

Editors' Introduction: New Dimensions in the Scholarship and Practice of Mexican and Chicana/x Social Movements

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THIS SPECIAL ISSUE OF *SOCIAL JUSTICE* BRINGS TOGETHER THE WORK OF SCHOLARS and activists from Mexico and the United States, representing a variety of disciplines and movements, to discuss current trends in the scholarship and practices of Mexican and Chicana/x¹ social movements. The idea to organize a forum to share and critically assess new developments in the social movements of “Greater Mexico” came to the editors in the summer of 2010. Maylei Blackwell, Ed McCaughan, and Devra Weber crossed paths in Oaxaca, Mexico, that summer. Blackwell was helping to lead a workshop on issues of gender and sexuality with an indigenous community affiliated with the Frente Indígena de Organizaciones Binacionales. McCaughan was there completing his manuscript on art and Mexican/Chicana/x social movements, and Weber had been invited to present her research on the Partido Liberal Mexicano for a symposium commemorating the centennial of the Mexican Revolution. As we shared our work and observations about significant political and cultural developments in the social activism of Mexican communities on both sides of the border, we felt compelled to organize a forum in which activists and scholars could reflect on these changes.

A great deal has changed—economically, politically, culturally, and intellectually—in the decades since the watershed 1968 Mexican student movement, the historic Chicana/x mobilizations of the 1960s and 1970s, and the internationally celebrated EZLN uprising of 1994. Moreover, 25 years have passed since publication of the last English-language anthology to bring together research on a wide variety of Mexican social movements (Foweraker and Craig 1990). In the meantime, the shift away from liberal and nationalist Keynesianism to neoliberal economic policy has been consolidated in Mexico and the United States. While Mexico wit-

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nessed a promise of democratization and the end of one party rule, many social sectors have been disappointed by continued corruption, blocked channels to full democratic participation, and the criminalization of protest, along with increased violence and militarization of the drug war. At the same time, new social movements of indigenous peoples, youth, women, lesbian, gay, and transgender people have gained new ground in the Mexican social, political, and cultural landscape like no other time in history.

In the United States, sustained mass movements have declined in the “post-civil rights” era, even as people of color, feminists, and queer communities experience a fierce backlash in many regions and sectors of the population against earlier gains. Advances such as the legalization of same-sex marriage are clouded by the fear that state incorporation of some forms of difference come hand-in-hand with the repudiation of many others, leading many to suspect these gains are part of a neoliberal incorporation or management of difference (Malamed 2011). We see these moves with the limited acceptance of undocumented youth as DREAMers, while the US government staunchly rejects their parents or other members of undocumented migrant communities. Now this troubling neoliberal cultural logic incorporates difference by creating new, acceptable normativities. Homonormativity, for example, is a concept that explains how the co-opting of the most elite and privileged among the LGBT movement is used to regulate those who the state deems “bad subjects” (Hale 2002). Further, this invokes the need to engage in multi-issue organizing and analysis, as well as to engaged in cross-sector and cross-movement work to challenge the neoliberal logic of uneven incorporation that subverts gender rights, regulates indigenous rights, or uses the normative gay or lesbian subject to regulate transgender or queer immigrants (Blackwell 2012; de la maza p rez 2012).

Yet, the 2006 mega-marches for immigrant rights were the largest mass mobilizations in the recorded history of California, raising new questions about political inclusion, inequality, and the rise of migrant civil society. Continued mobilization of the Dream movement, newly organized sectors of the Latin American indigenous diaspora, and new organizations that have emerged to challenge the anti-immigrant and anti-ethnic studies trends in Arizona and elsewhere have revitalized and renewed Chicana/Latina politics in the United States. Another important development is transborder organizing, which, though not new, has become an increasingly significant aspect of many Mexican and Chicana social movement sectors. On the ground, the transnational scale of politics is clearly registered by phenomena such as Mexican politicians campaigning in the United States to capture the Mexican vote abroad, and the ways in which the US labor movement has been transformed by the infusion of experience that immigrant labor brings from Mexico and Central America.

