THE SEARCH FOR SOLIDARITY IN THE UNITED STATES-MEXICO BORDERLANDS/OCCUPIED O’ODHAM TERRITORY

by

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Abstract

Qualitative research in Tucson, Arizona reveals limitations to coalition building based on activists’ distinct positions and experiences, as well as their disparate understandings of the meaning of solidarity. Nonetheless, in the context of increasing militarization in the United States-Mexico borderlands/occupied O’odham territory, there is a history of coalition building to challenge the violence, at times halting the U.S. state’s plans for further militarization. Thus, it is timely to consider the (im)possibilities for solidarity amongst activist groups confronting militarization. To do so, I first examine the analysis and strategies put forward by immigrants’ rights groups, incorporating literature related to racial capitalism and imperialism. Next, I consider critiques and strategies presented by a Palestine/occupied O’odham land solidarity group, integrating scholarship on settler colonialism and indigenous resistance. Finally, I discuss challenges to and potentials for coalition building in the region based on listening to activists’ varying sentiments related to solidarity.

I posit that a form of solidarity that requires finding a common struggle, despite the recognition of different experiences, may reify settler colonial ways of relating. I argue a decolonial framework may foster a form of solidarity that does not require a search for one form of oppression that is “common” to all, but rather embraces a form of solidarity that strives to listen to and learn from multiple subject positions. Additionally, a form of solidarity that embraces analyses born out of listening to various (hi)stories of those affected by the ongoing militarization in the region provides a nuanced understanding of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands/occupied O’odham territory. Such an understanding highlights the complexity and multiple technologies of power at play in the U.S. settler colonial capitalist nation, as well as various forms of ongoing resistance to oppression.
Lay Summary

This research contributes to ongoing conversations related to potentials for solidarity amongst activist groups. To do so, I carried out research in Tucson, Arizona to consider the possibility for solidarity amongst activist groups that employ different strategies to confronting United States state violence in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands/occupied O’odham territory. Next, I discuss difficulties related to attempts to forge solidarity through establishing one struggle as universal. As such, I suggest there is a benefit to appreciating particular activists’ experiences and listening to their corresponding perspectives. I support such work by outlining the contributions of the various activist organizations I worked with in Tucson, and then putting their analyses in conversation with one another.
Preface

This thesis is the original, unpublished work of Rebekah Kartal. The fieldwork carried out for this thesis was approved by the full University of British Columbia Behavioral Research Ethics Board or by an authorized delegated reviewer, UBC BREB number H17-01204; Principal Investigator: Dr. Juanita Sundberg.
Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................ iii
Lay Summary ............................................................................................................................... iv
Preface ........................................................................................................................................... v
Acknowledgements ..................................................................................................................... vi

Introduction ................................................................................................................................ 1
  The state of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands ................................................................................. 1
  The (im)possibility for coalition building in occupied O’odham territory/the U.S.-
  Mexico borderlands .................................................................................................................... 5
  On positioning ............................................................................................................................ 7
  The thesis: priorities and roadmap ............................................................................................ 11

Chapter 1 ................................................................................................................................... 12
  1.1 On edge: The precarious position of undocumented migrants ...................................... 12
  1.2 U.S. imperialism and globalization as dispossessive forces: How did we get
  here? ........................................................................................................................................ 16
  1.3 From education to mobilization: Racialization for profit making .................................. 18
  1.4 Criminalization as legitimation for the racial capitalist state ............................................ 23
  1.5 Confronting criminalization: Demands! ............................................................................. 26
  1.6 From racialized subject to liberal subject: speaking the language of the state ................. 29

Chapter 2 ................................................................................................................................... 38
  2.1 Exposing settler colonial roots of violence in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands ... 38
  2.2 Educating from O’odham lands and Palestine ................................................................. 41
  2.3 Responding to restrictive spaces: Articulating a politics of refusal ................................ 52

Chapter 3 ................................................................................................................................... 57
  3.1 The search for solidarity ...................................................................................................... 57
  3.2 Confronting universalizing desires .................................................................................... 68
  3.3 Challenging the binary: Neocolonialism and the racialization of arrivants .................... 69
  3.4 Inclusion as assimilation: Uncovering the settler colonial foundations of the
  U.S. ......................................................................................................................................... 72

Concluding discussion ............................................................................................................. 75
  Capturing further complexity through dialogue and listening .............................................. 75

References: ................................................................................................................................. 81
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Introduction

The state of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands

[M]ilitarization has gotten a lot more intense. So thousands more border patrol…the wall has been built…which didn’t even used to be there when we started the work and Operation Streamline, so people are put into criminal…proceedings where they’re criminalized and put into prison just for…what are referred to as administrative violations…And so I’d say it’s just become a lot more difficult, a lot more dangerous, because people are forced into…more and more difficult and dangerous areas to cross, just to avoid the surveillance. So also we’ve seen that the towers go up, built…by Israeli companies partnering with United States government and so that again forces people into more and more dangerous areas to cross to avoid surveillance. So more people are dying because of that. Even though the numbers of people apprehended, which is supposed to reflect the number of people crossing, is down, proportionally the number of deaths is up because people are being forced into more and more dangerous areas and it’s intentional. I mean it’s an intentional government policy.

