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RESEARCH ARTICLE

"'In the world we want many worlds to fit:' a Xicanx Land Acknowledgement as Trans-Indigenous Storytelling Praxis"

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This land was Mexican once
was Indian always
and is.
And will be again. (113)

"El Retorno," *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* by Gloria Anzaldúa (1987)

Introduction

As the popularity of land acknowledgments grows beyond sites of knowledge production, it is necessary to adapt this form of storytelling to the multitude of contexts

that students, colleagues, and community members will navigate throughout their lives. In *theory*, land acknowledgments engage with Indigenous protocols for place-based relationship building, but in *practice*, rote declarations expressing appreciation for unceded territories are rarely followed with the repatriation of lands and resources that is necessary to repair relationships with Indigenous Peoples. The purpose of this essay is to explore the radical potential of land acknowledgements for decolonial worldmaking in the institutional context with which I am most familiar—the neoliberal university.

This essay examines the ways in which Zapatismo models the transformative potential of land acknowledgments to *intervene* in capitalist ways of building relationships to benefit Indigenous futures. My literary analysis examines the storied genealogies that inform Zapatismo to demonstrate how storytelling teaches place-based Indigenous values, which can be applied to other localized contexts in the service of trans-Indigenous decolonization. This method of crafting land acknowledgments from place-based storied genealogies will inform my own Xicanx land acknowledgement as a declaration of solidarity with Indigenous Peoples through our shared revolutionary culture hero, Emiliano Zapata. The pages that follow engage with trans-Indigenous literary methodology and Indigenous storytelling theory to demonstrate how each of us may "learn how to learn" to be good relatives from our respective positionalities without engaging in ethnic fraud. As a Xicanx of Indigenous descent, I am grateful for the mentors who have helped me navigate my own complicated history of colonial displacement and subsequent diaspora. Like Indigenous Peoples of the Americas, Xicanx affirm our long-standing presence on this continent, but at times, have done so by misappropriating Indigenous histories, landscapes, and cultures as our own. While many of us share Indigenous ancestry, we cannot claim to represent the sovereign Indigenous nations from which we have been displaced without their consent. Instead, my Xicanx land acknowledgment demonstrates how displacement informs our storied genealogies and invites us to

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intervene in colonial metanarratives rather than perpetuate Indigenous erasure and disenfranchisement.

Our academic foremother, the late Tejana writer, Gloria Anzaldúa provides the epigraph above and the inspiration for my Xicanx land acknowledgement. Anzaldúa's concrete poem, "El Retorno [The Return]," functions as a storied map of Indigenous space-time in Mesoamerica that invokes Indigenous prophesies of resurgence to undermine the settler colonial borderlands from which she writes. Her shape poem models narrative worldmaking by forming a nebulous allusion to Aztlán, while simultaneously reinforcing Indigenous conceptions of time. The poem refers to *this land* as "Indian always" and succinctly affirms Indigenous Land Back demands by mixing verb tenses and compressing temporalities to narrate an inevitable, decolonized, Indigenous future. While *Borderlands/La Frontera* uses the Chicana Nationalist rhetoric common to Anzaldúa's generation, this poem affirms Indigenous narrative space as the place where worldmaking begins and ends.

Theories and Methodologies

Storytelling

As narratives grounded in Indigenous worldviews, land acknowledgments are a form of *storytelling* where the land itself is an agent and relative, rather than an object. In the introduction to the 2012 reprint of *Storyteller,* Leslie Marmon Silko explains that "[l]ocation or place plays a central role in Pueblo narratives. Stories are more frequently recalled as people are passing a specific geographical feature or the exact location where a story took place," a situation in which the geographical location is what "stirs the imagination" and subsequently fortifies an ongoing place-based Pueblo identity (*Storyteller* xx). The formation of Laguna Pueblo identity is ongoing because, as Silko

informs us in *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit*, storytelling is ongoing at Laguna (53). The emergence of Laguna space-time is embodied during the Winter Solstice throughout the "four-day ritual retelling of the stories about the Migration and how Ka'waik, the Beautiful Lake Place, became our home" (*Storyteller* xx-xxi). This bundle of migration stories serves much the same purpose as a land acknowledgment since it defines Pueblo space by continuously reenacting active and ongoing Pueblo presence in this particular geography.

Throughout her oeuvre, Silko describes storytelling as a dynamic communal act because Pueblo "people perceived themselves in the world as part of an ancient continuous story composed of innumerable bundles of other stories" (*Storyteller* xix). Pueblo stories thus define the relationship between the Laguna Pueblo and Ka'waik by creating a storied archive of knowledge that can be read by looking upon the land and remembering what happened there. As a communal narrative, each tribal member is an active part of maintaining Pueblo *survivance* in their homeland by partaking in narrative worldmaking; "thus the ongoing story or history of the Pueblo people continues endlessly" (*Storyteller* xx). In this anecdote, tribal values are literally embodied in the communal act of retelling a shared narrative in Indigenous space (Ka'waik) and time (Winter Solstice) demonstrating how place-based narratives create a Pueblo-specific conception of time that is always fully populated. Silko's explanation of Pueblo time illuminates temporality in "El Retorno" since it demonstrates how "there are *always all* the times... We can think and speak only in the present, but as we do it is becoming the past, which is always present, and which always contains the future encoded in it" (*Yellow Woman* 137).

Since communal stories often have as many iterations as there are storytellers and storytelling contexts, Silko is careful to dispel any assumptions about a Pueblo metanarrative because a "collective truth resides somewhere within the web of different versions, disputes over minor points, outright contradictions tangled with old feuds, and village rivalries" (*Storyteller* xx). This non-canonical, dynamic approach to

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Pueblo storytelling is why Silko has been canonized in Indigenous Literary Studies; her tribally specific theories of narrative worldmaking are applicable to many diverse Indigenous contexts. This type of place-based storied knowledge is a form of *land literacy* that carries cultural capital for Indigenous forms of relationship building that prioritize *balance* among relatives, both human and non-human. Not only do communal stories tell us who we are, how we came to be in this place, at this time, but also, how we will continue to live, survive, and thrive here in ongoing interrelationships with all our relatives.

Trans-Indigenous

Since Silko informs this analysis of non-Pueblo texts, I employ Chadwick Allen's trans-Indigenous methodology to enable my study of diverse visions for sovereign Indigenous futures in a global context. According to Allen, the trans-Indigenous is a methodology that utilizes Indigenous juxtapositions, which "place diverse texts close together across genre and media, aesthetic systems and worldviews, technologies and practices, tribes and nations, the Indigenous-settler binary, and historical periods and geographical regions" (Allen xviii). The primary texts in this essay represent a range of narrative genres such as poetry, essay, cartography, and manifesto "to develop a version of Indigenous literary studies that locates itself firmly in the specificity of the Indigenous local while remaining always cognizant of the complexity of the relevant Indigenous global" (Allen xix). The subjects of this study are narratives of ongoing Indigenous presence, which fortify Indigenous existence, and fuel Indigenous resistance to settler colonialism and its global adjacent: neoliberal capitalism.