Throughout Latin America, vibrant social movements have broken traditional forms of governance and social movement scholars are calling attention to the power from below (Stephen 1997) and horizontalism (Stahler-Sholk, Vanden,

and Becker 2014). Many social movements in the United States and Mexico are deeply connected to the sweep of Bolivarian impulses across the Americas and the rise of alternatives to the Washington Consensus in the so-called pink tide, where popular movements toppled governments and replaced them with left governments. However, neoliberal forces seem ever more entrenched in Mexico and the United States, and violence and hatred have been deepened by the narco war, as witnessed by the 43 disappeared students of Ayotzinapa.

In thinking about the changing context of social movements, we were also aware of important new intellectual developments. Within the study of social movements, for example, the influence of the “cultures of politics” approach (Alvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar 1998) is seen in how much attention scholars and activists have given to the role of discourse, symbols, performance, and the arts in social movements. Some of the new scholarship on social movements debates the nature of transnationalism and when it first emerged. Also increasingly evident in the new work of activist scholars is the influence of feminism and queer of color critiques.

Clearly, the editors felt, the time has arrived for a serious assessment of new developments in the study and practice of social movements in “Greater Mexico.” Toward that goal, Blackwell and McCaughan organized a May 2013 symposium that brought together most of the contributors to this issue at the University of California, Los Angeles.² Based on that two-day dialog across borders, movements, disciplines, and generations, participants worked to revise their presentations for publication. The editors also issued a call for new articles to fill in some of the important gaps identified during the symposium.

In contrast to other recent collections on social movements in the Americas, this double special issue offers a critical assessment by social movement actors themselves, in a multigenerational conversation between new left activists and scholars of the 1960s and 1970s and later generations of activists, including those in current movements. It pays critical attention to the multiple modes of power and possibility that are produced by movements themselves. This includes a fine-grained analysis of how power is organized around racial, classed, sexual, and gendered axes within society and within social movements themselves. Further, ideas of intersecting oppressions and multiple strategies of liberation are seen in the ways these essays resist the normative subjects of resistance that are often reified in the literature on social movements. One lesson gleaned from our two days of deliberation was how intersectional analyses are deepening and enriching traditions of struggle and legacies of liberation. We also learned how youth organizers in the immigrant rights movement, #YoSoy132, and the Oaxacan popular uprising challenged the way of doing politics, leading to important innovations in social movement strategies and outcomes. By following the ways in which indigenous women are asserting gender rights within indigenous rights and how queer activists have challenged immigrant rights organizing, we saw the rich possibilities of including all the subjects of liberation in the movement being analyzed. As orga-

nizers of the symposium, we intentionally added axes of diversity and difference into each panel, with productive and enriching results. These results are presented here, in rough chronological order corresponding to the time frame of the social movements discussed.

We open this issue with historian Devra Weber's essay, "'Different Plans': Indigenous Pasts, the Partido Liberal Mexicano, and Questions about Reframing Binational Social Movements of the Twentieth Century." Weber questions assumptions of presentism in arguments about the novelty of transnationalism. She also centers indigenous protest as a source of early transnationalism, raising critical new questions. According to Weber, "indigenous organizing in binational and other social movements is more a continuity of older patterns than a novel rupture. Indigenous people have often been unrecognized or erased in written history." Piecing together scattered shards of evidence of indigenous people's participation in the early twentieth century organizing of the binational Partido Liberal Mexicano, Weber asks us to consider "how indigenous knowledge and memories about the past, some embedded in differing conceptualizations, might become part of a plural understanding of pasts."

Next, Colin Gunckel uses the concept of the "Chicano photographic" to map the myriad ways in which community was conceptualized and constituted through photography in the United Farm Workers (UFW) newspaper *El Malcriado*. Gunckel asks who, what, and how people are represented, as well as by whom and for whom? This analysis helps Gunckel consider how the newspaper constituted a visual address that "envisioned this diverse community while revealing some of the tensions and exclusions implicit in its construction." His work engages how photography has been analyzed in the black civil rights movements as a guide to charting how the medium has been used within the Chicano Movement and by extension, across other social justice visual terrains. This visual field was critically important in the UFW as it navigated external cross-ethnic and cross-class solidarity while visualizing place-based, local power relationships.