Border Patrol tactics have led to people being disappeared.

Like we are in a war

-Linda, activist in Tucson, Arizona, interview September 8, 2017

I begin with Linda’s accounts of the militarization of the United States-Mexico borderlands/occupied O’odham territory because, living and working in this region for many years, she is well positioned to speak to the increasing violence. While I can speak to this increasing militarization too, based on the large Border Patrol presence and numerous checkpoints I saw during my time in southern Arizona for example, having only spent six and a half months there limits my scope. Moreover, my experience as a white U.S. citizen was one of relative immunity from U.S. state violence to which Linda

1 All names have been changed to pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality of
and other activists refer. For example, I was never harassed at a Border Patrol checkpoint beyond being asked if I was a U.S. citizen, to which I answered yes, and was waved through. At times, I was not even asked whether I was a U.S. citizen, and instead, I was simply signaled to move through. Yet, as seen in Linda’s accounts above, my experience stands in stark contrast to many of the encounters faced by some of those whom I collaborated with in the region.

The increasing border enforcement, evidenced in the expansion of Border Patrol enforcement (Miller 2016) and the proliferation of new weapons and surveillance technologies, alongside the “archipelago of detention, prosecution, and deportation facilities” (Dear 2015, n.p.), “produces a subsequent ‘insecuritization’ of immigrant communities and all too often marginalized citizens in routine dynamics of policing, detention and deportation, that borders on state terror” (Rosas 2015, 120; c.f. Coalition to Bring Down the Walls 2006). Border patrol tactics of the 90s that increased border patrol presence and fencing in urban areas (Cornelius & Salehyan 2007) have pushed migrants to cross non-urban areas that are more dangerous due to terrain, remoteness, and climatic conditions (Cornelius 2001; Burridge 2009; Simmons et. al. 2015). These new policies have brought suffering and, in some cases, migrant loss of life. The coroner’s office in Tucson, Arizona reported a “twentyfold increase in the number of migrant bodies found each year since the 1990s” (Jones 2016, n.p.).

Alongside the precarious position faced by undocumented migrants, which activists and scholars alike have documented, other activists illuminate how the surveillance and discrimination documented in the region today exemplifies ongoing colonization of indigenous lands and life:
They built this wall, a lot of it or most of it, on occupied territory, land...

-Robert, Tucson, Arizona, interview, October 23, 2017

His whole military industrial complex, they’re part of this huge machine and they’re all working together, in tandem to colonize indigenous people, not only here but in Palestine.

Putting walls between us indigenous people; they’re recruiting our youth as Border Patrol

Of course you don’t want any of this on your land

-activists, Tucson, Arizona, “Together We Struggle: For justice, equality and freedom!”, November 29, 2017

Those hundred miles are under control of the Border Patrol and Homeland Security...And that includes a lot of the Tohono O’odham Nation.

-Omar, Tucson, Arizona, interview, November 2, 2017

We’re seeing unprecedented surveillance, discrimination, and many of us believe that they’re trying to run us off our land.

-activist, Nogales, Sonora, School of the America Watch, “Towards a World Without Walls!”, November 11, 2017

Despite the increasing militarization in the region, there is a history of numerous activist groups in southern Arizona contesting this violence and the increasing criminalization in the borderlands. Instances of solidarity amongst various activists and activist groups have, in some cases, foiled the U.S. regime’s plans for further militarization. Coalitions not only may thwart plans for further militarization of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands but also, in bringing together various actors, they reconfigure existing discourses. For instance, in 2003 in
Arizona the Coalition to Bring Down the Wall halted government plans for further militarization of the region at the time (Ray 2013). Additionally, through its unification of “environmentalist, humanitarian, and indigenous activists,” the coalition reshaped conversations related to “immigration, security, and the environment” to demonstrate “that environmental and social justice concerns are structurally related” (Ray 2013, 171).

