalist economy after the abolition of slavery in 1865.[46] Mexican (im)migration to the United States is particularly contradictory because while the highest rates of (im)migrants to the

[45] Jones, Reece. *Violent Borders: Refugees and the Right to Move.* United Kingdom, Verso Books, 2016.
[46] Wong, Edlie L. *Racial Reconstruction: Black Inclusion, Chinese Exclusion, and the Fictions of Citizenship*. NYU Press, 2015. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt15zc6xj.

U.S. have for decades been from Mexico, changes to U.S. immigration law since 1965 have made it increasingly difficult for Mexicans to access pathways to 'legal' (im)migration.[47] Nicholas De Genova argues that this paradox reveals much about American partisan efforts; leftist claims of liberalizing (im)migration laws insidiously mask restrictive policies and conservative aims of stricter (im)migration laws "purportedly intended to deter (im)migration have nonetheless been instrumental in sustaining Mexican migration, but only by significantly restructuring its legal status as undocumented".[48] Furthermore, De Genova posits that (im)migrant 'illegality' ought to be understood as a specifically spatialized socio-political condition in that illegality is lived through "a palpable sense of deportability – the possibility of deportation, which is to say, the possibility of being removed from the space of the US nation-state".[49] The legal (re)production of 'illegality' therefore provides an integral component sustaining Mexican (im)migrants' vulnerability and fungibility as workers whose labor-power sustains the U.S. economy.

Within nations, social membership is usually equated with citizenship status, however, many scholars have pointed out the limits of citizenship when it comes to marginalized communities.[50] Furthermore, 'citizenship' ignores the

[47] Gutiérrez, David G. "5. A Historic Overview of Latino Immigration and the Demographic Transformation of the United States". *The New Latino Studies Reader: A Twenty-First-Century Perspective*, edited by Ramon A. Gutierrez and Tomas Almaguer, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016, pp. 108-125. https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520960510-009
[48] De Genova, Nicholas. The Legal Production of Mexican/Migrant "Illegality". Lat Stud 2, 160–185 (2004), p.160. https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.lst.8600085
[49] Ibid,. p. 161
[50] Román, Ediberto. *Citizenship and Its Exclusions: A Classical, Constitutional, and Critical Race Critique.* United Kingdom, NYU Press, 2010. Adair, Cassius. "Licensing Citizenship:

various ways that social membership is established outside of definitions set by nations.[51] Importantly, while there is a long history of advocating for legalization/citizenship, such measures tend to have the undesired consequence of strengthening border policy, border enforcement, and the symbolic and ideological production of 'exclusion'/subordinate inclusion.[52] Following in the footsteps of critical migrant and abolitionist geography scholars, I move away from a position for pathway to citizenship to instead argue that citizenship of a nation-state, and even more, that nation-states are the problem.[53] Within my participation/observation, I came to see a thread of border abolition emerge from within IE community spaces. While day-to-day efforts appeared more practical, participants rarely (if ever) discussed citizenship as a dream and instead, often discussed a desire for autonomy, mobility, and freedom. This chapter therefore argues that rather than continuing to advocate for access to citizenship, migration justice movements should be advocating for the abolition of borders and nations.

Anti-Blackness, Identification Documents, and Transgender Studies." *American Quarterly*, vol. 71 no. 2, 2019, p. 569-594. *Project MUSE*, https://doi.org/10.1353/aq.2019.0043. Iwata, T. Rethinking Asian American Agency: Understanding the Complexity of Race and Citizenship in America. In Asian American Studies After Critical Mass, K.A. Ono (Ed.) 2005. https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470774892.ch10

[51] Del Castillo, Adelaida R. "Illegal Status and Social Citizenship: Thoughts on Mexican Immigrants in a Postnational World". *Aztlán* 1 October 2002; 27 (2): 11–32. doi: https://doi.org/10.1525/azt.2002.27.2.11

[52] De Genova, 'Border, Scene and Obscene'. De Genova, 'Spectacles of Migrant "Illegality"'. De Genova, 'Migrant "Illegality" and Deportability'. De Genova, Working the Boundaries, pp 242–249.

[53] Gilmore, Ruth Wilson. *Abolition Geography: Essays Towards Liberation.* United Kingdom, Verso Books, 2022. Bradley, Gracie Mae, and Noronha, Luke de. *Against Borders: The Case for Abolition.* United Kingdom, Verso Books, 2022. Heynen, N. and Ybarra, M. "On Abolition Ecologies and Making "Freedom as a Place"". *Antipode*, 53, 2021: 21-35. https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12666 Schoolman, Martha. *Abolitionist Geographies.* United States, University of Minnesota Press, 2014. Anderson, Bridget & Sharma, Nandita & Wright, Cynthia. Editorial:" Why No Borders?". *Refuge.* 26, 2009. 10.25071/1920-7336.32074.

Border Abolition - What do borders do?

Ostensibly, borders are lines on a map that establish where one country ends and another begins. For anyone alive at the time of this writing, borders are commonplace and naturalized ways to manage the movement of people and goods. The modern day iteration of the world is divided into countries, each with their own borders and while borders are a human-made invention, there currently exist no countries without borders. As such, even law abiding travelers are subjected to surveillance and control at borders in the form of full body X-ray scans, pat downs, and other biometric technologies within and beyond physical borders.[54] While on the one hand borders are broadly accepted as a necessary mechanism of safety and control, borders are always vulnerable to being breached by “floods” of (im)migrants - a narrative which serves to support government calls for continuously increasing resources and technologies that strengthen borders. Furthermore, experts, scholars, and voices across the political spectrum assert that borders are sensible ways to 1) protect workers from low wages caused by a surplus of cheap (im)migrant labor, 2) ease strains on housing and social services, 3) preserve national culture, and 4) combat the smuggling of people, drugs, and other illicit activity.[55] Nonetheless, borders are

[54] Brendese, P.J. “Borderline Epidemics: Latino Immigration and Racial Biopolitics.” *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 2, no. 2 (2014): 168–87. doi:10.1080/21565503.2014.909320.
[55] Anderson, Bridget, *Us and Them? The Dangerous Politics of Immigration Control* (Oxford, 2013; online edn, Oxford Academic, 23 May 2013), https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199691593.001.0001 Katja Aas and Mary Bosworth, eds, The Borders of Punishment: Migration, Citizenship, and Social Exclusion (Oxford: OUP, 2013); Juliet Stumpf, ‘The Crimmigration Crisis: Immigrants, Crime, and Sovereign Power’, American University Law Review 56: 2 (2006).

not in fact effective at keeping people out. While borders may force (im)migrants to take different (longer, more dangerous) routes, they do not actually stop (im)migrants from moving.[56]

If borders do not actually stop people from (im)migrating, what is it that they do? Borders not only impact (im)migrants, but continuously impact long settled individuals who have been illegalized, along with their families, friends, and broader communities by limiting their ability to leave an employer, spouse or university.[57] Moreover, everyday bordering regimes determine how people of all statuses relate to one another as differentiated rights are granted/denied and racist divisons along with nativist sentiments create hierarchies of inclusion and exclusion.[58] As such, bordering regimes actually facilitate much of the social harms they claim to prevent, including economic, political, and social inequality and death. Rather than addressing the conditions which shape migration processes in the first place, (im)migration controls worsen the conditions people on the move face.

By focusing on what are considered more ‘practical’ methods of expanding the boundaries of US citizenship, the current (im)migrant rights movement has simultaneously reinforced hegemonic narratives and oppressive structures which

[56] Hales, Anna. "Beyond Borders: How Principles of Prison Abolition Can Shape the Future of Immigration Reform." *UC Irvine L. Rev.* 11 (2020): 1415.
[57] Dauvergne, Catherine. *Making People Illegal: What Globalization Means for Migration and Law*. of *Law in Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
[58] Yuval-Davis, Nira., Wemyss, Georgie., Cassidy, Kathryn. *Bordering.* United Kingdom: Polity Press, 2019.

desecrate people labeled as “bad” (im)migrants.[59] Organizing strategies around meritocracy or aimed at proving an (im)migrant is “good” neglect to take into account how (im)migration policy performs as racialized population control and which perpetually construct some (im)migrants as outside of belonging and therefore exploitable and expendable. As one example, disabled (im)migrants and those who appear unable to care for themselves have a long history of being designated as “likely to become a public charge” - a designation which negatively impacts their ability to access legal, documented status. In its application, this designation has also proved discriminatory towards women, especially those within childbearing age, queer identifying, and/or of a lower income class.[60] By focusing on increasing access to “good” (im)migrants, advocates have abandoned those labeled as “bad” (im)migrants while simultaneously reinforcing hegemonic narratives and the expendability of those outside of the category of “good”. Lisa Maria Cacho discusses this process of valuing as inherently the process of devaluing another by drawing attention to the ways in which the moral grammar utilized in activist spaces often mirrors the moral grammar which sanctions state violence and which stem from capitalist measures of worth.[61]

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[59] Lawston, Jodie Michelle, and Martha Escobar. “Policing, Detention, Deportation, and Resistance: Situating Immigrant Justice and Carcerality in the 21st Century.” *Social Justice* 36, no. 2 (116) (2009): 1–6. http://www.jstor.org/stable/29768533.

[60] Fujiwara, Lynn. *Mothers Without Citizenship: Asian Immigrant Families and the Consequences of Welfare Reform.* United States, University of Minnesota Press, 2008. Luibhéid, Eithne. *Entry Denied: Controlling Sexuality at the Border*. NED-New edition, University of Minnesota Press, 2002. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.cttttvgx.
Luibheid, Eithne. “‘Looking like a Lesbian’: The Organization of Sexual Monitoring at the United States-Mexican Border.” *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, vol. 8, no. 3, 1998, pp. 477–506. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3704873.

[61] Cacho, Lisa Marie. *Social Death: Racialized Rightlessness and the Criminalization of the Unprotected.* United States, NYU Press, 2012.

Indeed, the (im)migrant rights movement has conceded to the nation-state by operating according to its parameters. There is nothing natural or essential about (il)legality and such categories must be recognized as socio-political constructions that exist in order to benefit the nation-state and modern forms of governance.[62] While the public political message has always positioned undocumented immigration as unwanted, the existence of undocumented people as workers benefits corporations and government as the fear of deportation serves as a tool to discipline. Furthermore, the U.S. has been and continues to be heavily involved in other countries so as to create the conditions that displace people.[63] By making people "illegal", the law produces and legalizes the exploitation of undocumented workers.[64] Neoliberal ideologies of personal responsibility serve to deny the displacement and transformation of people into "illegals" by framing undocumented (im)migration as if it is merely an individual choice.

Another extension of neoliberal thought can be found in the punishment and shaming of (im)migrants. Conservatives have raised the alarms when it comes to a perceived state dependency by (im)migrants - the argument goes that welcoming more (im)migrants will simply invite people from other nations to overuse and deplete U.S. born citizens' state-funded resources. In her study on

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[62] Molina, Natalia. *How Race Is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts.* United Kingdom, University of California Press, 2014.
[63]Gonzalez, Juan. *Harvest of Empire: A History of Latinos in America.* United States, Penguin Publishing Group, 2011.
[64] Peutz, Nathalie. *The Deportation Regime: Sovereignty, Space, and the Freedom of Movement.* United Kingdom, Duke University Press, 2010.

the criminalization of Latina (im)migrants, Martha D. Escbobar demonstrated how mapping state dependency onto Latinas framed imprisonment as a response to the "(im)migration problem". Latina women have been particularly vulnerable to this framing because their bodies paradoxically serve capitalist labor demands while also potentially enabling reproduction and the threat of permanent settlement. Even those understood as asylumes, refugees, and climate migrants have been framed within similar discourses despite being "good" or worthy of pity and charity.[65]

Throughout its history, the U.S. has considered the ideal migrant worker as one who enters the U.S. temporarily for labor without establishing any roots so that they may return to their country of origin in short order. Thus, through the ongoing tightening of the U.S. border, the state masks its differential inclusion of undocumented people as exclusion. While (im)migrant bodies are made fungible, their (il)legality is a necessary social condition for the continued production and hoarding of wealth in the U.S. As Yen Le Espiritu argues, their subordinate standing marks them as integral to the nation.[66]

However, the global system of nation-states and the inequalities between them are neither permanent nor natural. Following from abolitionists such as Angela Davis which asked "Are prisons obsolete?" and are engaged in imagining and creating a world where prisons are indeed obsolete, this dissertation argues

[65] Escobar, Martha D. *Captivity beyond Prisons,* p. 1-16
[66] Espiritu, Yen Le. *Home Bound: Filipino American Lives Across Cultures, Communities, and Countries.* Ukraine, University of California Press, 2003.

that borders (and the nations to which they belong) are obsolete as well.[67] Border abolition is a "revolutionary politic situated within wider struggles for economic justice, racial equality and sustainable ecologies, based on the conviction that there will be no livable futures in which borders between political communities are violently guarded".[68] More than just concerned with the right to move freely, border abolition is concerned with the transformation of the conditions to which borders are a response and the cultivation of forms of collectivity more conducive to human and more-than-human flourishing on local and global scales.

Just as bordering regimes exist beyond the physical border (workplaces, public spaces, private homes, etc.), the notion of human mobility I use here is also about more than the crossing of a physical national border; it is concerned with the ability to engage and move freely though society.[69] While some have argued for open borders based on the contemporary context of nation-states with territorial borders, an open borders approach which upholds nation-states, their territories, and formal citizenship does very little to counter restrictive access to membership in a particular geographic space. An open borders scenario might allow people to cross national-borders freely, but it does not mean that (im)migrants would be treated equally, nor does it stop the criminalization and exploitation of (im)migrants.[70] Instead, border abolition rejects nationhood and

[67] Davis, Angela Y. *Are Prisons Obsolete?*. United States, Seven Stories Press, 2011.
[68] Bradley and Noronha, *Against Borders*, p. 10
[69] Bauder, Harald. "The Possibilities of Open and No Borders." *Social Justice* 39, no. 4 (130) (2012): 76–96. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24361623.
[70] Anderson, et al. " Why No Borders?" Bauder, Harald. "Toward a Critical Geography of the Border: Engaging the Dialectic of Practice and Meaning." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 101, no. 5 (2011): 1126–39. doi:10.1080/00045608.2011.577356.

their borders and territorial statehood, as well as constructed identities such as (im)migrant. Through the transformation of ontologies that underlie colonial political and geographic configurations, the border abolition movement seeks to foster solidarity across imposed subject identities and "give serious thought to how to live with each other on the basis of equality, in the absence of exploitation and with ecological integrity".[71]

Belonging Outside of Nations

Whether through bordering regimes or carceral systems, the U.S. and other nations have produced and strengthened the legally sanctioned separation of (im)migrants from non-(im)migrants, so much so that our natural impulses to support other beings have been suppressed and limited to only those within our nation's borders. The idea that (im)migrants would establish relationships in their new homes threatens the nation-states insistence that (im)migrants are Others. Since (im)migrants are permanently labeled an (im)migrant in the American social imagination, whether documented or not, legally accessing citizenship status does not strip them of their Otherness. As (im)migrants are denied social membership in the dominant U.S. society, they seek ways of belonging outside of this and in the process create lives that are not bounded by national boundaries or claims to citizenship.