Juan Herrera also revisits the Chicanx movement by focusing on the importance of memory, space, and community care in Oakland, California. Drawing on oral histories conducted with movement veterans, Herrera "considers how activists of the 1960s and 1970s remember the formation of community spaces as integral to their participation in the social movements of the past." He argues that "the work of remembering the 1960s social movement activism is a cartographic process that draws attention to the social movement production of space." In another important move, Herrera shifts the "framework of analysis from militancy and protest to that of community care," thereby providing "a more expansive and complex understanding of the multiplicity of different mobilizations that the 1960s and 1970s engendered."

While Gunckel and Herrera consider print culture and community care in the Chicanx Movement, respectively, Olga Talamante's powerful testimonio tracks the "Encuentros and Desencuentros" of her trajectory "From Farmworker Girl to

Internationalist.” She points to the ways in which Chicana Movement activists were linked to Latin American struggles for social justice. In her narrative, she discusses how her childhood anger at the wage theft and unfair labor practices aimed at her farmworker family gained a language and framework for analysis in college. Talamante then takes those experiences and travels south with a political theater company and in her travels learns of powerful movements in the Southern Cone, where she moves to join the struggle. After suffering imprisonment and torture in Argentina, Talamante returns to the United States to become an advocate for political prisoners and human rights. Over the decades, she began to merge her personal life struggles against racism and homophobia with her public struggle for social justice by joining the National Center for Lesbian Rights, and she currently supports dreamers and the undocumented movement in her role as the executive director of the Chicana/Latina Foundation.

In “The Fruitful and Conflictive Relationship between Feminist Movements and the Mexican Left,” Gisela Espinosa looks at the history of the Mexican feminist movement over the last four decades as raw material for reflecting on the construction of feminism as a multifaceted subject, which is impossible to restrict to a single identity or political strategy. Acknowledging the multiplicity of paths contained in the movement, Espinosa insists on using the plural, *feminisms*. This diversity, she argues, was born of tense but rewarding relationships between distinct feminist currents and between them and the social Left. In this complex process, she emphasizes the progress and challenges involved in building a movement that respects diversity and empowers solidarity and emancipatory processes.

Edward McCaughan’s work takes the analysis of social and political movements into the realm of visual art as he considers how the LGBT movement in Mexico has used art to imagine ways of being “queerly Mexican.” His analysis demonstrates how the artistic practices of Mexican gay artists and the exhibition spaces used by gay and lesbian activists opened up the spaces for sexual diversity within civil society in the context of a fragile and uneven democratization process within Mexico. His analysis of how artists queer *mexicanidad* and the heteronormative, patriarchal symbols of the nation illustrates the work of cleaving machismo away from the subject citizen of the nation to consider alternative masculinities and sexualities. McCaughan argues that art produced “in the generative environment of Mexico’s LGBT movements contributed to cultural and political sea changes by producing new visual discourses that allowed diverse publics to recognize, understand, respect, and inhabit gendered and sexual identities previously excluded from hegemonic notions of what it means to be Mexican.”

While Espinosa and McCaughan examine feminist and gay movements that challenged the traditional Left’s sometimes narrow focus on social class demands and on a presumed male, heterosexual, working-class subject as *the* protagonist of revolutionary change, María de la Luz Arriaga returns our attention to the importance of class-based movements. She documents three decades of struggles by

Mexico's teachers' movement, in which she has been an active participant. The massive teachers' movement is of fundamental importance, she argues, because "it is active in every region of the country, it is strategically placed for the exercise of power, it has the capacity to be counter-hegemonic, and it has endured for more than three decades." Contextualizing the movement within global neoliberal strategies to privatize education and weaken the power of public workers in Canada and the United States, as well as in Mexico, Arriaga emphasizes the movement's important strategic shift from "labor claims to a struggle for the defense of public education as a social right." In light of the common challenges faced by the public education sector throughout North America, Arriaga also describes the important steps taken to build platforms for transnational action through the formation of the Trinational Coalition for the Defense of Public Education and the Social Network for Public Education in the Americas.

