

**Latino Urbanism**

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***The Politics of Planning, Policy, and Redevelopment***

EDITED BY

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NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS

*New York and London*

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS  
New York and London  
www.nyupress.org

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data  
Latino urbanism: the politics of planning, policy, and redevelopment / edited by David R. Diaz and Rodolfo  
D. Torres.  
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-8147-8404-4 (cl : alk. paper)

ISBN 978-0-8147-8405-1 (pb : alk. paper)

ISBN 978-0-8147-2470-5 (ebook)

ISBN 978-0-8147-2483-5 (ebook)

1. Hispanic Americans—Social conditions. 2. City planning—United States. 3. Hispanic American  
neighborhoods. I. Diaz, David R., 1951- II. Torres, Rodolfo D., 1949-  
E184.S75L3649 2012  
305.86'8073—dc23  
2012018749

New York University Press books are printed on acid-free paper,  
and their binding materials are chosen for strength and durability.  
We strive to use environmentally responsible suppliers and materials  
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Manufactured in the United States of America  
c 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1  
p 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

*Cultural Political Economy and Alternative Futures*

Victor Valle and Rodolfo D. Torres

This essay makes a general case for grounding a twenty-first-century critical Latino urbanism in something we shall provisionally call “cultural political economy.”<sup>1</sup> It makes that case by attempting to resolve lingering theoretical tensions between socioeconomic (structural) and culture-based (semiotic) approaches to our neoliberal present (Ribera-Fumaz 2009; Jessop and Oosterlynck 2008). This postdisciplinary interpretation reaffirms the centrality of capitalist formations in the study of the Latino urban question by embedding social and cultural categories in the lived spaces of our macroeconomic order. The kind of cultural political economy we posit strives for a theoretically and empirically useful analytic with which to approach the urban question for our changing times.

From the above approach, we sketch a few strategic lines to confront changing class formations and deindustrialization in neoliberal capitalism’s period of indefinitely prolonged crisis. Our cursory review then explores the ways the current economic crisis implicates the scholarly projects of Latino and Chicano urban studies and how our interpretations of cultural political economy might reconfigure these projects to answer the continued attacks from the populist Right.

We picked up our critical thread by making explicit the theoretical themes we implied in *Latino Metropolis* (Valle and Torres 2000). This chapter responds to Torin Monahan’s insightful review of *Latino Metropolis* (2002) by offering a more explicit statement of what he calls a postmodern political science in our attempt to represent our work in postdisciplinary theoretical terms. Our best recollections of more than a decade ago tell us that we wrote it to explore strategic political and discursive opportunities that Los Angeles offered as it emerged as a majority Mexican and Latino city. We argued then that the context in which the city reached this demographic tipping point was as important as its passage through the socioeconomic minefield of industrial transformation. For us, the maturation of a then hardly noticed transition to a post-Fordist mode of production in the nation’s largest manufacturing center spelled the most important element of that irreducible difference. The emergence of a majority Latino

immigrant working class in both the new manufacturing enterprises and the growing service sector was a symptom of a wrenching deindustrialization and reindustrialization of the region, a thoroughgoing reorganization of production in which neoliberal globalization imported the maquiladora model to those industrial sectors that were too expensive to relocate to Latin America or Asia. More important to the lived experiences of that emergent Latino working-class majority were the socioeconomic and cultural consequences of that new industrial order, its ever-harsher regime of growing class inequality, misery, and marginalization.

In formulating our argument, we tried to recognize the obvious: that the attainment of a supernumerary status would not guarantee diminished social inequalities so long as the region's symbolic economy continued to racialize, and therefore devalue, Latino immigrant labor. The means of cultural production, in other words, played a powerful role in reinforcing and reproducing the new social relations of post-Fordist production and its disciplinary requirements. We believed we saw, for example, subtle interactions between the recurring moral panics directed against illegal "alien" workers, the postmodern commodification of Mexican cuisine and ethnic tourist enclaves, and a huge restaurant industry that depended on the exploitation of a Latina and Latino immigrant workforce. We did not accept that decade's hegemonic symbiosis as the last word, however.

Instead, we tried to explore the ways in which a confluence of economic, political, and cultural changes meshed with the consolidation of a progressive Latino labor leadership and the day-to-day practices of Latino hybridity as aspects of a contestatory and pragmatic survival strategy in all the arenas of representations, including the practices of place-making. Making sense of these enmeshments, or what Marx called the metabolism of social and material conditions, required a degree of theoretical and methodological experimentation on our parts. Marx, after all, never developed a full-blown theorization of culture deduced from the logics of communicative processes. Instead, he saw the so-called "natural" environment as a seemingly endless, yet two-sided metabolic dialectic with humans, who, in modifying it, evolved new social relations to survive the environment they had changed.