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[71] Sharma, Nandita, "White Nationalism, Illegality and Imperialism: Border Controls as Ideology." Essay. In *(En)Gendering the War on Terror: War Stories and Camouflaged Politics*, edited by Kim Rygiel and Krista Hunt, 121–43. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2007.

In Bloomington, (im)migrants and non-(im)migrants bonded over a connection to rural ways of living that were not contained within a specific nation-state or access to citizenship. Collectively, they had and continue to cultivate a place where ranchers can live happily, peacefully, and prosperously. Simple ethics such as family values, hard work ethic, generosity, kindness to others, and a dedication to land and animals are practiced and cherished by each of the community members. Since each member of the community is viewed as integral to preserving their way of life, residents feel the pain when even a single person is displaced by developers and warehouses. With the removal of thousands of their neighbors, Bloomington residents have witnessed as piece-by-piece the community they so carefully cared for has altered.

The arrival of (im)migrants to the area has never posed such a threat - most (im)migrants who arrive quickly get a sense for the shared values and are able to join the community while also contributing to its character. With a strong sense of community comes an eagerness to gather and there are many opportunities to meet newcomers. Church, school, and just about any public space is an opportunity to talk, catch up on the local current events and gossip. When asked why they chose to live in Bloomington, almost everyone recounted terror stories of living in the city and the anonymity that comes with being in an overpopulated area. They liked living in a smaller town that enabled them to be involved to some degree with all of their neighbors. And while city dwellers covered their noses if they got too close to the local animals, Bloomington

residents cited the ability to keep their animals as just as important to them as anything else. The animals were family and just as integral to the character of the community as the human people within it. The vast, open fields which facilitated an equestrian lifestyle were also necessary. The community valued things that it understood as unnecessary or unwanted elsewhere, and that was fine by them so long as they were allowed to structure their community in the way they chose.

When I was first invited to meet with community members at CCAEJ's office, I was a bit unsure about how my presence would be received. I lived and had grown-up in the city of Los Angeles and I was showing up as a Ph.D. student researcher with no obvious ties to the community other than the fact that my sisters lived in the area. Having never been to CCAEJ's offices, I wasn't sure what to do when the road I was traveling on was no longer paved or marked. More nervous about being late than getting stranded, I drove up a winding, dirt-road riddled with craters and a snake or two traveling alongside me. As my electric vehicle ascended, I spotted the office at the top of the hill and decided to park at the edge where a wondrous view of the valley spread out before me.

As soon as I was out of my car I was greeted by a local organizer, laughing at the thought of me making my way up the unpaved road for the first time. As others joined us, it was clear that my small journey had pleased the group and served as a sort of test regarding my ruggedness and by extension, my ability to fit in. Pretty soon I was being bombarded with questions regarding

where my family was originally from and other personal matters. The questioning served to further vet my presence at the meeting which was otherwise a community space. Over coffee and pastries, I would soon learn that not everyone involved in the efforts was necessarily a resident in the area itself, though everyone was considered a community member because of their willingness to contribute to the preservation of the IE. With every meeting, I got to know more about the community. Rather than sticking to the topic at hand, gatherings often started with casual conversation about family and friends. What might otherwise be considered small-talk was integral to the formation and strengthening of relationships here.

Thinking back at the community member's statement quoted earlier in this chapter, it is clear that what this person was describing was the creation of borders within a community by industry. "(The developers) just think it's okay to put these giant walls of warehouses right between a community…It's right in the middle of our neighborhoods." In a community where open fields serve as pathways for horses carrying one community member to another and where gathering often take place so that there is enough room for all the families, placing a warehouse in the middle of it effectively serves as a border limiting and at times even prohibiting movement and more importantly, eliminating routes towards relationality. While government will cite the creation of jobs as their reason for allowing the continuous warehouse encroachment, we must ask, "What types of jobs, for who, and at what cost?" Within capitalism, jobs take

precedence over relationships. Understanding something like the development of warehouses as destroying mechanisms of relating becomes important if we are to dismantle the false sense of unity that relies on nationalism and instead, find better ways of relating with one another across national and otherwise borders. Furthermore, it is integral that we do away with the notion that we as people are inherently workers so that we can once again think of ourselves outside of capitalism in preparation for the dismantling of systems of exploitation.

Belonging Transnationally and Across Borders

Importantly, relationality can be sustained and nurtured across vast space and relationships that have been formed in the past come to bear on present and future relationships. At many Bloomington events, participants recounted stories about their relationships abroad and stressed the influence these relationships continued to have in their current struggles. At a workshop in September 2022, one immigrant participant remarked

> Before I came to the States, my people back in Mexico had struggled against the corporations and employers in a similar way. Because I learned from the leaders there, I am now able to be a leader here. I saw how they challenged their bosses and government officials, and I knew we would have to do the same when the warehouses started trying to buy the IE. I imagine that they are here today, because they are. They cannot enter this country physically, but through phone calls and letters they support us and we support them.

Much attention has been paid to transnational bonds that remain within (im)migrant spaces. Peggy Levitt argues that experiences of subjugation in the

United States reinforce (im)migrants' transnational bonds.[72] Levitt's focus on community demonstrates how transnational (im)migration is not an individual concern, but rather a collective experience of change as kin adapt and extend. As economic and political forces push (im)migrant internal and transnational mobility, (im)migrants push back by thickening their social relationships in ways that continue to bind the (im)migrant with the non(immigrant) in their country of origin. Scholars such as Adrián Félix have also discussed the unique experiences of transnational kinship and citizenship formation that (im)migrants live. As Félix observes, there is a "thickening of transnational citizenship" or "the political process by which Mexican migrants simultaneously cultivate crossborder citizenship claims in México and the United States over the course of their civic lives" in correlation with America's thickening border restrictions and fear-mongering.[73] Remarking upon the political nexus between naturalization, discrimination, and transnational citizenship, Félix also argues that under immigrant hostile conditions, naturalization is less about cutting ties with an immigrant's country of origin and more about accessing new forms of transnational citizenship through diasporic dialectics or "the constant political struggle and negotiation with the state and its institutions of citizenship on both sides of the border".[74]

More than remark on the ability of (im)migrants to sustain transnational relationships however, (im)migrants' ability to maintain strong bonds in their

[72] Levitt, Peggy. *The Transnational Villagers.* University of California Press, 2001.
[73] Félix, Adrián, *Spectres of Belonging: The Political Life Cycle of Mexican Migrants*. Studies in Subaltern Latino/a Politics. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019, p. 3
[74] Ibid., p. 8-10

country of origin while also forming equally close relationships upon their arrival demonstrates an ability to *defy* borders, nationalism, and citizenship claims. Through their movement, (im)migrants become experts at forming relationships and in their presence, U.S. citizens learn that relationality need not be national. In fact, the very presence of (im)migrants may reveal the illusion of nationalist politics as false as what happens in a perceived elsewhere arrives at our national shores, facilitated by national politics and capital.

When addressing the importance of relationships, some scholars have embraced the perspective that migrant studies should be focused on bettering the conditions which displace people, so that nobody will ever have to (im)migrate and while attention must certainly be paid to local issues, the right to choose must not be confused with the obligation to stay. As Alicia Schmidt Camacho points out, (im)migrants have rarely conformed to the presumed trajectory of (im)migration. Despite the collusion between state officials and labor contractors to create the 'ideal worker' through the ongoing enforcement of illegality, deportability, and racialization, undocumented and documented (im)migrants continue to defend their autonomy of movement informed by kinship. Rather than merely seeking acceptance and incorporation, (im)migrants have worked to transform conditions within and across borders. Camacho notes, "while defending their own mobility, (Mexican immigrants) demanded "el derecho de no migrar" [the right not to migrate], issuing indictments of the conditions and policies in Latin America that mandated their departures north" and that "often

corresponded to an itinerant existence".[75] The right not to (im)migrate presents an important point of analysis: Mexican (im)migrants understand their displacement from home and kin predates their border crossing, but instead, begins with internal displacement.

Displacement Within Borders

A focus on (im)migration as it has traditionally been understood will not address the various issues of displacement and separation from kin that communities experience. Most of those who have left the IE are still technically within the U.S. borders, but their U.S. residency does not equate continued access to their chosen kin. Sustaining relationships requires continuous efforts, even within close proximity to one another. Furthermore, framing such topics as (im)migrant issues obfuscates how those of us who are not (im)migrants might be connected or implicated within these concerns as well. Bordering regimes expand beyond the physical border, narrowing social and political power to a smaller and smaller elite box.[76] Not only do bordering regimes impact (im)migrants dealing with entitlements changes over time - they can be undocumented, temporary, in the asylum system or refused by it, or granted various kinds of residency status – all with differential rules of access and conditionality as well as varying scales of detainability and deportability attached, bordering regimes impact us all when their insourcing (the expansion of border

[75] Camacho, Alicia Schmidt. *Migrant Imaginaries: Latino Cultural Politics in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands*. NYU Press, 2008. p. 3-4
[76] Noronha, Luke de. "Hierarchies of Membership and the Management of Global Population: Reflections on Citizenship and Racial Ordering." *Citizenship Studies* 26, no. 4–5 (2022): 426–35. doi:10.1080/13621025.2022.2091224.

controls towards the interior of a nation) leads to increased securitization and surveillance within a territory and the management of mobility and bodies.[77] Furthermore, as (im)migrants are subjected to differential inclusion in more and more sophisticated ways, their precarity as exploitability is weaponized to keep wages low, tighten access to social welfare programs, and framed as antagonistic to social membership through racialization.[78]

The dominant (im)migrant rights movement is limited by its continued adherence to U.S. citizenship boundaries, its role in reproducing the good/bad immigrant dichotomy, and its human-centric approach. By shifting towards pragmatic endeavors, (im)migrant advocates and scholars have knowingly and unknowingly abandoned any number of (im)migrants including, but not limited to, disabled, queer, trans, system-impacted, and other criminalized peoples in exchange for citizenship for the select 'good'. Furthermore, the movement's focus on humans has failed to thoroughly consider the role of the environment in so-called (im)migration debates, only in recent years beginning to discuss climate-induced movement. When the environment and nonhumans are discussed, it is often as 'resources', with very little focus on the bonds between (im)migrants and non-human kin.

Furthermore, the mainstream environmental movement's nation-bound and citizenship focused solutions have also left little space for forming

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[77] Menjívar, Cecilia, Immigration Law Beyond Borders: Externalizing and Internalizing Border Controls in an Era of Securitization (November 2014). Annual Review of Law and Social Science, Vol. 10, pp. 353-369, 2014, http://dx.doi.org/10.1146/annurev-lawsocsci-110413-030842

[78] Silverman SJ. "Regrettable but necessary?" A historical and theoretical study of the rise of the UK immigration detention estate and its opposition (2012). *Polit. Policy,* 40:61131–57

coalitions with (im)migrant movements. When (im)migrants have been discussed, it has often been with increasing concern. ‘Well-meaning’ environmentalists argue that climate-refugees ought to be taken care of, while harsher critics lament what they view as an unwanted burden. Importantly, proposed ways of managing climate change discuss these concerns as if climate is contained within borders when in fact, we must be thinking internationally about solutions.

Contemporary border narratives extend the spatial-temporal reach of U.S. imperialist fantasies and colonial expansion. This current expression is made evident in ecofascist narratives and what Betsy Hartmann coined the “greening of hate” which contends that the U.S./Mexico border is a barrier protecting the nature of the West.[11] Such arguments are particularly dangerous in their ability to transform anti-immigration and xenophobia into ecological imperatives by claiming that immigrants are violating ecosystems and wilderness when they traverse national boundaries. Environmental groups, media, politicians, and nativist groups such as the Minutemen have capitalized on the shock value of (im)migrant damage to the environment to spread anti-immigrant sentiments while simultaneously using (im)migrants as scapegoats, turning attention away from neoliberal policies and capitalist interests which are responsible for the majority of environmental degradation as well as the forced displacement of (im)migrants. Furthermore, eco-fascism is willing to further damage the ecosystems of the border and surrounding areas in

exchange for higher securitization and access to cheap goods.[79]

Scholars such as Sarah Jaquette Ray have explored how the environmental movement deploys cultural disgust against various racialized communities, positioning them as threats to nature.[80] Disgust shapes mainstream environmental narratives through discourses of the body which position some bodies and bodily relations as ecologically "good" (pure) while those racialized are antagonistically positioned as "ecological other" (pollution) in order to justify their exclusion. Hence, an environmentalism concerned with notions of a "pure" nature (re)creates social hierarchies along a human/nature divide. Furthermore, this divide often results in contemporary conservation efforts aligned with the carceral state as "nature" is confined to a designated area and people who transgress those areas are criminalized as a result.[81]

While labor is extracted from (im)migrant bodies (often through work entailing toxic hazards), their bodies become discourses of threat to both nature and nation. Hence, (im)migrants often find themselves at the intersection of poor working conditions, reduced access to health care and medical treatment, a slow death of environmental toxicity in their workplaces and homes, and xenophobic claims which blame them for environmental degradation.

