

# Introduction: Citizenship Surveillance of *La Gente* (The People)—Theory, Practice, and Cultural Citizen Voices

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IN JULY 2007, A CONCERNED LATINA MOTHER ON A POPULAR SPANISH RADIO SHOW voiced concern about her daughter's fourth-grade teacher, who had expressed her views on citizenship in the classroom. In an earnest tone, the mother stated that she had gone to her daughter's school to find out why that teacher had told her students that immigrants, particularly Mexican immigrants, were not citizens who belonged in the United States. "*No está bien* (this is not right)," she said. Given the prominence of anti-immigrant debates, current policies, and the deportation of undocumented immigrants in the United States, the citizenship identity of Latinas/os, marked as illegitimate immigrants, is highly contested in schools and society.

As a key element of this special issue of *Social Justice*, contributors call for citizenship *inclusion* of young Latinas/os in schools and society. This is critical because young Latinas/os and their families are an emerging, politically under-represented "majority" in California and other states. Authors in this issue reflect a sense of urgency when addressing how *la gente*, Latina/o families and their community members, contend with the power imbued in citizenship ideologies and practices in schools, communities, and national forums. (The term *la gente* signifies a demographic of Latino people within the populace in general.) As educational scholars, these authors define dimensions of citizenship that are broadly rooted in the daily teaching and learning practices of *la gente*, who are too often excluded from democratic processes. As Renato Rosaldo (1997) and others have argued, traditional political scientists and institutions have rigidly defined citizenship to mean a national legal status that has to do with *papeles* ("papers" or legal documentation). This bounded conception overlooks an understanding of citizenship conditions in everyday life, especially in communities with members having various citizenship statuses. Drawing heavily on narratives based on ethnographic research, case studies, or personal testimonies, articles in this issue offer counter-stories from the standpoint of *la gente* about citizenship as a "lived" experience. Also, by using perspectives from the educational, feminist, and cultural citizenship literature, authors examine the intersection of citizenship theories, practice, and *la voz* (the

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voice) of Latinas/os in schools, communities, and society (Flores and Benmayor, 1997; Oboler, 2006). They offer analyses on the sociocultural context that underpins the citizenship conditions facing young Latinos and their educational opportunities (Bejarano, 2005; Cabrer, 2007; Seif, 2004). Contributors also critically examine the power relations embodied in citizenship inequalities that have been resisted by Latinas/os across generations *before* and *during* the proposal of anti-immigrant U.S. House Resolution (H.R.) 4437, also known as the Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act, which initially passed in December 2005, but was stalled in the House-Senate Conference Committee in June 2006.

In the field of education, researchers are beginning to describe, represent, and explain the contemporary realities of the citizenship “dilemma of belonging” for Latina/o youth and families (Oboler, 2006). Latino Studies scholars such as Susanne Jonas (2006), Gustavo Cano (2006), and others have analyzed the infamous and divisive H.R. 4437, which sought to separate immigrant and nonimmigrant members of Latino communities by systematically deporting immigrants. Through this proposed policy, state and national officials aimed to intensify legal practices that would criminalize people and organizations associated with undocumented immigrants. In this sense, H.R. 4437 threatened the social and cultural relationships—as well as safety nets—between immigrants and non-immigrants in schools, communities, and society.

In response, Latina/o immigrants and non-immigrants, as well as other allies, attempted to resist this top-down approach concerning citizenship inequalities. Together, hundreds of thousands of Latinas/os across generations and professions orchestrated local demonstrations, teach-ins, boycotts, school walkouts, and national marches. Drawing on multiple relationships and forms of knowledge to define common ground, the immigrant marches in March 2006 in some ways brought H.R. 4437 to a halt. Protestors demanded comprehensive immigration reform and questioned the “selective,” fractured democracy in the U.S. Following the organized efforts against H.R. 4437, national immigration bureaucrats launched “Operation Return to Sender” in June 2006. This system, which aims to arrest undocumented immigrants, has resulted in hundreds of deportations by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), with parents, children (students), and members of Latino communities becoming separated nationwide. In some instances, these arrests have included documented and U.S.-born Latinas/os.