In similar fashion, just recently a coalition of environmental groups, immigrants’ rights activists, indigenous peoples, poets, musicians, and politicians staged a rally near the Santa Ana Wildlife Refuge to protest the Trump administration’s plans for more border wall (Bird 2018). The coalition was successful in preventing the construction of the border wall through Santa Ana; however, over $1.5 billion was allocated to construct barriers in other parts of the Rio Grande Valley (Barclay 2018). Activist Hinojosa (2018) reflects on the victory that protected the Santa Ana Wildlife Refuge and what is required for continued success in confronting the militarization of the region:

> [O]ur passionate community must hold tight with each other, celebrate our wins, prioritize our partnerships, and keep pulling together to push back against the next wave of oppression from the Trump administration and Customs and Border Protection.

Hinojosa speaks to the importance of solidarity to succeed in halting further militarization, noting, despite victories, there is still work to be done in the face of ongoing violence in the region.

These instances of coalition building in the face of ongoing militarization in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands demonstrate the significance of considering the conditions of possibility for mobilizing in solidarity to confront increasing militarization in the region.
I posit that confronting the bourgeoning militarization would require a move toward greater, long-lasting solidarity amongst various activist organizations in the region.

The (im)possibility for coalition building in occupied O’odham territory/the U.S.-Mexico borderlands

I consider the possibilities for solidarity within activism in Tucson/Chukson, Arizona where immigrants’ rights organizations and a Palestine/occupied O’odham land solidarity group find education foundational to their work. Additionally, both groups center discourses of racialization and dispossession in their educational framework. However, each groups’ emphasis on disparate, particular (hi)stories is accompanied by contrasting understandings of the origins of violence in the region, and thereby holds unique critiques and demands. This research seeks to understand the particular framings of immigrants’ rights groups in contrast to the Palestine/occupied O’odham land solidarity group and the strategies employed by each group for confronting the increasing militarization, before considering the (im)possibility for solidarity amongst these groups in the region.

More specifically though, I strive to understand the grounds on which groups with varying approaches may or may not build coalitions that would challenge the violence in the U.S-Mexico borderlands/occupied O’odham territory. I ask the following: to what extent are activist organizations working in solidarity to confront militarization in the region? Under what conditions are coalitions between activist organizations more likely to be built? What act as deterrents to coalition building?
To answer these questions, I spent just over six months in Tucson/Chukson, Arizona. Upon my arrival, I introduced myself to numerous activist groups and asked if I could get involved in their groups. Many activist organizations suggested I attend their regular open meetings. Going to these meetings alerted me to educational events, marches, rallies, vigils, film screenings and discussions, and solidarity events that I attended, and, at times when invited, even helped plan. In addition to participant observation, I conducted semi-structured individual interviews. I carried out the majority of my interviews with activists I had gotten to know through my participation in regular meetings and at events.

Carrying out this research, I met with practical limitations. Though I gained insight from talking to numerous activists, there remained many activists to whom I did not have the opportunity to speak, either because they were out of town or they did not respond to my request to interview them. Additionally, some activist groups were inactive during the first couple of months I was in Tucson, which reduced the amount of time I collaborated with these groups. Finally, my work does not seek to make general claims, i.e. theorize solidarity as a universal concept that can be applied the same everywhere.

Based on the limitations delineated above, after several months, I decided to prioritize my collaboration with immigrants’ rights groups, Lucha Unida de Padres y Estudiantes (L.U.P.E) Tucson (United Struggle of Parents and Students Tucson) and the Coalición de Derechos Humanos (Derechos Humanos), and the Arizona Palestine Solidarity Alliance (APSA). Derechos Humanos is one of the oldest organizations committed to defending immigrants’ rights in the area. L.U.P.E., a newer organization
comprised of primarily young adults, is also dedicated to the struggle for immigrants’ rights. Both organizations responded rapidly to current political events, such as the Trump administration’s announcement to rescind DACA, while I was in Tucson/Chukson. Additionally, in some cases, L.U.P.E.’s and Derechos Humanos’ work is representative of immigrants’ rights activism in the U.S. more broadly, as some of their work parallels the work of other immigrants’ rights organizations around the U.S. APSA’s approach to understanding and confronting the militarization in the region provides an important contrast to that of the immigrants’ rights groups. APSA’s different approach provides a productive context in which to contemplate the (im)possibility for solidarity amongst activist groups with varying stances and strategies related to confronting the militarization in the region.

**On positioning**

My interest in collaborating with LUPE, Derechos Humanos, and APSA to ask questions related to the potentiality for solidarity amongst activist groups is based on my own story. Inspired by the work of feminist scholars and methodologies, I find positioning myself crucial to doing research. For example, Haraway (1988) rejects “universality,” instead arguing that “situated and embodied knowledge” are required for responsible knowledge making (583). She further clarifies that she is not advocating relativism but rather “partial, locatable, critical knowledges sustaining the possibility of webs of connections called solidarity in politics and shared conversations in epistemologies” (584). Following Haraway’s call, I want to situate myself in order to lay the groundwork required for the emergence of critical knowledges that do not make
claims to universality, but rather are accountable to relationships in the formation of ways
of knowing.