For far too long, mainstream environmentalist thought has often centered

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[79] Hartmann, Betsy, "Population, Environment and Security: a New Trinity". Environment and Urbanization, 10(2), 1998.
[80] Ray, Sarah Jaquette. *The Ecological Other: Environmental Exclusion in American Culture.* University of Arizona Press, 2013.
[81] Miyake, Keith K. "Carceral Jaguar Geographies along the US/México Border and the Case for Border Abolition." *Local Environment* 28, no. 10 (2023): 1295–1310. doi:10.1080/13549839.2023.2206641. Mei-Singh, Laurel. "Carceral Conservationism: Contested Landscapes and Technologies of Dispossession at Kaʻena Point, Hawaiʻi." *American Quarterly* 68, no. 3 (2016): 695-721. https://doi.org/10.1353/aq.2016.0059.

stability and long-term rootedness in a place as essential to a community's environmental politics and ethics. A commitment to a particular place is viewed as of the utmost importance for local place-attachment or what Yi-Fu Tuan calls topophilia.[82] While in many cases, long-term rootedness and place attachment can contribute to cohabitation and kinship networks amongst more-than-human beings, tophophilia can also contribute to theories of environmental determinism, isolationism, and xenophobia when this place-attachment ignores dialectical relationships with other places and therefore, other beings. Through an ecofascist and nationalist lens, (im)migrants are ecologically dangerous because of their movement. By disguising xenophobia as environmentalism, the movement risks disentangling racism from anti-immigrant sentiment and ignores the ways in which environmental racism is constituent of racial capitalism.[83] Similarly, through a mainstream environmentalist lens, (im)migrants are newcomers who lack life-long knowledge presumed necessary to care for a place.[84] In both cases, (im)migrants are viewed as detached and even antagonistic to environmental struggles.

[82] Tuan, Yi-fu. *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, 1974.
[83] Pulido, Laura, "Geographies of race and ethnicity II: Environmental racism, racial capitalism and state-sanctioned violence". Progress in Human Geography, 41(4), 524–533, 2017.
[84] Normandin S, Valles SA. How a network of conservationists and population control activists created the contemporary US anti-immigration movement. Endeavour. 2015 Jun;39(2):95-105. doi: 10.1016/j.endeavour.2015.05.001. Epub 2015 May 28. PMID: 26026333. Neumayer, Eric, The Environment: One More Reason to Keep Immigrants Out?. *Ecological Economics*, Vol. 59, 2006, Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=934822

Conclusion

When asked if the cabalgata had been worth the effort after the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors voted in favor of the Bloomington Business Park Specific Plan, one community member stated

> Of course it was successful. We know we are up against some big forces, but we are strong together. Anytime we are together, our bonds grow stronger and our willingness to fight for each other is re-awakened. If it were just for me, I don't know how much I would fight but when I see all the people, the families, the children, the horses and the neighborhoods - the trees, the plants, the fruits and vegetables - well then I know I have a responsibility. And well, that's what this is all about. We care about the environment, which we are a part of. When we spend time together, we are taking care of that environment and the IE that we have built.

The participant's response spoke to the importance of kinship networks formed between Latinx (im)migrants and their inclusion of non-human kin within these networks. Through their willingness to engage in relationality, even when those relationships are threatened and possibly ephemeral, Latinx (im)migrants demonstrated that citizenship was not a precursor to relating to a place or to other peoples. Hearing this statement, R and C nodded in agreement. R responded

> I have lived here my whole life, but I have come to know this place through all of you. I want to share with you all how we were treated the night when C and I were wrongfully arrested. That night I did not sleep, but not because of the other women who were in the cell with me - the police officers, who call themselves protectors of the peace and many who are from the IE too, spent the night accusing me and C of being immigrants, of being Brown Berets, and of lying about our age. They kept telling us that we were lying and that we were trying to do something wrong that night. They even made fun of my (curly) hair and because I looked Mexican. I have been having panic attacks and I don't like to go out alone anymore. My parents are immigrants and they always told me stories about how the police would beat or mistreat them and that I was lucky I was born here.

> But it doesn't matter. All they see is the color of my skin. I don't feel like a citizen anymore, but I feel more IE than ever.

Combined, these participants were theorizing relating outside of citizenship. R and C's experiences had served as an example of the limits of national citizenship as racialized people, but their participation in the local environmental justice movement had provided them with a new perspective on relationality which informed their participation in environmental struggles. Furthermore, relationality was viewed as central to environmental concerns - something that is not always considered within mainstream environmental movements. Contrary to ecofascist beliefs that (im)migrants harm or hinder environmental struggles, (im)migrants in the IE were intimately invested in protecting and contributing to the environment around them and beyond.

Chapter 2: Belonging through Relationality

On an overcast September morning in 2022, IE community members gathered at CCAEJ for a workshop led in conjunction with the National Day Laborer Organizing Network (NDLON). This meeting was advertised as a public event, open to all, and would be the first workshop in a series of actions utilizing popular education to critically analyze the environmental and economic struggles the IE was facing and empower community members to disrupt this transformation in favor of a vision of health and justice for their communities.

At the workshop, immigrant participants discussed their process of renegotiating family dynamics and even taking on responsibilities to care for chosen kin. For many of those present, (im)migration had, by choice or out of necessity, represented an opportunity to break away from the cultural norms and to forge new ways of being. Families that were once hierarchical and patriarchal discussed power shifts within their households that enabled everyone to participate equally in decision making. These changes were evident in the participation of community members at this workshop and other public actions hosted by CCAEJ and NDLON where families often arrived together, allowing for children and elders to participate, and men made sure to respect when female comrades were speaking. While many of these changes resulted from economic needs during the resettlement period, (im)migrants also cited the process of crossing the border as integral to their growth. For those who had crossed the border undocumented, they recounted the impact of forming ephemeral bonds of

trust with people of varied identities. Men were humbled by the protection and life-saving generosity they received from women, elders, and even children. When water and food became scarce, story after story recalled the ways that (im)migrants banded together, sharing what little they had so that everyone in the group could benefit.

Additionally, community members expressed their love for the IE area and the melancholy that came with the encroachment of warehouses. One by one, they spoke of a fondness for the land and the place they had created which resembled their homes prior to (im)migration. Although the IE may not be referred to these ways by city planners, participants echoed that the area felt like a small ranch where there was unity in community, animals and food cultivation, and importantly, *fiestas* or festivities. In regards to the impact of the warehouses, participants poetically discussed feelings as though their autonomy and memories were being taken away. Themes of autonomy, memory, community, liberty, union, love, and even pleasure repeatedly rose to the surface of community members' concerns. Furthermore, participants actively challenged the presumed benefits of capitalism, especially when those "benefits" were at the expense of relationships and other facets of their community that were highly valued as integral. To center such affective desires runs counter to hegemonic, capitalist aims of maximization of profit.

Furthermore, participants also noted the ways in which animals, plant life, water, and other elements of their environments had come to be as important as

family. On their migratory journey, (im)migrants made non-human friends which provided emotional support and joy during otherwise difficult times. Most of the participants had come from agrarian backgrounds and had grown fond of non-human animal and plant life as a result. When asked what their hopes for the future in the IE were, each person agreed that they hoped their communities could continue to harvest crops and keep horses, chickens, and other non-human animals as a part of their community. While one might assume that the focus on animals and plants is related to sustenance, community members discussed these living beings as chosen kin they felt responsible for and loved deeply. Importantly, community members at the workshop viewed connections to plants and animals as integral components passed onto them by ancestral knowledge which they actively pass on to future generations, regardless of the nations' customs they may come into contact with. Despite the heaviness of the threats that loomed, this aspect of the workshop was filled with affect and while all of the participants were physically present in the here and now, it was clear that emotionally, mentally, and spiritually we were all elsewhere. Through their connections with plants and animals, participants had managed to create a sense of 'place', even in otherwise liminal spaces. Furthermore, their expansion of what constitutes family, relationships, and responsibility to one another presents a queering/non-hierarchical alternative to citizenship towards migrant futures.[85]

[85] Bahng, Aimee. *Migrant Futures: Decolonizing Speculation in Financial Times* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2018).

At the workshop, one of the questions posed was, “What makes the Inland Empire home?”. Immediately, participants chimed in with their thoughts. Despite not knowing ahead of time what topics would be discussed, participants shared a sense of home that stemmed from the local culture and community. One participant went as far as to say that their home was with “each other”, it was not the geographic space itself, but rather, the land, plants, animals, and other human beings which collectively created a shared sense of “home”. For those who were (im)migrants within the group, they discussed a re-discovery of “home” in the IE and the power that came with actively creating that sense of belonging. When they were first (im)migrating, they were unsure of what to expect. None of the participants who identified as (im)migrants had ever lived outside of Mexico before leaving the country - similar to those who were born in the United States, they all expressed a sense of national identity which had previously been emphasized in their minds and their growing awareness of how insignificant this connection truly was upon reflecting on what truly creates a sense of belonging and home.

In my Master’s Thesis, “Dark Skinned and Disposable: Feminicide and Expressive Death for a Neoliberal México, I discussed the formation of a post-revolutionary ideology after the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) which consists of three main pillars: *mestizaje*, non-racism, and non-Blackness:

> Born out of the longing for a national identity and sense of unity in the aftermath of war, these three pillars posited mestizaje as the ideal and defined the Mexican identity as one of mixed-race blood. As a result, México has prided itself on being the land of what philosopher José

> Vasconcelos called la raza cósmica, the cosmic race, using this as a signifier that racism does not exist within its borders. According to Vasconselos, the cosmic race resulting from miscegenation would birth a new civilization where traditional ideas of race would be surpassed in the name of humanity's common destiny. However, research continues to prove the insidiousness of pigmentocracy within Mexican society. While on its surface mestizaje operates outside of Western racist paradigms, the national ideology has served to render Blackness and Indigeneity ineffable because of their perceived threat to the modernization of the nation.[86]

The United States has similar conceptions of itself as a land of immigrants, freedom, and opportunity. Relatedly, the U.S. has grappled with what Edmund Morgan called the American Paradox, or the obvious contradiction of American revolutionaries, who dedicated themselves to liberty and freedom, maintained a system of labor that was built on the denial of liberty and freedom for forcibly enslaved Africans and relatedly, the continued persecution of Indigenous peoples.[87] With the help of racialization and pseudo-science, white Americans hid being a hierarchy of race which attempted to excuse their violence towards others as acceptable because of their argued superiority over communities of color which instead, were painted as inferior at best and inhuman at worst.[88]

While these two countries serve as direct examples of the nationalism participants have been exposed to, the U.S. and Mexico are by no means the only nations with such fundamental problems. Indeed, nations of all sorts craft

[86] Arellanes Castro, Guadalupe. "Dark Skinned and Disposable: Feminicide and Expressive Death for a Neoliberal México ([Master's Thesis, California State University Los Angeles]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2019. 13880912. https://www.proquest.com/openview/91c92b06607e6bad9b9cbd5d77e65bf5/1.pdf?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y

[87] Morgan, Edmund S. "Slavery and Freedom: The American Paradox." *The Journal of American History* 59, no. 1 (1972): 5–29. https://doi.org/10.2307/1888384.

[88] Omi, Michael, and Winant, Howard. *Racial Formation in the United States.* United States, Taylor & Francis, 2014.

idealized identities, confining individuals to hierarchically supported notions of what model citizens look and behave like. Bordering regimes subsequently develop mechanisms by which to exclude, such as physical border walls, detention centers, and deportations in order to bolster territorial control, solidify a racialized national identity, and criminalize Others like (im)migrants who are differentially included.

Whether U.S. or Mexico born, the participants had come to realize that their national identity was flawed and empty. Whereas participants had once identified as “Mexican”, “American”, or both, there was an acute sense in the room that these national identities had once served to separate them from each other and that indeed, the collective identity that they had formed organically and in relation to ecology was much stronger than the idea nationalism had attempted to sell to them. Instead, by coming into contact with one another, the group had forged a unique sense of place which they now collectively called “home”, regardless of nationality or time spent in geographic territory; it was their intimate connection and responsibility to the ecological networks in place which created a secure sense of identity and belonging.

While at times there may be tensions or issues that arise within the community, their intimate knowledge of one another allows community members to stick with each other, working through any difficulties which may arise. Donna Haraway proposes the ontological transmogrify of *being with,* which she calls the Cthulucene or a “timeplace for learning to stay with the trouble of living and dying

in response-ability on a damaged earth".[89] The Cthulucene places emphasis on relational 'tentacular thinking' which creates string figures, enabling beings to think *with* not just human-to-human but non-human animals, soil, and all of life's entities.[90] String figures as thinking practices require relaying consequential connections that support the conditions for flourishing while cohabitating. Hence, Haraway posits that "the task is to make kin in lines of inventive connection as a practice of learning to live and die well with each other in a thick present".[91] We must endeavor to both 'make trouble' through critical responses to slow and fast violence as well as to 'stay with the trouble', recognizing human and more-than-human interrelatedness in unfinished places, times, and histories presently and incessantly becoming. Tentacular thinking and thinking *with* point towards the need for communal histories and the destruction (or at the very least, complicating) of the Nation which separates us.

Creating a Sense of Place

To better understand what has developed in the IE, and what often develops throughout the globe, it is necessary to lay a foundation regarding geographic understandings of space and place. Yi-fu Tuan differentiates the two as,"place is security. Space is freedom" he continues,"places are centers of felt value where biological needs, such as those for food, water, rest and procreation

[89] Haraway, Donna J. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016, p. 2.
[90] Ibid., 30.
[91] Ibid., 1.

are satisfied".[92] Indeed, it is through felt value that people give meaning to space and transform it into place. This logic leads Tuan to argue that place provides security and stability in opposition to the threat of space so much so that the two antagonistically need one another. Building off of Tuan's definition of place and space, I argue that (im)migrants create place wherever they go while simultaneously living in space. Furthermore, their interpersonal relationships composed of more-than-human and human kin across time and space inform their sense of spatial organization and concepts such as "close", "distant", "memory", "future", and "now". While anybody is technically capable of arriving at similar conclusions, (im)migrants (by virtue of their movement) are particularly adept at recognizing the importance of relationships for conceptions of space, place, and by extension, time.

If space is transformed into place as it acquires definition and meaning, then we ought to consider how migratory beings go about creating place and a sense of home where previously there was none. Understanding place as those places where we are nurtured and receive our fundamental needs means that place must exist in a pause long enough for a locality of felt value to be established.