That metabolism cannot function without the coordinating and interpretive cultural membrane through which human societies appraise, modify, and adapt to their environments: an approach to the symbolic order that Marx lacked, but intuited, when he proposed the logic of his biological metaphor. He brushed up against the symbolic order again when

he acknowledged the seeming mysteries of the commodity fetish, an object of socially produced value that is nevertheless a bearer of multiple connotative secrets: "A commodity appears at first sight an extremely obvious, trivial thing. But its analysis brings out that it is a very strange thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties" (Marx 1990, 163). Slavoj Žižek argues that the social relations that produce the commodity "fetish as a solid object" nevertheless carry within them the ideology that hides the social costs of the commodity's creation, a spectral parallel of pure "ideology" that hides the commodity's contradictions in plain sight. He convincingly uses the ways digital technology has taken the "dematerialization" of the money fetish, its transformations from gold bullion to paper currency to the transfer of the digital bank draft, to illustrate the extreme literalness with which these spectral transformations now occur, transformations that Marx would scarcely recognize. Our interpretation of the dematerialized fetish simply translates Žižek's notion of the "spectral aspect of capitalism" as one aspect of the cultural life of capitalism theorized from the more nuanced perspective of discourse and discursive practices (Žižek 2009, 301-2).

Our reading of the contributions of cultural studies has therefore led us to rethink Marx's biological metaphor and to look for the genealogies of social metabolism. Culture, in our version of this trope, functions as a medium and a by-product, a lived neural network and a physical archive of knowledge from which societies formulate and test new social forms and conceptual and material technology. Our formulation of culture does not distinguish between its resemblance to a living organism and its transformations into market commodities or technology. It tries instead to sense the organic life of culture in those moments when lived neural networks and the residues of the symbolic order obey the genetic and viral logics of language mutation. It proposes a conceptual language that tries to detect a dynamic process, namely those instances when the network's residues materialize in the archive of the known and knowable and blur the boundaries with which we try to distinguish the contaminating human trace from our idealized images of nature. The combined, synergistic effect of medium and residue can powerfully influence our social and so-called natural environments by exerting an inertial force that retards social adaptation to new environmental conditions or by generating new knowledge with which to transform those conditions. That the cultural function's dual aspects fill the seemingly minimal interstitial gap that articulates the linkage of the social to the material environment does not

diminish its power. Great effects often occur at a seemingly microscopic scale, a subtlety that allows us to envision cultural processes occurring within an ecological model of the biosphere.

We could go further, arguing that living organisms cannot sustain themselves without mediating communicative systems, membranes if you will, through which they interact and do something that resembles learning from the environment. Human society, in such a reformulation, would then emerge in that place where the spheres of culture, political economy, and biology overlap, a triangular arrangement that situates the lived "materiality" of Henri Lefebvre's theorization of "the everyday" within an ecology of human and nonhuman communicative communities. (Lefebvre 2007, 32). Such a reframing would allow us to resituate Marx's notion of metabolism within the most recent theorizations of ecology and evolutionary biology, but that task taxes our theoretical abilities and clearly overstates the intentions we had in mind when we wrote *Latino Metropolis*, which was to slow the slide of cultural studies into irrelevancy.

We were more concerned then with recalibrating its formidable critical tools for a new task: building the conceptual equation that would balance the discursive and the structural material realities of globalized capital accumulation. What could Stuart Hall and Michel Foucault tell us, we asked ourselves, about the cultural-economic metabolism of post-Fordist political economy, and could we extrapolate a category that would fuse political economy and a critical theory of culture, a field since named *cultural political economy*? We tried, that is, to take the critical turn in the global metropolis seriously and to bring cultural critique to power and class relations as they occur in the globalized city, the messy, fluid, and densely meaningful place, and therefore the ideal arena in which to study the processes of globalization. We were also interested in the global city's radical cosmopolitanism, a space of lived hybridity in which the immigrant subject's virtuoso experimentation with that environment's multiple political and cultural codes fosters new ways of thinking and acting around, under, and beyond the nation-state's rigid categories.

That cosmopolitanism underlies the implicit logic of *Latino Metropolis*. We tried to express it by simultaneously running a positivist analytic alongside a critical interpretation in such a way as to give each a reciprocal role within an overarching interpretive construct, which, for us, was L.A.'s entire symbolic and built landscape. We felt that we could no longer talk about Latinos, the city's ethnic majority, without a totalizing theory of the city that could correlate a specific cultural process to every social

relation within the context of market capitalism. Doing this required us to redirect cultural studies away from its then customary preoccupation with the subaltern subject and its myriad processes of identity formation. We believed that all subjectivities, including the varieties of “whiteness” embodied by the city’s corporate elite, merited the critical gaze of cultural studies. If these critical approaches hold any validity, they should allow us to interpret identity formation for all social classes and racialized ethnicities, and to locate the cultural effects we theorized within the totality of existing social relations of late global capital.

We therefore sought the reciprocal translatability between analytic and critical approaches, between the dialectical and the genealogical, to identify those points of structural articulation where cultural effects were unambiguous. We also strove for an approach that would allow us to plot the intersection of spatial and temporal planes from which indigenous local memories and their subjective spaces erupt from global capital’s urban matrix. The genealogical investigation of L.A.’s built environment that Valle explored after the publication of *Latino Metropolis* provided a powerful way to theorize the knowledge strands that construct a cultural political economy.