Since 1994, the Zapatistas of the EZLN (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional/Zapatista Army of National Liberation) have been disseminating their vision for a locally informed global Indigenous consciousness to combat neoliberal

capitalism. Since capitalism moves freely across borders, so too must our strategies of resistance. The trans-Indigenous enables the study of ongoing Indigenous presence between local Indigenous contexts and across settler colonial borders. This methodology does not assume comparable equality between texts or contexts but emphasizes the plurality that exists in narrative space-time. After rising up in arms to defend the Mexican people from the exploitative neoliberal politics of the Mexican nation-state, the EZLN received an outpouring of global support. The shifts in their geographical scale is reflected in how they address their audience in *La Primera* versus *La Segunda*. While the First Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle is addressed to the Mexican People/Al pueblo de México (*La Primera*), the Second Declaration includes "The People and Governments of the World/A los pueblos y gobiernos del mundo" (*La Segunda*). Regardless of geographical scale, the Zapatistas consistently specify the Indigenous-local context from which they communicate by signing off:

> Desde las montañas del Sureste mexicano.
> Comité Clandestino Revolucionario Indígena-Comandancia General
> del Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional
> México. Junio de 1994.
> ///
> From the mountains of the Mexican southeast.
> Indigenous Revolutionary Clandestine Committee-General Command
> of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation
> Mexico. June 1994[1].

The Mexican-Maya landbase in the remote mountains of the Mexican Southeast are central to the Zapatistas' revolutionary vision. Just as the story of migration to Ka'waik (Beautiful Lake Place) provides the foundation for Laguna (Lake) Pueblo identity formation, Zapatismo is shaped by the narratives "desde las montañas del Sureste

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mexicano." In both contexts, the land is a powerful relative and archive of the ongoing stories of the people. The prominent position granted *las montañas* is not a stylistic choice, but an allusion to the place-based stories that inform the Zapatista vision for collective liberation.

The Zapatista communiques are part of an ongoing trans-Indigenous story and their poetic repertoire of manifestos is riddled with Maya and Mexican literary references. "The Story of Questions/La Historia de las Preguntas" is an allegory for Zapatista worldmaking through the metaphor of "walking together." This story is one of many *historias* that inform *Zapatismo* from the collection, *Questions and Swords: Folktales of the Zapatista Revolution*. It is worth noting that this text is overtly transnational and trans-Indigenous, containing contributions by Mexican writers and illustrators, and an epilogue by Simon Ortiz (Acoma Pueblo). The stories are told from Subcommandante Marcos's perspective and are nested within narratives of his encounters with the storyteller, Viejo Antonio, during the EZLN's years of clandestine training. Viejo Antonio tells Subcommandante Marcos that this is "the real story" of Zapata, explicitly Indigenizing the legacy of Zapata, as well as the Zapatista army's worldview.

In "The Story of Questions," Night/Votán and Day/I'kal are two deities fused together in one body, immobile, and miserable since they can only turn in circles. In order to go anywhere they must ask one another where they want to go and how they will get there. The act of critically questioning *how* they might remedy the dissatisfaction they feel begins their journey to find collective satisfaction through cooperation. After some trial and error, I'kal and Votán decide they must move "[t]ogether but separately and in agreement," emphasizing Maya values of cooperation, autonomy, and consensus-based government for collective well-being (Marcos 32). Viejo Antonio ends "La Historia de las Preguntas" by explaining:

> This is how the true men and women learned that questions are for walking, not for just standing around and doing nothing. And since then, when true men and women want to walk, they ask questions. When they want to arrive, they take leave. And when they want to leave, they say hello. They are never still. (Marcos 42)

When Marcos asks Viejo Antonio about Zapata he observes, "You've already learned that to know and to walk, you first have to ask," reinforcing the lesson that Zapatista space is made from Maya storytelling (Marcos 45). Like Votán and I'kal, if we seek collective wellbeing, we must first ask the right questions to co-create it.

Finally, Viejo Antonio explains, "The one they call Zapata… is the I'kal and the Votán who came here while they were on their long walk and so they wouldn't scare the good people, they became one… and gave themselves the name of Zapata" (Marcos 46). By fusing the identities of I'kal and Votán into the historical figure of Zapata, Viejo Antonio envelopes Zapata's transnational legacy of rebellion within the Maya-Mexican narrative genealogy based in las montañas of the Mexican Southeast. The same mountains from which each Zapatista communique is dispatched, with the same approach to collective wellbeing: "to walk asking."

Survivance

The Zapatistas' affirmation of their ongoing presence and continued resistance in the mountains of Southeastern Mexico are expressions of *survivance*. According to Gerald Vizenor, "survivance is an active sense of presence, the continuance of [Native] stories, not a mere reaction, or a survivable name. Native survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, tragedy and victimry" (Vizenor 63). The plurality of Native stories in Vizenor's description asserts that stories have kept us alive despite the prevalence of genocidal metanarratives. Survivance dispels *terminal creeds*; those static narratives of regrettable extinction that settlers continue to mythologize while acknowledging extant Indigenous Peoples in the past tense.

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Survivance is the recognition that our present power is informed by the wisdom of our ancestors, which provides the foundation for building a decolonial future. To access such wisdom, the Zapatistas turn to *las montañas* and recall the stories archived in the land that sustains their resistance:

> Our fight continues. The Zapatista flag continues to wave in the mountains of the Mexican Southeast and today we say: We will not surrender!
>
> Facing the mountain we spoke with our dead so that in their word the good path would come along which our gagged face must walk.
>
> The drums sounded and in the voice of the earth our pain spoke and our history spoke our pain and our history spoke.
>
> "For all everything" say our dead. As long as it is not like that, there will be nothing for us. (*La Segunda*)

The decision to continue their fight is made in consultation with the mountains. The drums serve as a conduit for communication with their ancestors who speak through the voice of the earth by reminding them of their stories like "La Historia de las Preguntas," and their histories like the Mexican Revolution, led by the culture hero, Emiliano Zapata. By looking upon the mountains the Zapatistas remember the stories that guide the "good path… which [their] gagged face must walk." They cover their faces to protect their individual identities while simultaneously creating hypervisibility as a united force. Their consultation with the mountains reinforces a communal and intersectional consciousness: "For all everything" say our dead. As long as it is not like that, there will be nothing for us." The hierarchal distribution of resources under

neoliberal capitalism is unacceptable since it only exacerbates inequity, thus, the Zapatistas refuse to surrender until everyone has access to everything. By positioning their movement among the stories archived in the mountains they recall their ongoing history of resistance and affirm their responsibility to continue fighting for collective well-being from their respective positionalities in Southeastern Mexico. The centrality of continued presence and action in *las montañas* make the Zapatista communiques both Indigenous land acknowledgements and survivance stories.

Narrative Interventions

The emergence of land acknowledgments in academic settings is the direct result of growth in Indigenous Studies. As Indigenous scholars tell different stories about their university's history and presence, significantly more students and employees are aware of the Indigenous Peoples on whose lands they live and work. To tell a different story about our relationships to settler institutions is to participate in an *intervening* project, which is one of the "25 Indigenous Projects" outlined by Maori scholar, Linda Tuhiwai Smith in *Decolonizing Methodologies.* According to Smith:

> Intervening takes action research to mean literally the process of being proactive and of becoming involved as an interested worker for change. Intervention-based projects are usually designed around making structural and cultural changes… Intervening is directed then at changing institutions which deal with [Indigenous] peoples and not at changing [Indigenous] peoples to fit the structures. (Smith 147)

Each of Smith's Indigenous projects introduce processes for changing the settler colonial status quo. In research settings where these processes are called methodologies, Smith generously offers academics a guide on how to conduct research that effectively improves Indigenous Peoples' lives by making structural change. Similarly, the Zapatista movement mitigated the destruction of their

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communities wrought by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and simultaneously, their communiques *intervene* in the metanarratives that glorify global capitalism.