Furthermore, (im)migrants often depend on one another and fellow community members in order to establish and secure place as "home". In the absence of human and more-than-human kin, places are quickly drained of

[92] Tuan, Yi-fu. *Space and Place: the Perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977, p. 1-4.

meaning and their lastingness becomes pointless. In this way, the value of place is inextricably linked to the intimacy of a particular relationship; place cannot exist without kin. Hence, “place” and “home” are not permanently located in a particular geographic location. When individuals (im)migrate and are physically separated from their known kin, they look to establish community elsewhere by recreating similar bonds to humans, animals, plants, and environments. Intimacy here is not synonymous with knowing the details of another’s life; it merely requires a knowing encounter and exchange.

At the cabalgata, participants proudly rode on horseback as a symbol of their agrarian culture, but importantly, they also understood this as a way to make visible the connection between humans and more-than-human kin. Participants viewed the horses as important members of the community; without the presence of horses and other non-human animals, the IE wouldn’t be “home”, but merely another space. The warehouses were not only taking over land that would otherwise be used for human facilities such as schools and community centers, they were also privatizing land that the horses used to gallup and releasing toxins into the environment that was harming horses and other non-human animals. As interlocutors, the presence of horses spurred conversations between participants and non-participating community members along the route. Furthermore, the horses supported their human kin by allowing them to cover more ground during protests like these. Finally, the participants also considered the displacement of non-human animals that the warehouses were causing. This too was a sort of

forced migration and the cabalgata took on a symbolic representation of this deportation.

For some, the cabalgata's invocation of a pilgrimage also represented their identities as (im)migrants and for whom the act of immigrating entailed a movement through space and time. At the event, many discussed their (im)migration as a movement towards the future. From my own experience as the child of immigrants, I have always understood this aspect of (im)migration - (im)migrants understand that their lives may be more difficult in the United States, but they hope that the lives of their children will be better for it. This engagement in actively planning directs time and space towards goals or speculative visions. The spatial-temporal structure created by (im)migrants is unique in that it is communal. The time/space continuum does not reside in the individual, but flows through kinship networks. Hence, there is a spatial-temporal logic found in relationships that allows for kinship networks to evolve across space and time.

Furthermore, through their participation in cultural practices, participants make use of opportunities to experience time/space outside of normative boundaries. Tuan argues that music can negate a person's awareness of directional time and space by allowing rhythmic sound that synchronizes with body movement to alter one's sense of moving through historical space and time.[93] While the central purpose of the cavalcade was to march through the

[93] Ibid., p. 128

streets in an act of protest, the event was multidimensional. After the procession, participants gathered for food, drinks, and live music. Not all protests end with a party, but for those in the IE who are often overburdened with work and obligations, any gathering must entail festivities. To be in community is synonymous with joy, pleasure, and life affirming affect. While (im)migants' visions of the future are selfless and admirable, Latinxs are not pure superhuman, sacrificial beings, they simultaneously tend towards migrant futures, while existing in the here and now for themselves, together in unoriented space. The incorporation of music and dance at politically oriented events like this allows (im)migrants to forget their weariness and by extension, the slow violence that corporations enact onto their bodies as people living and working in sacrificial zones.

Tuan argues that our understanding of things like "close" and "distant" are tied to our cultural beliefs around intimacy which also have implications for our definition(s) of freedom.[94] For migratory beings, a strong sense for nurturing the earth can and often does exist. Despite not necessarily knowing each other, participants bonded over their love for horses, land, and a certain way of being and felt close to others who expressed a similar worldview. While we walked the changing landscape of the IE, I overheard various participants sharing their connection to a particular field or a plot of land. It was clear that the landscape was personal; walking these lands made history visible. Similar to their

[94] Tuan, Yi-Fu. "Strangers and Strangeness." *Geographical Review*, vol. 76, no. 1, 1986, pp. 10–19. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.2307/214781.

connection to horses, the cabalgata participants were genuinely concerned with the wellbeing of the land. Despite not knowing if or when they might be priced out of the area, the participants were adamant about establishing policies and procedures that would outlive them so that life could continue to flourish in the area even if little to no humans occupied the land anymore.

Place is stable, exists in the pause, and represents rootedness and ‘security’. Places are created in the pauses - when we have gathered enough experiences in a space to know it intimately - but intimacy does not equal longevity or permanence to a particular place. For those who live in constant migration, there are ephemeral places to inhabit and (re)create. For the (im)migrant whose world is constantly being threatened and upended, place, as Tuan defines it, is always shifting. Indeed, they queer place wherever they go. Nationalist arguments deny ephemeral rootedness or relationship in flux and instead, demand social ties to territory at the expense of ecological well being.

The Greening of Hate

Contemporary border narratives extend the spatial-temporal reach of U.S. imperialist fantasies and colonial expansion. This current expression is made evident in ecofascist narratives and the "greening of hate" which contend that the U.S./Mexico border is a barrier protecting the nature of the West. Such arguments are particularly dangerous in their ability to transform anti-immigrant sentiment and xenophobia into ecological imperatives by claiming that (im)migrants are violating ecosystems and wilderness when they traverse national boundaries. Environmental groups, media, politicians, and nativist groups such as the Minutemen have capitalized on the shock value of (im)migrant damage to the environment to spread anti-immigrant sentiments while simultaneously using immigrants as scapegoats, turning attention away from neoliberal policies and capitalist interests which are responsible for the majority of environmental degradation as well as the forced displacement of (im)migrants. Furthermore, eco-fascism underwrites strict border policies as well as exclusionary labor laws, further damaging the ecosystems of the border and surrounding areas in exchange for higher securitization and access to cheap goods.

In this way, the environmental movement deploys cultural disgust against various racialized communities, positioning them as threats to nature.[95] Disgust shapes mainstream environmental narratives through discourses of the body

[95] Sarah Jaquette Ray, *The Ecological Other: Environmental Exclusion in American Culture*. University of Arizona Press, 2013.

which position some bodies and bodily relations as ecologically “good” (purity) while those racialized are antagonistically positioned as “ecological other” (pollution) in order to justify their exclusion. Hence, an environmentalism concerned with notions of a “pure nature” (re)creates social hierarchies along a cartesian split. Additionally, the bodies of undocumented (im)migrants become “trash,” or bodies sacrificed to globalization, capitalism, and empire. While labor is extracted from (im)migrant bodies (often through work entailing toxic hazards), their bodies are maligned as a threat to both nature and nation. Hence, (im)migrants often find themselves at the intersection of poor working conditions, reduced access to health care and medical treatment, a slow death of environmental toxicity in their workplaces and homes, and xenophobic claims which blame them for environmental degradation.

Mainstream environmentalist thought often centers stability and long-term rootedness in a place as essential to a community’s environmental politics and ethics. Through an ecofascist and nationalist lens, (im)migrants are environmentally dangerous because of their movement. Similarly, through a mainstream environmentalist lens, (im)migrants are newcomers who lack life-long knowledge presumed necessary to care for a place. In both cases, (im)migrants are viewed as detached and even antagonistic to environmental struggles.

However, as discussed earlier in this chapter, place is not limited by boundaries, but instead should be understood as a layering of networks formed

from the amalgamation of multiple places tethered together through political, economic, and ecological forces. The complex experiences of (im)migrants who on the one hand mourn their affective bonds to the historical and local upon displacement, and yet form homes from previously unknown places push environmentalism away from localism, broadening conceptions of providing global solutions that speak to the unboundedness of environmental injustice and emphasizing ecology over environment.

The hierarchical social order provided by Nationalism sows division rather than unity. Animation of the environment along nationalist and territorial lines links the natural world to economic value as a form of property. Calls on citizens to “protect our environment” put environmental movements on a path away from relationships within ecology and, instead, toward an ambiguous sense of ownership of the nation-state. Uplift for the environment becomes synonymous with uplift of the state, thus aligning environmentalism with the state.

Borders Undo Ecology

Ecology denotes "the investigation of the total relations of the animal both to its inorganic and to its organic environment."[96] Broadly speaking, ecology is concerned with the balance of nature. As human beings as animals and a part of nature, ecology also deals with the harmonization of nature and humans. To reach such harmony, human beings must live in a lasting balance with the natural environment. Ecology clearly demonstrates that a perceived mastery over the natural world leads industry and empire to ecological harm. Furthermore, ecology naturally is based on relationality and serves as a framework for understanding belonging as related to relationality rather than being drawn along arbitrary territorial boundaries.

From the standpoint of ecology, capitalism and empire dangerously reduce environmental abundance and prosperity. The modern city represents the dominance of the artificial over the natural, of the inorganic (concrete, metals, etc.) on the organic. The growing warehouse encroachment of the IE is not only aesthetically offensive and chronically pollutant, it is also representative of a crucial decline in social ties with and to land.

The simplification process is carried out by regional (indeed, national) division of labor. Immense swaths of land are increasingly reserved for specific industrial tasks and/or turned into cities for urban populations engaged in commerce and trade. In this process, regions come to be commodified or serve

[96] Haeckel, E. *Generelle Morphologie der Organismen Vols I and II.* Georg Reimer, 1866.

as hubs of consumerism. The complex ecosystems which make up the world are drowned by the proliferation of nations which organize themselves into economically rationalized entities. The result is a willful dismissal of true ecology in support of economically-driven nations.

When politicians and developers look at the IE, what they see is empty territory that is not living up to its economic potential for its remaining natural beauty serves as a reminder that the land has not been exploited enough. When residents look at the IE, what they see is a land of abundance. When industry is allowed to prevail, it is undoing the work of organic evolution.

By overriding and undermining the complex, subtly organized ecosystems that constitute local differences in the natural world and replacing them with simplified, inorganic environments, politicians and developers are disassembling the complex ecologies which have supported humans and all of life for countless millennia. This reduction of the complex for the simple, inorganic is not confined to industrial spaces, but also includes the transmogrification of flowing land into bordered territories and by extension, of kin from each other. Our complex ecological relationships, on which all advanced living things depend, must be re-prioritized if we are to return to a balanced structure that is conducive to the wellbeing of all living creatures. These sorts of relationships are precisely what I have witnessed in the IE and which exists elsewhere, wherever people prioritize their relationships over a false sense of isolated citizenship.

During my time working with communities in the IE, various “outside” groups such as NDLON were brought in to support community structures. While the community was skeptical of outside industry and capital, they welcomed interrelated organizations into community spaces to dialogue over what they understood to be international, boundaryless concerns. Of course, there were specific details which community participants in the IE were concerned about, but their localized knowledge through relationality imbued them with a sense of solidarity towards people elsewhere facing struggles of their own. They knew that they were not the only ones being impacted by Amazon, Walmart, and the likes - that national borders were open for profit and therefore, that our struggles must be borderless as well.

Chapter 3: The Poetics of the Plea

In this dissertation, I have discussed two instances in which IE community members appealed to their local governing bodies in an attempt to stop warehouse encroachment in the area. These two instances are by no means the only examples of such appeals. In early 2022, Local farm groups and environmental justice organizations in Ontario, along with over 1,000 community members submitted public comments/submissions in opposition of the adoption of the South Ontario Logistics Center Specific Plan. On March 30, 2022 CCAEJ filed a lawsuit against the City of Ontario regarding the adoption after the city disregarded the public's concerns. Later that same year, CCAEJ filed a lawsuit against the United States Environmental Protections Agency over the agency's failure to act on Los Angeles regional air regulators' "indirect source rule" to reduce pollution from warehouses and seeking agency approval of the measure which would allow citizen groups to sue warehouse operators to enforce compliance with the landmark rule.

Almost every time I attended a community gathering, there was talk of an upcoming vote, a potential lawsuit, or some other form of judicial action which the community might use as an appeal. Importantly, community members did not necessarily believe that their appeals would be heard or that the outcomes would be in their favor. Residents in the IE often commented on how much more money and judicial power developers and corporations had, and yet they continued their pleas. For community members, these challenges were important not because

they believed the justice system was fair, but rather because it enabled them to continue holding spaces for the community to be in relation with one another. In the following chapter, I build on chapter two to discuss how approaches to (im)migrant rights might move forward if we center relations as the lens. Understanding that the law is often used against or at the expense of marginalized communities, I argue that the poetics of the plea lies in relationality and the formation of 'place'.

Sora Han encourages attention towards what she calls the "poetics of the plea".[97] Rather than simply focusing on a court's reasoning and decision in a particular case, Han suggests reading legal opinions as encounters with legal reasoning itself. What we witness in strict judicial review is a clash of desire between, on the one hand, the law's desire for "equal" and "reasonable" judgment and on the other, the Other's desire for freedom. There difference between these two desires is often incommensurable as they are fundamentally different types of desires. Even though judges may not realize it, their own ideologies and the ideologies present within the law view the people involved in legal cases as characters in a story of a nation-state called America and bound by the Constitution. Judges are bound by the Constitution's principles, which hold universals that are assumed beneficial for all citizens.

Furthermore, there are performative aspects to rights and the law. The prescribed reading of (im)migration, refugee and asylum law spreads the fantasy

[97] Han, Sora Y. *Letters of the Law: Race and the Fantasy of Colorblindness in American Law*. Stanford University Press, 2015, http://www.sup.org/books/title/?id=20198, Accessed 21 Mar. 2024.

of the U.S. as a nation of immigrants while ignoring the structural reality of inequity. As one example, we might interrogate current U.S. refugee law which states:

> *Under United States law, a refugee is someone who:*
>
> - *Is located outside of the United States*
> - *Is of special humanitarian concern to the United States*
> - *Demonstrates that they were persecuted or fear persecution due to race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group*
> - *Is not firmly resettled in another country*
> - *Is admissible to the United States* [98]

On the surface, refugee law positions the United States as sympathetic to the plight of people worldwide. However, absent in this definition are specific regulations around what constitutes 'special humanitarian concern to the United States'. It should come as no surprise then that the United States has readily accepted Ukrainian refugees fleeing so-called 'communist' (read: dictatorial) Russian persecution while callously and strategically turning away from African, Middle Eastern, and Latin American asylum seekers. Here, 'special humanitarian concern' becomes code for imperialist, neoliberal, and capitalist concerns. Hence, while the existence of a refugee law purports to provide support to all people who may need it, regardless of race, gender, sexuality, or ability, its existence merely obscures politically and economically targeted U.S. involvement or abandonment.

[98] For the legal definition of refugee, see section 101(a)(42) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA).