### The City as Narrative Observatory

Michele Foucault’s theory of “governmentality,” however, provides one method of doing the improbable—identifying the knowledge strands that encode the global city’s assembly instructions. Each of its knowledge strands began to be instrumentalized and codified as strains of governmental technology in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when emerging European states used the administrative apparatus of the medieval justice system to organize new governmental offices. These relatively small institutional innovations began to “governmentalize” the state by increments (Foucault [1978] 1991, 102-3). Liberalism’s eighteenth-century inauguration stimulated new government innovations to ensure the modern state’s survival. Governments rapidly borrowed the new techniques of disciplining the populace it sent to the prisons, the hospitals, the factories, and the military. The new census-taking methodologies established a concrete basis for imagining and implementing a national political economy. Obtaining accurate counts of the population provided a practical way to monitor a nation’s demographic wealth and health, and the material conditions and social relations that contributed to or detracted from its productivity.

As inventory-taking methods improved, it also became possible to monitor the lives of individual citizens. Birth and death certificates, school, tax, criminal, and military records, and a growing list of other documentary procedures allowed government to envision a state of perpetual surveillance, one initially devised for controlling prisoners and hospital patients but applied later to the full citizenry. Methods used to contain contagion in cities or reinforce the military chain of command also found their way into rationales for reorganizing government bureaucracies. Innovations in the surveillance and regulation of mental illness, sexuality, and female fertility allowed bureaucracies to narrow the application of that technology from the general populace to discrete social groups until focusing its gaze upon the body of the individual.

The modern state's tendency to apply these disciplinary techniques to different classes of objects led to another innovation: one could more thoroughly manipulate and disseminate the abstract discourse of the state by ascribing to it human corporeal qualities. The state's metonymic association with the body grew from an earlier metaphor—the medieval city as corporate or fictional person (Frug 1999, 31). Each innovation in governmental technology incrementally modified the state's forms and political rationality, a process that expanded the state's power while increasing its dependence on the invention and reorganization of existing governmental institutions to consolidate its gains and neutralize challenges to its authority.

In time, the proliferation of governmental functions and organs not only produced internal contradictions that undermined older governmental functions but revealed that the state did not possess a coherent, essential core of truth upon which it was based, only a collection of different and sometimes incompatible administrative techniques that the populace experienced as the unitary state. Foucault called the state's ever-changing governmental adaptations *governmentality*, or that "ensemble" of "institutions, procedures, analyses and . . . calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has [the population] as its target, [political economy] as its principal form of knowledge, and [the apparatuses of security] as its essential technical means" (Foucault [1978] 1991, 102).

From the eighteenth century onward, the formerly distinct spheres of "government, population, and political economy" gradually fused into "a solid series" of social practices we today call the economy. Foucault's spectrum of effects theorized the production of wealth, the security of the



state, and the control of the population as an integrated whole. However, rather than stress the Orwellian notion of a centralized state under the control of a single, all-knowing entity, Foucault envisioned the state as a field of effects generated by an ensemble of governmental technologies that naturalized that state's political hegemony. His theorization would allow others to more than simply speculate on the vague possibilities of a genealogy of the present. It would give those with sufficiently rich archives the means to identify and disentangle the governmental technologies that shape the state and its inhabiting subjectivities.

A key observation, one half-explained in *Latino Metropolis*, was the role capital plays, via its power to create and implement laws and generate and circulate its necessary truths, in re-creating the governmental technologies that generate the state "effect." (Valle would take the next step and make that formulation of the cultural technologies of capital accumulation explicit in his next book, *City of Industry: Genealogies of Power in Southern California* [2009].)

That was then, the more than a decade-old "then" of *Latino Metropolis*, in which we generally predicted the inevitability of our present economic collapse and resurgent anti-immigrant Latino hysteria. We recognized the potential for that crisis in the contradictions of a U.S. capitalist system that cannibalized itself in successive crisis of financialization rather than reinvest in the production of new wealth. We therefore recommended, given that these conditions were bound to recur and intensify, that Latino urban studies scholars and activist organizers accept coming social dislocation as a certainty they should plan for in their scholarship and praxis. We believe the economic meltdown of 2008 and its effects validate the continued pursuit of the scholarly project we envisioned for Latino urban studies: its interdisciplinarity as a field of study and its focus on interpreting the Latino working class within the totality of an urban landscape and experience.

The city, as the localized arena of global processes and changing class relations, is still the conceptual space in which to continue those experiments. The present-day context of economic collapse and resurgent anti-immigrant hysteria, however, also suggests that we remain vigilant to new possibilities of scholarly activism, that we look to the critical turn for more than monkey wrenches and cultural technologies of discontent. We should also consider using those tools to identify new opportunities of strategic urban intervention and to create moments of emancipatory rupture with which we might free ourselves to imagine another urban future

in the space opened up by the social and cultural equivalent of a cosmological singularity.