In their "Fourth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle," the Zapatistas offer an analysis of the hierarchical and alienating neoliberal relationship dynamics that maintain the system of global capitalism. *La Quarta* announces their rededication to rebellious action. The prominence of *worlds* constructed by *words* in the political analysis excerpted below refers to the power of storytelling to create new worlds by finding new ways to relate to one another:

> Brothers and Sisters: Many words walk in the world. Many worlds are made. Many worlds are made for us. There are words and worlds which are lies and injustices. There are words and worlds which are truths and truthful. We make true words. We have been made from true words. *In the world of the powerful there is no space for anyone but themselves and their servants. In the world we want everyone fits. In the world we want many worlds to fit*… Long live the night which becomes a soldier in order not to die in oblivion. In order to live the word dies, its seed germinating forever in the womb of the earth. By being born and living we die. We will always live. Only those who give up their history are consigned to oblivion. Our word, our song and our cry, is so that the most dead will no longer die. So that we may live fighting, we may live singing. Long live the word. Long live Enough is Enough!
>
> We are here. We do not surrender. Zapata is alive, and in spite of everything, the struggle continues.
>
> From the mountains of the Mexican Southeast. (*La Cuarta*; emphasis added)

The body of each declaration revises the Zapatista's historical trajectory and updates followers on their progress, reflections, and future plans to realize *a world where everyone fits*. In the simple phrase, "Brothers and Sisters," a far from simple paradigm shift is enacted through storytelling. *La Cuarta* establishes a horizontal relationship between "Brothers and Sisters," yet remains attentive to heterogeneity ("Many worlds are made"), and global asymmetrical power dynamics between "the powerful… and their servants." *La Quarta* both describes and enacts the interventions necessary to destabilize the metanarratives of neoliberal globalization, "which are lies and injustices." The Zapatistas dispel terminal creeds by asserting their ongoing presence because "Only those who give up their history are consigned to oblivion" and reaffirm their war cry ("¡Ya Basta!/Enough is Enough!") to invoke the survivance narratives ("words") that enable them to continue living, fighting, and singing a new world into being (storytelling). The past is not dead ("Zapata is alive") and continues to inspire the fight for justice ("the struggle continues"), from this specific place ("the mountains of the Mexican Southeast") to siblings in struggle all over the world. By disseminating their vision they plant a seed of possibility for another world, yet to be born from our collective actions.

While acknowledging the land and its stewards is a trans-Indigenous protocol, land acknowledgements need not be a written document nor a public declaration, and often entail a commitment to future action. Sometimes that action includes an offering in the form of a physical gift that represents the good faith of the giver/guest, a spiritual offering like tobacco spread on the land itself, or a verbal expression of respect and good intentions on the part of the guest. In her lecture, "What good is a land acknowledgement?," Cutcha Risling Baldy affirms the need for direct action following a land acknowledgment. The potency of land acknowledgements to intervene in settler colonialism remains latent when they are removed from Indigenous worldviews. However, individual settlers and allies could participate meaningfully in decolonization if they approach land acknowledgements as ongoing stories of which they are a part

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rather than disembodied institutional statements.

As *intervening* projects, land acknowledgements must contribute to structural changes that improve the wellbeing of Indigenous communities and build Indigenous futures. Baldy argues that land acknowledgments should name all of the tribes of that place, use the language and place names of the Indigenous peoples, and always use present tense because the purpose of a land acknowledgement should compel good guests to "really think about what they are doing here." This protocol is dynamic because it acknowledges the personal positionality of the guest in relation to Indigenous stewards and their landbase, thus, it must change as the relationship changes between guests and hosts. Baldy explains they are personal expressions of good faith so,

> land acknowledgments cannot be prescriptive, they can't be formulaic… because what it was supposed to do was inspire people to do the work of what actions will I commit to because of this land acknowledgement. And so every land acknowledgement has to include a very personalized approach to: what does it mean for me that I understand this now? (13:25)

Land acknowledgments are a way to prevent community neglect by reminding us of our complex interrelationships and our subsequent responsibilities in those relationships. As stories of ongoing Indigenous presence, they envision Indigenous futures within specific geopolitical contexts. To make genuine commitments to decolonization the guest would have to familiarize themselves with the local conditions. Baldy asserts this individualized, relationship building work is necessary, otherwise the land acknowledgment doesn't mean anything, and she will often invite audiences to donate to a local organization or cause in real time. In a global capitalist economy, structural change entails the redistribution of resources, thus, land

acknowledgements can compel direct action in the form of mutual aid.

Practice

De La Sexta

The Zapatistas have practiced the direct action necessary to realize decolonization in the neoliberal capitalist era since 1994 because what the Zapatistas "have, in fact, learned is to learn" (*La Sexta*). While each communique centers the Zapatista world by looking outward at how they are located in global networks of storied relationships, the "Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle" is a pivotal expansion of their narrative scale from national and trans-Indigenous to transnational and global forms of direct action. *La Sexta* begins by positioning the Zapatistas within historical and political relationships up to that point (Gregorian calendar year 2005). "Who We Are" and "How We See The World" offer a brief history of the Zapatista movement from their 20 years of clandestine training, to the 1994 uprising against NAFTA, and their present campaigns for Indigenous sovereignty despite obstruction and retaliation from the Mexican government. *La Sexta* also offers explicit land acknowledgements to co-strugglers in the global community as comrades in the fight against the global class of neoliberal capitalists. Their analysis is succinct: "in short, the capitalism of global neoliberalism is based on exploitation, plunder, contempt and repression of those who refuse. The same as before, but now globalized, worldwide" (*La Sexta*). By characterizing "the world of the powerful" as one constructed according to vertical relationships of extraction with which we are already familiar in local contexts, the Zapatistas make global patterns of inequity accessible to a broad audience.

Establishing horizontal relationships in their vision for global liberation, the Zapatistas strategically articulate narrative interventions in settler colonial discourses that *talk about* or *talk down to*, but rarely *with* Indigenous peoples. By positioning themselves within horizontal relationships they align with Allen's trans-Indigenous methodology, which seeks to decenter settler metanarratives and paternalistic

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worldviews. This approach to grassroots solidarity centers listening to the needs of those most impacted by local struggles, rather than dictating hypotheticals from a distance or paternalistically from above. The following call to action precedes the body of the declaration wherein the Zapatistas detail how they will practice solidarity with co-strugglers rebelling in other locations, both in Mexico and globally:

> This is our simple word which seeks to touch the hearts of humble and simple people like ourselves, but people who are also, like ourselves, dignified and rebel. This is our simple word for recounting what our path has been and where we are now, in order to explain how we see the world and our country, in order to say what we are thinking of doing and how we are thinking of doing it, and in order to invite other persons to walk with us in something very great which is called Mexico and something greater which is called the world. This is our simple word in order to inform all honest and noble hearts what it is we want in Mexico and the world. This is our simple word, because it is our idea to call on those who are like us and to join together with them, everywhere they are living and struggling. (*La Sexta*)

Like previous communiques, the Zapatistas share their visions for another world with rich poetic imagery. Since land acknowledgements are stories about our interrelationships in space and time, the excerpt above invokes both the "word" (narratives/stories) and "walk" (action) we must figure out how to take together like I'kal and Votan in "The Story of Questions."