Nonetheless, I heed Ahmed’s (2004) warning that simply revealing one’s
privileged white position does not guarantee an anti-racist account. Moreover,
“[s]tudying whiteness can involve the claiming of a privileged white identity as the
subject who knows” (Ahmed 2004, n.p.). If used in this way, feminist epistemologies
could reinforce colonial ways of relating that position the white researcher as the only
subject capable of producing knowledge. Indeed, Smith (2013) contends, research has
been and continues to be “inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism”
(30), and as such has come “to shape relations between imperial powers and indigenous
societies” (67).

Thus, in what follows, I position myself not as a way to legitimate my claims as
expertise, nor to stake claims that the academic work I have done has somehow
transcended colonialism. Rather, motivated by indigenous methodologies, I hope by
situating myself I speak to and practice both an honoring of and responsibility to the
activists with whom I worked in Tucson/occupied O’odham territory. Indeed, “[i]n
indigenous frameworks, relationships matter. Respectful, reciprocal, genuine
relationships lie at the heart of community life and community development” (Smith
210). I argue garnering respectful relationships requires critical reflection as it relates to
the positioning of self. Simultaneously, the practice of positioning of self in many ways
follows the activist custom of situating oneself in Tucson. Whether in individual
interviews or in community spaces of education, oftentimes activists reflected and shared
a feature of their (hi)story or position that brought them to the current moment.
The practice of reflecting and sharing (hi)stories or positions relates to decolonial methodologies. I agree with de Leeuw, Cameron, and Greenwood (2012):

[W]orking to decolonize geographic thought and practice requires nurturing forms of relational accountability, not just the relations and spaces through which research is formally evaluated or circulated, but also the multiple ways in which researchers and research subjects are known, seen, and made. (188)

Inspired by their argument, I hope positioning myself will help support an honest, accountable rendering of my commitments, where they are born, how they have been transformed, and where they lie. It is a consistent reflecting on my circumstances as they relate to those circumstances and places of others from which my research scope and the lens through which I understood my fieldwork experiences emerged and continue to be reshaped.

My research interests in questions related to solidarity are born out of my particular positioning within the U.S. Growing up hearing stories of my grandparents’ plight as Jews in Europe before and during the Holocaust, and their concomitant forced migration experience, affected me greatly. In many ways, these stories, coupled with listening to my grandparents speak Hungarian with my dad while eating Hungarian food growing up, served as constant reminders of our immigrant origins. As such, my family and I have always been sensitive to migrants’ struggles. In fact, I was recently reminded of these empathetic sentiments shared by much of my family just recently when my mom sent me a text message with a photo of her with a couple of her friends at an anti-Trump rally. Her hand made sign said, “NO human being is ILLEGAL. WE ARE ALL IMMIGRANTS, WE STAND TOGETHER”.


The stories my grandmother told and continues to tell me from her childhood and adolescence in anti-Semitic Europe and, eventually, Nazi occupied Hungary that forced her into hiding for her survival are a constant reminder of how dissimilar my experience living in the U.S. has been. Growing up I oftentimes found myself reflecting upon how disparate my grandparents’ experience of racialization in Europe, followed by forced displacement, was from my experience of white privilege in the U.S. I was troubled by the recognition that not all migrants are afforded the privileges my grandparents obtained upon their arrival to the U.S., and, as such, some migrants are continually racialized, condemned to a position of precarity. Thus, initially, my research questions began to cluster around understanding how migrants confront racialized violence and exclusion in the U.S. southwest today.

However, more recent experiences living and working on the unceded territory of the Musqueam and Squamish peoples as I work and study at the University of British Columbia (UBC) encouraged me to begin to question what remains at stake when these conversations regarding racialization and exclusion in the context of U.S. citizenship and inclusion occur on occupied land in settler colonial contexts. I think my coming to engage the U.S. as a settler colonial entity late is a testament to technologies of power employed by the U.S. settler colonial state that frame occupation as natural (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014; Byrd 2011;), despite the fact that settler colonial occupation is a continuous structure, not a one-time event (Wolfe 1994). Nonetheless, inspired by indigenous resistance to settler colonialism and by the work of indigenous scholarship, I began to more deeply examine my family history of migration and my related commitment to the struggle for immigrants’ rights and inclusion in the U.S. As I reflected upon the fact that
I have Jewish European family spread across four settler colonial states that include the U.S., Israel, and Canada, I began to ask myself, how is it that a racialized, oppressed people find their “opportunity” in the dispossession of the original inhabitants of the place to which they arrive?