Genealogy offers another way to revisit our revolutions for the lessons their successes and failures teach, for traces of the singularities that rupture and reset the clock of capitalist hegemony. We are not talking about reviving boring Stalinist hagiographies of worker heroes but of producing cultural genealogies of those settings in which emancipatory subjectivity erupted in specific individuals, social movements, or class formations.

The various genres of narrative art, whether written, performed, or lived, represent one way of observing and exploring the fusion of these spaces and subjectivities. Entering that narrative observatory requires the recovery of the seemingly disconnected stories Latinos and Latinas told themselves when they encountered each other and reinvented themselves in the sweatshops, boulevards, slaughterhouses, and movie houses of the last century, when they dreamed of other radical futures few outside the immigrant and exile communities seemed to hear or see. Making an inventory of revolutionary remembering could be that first step in preparing ourselves to identify, and if possible, cultivate new revolutionary subjectivities in the cities that Latina/o immigrants know best. We could start, in other words, by identifying the low-hanging fruit of an abandoned neighborhood tree, and then making plans for that tree's pruning, watering, and feeding.

#### Answering Arizona

We borrow from a speech Mao gave on May 29, 1939, as a kind of ideal to which we should aspire in the aftermath of Arizona's recent censorship of the Latino/ethnic studies high school curriculum. "It is good if the enemy attacks us, since it proves that we have drawn a clear line of demarcation between the enemy and ourselves. It is still better if the enemy attacks us wildly and paints us as utterly black and without a single virtue; it demonstrates that we have not only drawn a clear line of demarcation between the enemy and ourselves but also achieved a great deal in our work" (Mao 1939, n.p.). Could it be that they deserved the epithets of the populist Right, especially when they accused our colleagues of fomenting a postcolonial critique of the United States' conquest of the Arizona territory? As we all know, many of the attacks were fevered projections of an ethnic *reconquista* that our colleagues do not teach. We also know that they meant these attacks to distract Arizonans from the ruling majority's failure to prevent the state's fiscal collapse. They instead chose to blame

the racialized other they strove to re-create, Mexican and Latino immigrants and their children, who will indeed alter the state's balance of political power, if only modestly.

The Tea-Bagger populists needed to turn the Latino/a immigrant into a terrifying threat. It did not matter to them that the community's integration into the state's electorate, and their attendant acquisition and exercise of civil rights universally accepted for African Americans, has been painfully slow. The symbiotic media-state representations of immigrant border violations had already produced the appropriate intensity of moral sensitization. They targeted teachers who taught the modest virtues of ethnic and racial diversity and the Latino community's well-documented contributions to Arizona's wealth as agents of subversion. The teachers who had had the audacity to urge the next generation of Latina and Latino voters to act as first-class rather than alienated citizens were a terror too good to pass up. Why calmly accept that inevitability, one that would not fundamentally alter the state's neoliberal underpinnings, if you could orchestrate a major distraction? Cultivating a panic was much better than acknowledging that Latino immigration was a symptom, not a cause, of the economic globalization that had destroyed the high-wage manufacturing Arizona had secured during the cold war, or that the low-wage, no-benefit post-Fordist regime that had replaced it depended on a surplus of "unskilled" immigrant labor. Such is the racist logic, Zizek observes, of populist xenophobia: it obsesses over the impure outsider that would threaten the purity of the polis, its innocent "we" of (white) natives, the indispensable ingredient of "whiteness" that the Tea-Baggers presume in their tribal construct of citizenship.

Perhaps it is time to earn their scorn. Perhaps it is time to search our political and cultural memories of failed revolutions, as Zizek recommends, for the antipode of the populist pole, a position around which a viable Left could coalesce and offer a coherent alternative to the populist Right. The students of Latino urbanism have a particular role to play in the search for that new positionality. We hope the next generation of Latino urban scholars will show how a viable Left in the United States cannot emerge if it does not embrace the quintessential "part of no part," the undocumented immigrant, and that inventory of others effectively stripped of citizenship, as its core constituency, the future majority that will embody and express our deepest democratic values and impulses.

Place matters in this continuing enterprise. That was one of the implications we explored in *Latino Metropolis* when we called for a new kind of

Latino politics—a politics of class and workplace. We asserted an emphasis on the places of production to imagine a new politics, one that would cut across districts and working-class neighborhoods: community politics are not principally the politics of neighborhoods but the politics of work, class, and culture. We should advance this line further now and reconsider what the category of class can mean in U.S. cities when the immigrant-dependent restaurant industry scatters the place of production throughout the urban landscape. That same question applies more directly to the Walmart clerks and subcontracted warehouse workers symbiotically connected to Asian manufacturing via that vast trans-Pacific system of commodity distribution known as logistics. Not only does understanding immigrant workers' role in global manufacturing clarify their labor power's strategic significance, it forces us to question the notion that consumption is the new point of production, an implicitly nationalist orientation that tends to privilege the welfare of the "American" worker-consumer over all the others, while ignoring the urgency of building transnational worker solidarity.