Like Arriaga, Gaspar Rivera-Salgado is also a long-time scholar-activist in a movement that has built a transnational practice. In "From Hometown Clubs to Transnational Social Movement: The Evolution of Oaxacan Migrant Associations in California," Rivera-Salgado "examines the multiple forms of immigrant-led organizations found among Oaxacan Indigenous migrants that have enabled them to participate in various levels of the political and cultural spheres, in the different geographical spaces in which the Oaxacan diaspora has spread in the state of California." While tracing the evolution of what is now called the Frente Indígena de Organizaciones Binacionales (FIOB for its name in Spanish; Binational Indigenous Organizations Front), he emphasizes the importance of the organization's "political use of ethnic identity" and its "ability to articulate a multi-thematic political message in Mexico and in the United States." FIOB's successful experience of organizing simultaneously in various locales in Oaxaca and California, he suggests, "allows us to visualize the importance of the local context for understanding the civic incorporation of other Mexican migrants in the United States."

Maylei Blackwell also draws upon the experience of FIOB in her article, "Geographies of Difference: Transborder Organizing and Indigenous Women's Activism." She analyzes how "activists with shared transborder goals—for example, women's participation and leadership—must navigate the local realities and arrangements of power to be effective, even while engaging in coordinated cross-border campaigns or programs." Blackwell also explores the often fluid, evolving nature of indigenous subjectivity, as manifested in the lived experiences of FIOB activists. "Indigeneity," she writes, "is often associated with a fixed place and territory, yet it is often the process of displacement and mobility itself that leads to new forms of indigenous consciousness." The implication of her research for the experience of women in FIOB, she argues, "is that migration and complex migrant civil society organizing navigate over geographies of difference in ways that produce new gendered arrangements and new forms of indigeneity that are transforming US *latinidad* in the process."

Rosalva Aída Hernández Castillo also writes about indigenous women through a feminist lens in an article about her recent work “with indigenous and mestiza women who are victims of a penal state that criminalizes poverty and social protest.” Hernández Castillo describes her participation in a collective project “documenting the life histories of the indigenous female prisoners” in the Centro de Readaptación Social (CERESO) in Cuernavaca, Morelos. She explains that what began as a writing workshop evolved into an editorial project called Sisters in the Shadows Editorial Collective of Women in Prison. The collective’s many publications “have influenced revisions of judicial inquiries and the liberation of a number of women who had been unjustly imprisoned.” The project appears to have also profoundly affected the participants. In the words of one inmate, “The Life Stories Workshop is important to me because it opens a door to an unknown world that must be considered to eliminate the inequalities we experience in our country. It is also a way to sensitize the hearts in order to create a sisterhood among women of different social classes.” Hernández Castillo explains that the project’s “methodological proposal is directed . . . not only toward the women in confinement . . . but also toward all those who are interested in knowing—and, to the extent that this is possible, transforming—the justice system of the Mexican state.”

In “From the Barrio to the Barricades: *Grafiteros*, Punks, and the Remapping of Urban Space,” Maurice Rafael Magaña examines youth participation in the massive social movement that exploded in Oaxaca in 2006. Magaña is interested in “the impacts that social movements can have on the subjectivities of local actors and everyday social changes.” He argues that such changes “can be made visible if we focus on the physical and social constitution of space as a window into the multiple ways that power and counter-power are enacted, contested, and negotiated.” Based on his ethnographic work in Oaxaca, Magaña describes and analyzes the importance of youth participation in spaces such as a series of occupied radio stations, a citywide network of barricades, occupied buildings, communities of graffiti artists, and punk and anarchist collectives. He argues that many of the novel relationships built through participation in the movement’s varied spaces “continue to be expanded and strengthened through a network of autonomous youth collectives,” which are permeated by a “horizontal political culture.”