Historically, hierarchically organized resistance movements have not been sustainable for long-term social transformation because they rely on the same top-down and majoritarian-centered processes they claim to critique. When majoritarian groups within marginalized communities prioritize majority interests, it only creates

further marginalization by demanding sacrifice and silence from those who most need social transformation. This is more than a disservice to our multiply marginalized comrades because such processes actively harm members of our communities and *undermine potential collective action* (Crenshaw 167). The Zapatista approach to liberation prioritizes grassroots, bottom-up worldmaking strategies, which also aligns with Kimberlé Crenshaw's theorization of an intersectional approach to anti-discrimination policy. Both Zapatismo and Crenshaw emphasize the need to alleviate the compounding effects of inequality for the most marginalized within marginalized populations. According to Crenshaw, by addressing the needs of the most marginalized among us, "then others who are singularly disadvantaged would also benefit… placing those who currently are marginalized in the center is the most effective way to resist efforts to compartmentalize experiences and *undermine potential collective action*" (Crenshaw 167; emphasis added). In order to transform the hierarchically organized world in which we live, we must tap into our collective powers of imagination to create a world in which everyone is free from structural violence, specifically the violence wrought by neoliberal global capitalism.

In the final section of *La Sexta*, "How We Are Going To Do It", the Zapatistas lay out a 3-point plan for the World and a 4-point plan for Mexico that bridges their analysis of global capitalism with their intersectional strategies for building change *from below*. To partake in this alliance, "non-electoral organizations and movements which define themselves, *in theory and practice*, as being of the left" (*La Sexta*; emphasis added) must foreground principled action and integrity as follows:

> Not to make agreements from above to be imposed below, but to make accords to go together to listen and to organize outrage. Not to raise movements which are later negotiated behind the backs of those who made them, but to always take into account the opinions of those participating. Not to seek gifts, positions, advantages, public positions, from the Power or those who aspire to it, but to go beyond the election calendar. Not to try to resolve from above the problems of

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> our Nation, but to build FROM BELOW AND FOR BELOW an alternative to neoliberal destruction, an alternative of the left for Mexico. (*La Sexta*)

These conditions for "organizing outrage" underscore community accountability and transparency so that all are in agreement, and no one is prioritized over the collective. Since neoliberal globalization is a hierarchical system imposed from above for power and profit, the Zapatistas envision a global resistance movement from below that is horizontally organized to fight for humanity. This is not an individual effort for personal gain and glory—a pitfall for many in the neoliberal university—but a collective movement for liberation based on Indigenous principles for ethical relationship building.

In the summary that follows, the Zapatistas acknowledge their relationships to others in struggle and offer support in whatever capacity they can afford. They begin generally with the peoples of Latin America who remember the light of resistance led first by Simón Bolivar and later by Che Guevara against Spanish colonization. To Cuba they offer maize to help with their resistance under the blockade imposed by the US and other proponents of neoliberalism. The Zapatistas distinguish themselves as part of Latin America rather than the English-speaking countries of North America. However, they are careful to directly address the people of North America who struggle in solidarity with those in other countries, rather than the corrupt government leaders that represent the US and Canada as global powers. Nothing particularly material is offered since most US and Canadian struggles are better funded given their First World or Global North context.

The Zapatistas offer shoutouts to Indigenous leaders in Latin American countries such as the Mapuche in Chile, Venezuelans defending their sovereignty, and Indigenous peoples in Bolivia and Ecuador for "putting a halt to neoliberal globalization" within their national borders. The Zapatistas acknowledge Uruguay,

Brazil, and all the young people in Latin American, but to the piqueteros in Argentina, the Zapatistas say, "we love you." This expression of love is also an expression of admiration for the piqueteros resistance tactics which peacefully and effectively disrupt "business as usual." This tactic is such an affront to capitalism that it is illegal in parts of the United States. Those who obstruct "business as usual" do so with courage at great personal risk of police violence and other structurally sanctioned forms of repression.

When the Zapatistas turn their attention to Social Europe "and their great movements against the neoliberal wars", they offer culturally sensitive support. For example, they will not send Euros because they are likely to be devalued in "the European Union mess", and they will not send Pozol "because pozol is more our way," and could "hurt your bellies and weaken your struggles" (*La Sexta*). Their consideration for the diverse needs of others is a radical divergence from the paternalistic approaches that often pervade liberal and leftist organizing circles.

Like the caracol which symbolizes Zapatismo in its spiral movement—inward for reflection and outward for action—the Zapatistas are looking for ways to strengthen their movement "de abajo y la izquierda" at home. When turning their attention back to their patria, they are careful not to use any newfound knowledge to dictate what those at home "should do [nor] give them orders / Nor… ask them to vote for a candidate… /Nor… tell them to be like us" (*La Sexta*). Rather, the Zapatistas commit to *asking questions* about "what their lives are like, their struggle, their thoughts about our country and what we should do so [the neoliberals] do not defeat us." This attempt to develop a national program of struggle from below seeks to find consensus about how to

> engage in a struggle with everyone, with indigenous, workers, campesinos, students, teachers, employees, women, children, old ones, men, and with all of those of good heart and who want to struggle so that our Patria called Mexico does not end up being destroyed and sold, and which still exists between the Rio Grande and the Rio Suchiate and which has the Pacific Ocean on one side

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and the Atlantic on the other. (*La Sexta*)

This reiteration of the Mexican territory is a land acknowledgment of national scale that declares the geopolitical boundaries in which they will organize resistance and the impacted populations with whom they plan "to exchange with mutual respect, experiences, histories, ideas, [and] dreams" to shape a new political future (*La Sexta*). Central to this effort are the Mexican People "who do not put up with things, who do not surrender, who do not sell out. Who are dignified…" because true power lies with the people united (*La Sexta*).

By declaring their positionality in multiple scales (national/Mexico, regional/ Mexican Southeast, transnational/Lacandon Jungle,[2] trans-Indigenous/pan-Maya,[3] structurally/de abajo, and ideologically/Zapatismo), the Zapatistas model radical transparency. We know who has written this manifesto based on how they define their place in the world and the stories of that place that inform their worldview. We know the purpose of their rebellion, their personal risks, and their demands. We also know the global climate in which this communique intervenes thanks to the Gregorian calendar time stamp (2005) and the geopolitical orientation (las montañas del Sureste Mexicano). This information is necessary for community accountability because they have stated their vision, why it is necessary given their analysis of our global context, and how they plan to achieve liberation according to Zapatista values. If there is any discrepancy between what they say they will do and what they actually do then accountability is not only possible, but necessary.

Decolonial Worldmaking

For those unfamiliar with Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang's seminal article, "Decolonization is not a metaphor," Tuck and Yang posit that decolonization cannot be separated from the repatriation of Indigenous lands. In the vein of "testimony" and

"truth-telling," land acknowledgments utilize Indigenous storytelling practices to create Indigenous worlds that unsettle geopolitical space. By telling stories about our connections to Indigenous lands and peoples, land acknowledgments ought to assert long-standing Indigenous claims to specific geographies and envision their rightful return. Attempts to distract from repatriation are "settler moves to innocence" that only serve to alleviate settler guilt in the short-term but continue to protect the structural foundations of settler colonialism in the long-term (Tuck & Yang 3). Unfortunately, land acknowledgments have been appropriated from Indigenous worldviews to alleviate settler guilt in neoliberal academic institutions that have no intention of returning Indigenous lands or resources. Settler land acknowledgements posture as actions that take responsibility to right past wrongs but are actually rote performances thanking Natives for the land and reinforcing the myth that settler colonialism is a regrettable but permanent condition. *In theory* land acknowledgements prohibit the erasure of Indigenous peoples, but *in practice* settler land acknowledgements are static perversions of an otherwise dynamic worldmaking practice.