The organizers of Warehouse Workers United are, as of this writing, attempting such a recentering of working-class citizenship amid the world's largest concentration of warehouses. Global trade in the Pacific Rim and Southern California's north-south mountain corridors has created a new battlefield clustered around the rail, truck, and air infrastructure of San Bernardino and Riverside Counties. Geography has funneled the huge increases in cargo pulsing from the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach through the historically depressed region misleadingly named the Inland Empire. The transformation of the logistics industry, which was touted as the cure to the region's chronic job losses and epidemic of housing foreclosures, actually raised particulate air pollution to the world's fourth highest while turning temporary employment agencies into the new growth sector (Hart 2006, 28). These permanently temporary agencies eagerly refined the "sweatshop" subcontracting technologies to the retail industry's specifications. They drastically lowered wages, job security, and safety standards for more than fifty-three thousand workers (most of them undocumented) by creating a barrier of deniability for the warehouse retailers to evade responsibility for creating those conditions (Jamieson 2012).

The Change To Win-supported campaign's answer to the atomizing technologies of outsourcing has been to build an impressive coalition of environmental, labor unions, church groups, and West and East Coast Occupiers in support of immigrant Latino workers battling for union repre-

sentation, living wages, and safer working conditions (Woodman 2012). It attempts not only to create that tipping point at which Latino immigrant workers can make the transition from racialized minority to empowered working-class majority but also to neutralize the demoralizing effects of labor subcontracting by representing the entire transportation corridor as a continuation of the warehouse. Its strategy is to expose the industry's vulnerabilities to a variety of community actions, from regulatory and legal interventions against safety violations to blockades of key trucking arteries, by revealing its complicity in degrading the region's social and natural ecology (Lifsher 2012; Lydersen 2011).

Obviously, a handful of Latino urban scholars will not lead this constructive political project by themselves. Already a whole bundle of academics of seemingly marginalized tendencies, from critical ethnic studies to postcolonial studies, cultural studies, women's studies, and gender studies, as well as independent scholars, artists, and activists, are asking questions of this sort. As the Occupy movement demonstrates, their numbers will increase as the crisis in the developed economies of the West deepens and as the corporate sector further privatizes the academic organs of social reproduction and promotes a politics that makes it easier to simply externalize those functions.

What lies ahead for this next generation of would-be scholars, and how do they pursue it? We believe that Latino and Latina urban theorists can perform a great service of research and practice that explains to their would-be colleagues, and progressives generally, why they must see their futures in creating class relations based upon complete identification with the emergent urban immigrant majorities. They can also help by excavating the discursive legacy, those genealogies of knowledge and practice that have directly contributed to the recent mass mobilizations of Latino immigrant workers. They can set an example by acknowledging the Latino and Latina radical and revolutionary intellectuals, workers, and scholars who shaped the agenda and narratives that reacquainted organized labor and today's Occupiers with the feasibility of a national general strike by achieving a scale that spoke more loudly than its rhetoric.

Cultural processes were crucial in producing that result. The use of Spanish-language media, above all radio, to mobilize millions validated the importance we gave to that strategic resource in *Latino Metropolis*. The content and forms of their appeal to Latino workers also betrayed a genealogical moment overlooked in the scholarly studies that interpreted the 2006 mobilizations. Immigrant rights organizers formed in L.A.'s Marxist-

Leninist circles of the 1970s led that first push to prevent the passage of HR4437, legislation that would have set the stage for the deportation of millions of undocumented Latino immigrant workers and the prosecution of anyone convicted of sheltering them. That generation's historical formation was especially evident in the year's May Day demonstrations. They had orchestrated a mobilization in which supposedly "conservative" immigrants in immaculate white T-shirts denounced racism, sexism, class inequality, borders, imperialism, and neoliberal globalization—a concise inventory, in other words, of a discursive formation we can call the Latino Left.

Two immigrant rights activists, Jesse Diaz and Javier Rodriguez, deserve recognition for their intrepid leadership in initiating, organizing, and framing that day's unprecedented demonstrations. In addition to the million or so marchers mobilized in Chicago, New York, and dozens of smaller cities across the United States, one million more went to the streets of Los Angeles in two separate marches. The first wave of marches demanded immediate and unconditional amnesty for all undocumented immigrants, an immediate halt to border fence construction, decriminalization of the undocumented, and an immediate cessation of factory raids and deportations. More importantly, the mobilizations emptied the workplace. As many as 75 percent of the Los Angeles industries employing Latino labor shut their doors, while as many as 90 percent of the day truckers hauling goods from the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach stayed home. "On farms in California and Arizona," Rodriguez said, "fruit and vegetables went unpicked, and across the country, meat-packing and poultry plants, fast-food franchises and other businesses were forced to close. In a lot of cases, employers supported their workers: all over Los Angeles businesses started putting up signs saying they would be closed on May 1" (Diaz and Rodriguez 2007, 99–101).