**The thesis: priorities and roadmap**

This aforementioned question structured much of the way I synthesized my experiences in Chukson/Tucson, Arizona, encouraging me to prioritize both conversations that centered geographies of racialization as well as dispossession in my analysis. Additionally, I was motivated by my (hi)story to try to put distinct insights from the particular activist groups I collaborated with into conversation with one another. Thus, I will dedicate chapter one to delineating the commitments of immigrants’ rights groups, L.U.P.E and Derechos Humanos. I will primarily focus on their educational strategy that centers U.S. imperialism as it relates to racialization and capital, and their demand for legalization for all. Then, in chapter two, I will outline APSA’s commitment to education that sheds light on U.S. settler colonialism and indigenous resistance, and their refusal to make demands to the U.S. Finally, in chapter three, I will explore the (im)possibilities for constructing solidarity amongst various activist groups in occupied O’odham land/the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. I do so by attending to activists’ varying perspectives related to solidarity that may encourage us to reimagine solidarity altogether.
Chapter 1

1.1 On edge: The precarious position of undocumented migrants

September 4, 2017. I biked to the Lucha Unida de Padres y Estudiantes Tucson (LUPE) meeting in South Tucson like I had done many times before. However, this time was different. As I walked into the room where we had our biweekly LUPE meetings, I felt an acute tenseness. The light-hearted chitter chatter to which I had grown accustomed to hearing at prior LUPE meetings had vanished. Although it may have felt like an insignificant Monday to many, well over half a million people in the United States were bracing themselves for an announcement related to their legal status. This imminent announcement brought many immigrants’ rights groups together, along with members of Black Lives Matter Tucson and the Chukson/Tucson Water Protectors, to strategize. How would we respond to this impending announcement? What should we demand? How could we support those in the most precarious position?

The Trump administration announced the ending of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), an Obama-era program that allowed those who arrived to the U.S. without documents as children to have temporary protection from deportation and obtain a work permit that could be renewed every two years, the following day. Numerous immigrants’ rights groups in Tucson joined forces to respond rapidly to the announcement. They held a press conference the same day as the announcement and organized a march and rally the following day. Immigrants’ rights activists gathered for the press conference in front of the City Council with numerous signs, one reading “Aquí estamos, y no nos vamos” against an image of a U.S.A. flag, another reading “They gave
us wings, now they want to cut them off. DACA” with a heart depicted. The largest sign, held in front and spanning about 7 people, read “#HereToStay”. The next day, the Defend DACA! March & Rally, which also convened downtown in front of the City Council building, attracted more than 500 community members (Duarte and Ferguson, 2017).

While there are multiple activist groups in Tucson, Arizona working to confront the increasing militarization in the region, in this chapter I focus on the efforts of LUPE and Derechos Humanos. Derechos Humanos is one of the longest standing immigrants’ rights groups in the region, inspiring the work of many other groups that have emerged since its founding. LUPE, a more recently formed group, consistently spearheaded mobilizations in response to particular instances of increased militarization while I was in Tucson. I decided to focus on these two groups because their efforts are largely aligned and representative of the work of multiple other immigrants’ rights groups in the region.

LUPE and other immigrants’ rights groups were rejecting the escalation of precarity faced by undocumented migrants due to the Trump administration’s repealing of DACA, which removed state protection for undocumented youth and young adults brought to the U.S. as children. A LUPE member that had benefitted from DACA expressed the repudiation of the Trump administration announcement at the DACA press conference: “we’re not going back into the shadows” (5 Sept. 2017). The “shadows” to which this LUPE member is referring, which has been echoed by other immigrants’ rights activists across the nation, could be understood as a metaphor for the condition of insecurity that undocumented people in the U.S. confront. Essentially, this LUPE
member is signaling a rejection of the undocumented status that she sees as responsible for the precarious position of migrants.

Alba, a LUPE member, illustrates this insecure position when she described, “[i]t’s kinda messed up sometimes because you have to be hyper vigilant because of the way we exist, which can be unhealthy sometimes [laughs nervously]…” noting that “it’s very scary, too, with this current administration” (Interview, 7 Oct. 2017). She also reported some of the consequences of being undocumented in the U.S., which include fear and anxiety. Alba also described “public health issues” resulting from deportations, emphasizing the emotional and mental impacts that are incurred by affected families. She knows the impacts first hand, since some of her family members have been deported and others are undocumented. She described feelings of sadness and anger when “relationships are kind of fractured…” “It weighs really heavy on me,” she added (7 Oct. 2017). Lastly, she pointed out that in “detention centers… there are… human rights abuses…where there’s death happening, there’s abuse, like physical abuse, sexual abuse, suicides…” (7 Oct. 2017). Alba calls our attention to the incessant ramifications affecting undocumented migrants and their communities. This precarious position does not just occur during or after detention and deportation, but rather conditions the everyday lives of undocumented migrants and their communities in the U.S.