Academic research has long been a weapon of colonial exploitation that benefits the settler scholar, their institution, and settler society at the expense of Indigenous peoples. This lack of community accountability persists when settler institutions appropriate land acknowledgments to maintain the settler colonial status quo. As Madeline Whetung and Sarah Wakefield observe, Indigenous knowledge is only valued if it can be passed off as research over which settlers maintain authority, or what they call "knowledge supremacy" (148). According to Whetung and Wakefield, "*that impetus to acquire knowledge… is the exact same impetus for colonizing*, which is to just look outward and grab a bunch of stuff from other places and try to make it legible to yourself, without necessarily having to be a part of it" (150; emphasis added). By accepting land acknowledgements in *theory,* academic institutions preserve their paternalistic knowledge supremacy and protect the neoliberal practice of cultural appropriation through extractive research methodologies *within* the settler institution.

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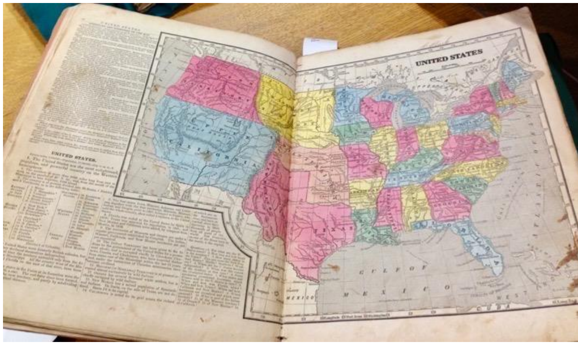
However, as more Indigenous people enter academic institutions, the "Indigenous–scholar" relationship is less of a mutually exclusive binary opposition and increasingly, a hybrid identity (Whetung & Wakefield 150). This paradigm shift positions Indigenous researchers as authorities in both their fields of study and protocols for community accountability, and enables Indigenous–Scholar relationships that value respect, cooperation, reciprocity, and research integrity. To enact decolonial change in academia, the theory and practice of land acknowledgements must be brought into alignment, otherwise academic institutions continue to render decolonization a metaphor. Following Tuck and Yang, settler comfort is the inevitable price that must be paid for decolonization; specifically, the material comfort that comes from neoliberal capitalist impositions on Indigenous land, labor, and natural resources.

Praxis

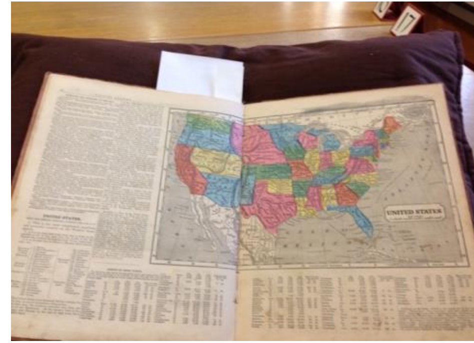
(Re)Mapping

In *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations,* Mishuana Goeman explains that maps, "in their most traditional sense as a representation of authority, have incredible power and have been essential to colonial and imperial projects… as spatial embodiments of knowledge" (16). Rather than accept representations of imperialism as stable, Goeman suggests we see "mapping as a means of discourse that mapped the imperial imaginary" (20). Such an approach "allows us to see that the map is an open one and the ideological and material relationships it produces are still in process" (38). I found evidence of colonial mapping as an open discursive process while examining cartographic representations of the US nation-state after the Mexican-American War ended in 1848. The images below are from two different editions of *Morse's School Geography* textbooks from the Newberry Library's Special Collections.

Morse's School Geography was a popular textbook to educate settler school children, and in Goeman's terms, "exert political control by manipulating the language of space into a language of normativity" that visually consolidates empire through Indigenous erasure (18).



Morse's School Geography (1850)



Morse's School Geography (1854)

Only in the 1850 edition do these pedagogical maps of the United States begin to depict its new nation-state boundaries, but state borders were yet to be determined. The 1854 edition presents a form more recognizable to our present context, however, the juxtaposition of these two maps illustrates that this spatial knowledge was still in process. The only indication of Indigenous presence—aside from the extant use of Indigenous language place names—is the rough formation of Oklahoma, labeled "Indian Territory." This is the site to which the Cherokee, Muscogee, Seminole, Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Ho-Chunk nations were forcibly removed from their ancestral homelands by the US federal government during the Trail of Tears. Oklahoma is noticeably larger in 1850 compared to 1854, indicating rapid settler encroachment while abstracting the violence of invasion.

In contrast, the map below by Carl Wheat depicts the colonial imaginary that precedes those in *Morse's School Geography* above. Conflicting colonial perspectives of what is now known as the U.S. Southwest before and after 1848 represent the contentious history of this region. Colonized first by the Spanish, claimed by Mexico, and invaded by the United States, Indigenous peoples are violently erased, "absented

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and obscured" as "part of the flora and fauna open to settlement" (Goeman 18).

"1540-1861: Mapping the Transmississippi West" by Carl I. Wheat, *Volume Three: From the Mexican War to the Boundary Surveys 1846-1854* (The Institute of Historical Cartography, 1959)

Since these first three cartographic depictions represent colonial metanarratives, we can deduce which areas were thoroughly "explored" by the detail offered in each map. Prior to 1848, the settler nation-state of Mexico's border extended as far north as Oregon and as far east as Texas. In Wheat's depiction, "Upper California" encompasses current day Nevada, and parts of Arizona, Utah, and Idaho. Comparatively, in *Morse's School Geography* (1850), Upper California has a more distinctive shape, but still encompasses Nevada, Utah, Arizona, part of New Mexico, and possibly Colorado. It is also important to note that California as we know it today was well populated with settlers due to the gold rush in 1849, which contributes to its precise representation in *Morse's* 1854 pedagogical map. Since these three colonial maps triangulate the discourse of mapping into terminal creeds, countermapping is a necessary intervention for decolonization.

(Re)mapping as decolonial discourse according to Goeman, is a way to "generate new possibilities. The framing of 're' in parenthesis, connotes the fact that in (re)mapping, Native women employ traditional and new tribal stories as a means of continuation or what Gerald Vizenor aptly calls stories of survivance" (3). Goeman and I both rely on the late British geographer, Doreen Massey's conceptualization of spacemaking as a dynamic discursive process. In *For Space,* Massey argues that space is 1) "the product of interrelations"; 2) "constituted through interactions… in which distinct trajectories coexist"; and 3) "always in the process of being made" (Massey 9). When our distinct trajectories co-exist in the same locations, we create a "sphere of influence" where space is made and can even be unmade or remade. In Massey's definition, space is heterogeneous and malleable. The product of our interrelations changes depending on the respective historical, familial, and ideological stories that shape our interactions. When we tell stories that include the whole world, like the Zapatista communiques, we engage in the ongoing process of worldmaking in a diverse and ever-changing present context.

Chicana Trajectories

As a Queer Xicanx from California, who lives on unceded lands, and works in settler institutions, it is imperative that I create a meaningful land acknowledgement from my personal trajectory and subsequent positionality. I began this article with an epigraph by the late Gloria Anzaldúa because her shape poem not only tells the story of colonization and Xicanx displacement, but also prophesizes decolonization. Xicanx participation in Indigenous resurgence is often misguided, which is why I don't teach Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. Instead, I regularly assign her posthumous essay "Border Arte: Nepantla, el lugar de la frontera" so that students—many of whom are Latine—learn about our academic foremother, but also begin to think critically about the ways in which representations of indigeneity are filtered through settler colonial worldviews.