In 2007, Texas state officials proposed House Bill 28, which sought to deny social resources to U.S.-born children of unauthorized and undocumented immigrants. Such exclusionary measures continue to be proposed. As Sunaina Maira (2005) has argued, this array of proposed citizenship policies represents an autocratic system about how citizenship should be constituted. Simultaneously, it implicitly structures a sense of citizenship surveillance in schools, communities, institutions, and civil society.

Contemporary debates and policies about citizenship have unfolded within the

culture of fear sustained after September 11, 2001, the global war in Iraq, and the militarization of the U.S.-Mexico *frontera* (border). Despite these hostile sociopolitical conditions, Latinas/os across generations continue to contribute significantly to the U.S. political economy and to social, cultural, and political institutions. Yet Latinas/os are targeted by anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies that implicitly put into effect citizenship surveillance of Latina/o youth and their families. As Gloria Ladson-Billings (2004), Joel Spring (2007), and others in education have argued, citizenship in the U.S. has taken place within a context of struggles and negotiations originating in a history of conquest and colonization. Citizenship conceptions, identity, and practices are thus historically grounded.

As a result of this history, citizenship identity in the U.S. today is primarily represented by normalized white, English-speaking members of European descent. In this sense, as Rosaldo (1997) has asserted, citizenship identity and rights are not afforded equally to all members of society, regardless of their legal citizenship status. Within a history of global inequalities leading to the displacement and exodus of people, many migrants and immigrants act as social and civic citizens insofar as they contribute to the sociocultural and economic fabric of the nation in which they reside. Yet, institutions normalize the citizenship identity of some subjects while subjugating others, depriving them of social and human rights. Given the power structures affecting Latino communities—particularly young people—the authors of this special issue call for educators and others to understand and sustain actions against citizenship inequalities in schools and society.

In the first article, “Battling for Human Rights and Social Justice: A Latina/o Critical Race Media Analysis of Latina/o Student Youth Activism in the Wake of 2006 Anti-Immigrant Sentiment,” Veronica Vélez and her colleagues provide theoretical and practical insights into how the media framed Latina/o student mobilizations that occurred immediately before and after the nationwide mass demonstrations against H.R. 4437. Prevailing media images of the demonstrations offered mostly negative portrayals of these Latina/o students. Using a Latina/o Critical Race Theory framework, the authors argue that contrary to those impressions, most Latina/o student activism critically expressed concerns about rising and persistent anti-immigrant sentiment and were motivated by emancipatory goals. Based on a content analysis of print news media, they contend that these forms of Latina/o student activism responded critically to a broader context of racism, violence, and dehumanization that is committed daily against these students, their families, and communities. In this way, their actions sought a societal commitment to human rights and, thus, a more inclusive understanding of social justice that would address racist nativism, as seen in the anti-immigrant actions and sentiments in the immigration debate. The article highlights documented forms of activism by Latina/o youth within larger pro-immigrant mobilizations as a way to demonstrate the wide array of activism and to provide a deeper theoretical understanding of youth activism for social justice

today. Also, these co-authors broadly discuss how national institutions legitimize and subjugate forms of social and political citizenship.