Natalia, one of the co-founders of LUPE, described undocumented immigrants as “the most vulnerable group in our community” (Interview 13 Nov. 2017). She, alongside others, started LUPE specifically to center their work on the needs of this most vulnerable group. Similarly, Francisca, one of Derechos Humanos’ initial founders described how she and a group of others formed “La Mesilla Organizing Project [an
earlier iteration of La Coalición de Derechos Humanos] to figure out how it was best to organize to protect immigrants’ rights” (Interview 7 Sept. 2017).

Francisca connects mainstream narratives that represent immigrants in a negative light to their increased vulnerability. Her analysis parallels that of many scholars who emphasize the correlation between negative representations of immigrants and the further militarization of the border (see Slack et. al. 2016; Warren 2015; Andreas 2009; Rosas 2015). Francisca emphasized how the precarity immigrants face is related to the way in which immigrants are framed as contributing to or causing whatever is ailing the U.S. nation. Scholars concur, arguing increased border enforcement has been positioned as an answer to portrayals of undocumented migrants as criminals (Purcell & Nevins 2005; c.f. Trujillo-Pagán 2014), and as a potential threat to homeland security (Coleman 2007; Porvine and Doty 2011) or to socio-economic security (Purcell & Nevins 2005).

This trend has continued, exemplified in President Trump’s statements portraying migrants as criminals alongside his plans for increased militarization of the borderlands that include revoking DACA and sending National Guard troops to the U.S.-Mexico border.

I dedicate the rest of this chapter to detailing how LUPE and Derechos Humanos confront the increasing militarization in the region by challenging negative representations of immigrants through their educational framework that emphasizes systems, including U.S. imperialism and profit making qua racialization, responsible for migration and the category of the undocumented migrant. In doing so, rather than frame

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2 See Purcell and Nevins (2005) for a more nuanced understanding of the way in which “complex interchanges between state actors and groups of citizens produced a set of deep concerns about the enthno-cultural, socio-economic, and bio-physical security of the nation…” that have shaped the increasing security apparatus on the U.S.-Mexico border (213).
migrants as criminals, threats, or those who steal U.S. citizens’ job opportunities, LUPE and Derechos Humanos elucidate the position of migrants as relational, produced by experiences of U.S. imperialism, racialization and capitalism.

Next, I will explore the principal demand put forth by LUPE and Derechos Humanos and draw on academic literature to contemplate the potentials for and complications of calling for legalization for all within a racial capitalist social formation. I will conclude this chapter with some reflections related to the impasse that is likely to ensue when calling for inclusion within a system that has depended on racial violence since its inception. Finally, I will outline the importance of looking towards groups that conceive of militarization in the borderlands differently, thus potentially opening ourselves up to alternative approaches to understanding and confronting violence in the region.

1.2 U.S. imperialism and globalization as dispossessive forces: How did we get here?

LUPE and Derechos Humanos are dedicated to shedding light on international processes that are responsible for creating mass migration and are concerned with teaching the community to see the structural dynamics that produce migrants. For example, in one of Derechos Humanos’ potlucks, entitled “Forced Migration: Root Causes,” panelists highlighted the trade agreements, such as the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), and U.S. policies as primary causes of immigration, describing how these agreements and policies ruin the livelihoods of
peasants and indigenous peoples (13 Oct. 2017). One of the panelists indicated how people in Latin America are oftentimes unable to make a living producing crops, such as bananas and coffee, for export to the U.S., and thus have no other option but to migrate. Derechos Humanos, through educational events, works to delineate how the U.S.’s policies related to trade and the economy are implicated in creating the conditions whereby migrants are forced to flee their country and seek better economic conditions in the U.S.

LUPE also provides popular education, in part, through their monthly community Cultura Nights. One of their Cultura Nights entitled “Exportando Violencia” provided information related to how the U.S. empire “export[s]…economic, political and cultural violence” (29 June 2017). Their objective was to articulate the way in which many policies implemented by the U.S. are productive of unlivable conditions in Latin America, pushing people to leave their home country in search of security (economic or otherwise) in the U.S. One LUPE member voiced this sentiment succinctly during her speech at the Defend DACA! March & Rally:

It is important to remember nobody leaves their home just because they feel like it…Nobody leaves their home country to come to a country like this, that treats them like subhumans….I tell you, people do it because they have to do it. They have to. And why do they have to? The American empire, the American empire is out there destroying our home countries, like my home country of Mexico. Complete and utter destruction of Central America and South America by constant intervention, economically and otherwise. (September 6, 2017)

This LUPE member demonstrated how U.S. political and economic interventions wreak havoc across Latin America, forcing people to unwillingly leave their homes.
Through events like marches and rallies, potlucks and *Cultura Nights*, Derechos Humanos and LUPE highlight the relational nature of migration, demonstrating mass migration’s connection to U.S. imperial economic policies in Latin America that force people to emigrate. LUPE and Derechos Humanos encourage the Tucson community to shift its attention from negative tropes of migrants, instead centering the origin of migration by shedding light on violent, dispossessive structures that benefit capitalist imperial expansion at the expense of local communities in Latin America.