In "Border Arte," Anzaldúa critically reflects on her experience at the 1992

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opening day of *Aztec: The World of Monctezuma* exhibit in the Denver Natural History Museum. Throughout the essay, Anzaldúa articulates the Xicanx dilemma that many of us grapple with throughout our lives: how do we engage with "cultural 'recovery' and 'recuperation' work" without appropriating Indigenous cultures and perpetuating colonial power dynamics? Anzaldúa notes that the three "madres"—La Malinche, La Llorona, y La Virgen de Guadalupe—are cultural figures that Chicana writers and artists reclaim to express their cultural pride and resist colonial assimilation (51). Unfortunately, by appropriating these cultural figures to "finally [acknowledge] and [accept] our [Native] origins," Anzaldúa observes,

> we've gone to the other extreme, 'becoming,' claiming, and acting as though we're more [Indigenous] than Native Americans themselves—something that Native Americans rightfully resent and thus the source of recent Chicana/Native conflict…Though Chicanas are aware that we aren't 'Indian' and don't live in a Native American culture, and though our roots are [Indigenous], we often do misappropriate and collude with the Anglos' forms of misappropriation. (53)

While I agree with Anzaldúa that her appropriation as a Chicana "differs from the misappropriation by 'outsiders'" (50), unfortunately, the impact of this extractive cultural consumption is the same: Indigenous erasure. This is not ethnic fraud á la Andrea Smith for personal gain, nor is it settler nativism to deflect settler accountability for colonialism as one of the "moves to innocence" identified by Tuck and Yang (10). For Xicanx, our misguided attempts to locate our Indigenous American lineage makes us feel entitled to (re)claim Mexican tribal cultures without tribal consent. Anzaldúa is guilty of claiming Aztec heritage and appropriating Nahuatl, which colludes with the Mexican nation-state's erasure of living Indigenous Peoples on both sides of the border. The nationalist metanarrative of Mexico appropriates Aztec heritage for all

Mexicans while denouncing African ancestry and influence, despite the actual history of mestizaje in Mexico. By ascribing to the metanarrative of the Mexican settler colonial nation-state, Xicanx perpetuate colonialism in one context ostensibly to resist oppression in another.

During the Chicano Movement of the 1960s and 70s, activists intervened in the settler metanarrative that demanded Mexican-American assimilation to the U.S. nation-state by staking a much older claim to the geography. Drawing on Aztec oral stories about their migration south to Tenochititlán (Mexico City), Xicanx claim ancestral lands that straddle the US-Mexico border with the rallying cry, "We didn't cross the border, the border crossed us." Since then, many Xicanx have ascribed to this metanarrative of Aztec ancestry to assert their right to be in the US as displaced descendants of Indigenous Americans. The presence of Uto-Aztecan linguistics in this region affirms Mesoamerican cultural influences, but to use such knowledge to displace current Indigenous peoples cannot in good faith be called decolonization. However, at the National Museum of Mexican Art in Chicago, Xicanx history begins with two maps. The first is featured here, titled "Aztlán, Xicanx Homeland" and outlines Mexican territory before U.S. invasion. It is uncomfortably similar in shape to the Wheat map, but there is less topographical detail and it lays claim to Texas, another contested site ("Remember The Alamo").

[Image overleaf]

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Aztlán, Xicanx Homeland, National Museum of Mexican Art in Chicago (2017)

The second map—which I no longer have access to—outlines the geographical parameters of the Mesoamerican cultural influence and the former landbase of the Aztec Empire. The borders of the Xicanx homeland are drawn to include the US Southwest as a part of Mesoamerica. While it acknowledges Indigenous heritage, it is a homogenizing representation. Indigenous peoples with homelands within the parameters of Aztlán's cultural boundaries have expressed frustration with Xicanx Nationalists whose land claims encroach on *their* long-standing claims to the exact same geography. After waves of invasion that began with the Spanish Crown, continued through the Mexican nation-state, and now exists due to US Imperialism, Xicanx claims to the US Southwest is just another iteration of settler colonialism. As Xicanx, we cannot claim to be allies with our Indigenous relatives if we contribute to their erasure. To be in solidarity with Indigenous Peoples we must build relationships based on respect, reciprocity, and humility. We must be honest about our own complicated positionalities (and privileges) as Xicanx, we must listen to Indigenous

Peoples, and we must use our majoritarian privilege to amplify Indigenous voices, rather than drown them out.

Anzaldúa's legacy is undeniable. By starting important conversations about Chicana Indigeneity, Chicana queerness, and border transgression as resistance, she created a narrative space for Queer Chicana writers and artists to experience belonging that previously did not exist. While "Border Arte" interrogates her own Chicana appropriation of Indigeneity, Anzaldúa still introduces the concept of nepantla, and by doing so, appropriates Nahuatl phonetics and Aztec symbolism to describe a Xicanx transitional space. This analysis will not engage with nepantla directly, but rather the ways in which Anzaldúa invites us to think about space and spacemaking as malleable because she too believes another world is possible. In "Border Arte", she asks, "What does it mean that this exhibit takes place in Denver? / It means that the border itself moves, is mobile" (Anzaldúa 48). Anzaldúa's answer aligns with Massey's definition of space as always in the process of being made, Goeman's assertion that maps are spatial discourses, and the Zapatista's global restructuring of the world to fight neoliberalism.

Since movement is inevitable, we must "learn how to learn" to navigate change with principled action to build a new world that prioritizes collective liberation. At times, the oppressive systems in which we live seem static, permanent, and all consuming, making change seem impossible, and another world inconceivable. For some, it may be difficult to imagine the end of the world as we know it as anything other than total destruction. However, creative mediums, such as art—and more specifically, storytelling—hold the power to transform our perspectives so that we might transcend our preconceived limitations. If we ascribe to a different story, one that does not perpetuate colonialism, but dismantles neoliberal global capitalism, we can bring that new world into being by changing how we relate to one another in micro- and macrocosmic contexts. The European invasion brought about the end of the world for many Indigenous Peoples, so narratives about Indigenous resurgence recall stories