Some scholars have called for the incorporation of categories such as climate refugee into international and national laws, an expansion of asylum and refugee policies to accommodate those who have been environmentally displaced, and other human rights based discourses which would purportedly provide security for impacted communities. However, these laws do not necessarily support inhabitants already living within a nation who have been internally displaced and furthermore, they often fail to support (im)migrants who would otherwise utilize these resources. The limitations of the dominant (im)migrant rights framework have materialized at various points in history, but most recently were made evident with the enactment of Title 42 in March 2020 by the Trump Administration, and later, the Biden Administration's continuation of the policy.

Title 42 was created to address public health concerns and grants the U.S. government the ability to take immediate, emergency actions for reasons including to stop the introduction of communicable diseases such as COVID-19. The Trump Administration used Title 42 deport millions of (im)migrants and asylum seekers immediately and prevent them from applying for asylum, arguing that allowing these migrants to enter the U.S. would increase the spread of COVID-19. These measures worsened an already disastrous situation at the U.S./Mexico border for an estimated 60,000 asylum seekers who were prevented, by the Trump administration's 'Remain in Mexico' policy enacted in January 2019, from remaining in the United States while they awaited their

asylum hearings.[99] The enactment of Title 42 allowed the U.S. government to deny asylum seekers their right to apply for asylum in the U.S. and violated international law. To add insult to injury, the border itself was not closed for travel, demonstrating that the concern of the spread of COVID-19 was a farce, and the measure was simply enacted to deny asylum seekers and by effect, encourage undocumented (im)migration.

During this time, I worked with an organization called Al Otro Lado who provided legal and humanitarian support to refugees, deportees, and other migrants through direct, free, legal services on both sides of the U.S./Mexico border. My role as a volunteer was to support the Border Rights Project which provides legal orientation to refugees in Tijuana, Mexico, regarding the process to seek asylum in the United States. During Title 42, I worked mainly with would-be (im)migrants desperately seeking entry into the U.S. while they applied and waited for an asylum trial. Every case I took on fit the requirements for asylum in the U.S., however, many were denied under the strict border control enabled by the fear of COVID-19. The individuals I was working with were all waiting for answers at the U.S./Mexico border, living in frantically created encampments or packed into local churches for shelter. They lacked access to clean water or other sanitary conditions which mean that many of the individuals waiting actually contracted COVID-19 as a result of the conditions Title 42 had

[99] Blue, Sarah A., Jennifer A. Devine, Matthew P. Ruiz, Kathryn McDaniel, Alisa R. Hartsell, Christopher J. Pierce, Makayla Johnson, Allison K. Tinglov, Mei Yang, Xiu Wu, and et al. 2021. "Im/Mobility at the US–Mexico Border during the COVID-19 Pandemic" *Social Sciences* 10, no. 2: 47. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci10020047

placed on them to remain in Mexico. On top of the health concerns, many were kidnapped or subjected to violent conditions due to their vulnerable positions living in limbo. While asylum law purported to protect these individuals, there was nothing prohibiting an unsympathetic government from enacting conflicting laws in order to limit and even deny those protections. Every day when I would sign on to volunteer, I would notice the names which had switched in our color-coded system - another person had died awaiting asylum.

Law and legal institutions play a significant role in societies. In full recognition of this consequential role, critical legal scholars have impugned the law's infallibility, pushing the boundaries of law and ultimately questioning its authority in arguing for the promotion of litigation strategies as the only road towards 'justice'.[100] A true progressive analysis of immigration and environmental law can only take place when we consider the consequences of an individual human rights framework that is so often tethered to citizenship and relationship to a nation. (Im)migrant justice requires us to confront hegemony and denormalize a system of capitalism, citizenship, and a Human-centric logic that marks some bodies as productive citizens worthy of human rights and devalues others as noncitizens and therefore, non-Humans. Without the capacity to reap any benefits from legal rights while simultaneously being hyper-visible and made vulnerable by laws that purport to protect, an individual and citizen-centric human

[100] Fisher, William W., David Kennedy, William W. Fisher, and David Kennedy. *The Canon of American Legal Thought*. Edited by William W. Fisher and David Kennedy. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018. Bell, Derrick. *Faces at the Bottom of the Well : The Permanence of Racism*. New York, NY: BasicBooks, 1992.

rights framework benefits the status quo by manufacturing and maintaining an exploited, racialized Other.

The dominant (im)migrant rights movement risks conspiring with colonial and capitalist interests via its continued adherence to U.S. citizenship boundaries, its role in reproducing the good/bad immigrant dichotomy, and its Human-centric approach.[101] The movement's willingness to negotiate with U.S. lawmakers for 'pragmatic' solutions means that (im)migrant advocates have knowingly and unknowingly abandoned millions of (im)migrants including, but not limited to, disabled, queer, trans, system-impacted, and other criminalized peoples in exchange for citizenship for the select 'good'. Absent within the (im)migrant rights framework has been a call to dismantle the (im)migration system, borders, and nations altogether. Rather than shapeshifting to fit within America's system, (im)migrant groups must find ways to be mindful of the function that (im)migrant rights perform while also taking advantage of moments of convergence.

The notion of 'human rights' and an enforcing international law, which many (im)migrant rights groups have supported, is riddled with these pitfalls. Randall Williams proposes that rather than assuming that the inhumane acts of violence on a mass scale must be or are necessarily 'against the law', we would

[101] Jackson, Zakiyyah Iman. *Becoming Human: Matter and Meaning in an Antiblack World*. New York: New York University Press, 2022. Zamora, Daniel. "Decolonizing the 'Good Immigrant': Discourse, Cultural Studies, and Decolonial Thought." California State University, Los Angeles, 2016. Cacho, Lisa Marie. 2012. *Social Death: Racialized Rightlessness and the Criminalization of the Unprotected.* New York: New York University Press, 2012. Chang, Grace. *Disposable Domestics: Immigrant Women Workers in the Global Economy.* Cambridge: South End Press, 2000.

be wise to recognize that international law is, “at best, neutral or completely ineffectual on such matters and, at worst, fully complicit and legitimating”.[102] Despite the global emphasis on international human rights since World War II, Williams notes that this ‘progress’ has consistently served to strengthen the global power of the United States. The alignment of human rights with the interests of U.S. capitalist expansion is conveniently hidden by performative measures on behalf of the United Nations and buttressed by international law. With concern to immigration law, the criminalization of (im)migrants has occurred since the nineteenth century, officially beginning in the late 19th century with the Page Act of 11875. Today, immigration law continues to support capitalist demands at the expense of (im)migrant justice in what some have called the Mexican (im)migration paradox.[103] This contradiction entails the devastating combination of 1) leftist claims of liberalizing (im)migration laws while insidiously masking restrictive policies and 2) conservative aims of stricter immigration laws purportedly concerned with deterring (im)migration that are actually instrumental in sustaining and shaping Mexican (im)migration by significantly restructuring its legal status as undocumented. The legal (re)production of ‘illegality’ therefore is an integral component sustaining Mexican and other (im)migrants’ vulnerability and fungibility as workers whose labor-power sustains the U.S. economy.

[102] Williams, Randall. *The Divided World: Human Rights and Its Violence*, University of Minnesota Press, 2010. p. xxxii
[103] De Genova, Nicholas. “The Legal Production of Mexican/Migrant Illegality”. Lat Stud 2, 160–185 (2004). https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.lst.8600085

Simultaneously, as neoliberal globalization spreads, proponents of justice must also be concerned with the ideological relationship between the citizen and the noncitizen (and by extension, between human and non-human) and the role that international bureaucracies and discourses play in (re)creating the hierarchical split between these two categories of being. This entails grappling with the colonial legacies of nations and citizenship in order to create a different kind of relationship with one another.

The United States legal system has been a key method in the categorization of people into different states of vulnerability to exploitation and violence. Furthermore, power relations impact how we come to understand ourselves as subjects within systems of meaning and control. (Im)migrants are not only categorized based on their national origins but also face increased exposure to harm based on their race, gender, ability, and sexuality. Such categorization not only limits opportunities but also informs how (im)migrants and citizens understand their relationship with the state as well as their ability to transform it. A critical analysis casts light upon the inadequacies of law reform arguments. By appealing to law, proponents of reform (in)advertently place the onus of system inequities on a “few bad apples", rather than tend to the ways that U.S. law has been molded to create classist, racialized, and gendered distribution of life chances. In order to properly understand power and harm, Dean Spade proposes we should shift our focus from the individual rights framing of discrimination and think more comprehensively about how legally-created

categories are enforced on all people in ways that have particularly dangerous outcomes for those thrust into the margins.[104]

Hence, it is necessary to consider the utility of the plea itself as a calling for imaginary worlds full of relationality. The 'poetics in the plea' lies not in an appeal to the courts, but rather in the problematization of the law's existence and the willingness to disrupt hegemonic notions of what is imaginable and therefore actionable. In other words, we might understand the plea as an utterance according to the Black radical tradition of locating freedom within the struggle against.[105] While the plea makes visible the social effects of legal exclusion, it also critiques the law as implicated in the social construction of identities.

Poetics of the Plea

During one particularly solemn meeting that came after a series of legal blows, I asked the community members if they had lost hope in the legal system. One community member loudly boasted that she never had hope in the legal system, but she had hope in her community. As she spoke these words, the color came back into the room. Everyone was nodding in agreement, including the new faces. As the conversation went on, it became clear that the purpose of filing these claims was very rarely with the expectation that anything might change legally, but rather, the hope was that something might change socially. With every

[104] Spade, Dean. *Normal Life: Administrative Violence Critical Trans Politics and the Limits of Law.* South End Press, 2011.
[105] Robinson, Cedric J. *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition.* United Kingdom: University of North Carolina Press, 2000.

plea, centers like CCAEJ and other community organizations in the IE grew in numbers - every plea converted residents into comrades, every struggle an act of solidarity.

As we discussed how the purpose of the plea was not necessarily rooted in legal recognition, it became clear that despite the recent legal blows, the group had actually been quite successful on their own terms. For the participants, the fact that they had been able to congregate around the issues that were impacting them, hold space for each other, and strengthen their bonds in the process meant that their community was stronger than ever. With every legal encounter, community members learned new skills and ways of discussing their concerns, engaging in political education, and performing outreach or connecting with others. In short, the legal cases provided an opportunity for community members to once again take to the streets, knock on doors, and distribute pamphlets. While organizing around environmental justice was always in high demand in the IE, it was much more intimidating for folks to approach strangers in the community if there was not a specific ask or concern to discuss. In this way, a legal battle served as an excuse for conversation.

Furthermore, through their political and legal engagements, the community had learned something about themselves and their ways of relating to one another. They were a community that liked to communicate and that had strong and interesting ideas about how to live collectively and move forward without corporate involvement. While sometimes community members disagreed

on a particular vote or issue, they had learned to communicate through their disagreements, to listen to one another, and to arrive at a conclusion that was mutually beneficial - a process which equipped an already thriving community with the skills necessary to continue as an autonomous community.

Foucault notes that individuals are shaped by their encounters with power which damage their personal agency and access to free will.[106] While the IE community had and continues to encounter power in various spaces (schools, workplaces, immigration centers, etc.), their sense of personal agency remains intact. While some of the participants did not consider themselves activists, they understood their responsibility to protect their communities against all forms of oppression. When participants were asked what they hoped to achieve by participating in CCAEJ and related events, they simply cited their network of relations - their bodies, their childrens' bodies, their kins' bodies, and even their epistemologies and ways of living were being threatened.

Perhaps without knowing it, the participants were confronting what Foucault might call 'biopolitics' which states that the sovereign exercises their right over life by exercising their right to kill.[107] Biopolitics as population control involves the ratio of births to death, the rate of reproduction, and other issues of fertility in order to achieve the most 'optimal' outcome for the whole. Racism is then, he argues, transformed into a 'positive' that serves as a strategy of

[106] Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison.* New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1995.
[107] Foucault, Michel. "Right of Death and Power Over Life" in The History of Sexuality. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.

cleansing undertaken for the continuation of the Human (white) race. He claims that discipline engenders ‘docile bodies’ and argues, “discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience)”.[108] The docile body is understood as the ne plus ultra worker - bodies that are productive for factories, monasteries, and militaries. Discipline creates the individual from regulated bodies through its focus on the cellular, organic and genetic. Its techniques include the precise use of ever-expanding linear time and impeccable bodily movements within a sequestered space. Discipline coerces the individual’s movements and their experience of space-time.

Before it was explicitly known that the community would band together, many individuals felt helpless to stop the warehouse encroachment. Given the precarious economic situations that many Americans find themselves in, some even sought and found employment in the very warehouses which are threatening their local ecology. With sadness, various participants reflected on these moments as times when they most felt like docile bodies. Community members shared experiences of monitoring themselves and others for fear of retaliation, including deportation. When the developers kept coming despite their docility however, community members found comfort and support in each other. While the warehouses threatened to destroy the community, they also served as something to band together against and by extension, presented an opportunity

[108] Ibid., 138.

for the community to struggle with each other and aim not just for the regulation of warehouses, but for far bigger worlds.

Later in our discussion, another community member chimed in, “it is less about a winning verdict and more about haunting (the developers)”. A ‘haunting’ describes how that which appears absent or nonexistent is often “a seething presence”.[109] The ‘ghosts’ here, as the community member was suggesting, are the human and more-than-human inhabitants of the IE that developers, corporations, and local politicians otherwise willfully ignore. The haunting then becomes an affective pull into a structure of feeling, a recognition of the “unexamined irregularities of everyday life”.[110] As more and more of what the community once knew started to disappear, corporations viewed the IE as “developing”, but community members saw absences - markers of their communal relationships which were no longer present. Hence, the perceived common sense understandings are instead negotiated within a self-dialectic developing what Raymond Williams calls a “structure of feelings” vying to emerge. [111] It is through this structure of feelings that new modes of thinking were born, pushing community members to understand their experiences as connected to broader social and ecological problems.

Additionally, beyond the physical markers of the violences the IE has been confronted with (homes and schools converted into commercial spaces, diesel

[109] Gordon, Avery. *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination.* United Kingdom: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.
[110] Cho, Grace M. *Haunting the Korean Diaspora: Shame, Secrecy, and the Forgotten War.* United Kingdom: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.
[111] Williams, Raymond. *The Long Revolution*. Orchard Park, NY: Broadview Press, 2001.

trucks and congestion, etc.) much of the violences are hidden. These hidden or slow violences can be defined as “a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all”.[112] Hence, community members have themselves been haunted, and reveled in the idea of haunting back.