1.3 From education to mobilization: Racialization for profit making

In addition to emphasizing structures that are responsible for creating conditions, which force people from Latin America to migrate, LUPE highlights how migrants are treated like “subhumans” upon their arrival to the U.S. because harmful domestic policies racialize them. Migrants encounter a double violence, namely the violent dispossession brought about by U.S. imperial policies and the experience of racial violence upon their arrival to the U.S.

Moreover, LUPE and Derechos Humanos emphasize how, through the racialization of migrants, corporations make a large profit off of mass migration. To do so, LUPE and Derechos Humanos focus much of their attention on providing education related to Operation Streamline, the program that criminally prosecutes undocumented immigrants en masse. One LUPE member described Operation Streamline at the Defend DACA! March & Rally:

We have Operation Streamline right down the street, where immigrants are tagged like products. Operation Streamline came to power because of corporate interest. Immigrants are a product for profit for somebody else,
for somebody at the top, for some white person making money out of the suffering and detention of our community without any protection. (September 6, 2017).

This LUPE member argued that Operation Streamline exists and maintains itself by continually making profit off of the “tagged,” or racialized, undocumented migrants who are subjected to criminal proceedings followed by detention. She also described the way in which vulnerability accompanies racialization. Derechos Humanos also holds Operation Streamline responsible for private prisons profiting, evidenced in a fact sheet on their website that notes that although the criminalization of migration began back in 1952 with the McCarran-Walter Act, the law was seldom enforced (Coalición de Derechos Humanos). Rather, it has been since Operation Streamline’s inception that we see prosecutions of migrants for “illegal” entry and reentry increase exponentially (ibid). In most cases, this prosecution leads to the detention of undocumented migrants from which the private prisons profit. To summarize, LUPE and Derechos Humanos emphasize how corporate interest is tied to the increasing criminalization of immigrants.

Additionally, LUPE delineates how companies benefit from having an undocumented labor force. One LUPE member described at the Defend DACA! March & Rally, “[the undocumented] are not being given papers because somebody needs to super exploit them for cheap labor” (6 Sept. 2017). The exploitation of migrants is evidenced historically: as the U.S. was becoming increasingly reliant on cheap immigrant labor, the U.S. government passed acts that took away the rights and opportunities that had been previously afforded to immigrants and refugees (Noorani 2007). Natalia described the exploitation in an interview when she said, “[w]e see the labor abuses, right? Um they’re being paid under the minimum wage, they’re at risk of deportation”
(13 Nov. 2017). She makes evident how keeping people undocumented allows for the extraction of higher surplus value, which is essential to capitalist accumulation, since those at risk for deportation are less likely to report abuses in the workplace and/or wage violations.

The work of LUPE and Derechos Humanos resonates with the work of scholars who examine race and capital in the context of the United States. For instance, Ponce has argued, “[t]he racialization of migrants is constitutive of the socio-political and economic order in the United States” (Ponce 2014, 9). LUPE demonstrates this point through their examination of the way in which corporate interests support the maintenance of an “undocumented class.” Whether it is private prison corporations that benefit from the detention of undocumented migrants or the employers that take advantage of the undocumented status of their workers to super exploit them, LUPE demonstrates in both cases the capitalist utility of the U.S. domestic policies that maintain and expand the category of the undocumented as “illegal.” In addition, in both cases, LUPE and Derechos Humanos emphasize the vulnerable position racialized migrants are forced to confront under this state-sanctioned capitalist social formation.

In an interview Natalia further detailed how undocumented migrants are used as cheap labor in the agricultural sector:

Who tends to the fields in this country? Who grows the food in this country? Um I can tell you that there are, as we all know, there are children still tending the fields in California for example, in Homestead, in Florida, which I grew up very close to. Um so that source of cheap labor, not only here with keeping an undocumented class but then also… with cheap labor from Latin America as well as in Latin America (November 13, 2017).
Natalia synthesized how capital benefits from both foreign imperial and domestic policies. She does so by drawing our attention to the corporations that benefit from exploited labor in Latin America, while also highlighting how capitalist interests in the U.S. are served by keeping immigrants undocumented, again creating a source of cheap (child) labor.