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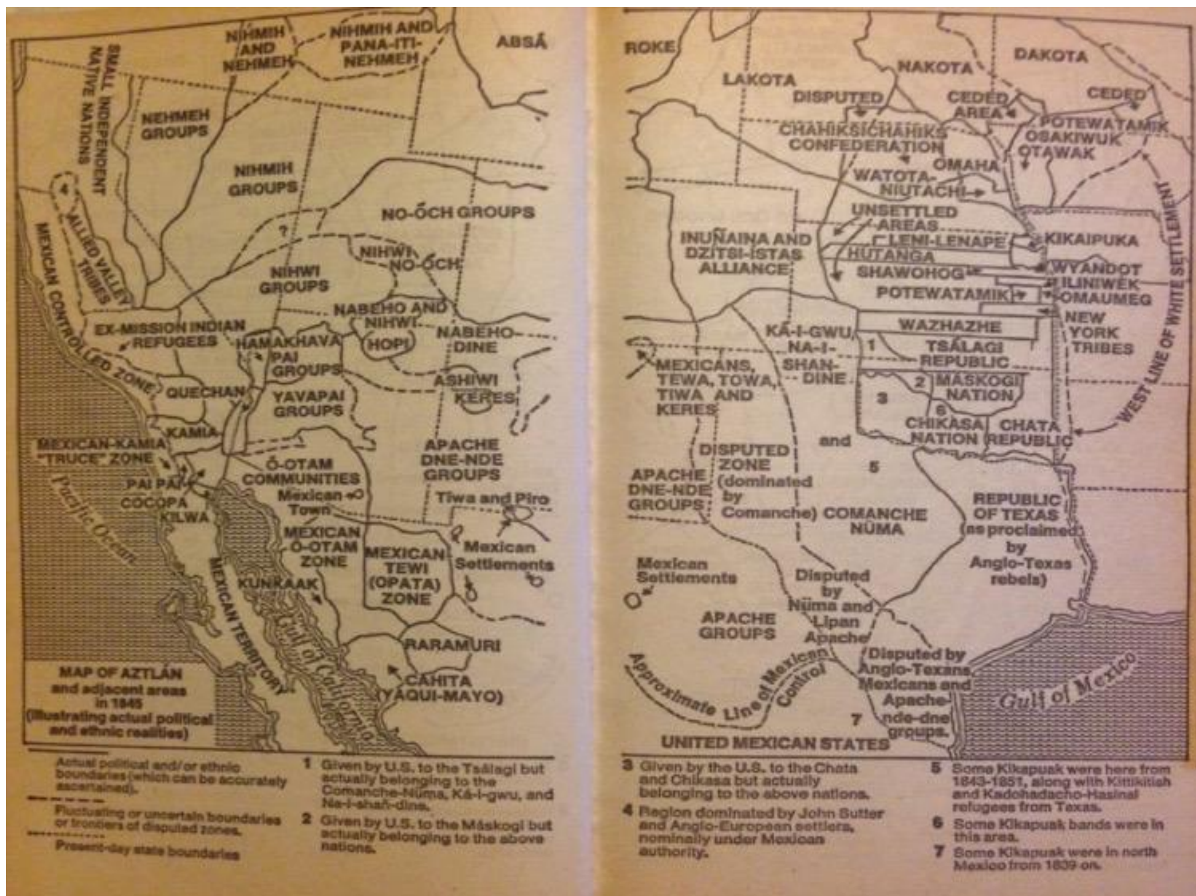
that restore hope and envision our collective healing; these are stories of survivance.

My Xicanx Land Acknowledgment

My Xicanx story is one of displacement and diaspora. As Xicanx we have been ideologically displaced from our Indigenous homelands, while simultaneously still living in the Americas. It is a precarious type of diaspora because we cannot always identify the exact tribal nation we are from, but we are undeniably from here, the here that existed before colonization, the here that still exists. With lineage that predates the US annexation of the Sonoran Desert region, most of my relatives identify as Mexican despite having no direct ties to the Mexican nation-state as it currently exists. This can mean that my ancestors were Mexican when this land was part of the settler colonial nation-state of Mexico and thus carry that identity as a subtle form of resistance to American assimilation. Or, it is also possible that my ancestors were Indigenous and claimed Mexican identity to avoid genocidal policies such as bounty hunting, boarding school kidnappings, and enslavement.

Lying about blood was a common survival strategy that Deborah Miranda illuminates in *Bad Indians,* with her poem, "Lies My Ancestors Told For Me." Miranda expounds, "When a lie saves your life,/that's truth; when a lie saves the lives/of your children, grandchildren/and five generations forward,/that's truth in a form so pure/it can't be anything/but a story" (49). As Miranda observes, a story can contain all the complexities and contradictions of so-called "truths and lies" because a truth or lie is defined by its rhetorical context. My Xicanx story is made of many fragments that contain truths and lies, some I have inherited, and others I have adopted, but all exist in ever shifting contexts that do not deviate from what is now known as the US Southwest/Northern Mexico. Undoubtedly, Indigenous peoples in this region maintain tribal narratives that identify much more precise geographies and as a result, some

Indigenous writers and scholars have attempted to mitigate this intertribal tension over belonging.



"Map of Aztlán,"Aztecas Del Norte: The Chicanos of Aztlán by Jack Forbes (1973)

In *Aztecas del Norte*, the late Jack Forbes (Powhatan-Renapé and Lenape descent) makes the controversial claim that Chicanos are the largest tribe in North America. His "Map of Aztlán," attempts to illustrate the "actual political and ethnic realities" of Aztlán to dispel the metanarrative of cultural hegemony that dominates both imperialist and Xicanx Nationalist depictions of the region. Contrary to Goeman's claim that maps are discourses in process, Massey calls mapping an "after the fact" documentation of the process of spacemaking (5), which renders most maps as

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cartographic representations of terminal creeds. The geopolitics that shape mapped spaces in Massey's characterization are invisible and the result is presented as a static and uncompromising, universal truth. However, the noticeable gaps in Forbes's map actually lends it to Goeman's theory that maps are discourses in process. It is not a terminal creed since it depicts a dynamic world that can be read in many different ways. For example, Forbes outlines Indigenous geographical spaces with clearly defined solid lines to indicate that they are indisputable. The Indigenous cultural regions labeled "disputed zones" are trans-Indigenous geographies shared between Indigenous groups that are demarcated by lines with long dashes to indicate porousness in spatial "truths." Settler nation-state boundaries are marked with short dashes, representing them as the most tenuous land claims by making them appear the most porous. By layering Indigenous, trans-Indigenous, and settler nation-state geographies, Forbes compresses temporalities and makes space for many ancestral worlds to co-exist in his story of Aztlán.

According to Keith Basso in *Wisdom Sits in Places,* "Knowledge of places is… closely linked to knowledge of the self, to grasping one's position in the larger scheme of things" (34). Places are specific geographic locations and one's knowledge of a place defines how one relates to the locale. As Basso explains, Indigenous narratives construct a history of "what happened here" (6) because "the place-maker's main objective is to speak the past into being, to summon it with words and give it dramatic form, to *produce* experience by forging ancestral worlds in which others can participate and readily lose themselves" (32). What Basso describes as "place-making" is storytelling that imbues geographical places with cultural significan'e. Close observation of the "Map of Aztlán" reveals rhetorical gaps in Forbes's map that represent gaps in his own knowledge. First, only the largest tribal groups and those with federal recognition are represented. Then, if we look at California, the tribal

nations are identified by general regions, or their colonization by Spanish Missionaries ("Ex-Mission Indian Refugees"). While more Indigenous Californians are intervening on this metanarrative of erasure, Forbes is representing his own positionality through the information he had available at the time. Moreover, the entire map only covers the U.S. portion of Aztlán, which validates the Xicanx metanarrative, but erases Mexican Indigeneity by centering the US nation-state. According to Goeman, remembering "important connections to land and community is instrumental in mapping a decolonized Native presence," but it is clear from the colonial presence in the "Map of Aztlán" that this is not a story about decolonization (29).

Rather than conform to the metanarrative of imperialist maps, land acknowledgments enable us to share more complex stories about our interrelationships—and our subsequent responsibilities—with places and peoples. Since the "stories that connect Native people to the land and form their relationships to the land and one another are much older than colonial governments," the map that resonates with my own positionality is Leslie Marmon Silko's "Five Hundred Year Map" (Goeman 28).