The next three articles offer a context for the citizenship experiences of students, educators, and members embedded in Latino communities. These articles attest to the citizenship inequalities in schools and society and identify the forms of power daily confronted by Latino community members. For example, in their case study, “Transnational and Transgenerational Latina/o Cultural Citizenship Among Kindergarteners, Their Parents, and University Students in Utah,” Dolores Delgado Bernal, Enrique Alemán, and Judith Flores Carmona refer to the ongoing anti-immigrant movement. They explore the tensions and complexities surrounding cultural and legal citizenship across different generations of Latinas/os in the state of Utah. Using participant narratives and drawing upon cultural citizenship studies and Chicana feminist theory, Delgado Bernal et al. discuss data from a school-university-community educational partnership. This partnership provides spaces for a mainly Latina/o student population and community to initiate and sustain a discourse that encourages a college education, beginning in kindergarten. It is imbued with complex meanings of citizenship and identity among transnational and transgenerational Latina/o kindergarteners, their parents, and their university mentors. The study analyzes the ways in which participants negotiate anti-immigrant discourses and policies, affirming pedagogies related to cultural citizenship and the struggle for bilingual/bicultural identities. Delgado Bernal et al. conclude by reframing traditional definitions of “citizen” and call for the use of a Latina/o cultural citizenship concept when working with constituents who struggle for rights in an increasingly anti-immigrant political context.

In “Lessons of Belonging and Citizenship Among *Hijas/os de Inmigrantes Mexicanos*,” I examine the power associated with conceptions of citizenship offered by U.S.-born, university-educated daughters and sons of Mexican immigrants living in the borderland areas of California. Drawing on a larger study, I present ethnographic histories of young adults that self-identify as citizens in relationship to their family’s social, cultural, and legal sense of citizenship. Using a framework of cultural citizenship, my study highlights broad lessons about negotiating citizenship surveillance, straddling multiple citizenship ideologies, and surmounting cultural contradictions regarding national citizenship within the family. It illustrates that citizenship is *not* a simple question of being or not being a legal citizen with individual rights. Rather, citizenship is about the everyday politics surrounding citizenship practices and identity associated with U.S.–Mexican families and community members with varied citizenship statuses.

David Quijada’s “Reconciling Research, Rallies, and Citizenship: Reflections on Youth-Led Diversity Workshops and Intercultural Alliances” focuses on the politics of youth citizenship. Unlike those who foreshadow the ways in which ethnicity and immigrant culture often mark the understanding of citizenship, Quijada explores how activism on the part of youth over anti-immigrant policy has challenged youth

studies scholars to re-imagine the meanings of citizenship. According to Quijada, youth activism on citizenship issues has led some researchers to ask, “What does it mean to do research and to teach in the area of youth studies when young people who are not participants of our studies walk out of their high schools and demand civic participation?” By blending personal testimony with ethnographic data, Quijada explains contradictory positions he experienced in undertaking research. He examines how an ethnically diverse group of youth facilitated diversity workshops for other youth. This layered account narrates the methodological and pedagogical challenges Quijada confronted as a youth studies scholar who has come to understand citizenship as intercultural alliances between participants. His article calls into question the perspective and accountability of educational researchers and others concerned with citizenship inequalities experienced by youth in marginalized communities.

In their article, Luis Urrieta, Jr., and Michelle Reidel suggest that cultural and civic identities intersect and affect citizenship education. White, middle-class pre-service (future) social studies teachers reproduce notions of what it means to be a full citizen that are based on a white standard and are part of an unacknowledged “property” (privilege) of whiteness. Normalization of citizenship to a white mainstream standard, they argue, was the basis of these future teachers’ production of civic identities and practice as civic educators. Given the growing cultural and racial disconnect between our nation’s teachers and public school students, Urrieta and Reidel argue that the normalization of citizenship must be acknowledged, called into question, and contested by educational researchers and educators.

Each article challenges normalized conceptions of citizenship and indexes the troubling ways in which citizenship exclusion is normalized and operationalized in schools and society. The authors speak to the struggle for citizenship equality and community, especially when state accountability fails Latino youth and families. These educational researchers highlight how conceptions of citizenship inform practices that educators and other social agents enact in schools and society, exemplified by the concerned Latina mother cited at the top of this essay. Contributors also urge other educational researchers and educators to begin or continue difficult dialogues about citizenship identity and practices (i.e., social, cultural, civic, and political) and to discuss ways of deflecting citizenship surveillance of young Latinas/os in educative spaces in schools and communities.

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