Those events deserve further study, starting with the so-called mainstream Latino organizations and unions that fragmented and weakened the mobilization's initial message by prematurely supporting the Democratic Party's pragmatic path to immigration reform. A new generation of scholars and organic intellectuals must also give itself permission to question the institutions from which they should expect bolder leadership. Would it be reasonable for them to ask, for example, why the Chicano studies discipline, especially its bureaucratic apparatus, seemed to take such a reticent stance toward the self-organizing immigrant energy recently displayed on the streets? That institutional ambivalence (not the

independent scholars who met in the streets) also suggests itself when a few scholars and administrators still try to reconcile the uniqueness of Chicano identity, as asserted in the 1960s, with the growing and by now irreversible immigrant presence, which has transformed Latino communities everywhere. We will not go into all the twists and turns of that reticence here. Suffice it to say that, except for the sober concluding pages of Michael Soldatenko's *Chicano Studies: The Genesis of a Discipline* (2009), only a fraction of works within the discipline seem to have mustered the courage to directly discuss the widening fissures of this ideological debate. Strangely, that silence continues, as Soldatenko observes, even though a growing number, perhaps a majority, of scholars sheltered under the rubric of Chicano studies practice strains of scholarship that have already outstripped the discursive boundaries of its most generous disciplinary definitions. That silence means that the pressure to reradicalize Chicano studies has also come from the students and their sisters and brother academics outside the discipline.

We can hear that prodding to revisit pre-Chicano movement origins in works such as Gilbert G. Gonzalez's *Guest Workers or Colonized Labor? Mexican Labor Migration to the United States* (2007), Mike Davis's *Magical Urbanism: Latinos Reinvent the US Big City* (2000), David R. Diaz's *Barrio Urbanism: Chicanos, Planning, and American Cities* (2005), and William David Estrada's *The Los Angeles Plaza: Sacred and Contested Space* (2008), especially for his masterful recontextualization of the plaza's Magonista, Wobbly, and anarchist synergies. Raul Homero Villa's *Barrio-Logos: Space and Place in Urban Chicano Literature and Culture* (2000) and Ignacio Lopez-Calvo's *Latino Los Angeles in Film and Fiction: The Cultural Production of Social Anxiety* (2011) push upon that reticence from another direction. Both challenge the long-held myths that authentic Hispanic "cultural identity was to be found outside the urban context" and that the early 1970s had somehow birthed a fully formed Chicano literature from the preceding decade's radical protest. Lopez-Calvo's work does an especially effective job of debunking Chicano literature's pastoral image and uncomplicated identitarian origins. Not only does that literature draw from deep indigenous, Hispanic, and African roots, but its late twentieth-century energy is urban and therefore modern in its questioning of imposed or "traditional" tropes of racial, gender, and sexual identity. Its polyvocal, restless, questioning energy will continue in this century. Lopez-Calvo writes, given that "the massive migration of Latinos to Los Angeles has turned this late-capitalist metropolis into a privileged site for Chicano and La-

tino cultural production. It is no longer the Babylon where Mexican immigrants inevitably lose their 'authentic' national traits and roots" but the imaginary in which they radically remap the city's democratic possibilities (2011, xii, 3).

Ernesto Galarza's cryptic Magonista and Wobbly references in his classic autobiography, *Barrio Boy*, represent another contribution that urges a critical look back to the early Chicano movement's preoccupation with identity formation. Galarza would say as much in a series of interviews he gave in 1977-78 and 1981, when he questioned the way Chicano scholars and activists in the 1960s and 1970s tried to represent themselves through the single prism of ethnic identity:

I try to stay away from terms that rely on ethnicity. I use terms that represent what people do for a living—*occupation* is a much more meaningful term. Academics at UCLA have worked on this theme. In Arizona and in New Mexico there is a great deal of scholarly interest in this problem of choice of terminology. I don't think it leads very far, because if you look at these terms—you'll find people who are called Chicanos in San Jose; they're called Chicanos in Imperial Valley; they're called Chicanos in San Francisco. But if you know those people, the occupational differences are more important, to me, anyway. It may be because I have a certain bias against ethnic identity. I don't think people should be handled that way . . . should be catalogued . . . because it's not a permanent characteristic other than to those who believe in very strong racial, ethnic characteristics—and I don't. (Galarza 1982, n.p.)

The Chicano studies project would eventually catch up to Galarza's formulation and embrace his understanding of social constructivism. However, the discipline retains a certain ambivalence regarding the utility of Galarza's cautiously expressed class analysis (one informed more by Weber than by Marx).