The idea of haunting the corporations and politicians that had disregarded the wellbeing of the community also expands how we might think about agency and the ability to affect others. While the community rarely (if ever) got the opportunity to talk directly with developers, corporations, and politicians, filing a legal case against these actors enabled the community to have their voices and resistance heard. Furthermore, hauntings reveal the past as existing in but also acting upon the present. For the community members, this sort of haunting took shape whenever they challenged the rights of corporations and/or the government on the grounds of past American and corporate theft, violence, and displacement that continues to impact communities worldwide today. Still, the haunting and the ghost are but a part of the evidence of social reality. For the (im)migrants within the group, they were not just haunted by the recent changes in the IE, but experiencing the collective load of past displacements. Indeed, they understood the events in their lives as connected to structural and institutional oppression.

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[112] Nixon, Rob. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013.

Upon this reflection, the room filled with energy. “We are not going to go down without a fight. This is a community where people care about one another and that is worth more than anything they have. Many of us have been uprooted multiple times - their greed has no end, but neither does our commitment to one another, to the animals, and to the land.” Here it is also important to note that while the group did not have hope that the law would favor their cause, the community believed that it was their responsibility to the land, animals, and their broader ecology which could not necessarily advocate for themselves legally, to do so on their behalf.

Here, community members commented on the law’s failures when it comes to considering the needs of non-human life. While certainly environmental law as a field exists, what the participants were commenting on was the law’s inability to *listen* or to connect to the land. For the community members, the land had become a significant site which stored knowledge, culture, and demarcated time. Through their agrarian lifestyles, the participants had come to understand land as fundamental to ways of learning, being, and knowing so much so that land itself can serve as an interlocutor, a more-than-human person who they are constantly in conversation with. Others such as Mel Engman and Mary Hermes have argued that working from an Indigenous land-based paradigm grounded in relationality, one can tap into the knowledge that land is sharing and (re)turn to a decolonial ontology.[113] Similarly, understanding land as a living participant and

[113] Engman, Mel M. and Mary Hermes,“Land as Interlocutor: A Study of Ojibwe Learner Language in Interaction on and With Naturally Occurring Materials”. *The Modern Language Journal*, 2021: 105: 86-105. https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12685

teacher in (im)migrant studies rooted in relationality connects (im)migrants with decolonial struggles. While appealing to the law for these sorts of protections appears to concede power to a nation's legal system, once again, the community is moreso utilizing the legal platform to make their case to potential allies elsewhere. While the IE has received some attention from outside groups and supporters, community residents recognize that their struggles are not necessarily unique. Throughout the world, communities are facing similar challenges to their ecologies.

Community members in the IE, led by the (im)migrants within the group, argue that a just legal system (or something akin to a just legal system) would recognize and center relationality. Centering relationality within a just legal system, they argue, means constantly asking how a particular law, legal contract, or verdict will impact relationships beyond the clearly implicated. Furthermore, a just legal system that centers relationships would necessitate a slowness with which to recognize the most minute of relational changes. Relationships are central to people's lives, however, in the prevailing American national narrative, human beings are understood as individuals separate from one another so while relationships exist, they are not treated as constitutive. While everyone in the group had come to this conclusion, the (im)migrants participating discussed their experiences of losing kinship networks and fostering new ones as fundamental to their view on the importance of relationships.

Based on their life experiences, the individual self is constituted in such a way that is in flux via their relationships. The values that the group was advocating for as individuals and collectively were made possible through their relationships with each other, their non-human kin, and their intimate creation of the place they were protecting. The law, and human-rights by extension, were principle rhetorical and institutional mechanisms that had previously shaped their relationships with others and even with themselves. Participants reflected on the ways that law had undermined their sense of autonomy, which was interestingly restored by being in community and fostering relationships with others.

On the surface, it may appear as though I am advocating for a shift in emphasis so that relationships would be considered central rather than on the periphery of legal thought and practice, however, I'm not necessarily sure that a legal system which centered relationships would be a legal system at all. A clearer aim here is instead to shift social consciousness so that people are keenly attuned to the relations of interconnection that shape human experience, at times cause problems, and in many other instances, lead to solutions. Today, law is a powerful means of structuring human (and otherwise) relations, but what if these relations were capable of structuring themselves collectively, without a legal arm from the outside devoid of intimacy or care?

When we understand the individual as constituted by relations, then every social problem we might consider would take into account the centrality of relationships, rather than placing the burden on an arbitrary component of what is

actually a web of interconnectedness. Constructive relationships are necessary for autonomy to flourish, and if we are to construct a world without borders, autonomy is necessary. Therefore, centering and valuing relationality is itself an important component of abolishing borders and other oppressive forces.

Robin D.G. Kelley, informed by the contributions of Aimé Césaire, posits that 'poetry' or 'poetic knowledge' is more than what we have come to know as the formal 'poem'; poetry is a lucid revolt of the unconscious concerning every history, future, and dream.[114] The poetics of the plea comprises imagination-full moments with the capacity to affect and propel society into otherwise futures. The plea carries the potential for something else - the yet-to-be that must be made tangible by ultimately overcoming the law it purports to assuage. Their import is derived not from their ability to become codified, but rather from their potency to make other worlds imaginable and therefore possible. The challenge of lawyering toward unbounded freedom, therefore, becomes about how one brings words or pleas to life.

As Harsha Walia notes, "borders are not simply lines marking territory; they are the product of, and produce, social relations from which we must emancipate ourselves".[115] Supporters of an open borders approach have not given enough consideration to the deep social causes that prompt states to

[114] Kelley, Robin D. G. *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination.* Boston: Beacon Press, 2002.
[115] Walia, Harsha. *Border & Rule: Global Migration, Capitalism, and the Rise of Racist Nationalism*. United States: Haymarket Books, 2021.

implement and pursue border policies, nor the social problems that lead people to support such policies and the nation-states that bestow them.[116] Even in their wildest imaginations, rights-based discourses fail to tackle the root causes of displacement and violence and fail to see the abolition of borders and nations altogether. Instead, these discourses perpetuate an asymmetry of movement, power, and rights. The border abolition movement however understands borders and nations as significant components of global relations of spatial/social disparities in wealth and power and the laws surrounding these entities as an effect of hegemonic social attitudes.[117] While the law was created to support hegemonic powers and (re)create colonial and capitalist desires, (im)migrants themselves defy attempts to control their will to live and thrive. Although their direct legal pleas may be ignored or co-opted, their imaginations engage in an act of worldmaking and rebellion against the current system.

[116] Gill, Nick. "Whose 'No Borders'? Achieving Border Liberalization for the Right Reasons." *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees / Refuge: Revue Canadienne Sur Les Réfugiés* 26, no. 2 (2009): 107–20. https://www.jstor.org/stable/48732550.
[117] MacKinnon, Catherine. *Towards a Feminist Theory of the State*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.

Chapter 4: Ecology Outside of Fixed Space

Climate change and environmental destruction has increasingly been a topic of concern and debate. What was once considered an abstract warning has made itself known. Some scholars have labeled this epoch the 'Anthropocene', naming what they deem as 'human activity' which has considerably altered the Earth. These discourses however have failed to consider Black, Indigenous, and other critical race and feminist perspectives which have much to add to the conversation regarding disaster as linked to settler colonialism, racial capitalism, heterosexism, and speciesism. As Kathryn Yusoff so aptly puts it,

> "if the Anthropocene proclaims a sudden concern with the exposures of environmental harm to white liberal communities, it does so in the wake of histories in which these harms have been knowingly exported to Black and brown communities under the rubric of civilization, progress, modernization, and capitalism. The Anthropocene might seem to offer a dystopic future that laments the end of the world, but imperialism and ongoing (settler) colonialisms have been ending worlds for as long as they have been in existence. The Anthropocene as a politically infused geology and scientific/popular discourse is just now noticing the extinction it has chosen to continually overlook in the making of its modernity and freedom".[118]

All things being equal, climate change and environmental destruction mean that all life is at risk. However, all things are not equal - longstanding and strategic terraforming has already resulted in hierarchically distributed suffering, in "group-differentiated vulnerabilities to premature death".[119] Hence, those deemed Other, the wretched of the earth (as Katherine Mckittrick and Clyde

[118] Yusoff, Kathryn. *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None.* Forerunners: Ideas First. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2018.
[119] Wilson Gilmore, Ruth. *Golden Gulag: Prisons, surplus, crisis, and opposition in globalizing california.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007, p. 261.

Woods by way of Frantz Fanon put it), are always the sacrificial offerings in already racialized spaces of uneven geographies where human and more-than-human life are marked for premature death regardless of their migration away from the perceived areas of danger.[120]

The Anthropocene is an insufficient framework by which to think through histories of ongoing environmental injustice and importantly, the destruction of ecology. With a select focus on the future, the Anthropocene demonstrates a willful ignorance and detachment from the 'billion' extinctions and violences already undergone. Furthermore, the Anthropocene lacks consideration of the relationships we hold with land outside of territory, and the relationships we have with each other across space.

Dina Gilio-Whitaker furthers this discussion by contending that settler colonization's eliminatory impulse and structure began as, and continues to be, environmental injustice and therefore, environmental justice need be explicitly in conversations with decolonial dialogues.[121] The invasion of Indigenous lands and subsequent forced displacement of Native nations threatened Indigenous epistemologies and altered kinship relations with land and more-than-human life. Indeed, colonization disrupts systems of responsibility which are a necessary component of imagining otherwise. By erasing the socioecological contexts required for Indigenous peoples to experience the world through abundance,

[120] McKittrick, Katherine and Clyde Adrian Woods. *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place*. University of Michigan Press, 2007.
[121] Gilio-Whitaker, Dina. *As Long as Grass Grows: The Indigenous Fight for Environmental Justice, from Colonization to Standing Rock*. Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 2019.

settler colonizers devastated the (re)production and future of autonomous Indigeneity. To be sure, the hardships and calamity non-Indigenous peoples dread, such as those presented by the climate crisis, are realities that Indigenous peoples have already suffered through at the hands of settler colonialism.

When I first started this work, I knew I would have to address Indigeneity somewhere within my dissertation. From the beginning, I recognized that while I was working with communities defending their right to a certain land, that land was Indigenous land first. Among the Indigenous groups which call this land home are the Cahuilla, Gabrielino-Tongva,Payomkawichum/Luiseño, and Yuhaaviatam, clan of Maara'yam/the Serrano People. Settler colonial forces were responsible for the forced displacement of many of these people from the area, and as they had their own intimate relationships with the land, many more of their descendants might still be on the lands today if it were not for violence and the persecution of their ancestors. Kyle Whyte argues that by shifting the point of reference which mainstream environmentalists typically position as the center, the current world starts to look a lot more dystopian. Whyte turns to Indigenous perspectives on climate change, nations, and kinship in order to situate the present time as already apocalyptic. Indigenous peoples' direct experience with loss, displacement, and violence positions Native communities within the nightmares of their ancestors.[122]

[122] Whyte, Kyle P. "Indigenous Science (Fiction) for the Anthropocene: Ancestral Dystopias and Fantasies of Climate Change Crises." *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space* 1, no. 1–2 (March 2018): 224–42. https://doi.org/10.1177/2514848618777621.

Additionally, I owe a great deal to Indigenous scholars who have helped open my eyes to a different way of connecting with ecology and the more-than-human world.[123] Still, as I started to develop my critique of nations, nationalism, and borders, I realized that certain aspects of Indigenous struggles would be implicated within this critique.

Land Back Within Autochthony

National borders were a necessary component for the full realization and securitization of postcolonial power. Borders and (im)migration control normalized the fragmentation of the world into national capitalists markets while also cementing a difference in quality of life for citizens versus non-citizens. Whenever we center the national over relationality, we cement the idea that the body politic is and should be national to the exclusion of non-nationals/ (im)migrations.

Increasingly, autochthony is cited as the explanation for a lack of desire to embrace (im)migration. Autochthonous discourses restrict belonging to those

[123] Whyte, Kyle & Caldwell, Chris & Schaefer, Marie. “Indigenous Lessons about Sustainability Are Not Just for “All Humanity””. 2018, 10.18574/nyu/9781479894567.003.0007. Whyte, Kyle. "Settler Colonialism, Ecology, and Environmental Injustice". *Environment and Society* 9.1: 125-144, 2018. Dian Million, "There Is a River in Me: Theory from Life", *Theorizing Native Studies*, Audra Simpson, Andrea Smith Theorizing Native Studies. United Kingdom: Duke University Press, 2014. Simpson, Leanne, 2014. *Dancing On Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence.* Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Pub., 2011. https://doi.org/10.3167/ares.2018.090109.. Kimmerer, Robin Wall. *Gathering Moss: A Natural and Cultural History of Mosses.* United States, Oregon State University Press, 2003. Salmón, Enrique. Kincentric Ecology: Indigenous Perceptions of the Human-Nature Relationship. Ecological Applications, 10: 1327-1332, 2000. https://doi.org/10.1890/1051-0761(2000)010[1327:KEIPOT]2.0.CO;2

who can show their nativeness by virtue of originating in a given nation and/or its defined territory. However, national autochthonous discourses are a legacy of imperialism. Of course, American Nationals make autochthonous claims which ignore the existence of Indigenous peoples. Hence, Nationals make claims that (im)migrants are colonizing National-Natives when they enter spaces such as the U.S.

Despite having colonized and settled on land that were not theirs to do so with, settlers went on to create two opposing categories: National-Natives and (im)igrants so that today, people's relationship to nation-states, to political and social power, and to one another are organized by the rights associated with the category people happen to find themselves in. As settler-colonizers co-opt the meaning of what it means to be a colonized people, (im)migrants become threats to nations and their own experience of colonization and imperialism may be ignored. While each autochthonous discourse has its own history, each is embedded with legacies of colonization, imperialism, capitalism, and other forms of violence. Importantly, in each instance, the idea that the "people of a territory" should rule reigns supreme.