[Image overleaf]

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"Five Hundred Year Map," *Almanac of the Dead* by Leslie Marmon Silko (1991)

In the opening pages of *Almanac of the Dead,* Silko's "Five Hundred Year Map" roughly outlines Aztlán, not to validate Xicanx Indigeneity, but to invalidate settler colonialism. The focal point of the map is Tucson, and all borders are removed except the US-Mexico border, which is depicted by a single vector that only acknowledges Mexico and symbolically erases the US, "(re)mapping power relations abused in the global

capital system" (Goeman 158). Silko's personal essays address the arbitrary, yet violent enforcement of the US-Mexico border around Laguna Pueblo despite the metanarrative of a precisely maintained boundary and its distinctive presence on her map represents the partition for the rigid imposition that it is on the area. According to Goeman, "[by] making use of language to create new associations with borders as unreal and history as not yet finished, [Silko] reflects a map without borders. The prophesy referred to… is not a magical happening *but rather the process of language and communal sharing"* (199). The text in the lower right-hand corner of the map shares Silko's decolonial worldview, which is heavily influenced by Pueblo stories that compress time and locate Indigenous futures in old prophetic symbols about the arrival and inevitable disappearance of European worldviews. All that is left is for us to live the story of decolonization that has already been told.

While the "Five Hundred Year Map" is part of a fictional text, it nonetheless narrates the cultural reality of survivance in the region. It depicts a decolonial space that includes non-humancentric relationships, trans-Indigenous alliances, and alliances with descendants of formerly enslaved Africans—all victims of settler colonialism in the Americas. In the "Five Hundred Year Map," "Silko is generating a sense of belonging based on acknowledging the relations around us… [and] relationships are essential" (Goeman 199). *Almanac of the Dead* was published in 1991, three years before the Zapatista uprising in 1994, yet narrates Indigenous resurgence in the neoliberal global capitalist era. One of the narrative threads in this polyvocal text follows twin brothers Tacho and El Feo, as they organize an Indigenous-Maya resistance movement in the state of Chiapas. As their movement spreads north, Indigenous Peoples on both sides of the border begin to organize in solidarity. This uncanny prediction that Maya resistance in Southeastern Mexico will bring about decolonization across the Americas is not lost on Indigenous peoples and informed allies. It took Silko ten years to write her novel, which means she was writing it while the Zapatistas were in the midst of their 20 years of clandestine training in Chiapas. As the quincentennial of European invasion

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approached in 1992, many Indigenous Peoples were reflecting on the past five hundred years of colonization with the prophetic knowledge that this era of destruction will end. These are the place-based narratives that inform this Xicanx land acknowledgement. Like Anzaldúa's shape poem, Silko's map undermines settler borders and literally narrates an inevitable, decolonized, landback future. Acoma Pueblo writer and scholar Simon Ortiz asserts that "[the] oral tradition has been the most reliable method by which Indian culture and community integrity have been maintained" and in the face of perilous circumstances, "[the] continued use of the oral tradition today is evidence that this resistance is ongoing" (Ortiz 9; 122). Since storytelling is precisely how Indigenous peoples resist ethnocide under settler colonialism, I choose to ascribe to the stories that prophesize Indigenous resurgence and decolonization. *Almanac of the Dead* is one such story.

Just like Silko's hero twins, the Zapatistas also embody an ancient prophesy. In *La Quinta,* the Zapatistas include an epigraph from the Popul Vuh—the K'iche' Maya story of creation—that reaffirms their ongoing commitment to survivance: "'We are the avengers of death./Our lineage will never be extinguished as long/as there is light in the morning star.'/–Popul Vuh" (*La Quinta*). For the Maya, the colonial eviction date was set for the year 2012 and in December of that year they released the following communique to announce the birth of a new world:

> To Whom It May Concern:
>
> Did you listen?
> It is the sound of your world crumbling.
> It is the sound of our world resurging.
> The day that was day, was night.

And night shall be the day that will be day.

Democracy!

Liberty!

Justice!

From the Mountains of Southeastern Mexico.
For the Clandestine Indigenous Revolutionary Committee – General Command of the EZLN

Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos,
Mexico, December 2012

There is no doubt that trans-Indigenous prophesies of resurgence empower Indigenous Peoples in resistance. The Zapatistas credit their stories for guiding them in struggle, which includes las montañas and Zapata (*La Quinta)*. By Indigenizing Zapata and his spirit of resistance, the Zapatistas offer Xicanx a shared ancestor so we may stand in solidarity with our Indigenous relatives from our respective positionalities in the North, rather than replicate colonial practices of cultural appropriation. If we accept that land acknowledgements are a form of community literacy that position us within place-based relationships, and relationships define our responsibilities for one another, then Indigenous protocol requires that we state who our people are, where we come from, and what we are doing here. The narratives we believe about our place in the world shape how we embody space, and thus, I am a Queer Xicanx from California and I am of the Sixth/Soy de la Sexta.

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Conclusion

This essay relies on storytelling methodology to intervene on static conceptions of space-time and envision decolonial futures in which Xicanx contribute meaningfully to Indigenous resurgence and decolonization. It posits that the purpose of land acknowledgements is to contribute to the ongoing story about the world of which we are all a part by intervening in the terminal creeds of colonial maps through the trans-Indigenous practice of storytelling as a form of worldmaking. In the neoliberal university where I am located this would require us to confront capitalist ways of constructing relationships. At the public institution where I work, many people have adopted a depoliticized land acknowledgment on their own authority: "Cal Poly is in tiłhini, the Place of the Full Moon. We gratefully acknowledge, respect, and thank yak titʸu titʸu yak tiłhini… in whose homeland we are guests." While the quoted material might seem like a noble effort by well-meaning academics who put this statement in their email signatures, justice-oriented settler land acknowledgement should acknowledge the extractive historical relationship of which they are a part and offer a good faith gesture for righting the past wrongs from which they continue to benefit by living on stolen land. Institutional change starts with individuals who will take up the discomfort of *intervening* on their own power and privilege to change the neoliberal practices that enable universities to extract resources from unceded Indigenous lands, while simultaneously mining decolonial discourse from Indigenous Studies and other historically marginalized disciplines. Land acknowledgements mean nothing without dedicated action to repatriate Indigenous lands to Indigenous Peoples, so I have taken a page from Cutcha Risling Baldy's book and for every land acknowledgment I give, I also ask the audience to take action by donating to support a local grassroots organization or project (most recently: Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary).

Notes

[1] Translations of the Zapatista Communiques are taken from https://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/ and used throughout this essay.
[2] The Lacandon Jungle is also a transnational and trans- Indigenous space, uniting Maya in the region that crosses settler borders of Mexico, Guatemala, and Belize.
[3] "The Zapatistas were and are standing together and behind the Indian peoples of the country. Like now, we were then only a small part of the great history with a face, word, and heart of the nahuatl, paipai, kiliwa, cúcapa, cochimi, kumiai, yuma, seri, chontal, chinanteco, pame, chichimeca, otomí, mazahua, matlazinca, ocuilteco, zapoteco, solteco, chatino, papabuco, mixteco, cuicateco, triqui, amuzgo, mazateco, chocho, izcateco, huave, tlapaneco, totonaca, tepehua, popoluca, mixe, zoque, huasteco, lacandón, maya, chol, tzeltal, tzotzil, tojolabal, mame, teco, ixil, aguacateco, motocintleco, chicomucelteco, kanjobal, jacalteco, quiché, cakchiquel, ketchi, pima, tepehuán, tarahumara, mayo, yaqui, cahita, ópata, cora, huichol, purépecha, and kikapú." (*La Quinta)*

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