Does the bureaucratic imperative to defend Chicano studies in some of the same institutions Galarza mentioned more than four decades ago still trick us into a scholarship that imbues Chicano identity with a transcendent quality, one that defies the historical flux that transforms all others? Do we harbor a deeply buried assimilationist wish when we expect new Latino immigrants to act as Chicanos-in-the-making, a vast transitional population reliving the traumas and joys of inventing a bicultural-



bilingual citizenship? Discovering the common experiences with which different immigrant communities have reclaimed their humanity in a system that denies it is indeed valuable. But do lingering notions of identity politics freeze us in a neoliberal status quo that acknowledges diversity while preventing us from facing the brutal economic reality of our time? Will celebrating diversity challenge the state in its current embattled corporate configuration to countenance the continued naturalization of millions of immigrants? Does not the current depth of the crisis require that we rethink what a "Chicano" politics can mean in an economy that will stagnate for decades to come, in which even the most modest, most humane immigration reforms, such as the "Dream Act," will require massive, broad-based national mobilizations to implement? It would seem that the manner in which Galarza's work slowly disappeared from the curriculum has answered these questions. His were not interesting questions.

But an ideological debate that erupted in the 1970s, outside the academy, on L.A.'s picket lines, in its sweatshops, and in INS detention facilities, would revive Galarza's line of questioning. Laura Pulido's *Black, Brown, Yellow, and Left: Radical Activism in Los Angeles* (2006) touched that nerve when she credited the Marxist-Leninist cadres of that decade for pushing the movement in a more radical and ultimately more fruitful direction. Pulido, who does not ignore the failures of Bert Corona and L.A.'s Centro de Acción Social Autónomo (CASA), nevertheless recognizes their undeniable impact on the city's present political landscape: "Former members of CASA had not only created a network of like-minded people but seeds of resistance within the 'old' labor movement that would blossom with advent of greater institutional support" (2006, 221). That cadre's most important discovery was to recognize the likely impact of the emergence of a majority immigrant Latino workforce on all other class and power relations in the city, a realization they obfuscated when they tried to replace Chicano cultural nationalism with Mexican nationalism as a means of achieving a new working-class solidarity. But even the seeming half-measure of representing CASA as the Marxist-Leninist vanguard of workers unified by a crudely constructed theory of nationalist loyalty had the benefit of loosening up the ways Chicano academics and activists had represented class relations and self-awareness until that time, and of recognizing the possibilities of Latin American worker solidarity. The seeds they had sown would bear fruit in the 1990s, when the former CASA members assumed pivotal positions of leadership within the local and national labor movement, within the legal arm of the immigrant rights movement.

and within the political class that began to reshape the city's entire political culture. Their emancipatory intentions, moreover, did not simply respond to that decade's material conditions; their practice would create the conditions of another struggle, the one that reappeared to fill the streets of Los Angeles and other major cities in 2006.

But the relative silence with which the Chicano studies standard-bearers have received the work of Pulido and her urban studies colleagues underscores the subtle rift in the discipline's ethnically focused bureaucratic project. The edge of that rift reappears each time Latino students treat the glories of the 1960s with more reverence than the mass immigrant mobilizations that have occurred since the 1990s, a nostalgic gaze that prevents them from recognizing the radical possibilities of the present. That is what made Bert Corona so remarkable. If he were with us today, would he gently coax those students and faculty to overcome their fears and tell them that the present is the best time and place to struggle and that the scale of the immigrant-led labor movement he helped create dwarfs anything the Chicano movement achieved?

We must also acknowledge the limits Pulido imposed on herself. Her understandable focus on the field from which the three ideological configurations of L.A.'s ethnic Left emerged necessarily gave less attention to Bert Corona's biography. Nor did she have the space to adequately address the subtle ways these revived "Lefts" owed their successes to L.A.'s early and mid-twentieth-century leftist radicals. Perhaps we should put the responsibility for that silence at the feet of a prior generation of scholars and journalists who succeeded in distancing Corona from the early twentieth-century Left that formed him and made him a recurring target of Red-baiting. Perhaps we should also question those efforts to remake Bert as a wholesome ethnic leader of generic progressive tendencies and only the slightest "socialist" sympathies (Munoz 1994, 4). These revisions illustrate the ways the ghosts of the Left still haunt the Chicano movement's ideological project, a squeamishness Bert understood and patiently tolerated but ignored when it came time to take the courageous political gamble of challenging the early Chicano movement to embrace the cause of undocumented Mexican and Central and South American immigrant workers.

The effect of Bert's strategic choices, and his consistent critique of corporate capitalism, still cause some Chicano academics to agonize over whether they should embrace the immigrant workers who demonstrate a willingness to put their class loyalties before ethnic, racial, or national allegiances. That ambivalence persists when Chicano and Latino scholars

look past the 1970s, that crucial decade in which the organizational and discursive foundations of today's Latino immigrant mass mobilizations began to appear as a complicated, largely urban response to brutal worker exploitation, the government's policies of immigration terror, and the limitations of the previous decade's Chicano radical discourse. It was in that decade that the first women and gay artists began to express their dissatisfaction with constraints of Chicano cultural nationalism, and Chicano activists confronted the immigrant and political refugees who would alter the demographic composition and social relations that characterized what they had once understood as a predominantly Mexican American "community." Not only would Mexican and other Latin American immigrants soon emerge as the barrio's new majority, they would eventually emerge as urban America's working class, a realization that obliged the more farsighted to see the sweatshop or factory floor as the crucial arena of struggle.