Indigenous Nations in the U.S. and elsewhere have utilized such claims to their advantage by arguing that if we as a society claim to value a group's rootedness in place as granting them power over the place, then the United States ought to return the land it stole to Indigenous Peoples. Furthermore,

rather than call for inclusion into the body politic of the United States which has systematically excluded non-white people, a decolonial framing of “land back” makes the demand of sovereignty – that is, collective self-determination – as redress for dispossession, rather than civil rights.[124] Importantly, these arguments are largely rooted in land as the site of production for social, economical, and political relationships to community as well as other tribal nations making land uniquely pivotal to Indigenous identity and survivance.[125] Central to the Land Back movement is land not merely for the sake of territory, but rather, land as a place which can bind people around common understandings and experiences.[126] The meaning of the term “land” from an Indigenous perspective is dynamic and difficult to convey through contemporary political boundaries. As a supporter of the Land Back movement, I am weary of autochthonous arguments which flatten Native peoples’ claims to land as rooted in territory. In particular, in the process of making land rights visible to the colonizer, Native communities have been forced to discuss concepts of property; concepts which are, according to Dale Turner “the cornerstone not only of liberal theories of justice but also of Western European economies.”[127] Furthermore, displaced or deracinated Indigenous peoples at times find themselves outside of

[124] Stevenson, Winona. “‘Ethnic’ Assimilates ‘Indigenous’: A Study in Intellectual Neocolonialism.” *Wicazo Sa Review* 13, no. 1 (1998): 33–51. https://doi.org/10.2307/1409028.
[125] Goeman, Mishuana. “From Place to Territories and Back Again: Centering Storied Land in the discussion of Indigenous Nation-building”. *International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies,* 1, 2008. 10.5204/ijcis.v1i1.20.
[126] Silko, Leslie Marmon. *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit: Essays on Native American Life Today.* United Kingdom: Simon & Schuster, 1997.
[127] Turner, Dale. *This Is Not a Peace Pipe: Towards a Critical Indigenous Philosophy.* Maldives: University of Toronto Press, 2006, p.24

autochthonous claims when such claims stress rootedness.[128] Furthermore, it is worth interrogating how efforts at decolonization that rely on ideas of nationhood when centuring autochthonous arguments of Native rights might loosen, but not transform, a binary of power that maintains a harmful dualism.[129]

While there are many differences when it comes to claims by Indigenous peoples to those of U.S. Nationals, all autochthonous discourses rely upon and produce essentialist and ahistorical ideas of nation, which is then made the fundamental basis of legitimate political claims. Following, autochthonous discourses also assert that natives should be the source of law, granters of rights, and the land (which in Indigenous epistemologies is viewed as kin) transformed into territory. This understanding of who should be included in political and other forms of power delegitimizes (im)migrant knowledge and experience in place.

Autochthonous claims also imply a special relationship to land, but one that ultimately excuses their transformation of land into territory to be managed according to the desires of Nationalists and at the exclusion of Others. However, beings of all sorts have a relationship to the land, including water and air which by western scientific standards are not considered living beings. Autochthonous

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[128] Kauanui, J Kēhaulani. “Diasporic Deracination and ‘Off-Island’ Hawaiians.” *The Contemporary Pacific* 19, no. 1 (2007): 138–60. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23721976.
[129] Sharma, Nandita and Cynthia Wright. "Decolonizing Resistance, Challenging Colonial States." *Social Justice* 35, no. 3 (2008): 120-138. http://mimas.calstatela.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/decolonizing-resistance-challenging-colonial/docview/231927761/se-2.

discourses then privilege the sovereign claim to territory over relationality with and connection to land. Therefore, any demands for territory are political claims that define land as territory to be regulated by some, regardless of who or what is living and in relation with land.

To be sure, many Indigenous Peoples express this very sentiment.[130] Importantantly, demands for land back in order to decolonize the land would also be against autochthonous claims over territory. Additionally, as many Indigenous peoples today hold diasporic identities, Indigeneity and diaspora are deeply related through settler colonialism and capitalist appropriation of ancestral lands, even as the two identities seem oxymoronic. Finally, it cannot be ignored that many (im)migrants from Latin America are in fact Indigenous. In an American context, Mayas, Zapotecs, Mixtecs, Garífuna, and P'urhépecha, among others, are often flattened under the umbrella of Latinidad.[131] Therefore, it becomes necessary to consider the complicated solidarity, antagonism, and incommensurability between Indigenous and (im)migrant justice struggles. Borrowing from scholarship focusing on the incommensurability between Black and Native struggles, we might consider the "stuckedness" of this relationality.[132] Indeed, Indigenous/(im)migrant relationality is not fixed and thus, an approach

[130] Ariwakehte Nicholas, C., Dunbar-Ortiz, R., Hill, G., Hébert, V., Huson, F., Kehaulani Kauanui, J., Toghestiy. (2023). *Anarcho-Indigenism: Conversations on Land and Freedom.* United Kingdom: Pluto Press. Atleo C, Boron J. Land Is Life: Indigenous Relationships to Territory and Navigating Settler Colonial Property Regimes in Canada. *Land*. 2022; 11(5):609. https://doi.org/10.3390/land11050609

[131] Blackwell, M., Boj Lopez, F. & Urrieta, L. Special issue: Critical Latinx indigeneities. *Lat Stud*15, 126–137 (2017). https://doi.org/10.1057/s41276-017-0064-0

[132] King, Tiffany Lethabo, Jenell Navarro, and Andrea Smith. *Otherwise Worlds: Against Settler Colonialism and Anti-Blackness*. Duke University Press, 2020.

that does not presume an “answer” but instead seeks to ask questions about the complexities of this relation through sustained engagement with each other is necessary.

Robin Wall Kimmerer states, “For all of us, becoming Indigenous to a place means living as if your children's future mattered, to take care of the land as if our lives, both material and spiritual, depended on it”.[133] This statement speaks to an intimacy with the more-than-human world, not dominion over territory. Additionally, Kimmerer’s statement suggests that we might “become Indigenous to a place”, leaving room for further conversations with (im)migrant communities that form the type of relationships Kimmerer is discussing. Indeed, Indigenous storytelling often makes reference to Indigenous peoples’ first arrival in the world as “immigrants” exploring Turtle Island which would come to be a new home, and getting to know all the creatures who already inhabited it long before the human immigration/arrival. Just as Black and Indigenous studies have focused on their relationality, a deeper engagement between Indigenous and migrant studies is necessary in order to work through any tensions.

[133] Kimmerer, Robin Wall. *Braiding Sweetgrass.* Milkweed Editions, 201, p.9.

Ecology as Relationality Beyond Fixed Space

Furthermore, if we accept that people form connections to unfixed ecosystems, we must expand environmental discussions beyond the notion of fixed space. An environmentalist rooted in ecology as relationality therefore is concerned with all aspects of how we relate to one another and how we might build these relationships wherever we go. In regards to (im)migrations, an ecology rooted in relationality allows for people to choose for themselves whether they stay or go. Indeed, to replace mainstream environmentalism with relational ecology would be an act of decolonization.

Importantly, decolonization is less about a struggle against, and more about remembering, imagining, and generating better relations. Within the community in the IE, I see decolonial struggles. Not only are community members concerned with resisting current forms of oppression, they are also acting intentionally in promotion of alternative societies by changing themselves, pushing the boundaries of the broader (im)migrant movement, and keeping with a strong sense of responsibility and reciprocity. This paradigm shift is undoing the hams that colonization has caused, and in this process, alleviating the stress felt by our human and more-than-human kin. Colonialism, capitalism, and

imperialism assume that the natural state of humans is competitive, transactional, selfish, and rooted in the individual, however, based on my time being in relation with (im)migrant activists in the IE, I propose that we ask ourselves, “what changes if we center kin relationality and ecological belonging? In other words, what changes if we assume that the natural state of humans is cooperative, selfless, and rooted in community.

A concept of relationality and ecological belonging conceptualizes the self as belonging to kinship networks of the sort that all Earth systems are connected to. Hence, while our kinship networks may be made up of different components from those of another human or species, this recognition of interconnectedness roots people to a planetary identity and orients us towards the benefit of all life forms. If to exist means to belong to an ecological community, then everything we do or don’t do is environmental and all actions must be considerate of the benefit to kinship networks or the harms that may result.

Who is Native? What is nature? What is humanity's place in nature? In an era of ecological breakdown and mass (im)migration, answering these questions has become central to our everyday lives and for the future that we and other beings may live. Unless we discuss these questions with care and arrive at a point of clarity, we will lack any ethical direction in dealing with our environmental problems. Today’s ecological problems stem from social problems - the domination of humans over humans mirrors the domination of humans over

nature and anything or anyone that can be viewed as closer to nature (i.e. barbaric). The ways in which we interact with the environment impact the ways we interact with society as a whole and vice versa.

In the face of a seemingly monolithic capitalist future as conceived by corporations and the impending doom of environmental disaster, community members in the IE have engaged in a speculation from below full - one that consists of alternative engagements with futurity emerging from the colonized, displaced, and disavowed. After participating in environmental justice events for the last couple of years led by (im)migrants in the IE, along with my personal experience as the child of immigrants, I observed these communities invested in the production of migrant futures.[134] Their visions are migratory in that they are not rooted in a fixed geographical location, but they move from place to place and enter different temporalities.

Furthermore, I understand these migrant futures as connected to abolition geography, what Ruth Wilson Gilmore describes freedom as place.[135] Abolition geography points to the ways that people make where they are into places they wish to be. Abolition ecology builds off of abolition geography to argue that environmental justice ought to also be concerned with liberating our

[134] Bahng, Aimee. *Migrant Futures: Decolonizing Speculation in Financial Times* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2018).
[135] Wilson Gilmore,Ruth. “Abolition Geography and the Problem of Innocence.” in *Futures of Black Radicalism.* Eds. Johnson, Gaye Theresa, and Alex Lubin. London ; Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2017. P. 224-241.

environments and ecologies.[136] Hence, abolition geography is about the ways we exist in the world together and migrant futures engage in acts of practice, developing, and refining those ways of being and those worlds.

For community members in the IE, freedom is a place they have known and created. For some, the IE is a space with little to offer, but for them, the IE is the place they have tended to and which they have engaged in freedom together towards. Prior to the arrival of warehouses and developers, the community was already engaging in environmental discourses - their attention to the ecology is not rooted in fear, but love for.

Communities come together to *think with* both in response to violence, but also and importantly, in support of freedom dreams.[137] Like the matsutake and the entanglements and codependency which link the mushroom to multispecies assemblages - communities not only survive in otherwise life-damaging conditions, but they create new environments, cultivating each other intentionally and unintentionally and all of their world-making projects.[138] While certainly there was a lot of sadness and pain at times, what I will remember most of working with folks in the IE was the pleasure. When they tended to the land, there was pleasure. When they made food for a gathering, there was pleasure. When they protested, there was pleasure. Hence, I believe it is also apt to discuss the uses

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[136] Heynen, Nik & Megan Ybarra, “On Abolition Ecologies and Making Freedom as a Place”. *Antipode.* 53. (2020) 10.1111/anti.12666.
[137] Kelley, Robin D. G. *Freedom Dreams: the Black Radical Imagination*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2002.
[138] Lowenhaupt Tsing,Anna. *The Mushroom at the End of the World.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017.

of the erotic and the role of pleasure in ecologies of relationality. Within these communal spaces, pleasure was often identified as necessary and intrinsically linked to ecology. Individuals formed links of pleasures that expanded beyond those experienced between humans to include pleasures shaped by more-than-human relations.

Mainstream environmental discourse is often tied to the unpleasurable - the discomfort, pain, and loss we will experience.[139] However, what I have learned from communities in the IE is that what motivates people more than fear is pleasure. Audre Lorde's "Uses of the Erotic" informs my analysis of migrant kinship networks and their relational ecologies. Lorde describes the erotic as,

> *"a measure between the beginnings of our sense of self and the chaos of our strongest feelings. It is an internal sense of satisfaction to which, once we have experienced it, we know we can aspire...the erotic is not a question only of what we do; it is a question of how acutely and fully we can feel in the doing".* [140]

Environmental justice is tied to the erotic, one experiences it because they *feel* it - it is not enough to read or be told that one processes it. Furthermore, it is through deep connection and memories of feeling "good" that we form place, informing our desires to nurture freedom as a place.

A historical and theoretical remapping of environmental justice as an abolitionist and decolonial project extends strategies towards freedom. As conversations about 'climate migrants', 'climate refugees', and annual migrant caravans traveling from Central America to the U.S. border continue to gain more

[139] Bladow, Kyle A., and Jennifer K. Ladino, eds. *Affective Ecocriticism : Emotion, Embodiment, Environment*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018.
[140] Lorde, Audre. *Uses of the erotic: the erotic as power.* Brooklyn, N.Y.: Out & Out Books, 1978.

and more attention, scholars must refuse the impulse to think of these communities as merely victims, therefore trapping them within pain narratives and instead, understand (im)migrants as theorists in relationality.

To preserve the environment without consideration of ecology or relations risks a further sterilization of the natural world and the perpetuation of human separation from our more-than-human kin. For Latinx immigrants in the IE engaged in the process of creating place, the process of ongoing relationality has instilled in them a unique knowledge which seeks to advance environmental agendas that are rooted in kinship. Furthermore, remembering that humans are a part of nature means considering human beings within our environmental struggles as well.

Conclusion

"Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings."

- Edward Said

On December 5, 2023, Lorena Gonzalez Fletcher, chief officer of the California Labor Federation AFL-CIO, received what was supposed to be a confidential memo written and circulated within Amazon's higher ranks titled "Community Engagement Plan 2024 - Southern California".[141] The purpose of the document was to summarize and analyze Amazon's community engagement efforts in 2023 targeted towards the Inland Empire. Within the memo, Amazon explicitly discussed how building trust in the IE would benefit their own operations and physical retail businesses: Amazon was already one of the state's largest employers with their second largest Air hub located in San Bernardino and 40% of Amazon's global goods passing through the IE. In the last 13 years, Amazon has invested close to $100 billion dollars into California with a significant amount of those monies directed towards sponsoring organizations, attended community meetings, connected with school districts, impacted local policy, and even integrated their grocery stores into SoCal hunger campaigns. The memo discussed how the community engagement team had

[141] Gonzalez, Lorena [@LorenaSGonzalez]. Someone sent me @amazon's "confidential" SoCal's community engagement plan. It's an interesting read about how they plan to use $$ to non-profits in communities of color to fight legislation that limits environmental affects of warehouses & labor organizing. X, December 5, 2023, 6:42 AM, https://twitter.com/LorenaSGonzalez/status/1732047860701782381

used 2023 to make significant strides in building Amazon's reputation as "Earth's best employer" and their data-driven goals to continue winning over the IE by making investments in food insecurity, education, and poverty alleviation. Tied to their efforts in the IE, Amazon also plans to grow its presence and positive reputation at the U.S./Mexico border and throughout Latin America through investments in cross-border environmental and children related issues.