Juan D. Ochoa examines creative interventions in today’s social movement activism in his exploration of the digital prints of self-identified undocuqueer activist Julio Salgado. As Ochoa notes, “Salgado’s prints portray the quotidian experience of navigating life as undocumented, queer, Chicana/o, migrant, and feminist in the United States.” Although Salgado’s work and the undocuqueer movement are “new” phenomena in many ways, Ochoa views them as having deep genealogical roots in Chicana movement history. In his article, Ochoa conceptualizes “a *jotería* analytic that is informed by Chicana feminisms, queer of color critique, and Chicana/o studies to create a queer Chicana/o optic to analyze the art of Julio Salgado.” Ochoa argues that “gay Chicano men’s cultural production, whether

photographs, oral histories, or digital art, is important to study because these sites highlight pockets of jota and joto resistance to oppression.” Throughout his close readings of Salgado’s work, Ochoa emphasizes sexuality as integral to “Chicana/o subject formation” and deploys “jotería” as an analytic that “guides us to alternative Chicana and Chicano identity formations.”

Michelle Téllez examines recent forms of activism and organizing that women have innovated in Arizona on the front lines of some of the most vicious anti-immigrant discourse and policing practices witnessed in decades. Through testimonios with activists, Tellez chronicles the initial forms of activism that emerged in the context of hatred, xenophobia, and violence and describes how these were transformed into longer-term strategies of community organizing that mobilized Chicax, Mexicanx, and indigenous communities throughout Arizona.

Mariana Favela, a young activist scholar, reflects on her participation in the phenomenon known as #YoSoy132, a mass insurgency that erupted in the midst of the Mexican presidential electoral campaign of 2012. She analyzes it as “neither a political organization, a structure, nor a movement,” but rather “a convocatory that gathered and unleashed a dialog about the democratization of politics, understood to mean breaking down hierarchical and central ways of power.” Favela’s analysis and praxis in many ways reflect a generational break with the organized modes of social struggle familiar to older activists and scholars. Rejecting electoral politics, political parties, and traditional notions of leadership, Favela describes how the #YoSoy132 participants “misspelled revellion” (transforming rebel into revel). Producing “a new generation of professional politicians and activists” was not among the goals of their “revellion.” Instead, Favela envisions “everyday revels that understand politics as a shared responsibility.” #YoSoy132, she concludes, “is the chance to take laughter back in a nation of pain and death.... We are a generation giving birth to something original: the certainty that the only election that can be lost is the one made every day.”

We close the issue with Alejandro Alvarez Béjar’s “Global Economic Crisis and Social Movements in Mexico and North America.” If Mariana Favela is one of the eloquent voices of Mexico’s new generation of social activists, Alvarez writes as a seasoned veteran of the generation of 1968. In this piece he locates the challenges and potential of current and future social movements within the context of the current global crisis of capitalism in which a variety of “economic Darwinism” has put “subordinated classes deeply on the defensive.” He then emphasizes the importance of taking a North American regional perspective in our efforts to respond to this crisis by coordinating efforts for radical change. Alvarez notes that “throughout North America, there is a three-headed strategy against public employees: aggressive anti-union policies, privatization policies, and mega-trade agreements.” Workers have responded to these assaults “by constructing broad local, regional, and even transnational coalitions.” Acknowledging the terrible violence and criminalization that has disarticulated many mass movements, Alvarez issues a call “to evaluate the

new conditions for struggle against monopoly capital and to build a viable road to fulfill democratic participatory aspirations, rollback [neoliberal] structural reforms, and attend to the economic needs of the majority of the population.”

NOTES

1. Because nouns in the Spanish language are gendered male or female, many activists and scholars began to use Chicana@—with the @ representing “a” and/or “o” to signal both women’s and men’s participation in social movements. Reflecting new consciousness inspired by more recent work by LGBTQI and feminist movements, some Spanish-speaking activists are increasingly using a yet more inclusive “x” to replace the “a” and “o,” in a complete break with the gender binary. Because language matters, we have chosen to follow this practice.

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