The ideological effects of travel to Cuba, Mexico, Central America, and other destinations in Latin America, as well as China, undertaken in the late 1960s and continuing through the 1970s and 1980s, provoked another series of discussions that would further erode the movement's insularity. Those Chicano activists, intellectuals, and artists who traveled and exposed themselves to a variety of Marxist and socialist critiques and debates centered on U.S. capitalism and imperialism would acquire more nuanced understandings of how they fit into a larger anti-imperialist front, as well as of the Left's failures and defeats. The pace of these conversations increased in the 1970s when brutal military repression from Mexico, Chile, and Argentina sent Latin American refugees and intellectuals to the United States. These conversations continued in the late seventies and eighties with the arrival of Central America's political and economic refugees who escaped U.S.-funded terror and counter-revolution.

These intellectuals often arrived with their books, given the popularity of Latin American literature experienced during the "boom" years, a reception enhanced by university courses that assigned them and Spanish-language print media that covered and interpreted them. Whether they passed through as touring performers or as lesser-known artists, writers, or professors who came to stay, young Chicano and Latino intellectuals found it easier to stay abreast of Latin America's political and cultural debates when they socialized with their Latin American cousins, dialogues that pushed that generation into a deeper exploration of their movement's pre-Chicano radical revolutionary roots.

These subversive influences and contradictory tendencies shared a geographic constant: they had converged in the major cities of the United States. The acknowledged centrality of the urban experience, as David Harvey's recent work suggests, therefore underlies the future study of the formation of Latino subjectivity. The recent studies that contextualize José Martí's New York, the city that witnessed Puerto Rican Bernardo Vega's political formation two decades later, represent a sample from that small number of postcolonial works that explore the U.S. city's role in coauthoring a transnational, hemispheric Latino intellectual legacy. We would expect Chicago to have exerted a comparable effect upon Lucy Gonzales Parsons, a possibility only marginally appreciated by the identity-based projects of recent African American and Chicano scholarship. Where else but in that brutal cauldron of industrial exploitation and anarchist protest would the former emancipated and fluently bilingual *mestiza* slave be able to reinvent herself into a radical labor activist who would convince Martí in 1887 of the possibilities of a Latina feminism? Laura Lomas, in her indispensable *Translating Empire: José Martí, Migrant Latino Subjects, and American Modernities* (2008), helps us see that other Lucy, the one the poet witnessed, through his emerging postcolonial gaze, in New York when she spoke in defense of the Haymarket Martyrs. Her oratorical art, because it equaled his, forced him to question his *macho* prejudices of women made mannish because they dared speak in the public sphere, and to recognize her as the unexpected female incarnation of the *mestizo* revolutionary he had begun to envision in "*Nuestra America*." The following passage further illustrates the transformative spell she cast on Martí:

There were moments when not a sound could be heard in the assembly except her inspired voice, which flowed slowly from her mouth, like spheres of fire, and the gasping of those who had stopped breathing momentarily in order to hear the sob in her throat. When this Indian and Mexican *mestiza* stopped speaking, all the heads were inclined, as if in prayer upon the benches in church, and the room seemed to fill, like a field of wheat bending in the wind. . . . Everything in her appears an invitation to believe and to rise up. Her speech, in its total sincerity, is literary. Her doctrines wave like a flag; she does not ask for mercy for those condemned to death, for her own husband, but denounces the causes and the accomplices to the misery that leads men to desperation. (qtd. in Lomas 2008, 252-53)

Lucy's performance, however, embodied not only a glorious beauty but also the necessity and possibility of a revolutionary, anticapitalist politics rooted in the hemisphere's indigenous soil, and thus the seed of an organic, autochthonous society for which Martí still searched. There was one important realization Lucy's anarchism seemed to lack, one that Martí possessed but did not live long enough to share: that the existence of modern capitalism depended upon the discourse of "race" refined in the conquest of the Americas, a cultural technology readapted to that brutal task of dehumanizing, dividing, and subordinating late nineteenth-century workers.

The asking and answering of these questions, when contextualized in the cultural political economy of the urban scene, not only will provide a way of revitalizing the institutional purpose of Chicano studies but will suggest the role an urban Latino studies agenda can play in transforming progressive national politics, what Mike Davis famously called a "magical urbanism." These interventions can articulate new forms of critique and struggle through which laboring Latino classes, including the fragile first-generation middle class, might go beyond the limits imposed upon them by the logic of market capitalism to propose a Latino power of constructive and lasting effects, one through which a class teaches itself to think about capital while acting against it.

#### NOTES

- 1 Our use of the term *cultural political economy* is especially indebted to the work of Bob Jessop and his colleagues in the Cultural Political Economy Research Centre (CPERC) at Lancaster University in the United Kingdom. In this respect, CPERC promotes cultural political economy both as a principal theoretical orientation and method of analysis and as a valuable adjunct to other theories and methods that examines the relations among semiosis, imaginaries, political economy broadly conceived, and issues of governance, government, and governmentality.

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