Importantly, as the memo continued, it became clear that Amazon was merely concerned with the benefiting from the optics of things like small charity events, meanwhile undermining actual efforts to target these community concerns. One section titled "Political Landscape in Southern California" stated:

> "Our most important public policy priority in Southern California remains labor agitation….Pay continues to be a significant concern across the state, particularly as Amazon employs more than 45,000 people in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties. Labor involvement continues to affect KSBD, the San Bernardino Air Hub, where employees have held protests and submitted petitions to leadership asking for a $5 pay increase, and changed working conditions. In 2023, the teamsters held a strike against Amazon with delivery drivers in Palmdale, CA at DAX8. While there was little media coverage, they will likely target more facilities in Southern California. Chief amongst those policy makers is Eloise Gomez Reyes. She is a Democrat representing the 50th Assembly District, encompassing urban parts of southwestern San Bernardino County, including the cities of Rialto, Colton, and Fontana…She continues to advocate on warehouse moratorium and environmental legislation that would be detrimental to Amazon's interests."[142]

Community members were outraged by the memo and the clear plan to allocate monies to non-profits in communities of color publicly while simultaneously hindering and sabotaging legislation these very communities were organizing and supporting, such as environmental and labor policies. In a

[142] Ibid.

statement released by CCAEJ, Ana Gonzalez, Executive Director stated,

> "This is shocking, but not surprising, this only validates every effort we have done as an organization to hold corporations and developers like Amazon accountable for their negligence and perpetrating unsafe and unhealthy communities in the Inland Valley, not to mention the conditions they have created of displacement of housing and low wages that in fact lead to hunger and homelessness, shame."[143]

While the community knew that corporations did not have their best interests in mind, there was always a renewed sense of outrage when these forms of covert communications came to light.

Learning of the strategic strategies and conversations that go on behind closed doors often leads some to disillusionment or the perception that we as people lack agency and the cards are just too stacked against us. Through community however, I have learned that rather than allowing the disillusionment to take hold, a true understanding of what's at stake and just how much power those who wish us harm have can provide a grounded sense from which to organize, imagine, and even dream impossible dreams from. Throughout this dissertation, I have argued against borders, nationalism, autochthony and have advocated for a theory of a relational, no-borders and internationalist approach to (im)migrant justice and by extension, to justice and freer worlds for everyone.

We cannot allow nation-states and capitalist forces to co-opt and de-radicalize our struggles. When (im)migrant justice groups frame their work as

[143] CCAEJ Communication. "CCAEJ Statement on Amazon's Effort to Undermine Advocacy for Healthy and Safe Community." ccaej.org, Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice, December 6, 2023, https://www.ccaej.org/post/ccaej-statement-on-amazon-s-effort-to-undermine-advocacy-for-healthy-and-safe-community.

benefitting just the (im)migrant, or when environmental justice groups frame their work as benefitting just the environment, they and similar movements fail to draw the connections or emphasize relationality which makes clear that we are all implicated in these struggles, and that by making the world better for those most oppressed, we are also making the world better for ourselves. More broadly, the manufacturing of a national people, as opposed to the international concern for life, limits our visions of what is possible to the confines of a geographic territory and our relationships become determined by where we happen to have been born.

As borders organize societies, the animation of a particular struggle often falls along nationalist lines. For example, the working class in the United States is antagonistically positioned to (im)migrants as citizens try to “protect” their jobs from individuals who have been otherwise but who are nonetheless, engaged in the workforce as well and in even more disadvantaged positions. As citizens are concerned with protecting their jobs, they lose sight of collective ownership of the means of production and, instead, deepen a superficial sense of ownership of the nation-state. Economic wellbeing for citizens becomes synonymous with the proliferation of the wellbeing of the nation-state, making it difficult if not impossible to imagine solutions outside of it.

Borders and nation-states suffocate our abilities to think beyond the unconscious rules and norms that have been created by these systems. For (im)migrants, this can mean an internalized sense of foreignness and a

self-discipline that demotivates people from being socially and politically involved, and even from forming attachments to land and place. Despite being a U.S. born citizen, I was (and remain) deeply connected to undocumented communities by virtue of my family's status growing up as well as the connections I have formed throughout my life. As a child, the rules my family had internalized were particularly difficult to cope with and understand. School meetings, doctors' offices, and government buildings were all off limits. My parents lived with a sense of their Otherness that limited my family's mobility to direct routes from work, school, and required appointments. Whenever possible, my parents avoid speaking in public because of their limited grasp of the English language and what their accents reveal about them when they are forced to speak. They have never taken a sick day, asked for a raise, or made any demands from their workplaces. They have never attended a town hall, nor have they voted even upon naturalization technically granted them the right to do so. They never made any friends they didn't already have. Throughout this dissertation I have talked about (im)migrants in the IE who strived to create lives for themselves that pushed the boundaries of what (im)migrants are supposed to do in the U.S., but not all (im)migrants do this. My parents have been in the United States for over 30 years, they have been U.S. citizens for about 20 years, but they have never stopped being out of place - their internalized sense of Otherness means that they are never out of danger. My parents are not alone in this.

Forecasts tell us that it is too late - climate catastrophe is happening and will continue to come for us. All we can do is minimize the harm, but the harm is already underway. A critical, decolonial environmental justice perspective not only highlights settler colonialism as environmental injustice, but it also stresses the importance of time and relationships within environmental discourses. One culturally significant aspect of climate change is how it affects understandings of time, which within many Indigenous groups are defined by cues and patterns observed in the natural world. In other words, time is "strikingly relational, so that seasonal patterns are observed as an intricate system of connectivity and integration among plant, animal, insect, and human experience".[144] Environmental injustice therefore fundamentally alters how elements of the natural world are connected. By focusing on relationality, Traditional Ecological Knowledge predisposes Indigenous scientists and peoples to notice interspecies interactional changes.[145] Such interactional changes are occurring today in small and big ways. As climate change displaces more and more people globally, we must question borders everywhere and challenge the bordering regimes which keep people separate from long-held relationships and serve as barriers when forming new relationships.

Relationality is radical in that it reminds us of our interconnectedness

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[144] Chisholm Hatfield, S., Marino, E., Whyte, K.P. *et al.* Indian time: Time, Seasonality, and Culture in Traditional Ecological Knowledge of Climate Change. *Ecol Process* 7, 25 (2018). https://doi.org/10.1186/s13717-018-0136-6

[145] Berkes, Fikret. *Sacred Ecology* (3rd ed.). Routledge, 2012. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203123843 Barnhardt R, Kawagaley AO *Indigenous knowledge systems and Alaska Native ways of knowing.* Anthropol Educ Q 36(1), 2005:8–23. https://doi.org/10.1525/aeq.2005.36.1.008

while simultaneously building community safety from within, engaging in accountability practices, building community members' skills, and attempting to stop harm before it ever occurs by getting at the root of the problem - disruptions in our social ecology. Dean Spade and other prison abolitionists argue that autonomous projects grounded in local knowledges are the best suited for creating long-lasting safety and wellbeing by building collective self determination and in that process, allowing people to recognize the power that they do have and which the nation-state has denied them.[146] For Spade, these autonomous projects often take the form of mutual aid or horizontal forms of communal support where people help one another, work which liberates people from dependence on exploitative systems. At the root of mutual aid is relationality - it works because there is a circular ecosystem where everyone benefits.

The theory of relationality that I have learned from (im)igrants in the IE and that I am now proposing is simple: when we are connected to one another, we improve our conditions by improving everyone's conditions; we care about one another, regardless of geography or stuckedness. When I started this dissertation, I was focused on environmental issues, but it was through relationality that I came to recognize the importance of social ecology to everything we might do. Capitalism has centered market relationships and borders have centered citizenship and Nationality at the expense of true

[146] Spade, Dean. *Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity during This Crisis (and the Next)*. London: Verso, 2020.

relationality, reducing people and the planet itself to commodities and resources for exploitation and extraction.

Research has historically been fraught with anxiety, fear, and outrage on behalf of informants (typically from marginalized communities) which are regularly reduced to the objects of study rather than subjects that create and interpret history. Often tied to exploitation, colonialism, and imperialism, academia has failed to be reflexive, respectful of, and accountable to the communities it has entered. In particular, many have questioned the validity of anthropology and the methods and methodologies that enable anthropological inquiry, such as ethnography.[147]

Edward Said reminds us that history as a form of study and a sight of knowledge is not a neutral exercise in facts and truths, but rather a selective logic which should be understood as nationalist desires framed by an insider's loyalty and understanding of their particular nation or clan (be it cultural, religious, or otherwise).[148] Since history is the underpinning of (personal and collective) memory, the particular history chosen to represent truth constitutes a considerable role in one's understanding of themselves and the world.

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[147] Visweswaran, Kamala. *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography*. University of Minnesota Press, 1994. Ruth Behar, and Deborah A. Gordon, *Women Writing Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995. Behar, Ruth and Deborah A. Gordon, *Women Writing Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995. Behar, Ruth. *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology That Breaks Your Heart.* United States, Beacon Press, 1996. Harrison, Faye. *Outsider within: Reworking Anthropology in the Global Age*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008. Mora Bayo, Mariana. *Kuxlejal politics: Indigenous Autonomy, Race, and Decolonizing Research in Zapatista Communities*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017.

[148] Said,Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1994.

The identities we come to assume are not in fact chosen identities for ourselves, but so often the result of relations of power predetermined by a historical and global context.[149] I am told I am American because I was born here, but I was only born here because economic forces displaced my parents. I am told I am Mexican because my culture and family hail from that nation, but they are only 'Mexican' and not Indigenous or some other identity because colonial legacies established such a thing as Mexico and such a thing as Mexicanness which would be "mixed-race", and so on and so forth. These cross-cultural, long-distance, and time-spanning encounters are what Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing calls 'friction': "the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference".[150] By focusing our attention on 'friction', or moments of connection, relationality, and momentary collisions with one another, we open up possibilities for global interconnection that look for the 'sticky engagements' that produce the dreams and nightmares of our time.

(Im)migration entails the momentary passing, a brush with, a collision. What migratory kinship ties form between human and more-than-human peoples and what new places and worlds are created and inhabited as a result, we may never know the extent of, nor was it the goal of this dissertation. What we do know is that (im)migration moves all involved closer towards worlds recognizable by ancestral kin - worlds where ecologies flourish.

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[149] Visweswaran,Kamala. *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography*. University of Minnesota Press, 1994.
[150] Lowenhaupt Tsing, Anna. *Friction: an Ethnography of Global Connection.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005.

In order to respond to (but not necessarily provide answers to) these queries, I have employed a strategy of shifting between the borders of researcher, interlocutor, and object of study. I find myself in a hybrid space - the borderlands where autoethnography and ethnography meet in a palpable “us”. As I became closer to the communities discussed and to the topic at hand, it became clear that I did not want to produce an ethnography that made visible a particular group, but rather, push forward a method and methodology of relationality. Whether in research, organizing, or just day-to-day life, our relationships provide the foundation of knowledge necessary to affect and be affected.

In other words, relationality is the essence of everyday life - those moments that continuously propel us into interactions filled with the capacity to affect and be affected. Intimate lives are filled with ordinary affects that can be experienced as a flow of feelings of pleasure or pain, disorientation or recognition.[151] Furthermore, they carry the potential for something else - the yet to be that is still always coming. Their import is derived not from their naming, but rather from their potency to make thoughts and feelings imaginable and therefore possible. Before we know where relationality might go, its affect has already generated new modes of knowing and relating within potentiality - a grandiloquently vibrating “what if " that maps further connections. Importantly,

[151] Stewart, Kathleen. *Ordinary Affects.* Ukraine: Duke University Press, 2007.

sitting with relationality requires a slowing down of what is otherwise a fast-paced, almost instantaneous jump to representational thinking within research which has misplaced emphasis on knowing and harms one's abilities to connect with complex organisms, events, and emotions.

Rather than being overly concerned with specific, individual stories, relationality bridges individual with collective histories to provide a narrative that elicits social change, therefore including the reader in this living history as an active participant and potential accomplice. While most academic texts position the reader as outside of the conditions being described, relationality understands the reader as within them and therefore capable of altering the course. Furthermore,we must not aim to 'give voice to' but rather, we must listen, speak and walk with.

In the face of climate change and a growing number of (im)migrants, some scholars and activists have called for national responses and preparedness to these "problems". However, within isolated nations structured through hierarchies, such occurrences are inevitable and desired creations rather than accidental. Bordering regimes may not always seem synonymous with environmental concerns, but it is clear that through their social creation and enforcement of strict binaries, we are denied our place in ecology and our ability to recognize others (internationally, non-human people) as interrelated to our own survival. We cannot be governable if we are all equal, but we can be free.

Ruth Wilson Gilmore often states that abolishing prisons is about one

thing, everything.[152] Relatedly, abolishing borders and environmental justice are more expansive than opening borders between nations or switching to electric cars and solar panels; they calls on us to transform the underlying social, political, and economic conditions that might necessitate borders to exist in the first place and indeed, which exploit land and people with reckless abandon. A genuine concern for these issues requires an end to conquest and forced displacement, wage economies which tether peoples' wellbeing to national systems, and the belief that we can innovate our way out of the problems that systems like capitalism and colonialism have created. We must resist all forms of warfare and occupation, mass incarceration, sweatshops, land grabs, and any other form of extraction which commodifies the exploitation of someone or something fundamental to ourselves and all of life. We must develop and (re)member systems of reciprocity which are still found in abundance in more-than-human life and which come to humans naturally as well. We must meet our neighbors, spend time at local hubs, gather our resources to be used for common good, help others and allow them to help us. We must change everything, including ourselves.

[152] Gilmore, Ruth Wilson. *Change Everything: Racial Capitalism and the Case for Abolition* [Manuscript in Preparation]. United States, Haymarket Books.

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