LUPE’s and Derechos Humanos’ analysis of racialization, as it relates to profit making, resonates with academic literature that examines the relationship between race and capital. Numerous scholars contend that capital accumulation occurs through concomitant racialization. As Thomas (2005) puts it, “[w]ith the introduction of the capitalist mode of production, a new economic and political order had evolved alongside a worldwide racial order that coincided with a global hierarchy of wealth and power” (13). To further theorize this connection between capital accumulation and race, some scholars use the term “racial capitalism”. Reading Cedric Robinson, Melamed (2015) argues, “the term ‘racial capitalism’ requires its users to recognize that capitalism is racial capitalism” (77; see also Preston 2017). Race functions to produce human difference, which is required to make the differential value on which capital depends (Pulido 2017, 527; Preston 2017). In other words, capitalism cannot exist without race.

Gilmore has further conceptualized how racialized geographies are created alongside capitalism:

Racism is a practice of abstraction, a death-dealing displacement of difference into hierarchies that organize relations within and between the planet’s sovereign political territories. Racism functions as a limiting force that pushes disproportionate costs of participating in an increasingly monetized and profit-driven world onto those who, due to the frictions of political distance, cannot reach the variable levers of power that might relieve them of those costs (Gilmore, 2002, p 16).
What is significant here is Gilmore’s attention to how racism, a product of racialization, produces vulnerability. Gilmore describes how racism, as it places subjects in hierarchical relation to one another, provides the means by which the sovereign state can externalize the cost (or violence) of capitalist accumulation onto always already racialized subjects who are unable to access protection from this violence.

Gilmore’s synthesis parallels many of the themes LUPE and Derechos Humanos are committed to teaching. These analyses emphasize the way racial capitalist interests operate to produce vulnerability at multiple scales. LUPE and Derechos Humanos highlight the negative effects of U.S. policies, whether domestic or foreign, which protect profit making at the expense of local communities in Latin America and “tagged,” or racialized, migrants in the U.S.

According to Hong and Ferguson (2011) hierarchical forms of social organization inscribe levels of “value and valuelessness” that predicate “contemporary racialized necropolitical regulation” (16). The notion of a spectrum of value was articulated by a member of Mariposas Sin Fronteras at the Defend DACA! March & Rally, when he said, “our existence continues to be dehumanized, our struggles continue to be minimized, our lives continue to be undervalued” (6 Sept. 2017). In essence, this Mariposas Sin Fronteras member is describing how undocumented migrants are racialized. Raciality paves the way for expendability, Márquez (2012, 484) suggests, and “expendability represents a base or foundational effect of power through which plans for economic exploitation can be and have been instantiated” (476). Reading the work of Ponce, Gilmore, Hong and Ferguson, and Márquez alongside the work of LUPE and Derechos Humanos, illuminates the way in which the capitalist state requires racialization to allow
for some to continue profiting at the expense of Others, in this case undocumented migrants, who are made vulnerable or expendable.

1.4 Criminalization as legitimization for the racial capitalist state

The synthesis of the operations of racialization and capital provided by LUPE and Derechos Humanos, and scholars alike, could prompt us to ask the following question: How does a country that claims to proffer freedom for all maintain its legitimacy while profiting off of racialized, vulnerable communities? LUPE and Derechos Humanos describe criminalization as a central technology of power utilized by the U.S. Empire to authorize the continued racialized profit making upon which it depends. For example at the DACA press conference, a LUPE member encouraged the Tucson community to remember the following:

[w]hat we’re seeing today, what we are living today, the attacks the immigrant communities are living today, did not start today, did not start with the Trump administration. The border militarization started under Clinton, under Bush, the program for massive criminalization and incarceration of undocumented immigrants was massively expanded. Under the Obama administration over 2 million people were deported, families separated, communities brutalized… (September 5, 2017)

This LUPE member made clear that federal programs, which have spurred massive criminalization of undocumented migrants, are responsible for policies that follow, be it the Obama administration’s directive to deport 2 million undocumented migrants or the Trump administration’s decision to rescind DACA.

Scholarly work supports this LUPE member’s focus on criminalization as one of the core strategies employed by the U.S. state to provide legitimacy to a political economic system that continually profits off of policies that incarcerate and deport
racialized immigrants. Legitimization occurs through “criminalization [which] makes sense of the contradictions that ensue when according unequal access to legal universality” (Cacho 2012, 8). In other words, pushing the violent costs of the capitalist system onto racialized people who are unable to access legal safeguards provided to non-racialized others is deemed appropriate by way of criminalization. Undocumented people are oftentimes framed as “illegal,” “aliens,” “terrorists,” “criminals,” or “burdens” to the system. Derechos Humanos embraces this analysis, pointing out that immigrants are oftentimes the first to be attacked when something is ailing the U.S. nation.

In line with this analysis, after 9/11 state officials declared undocumented migration a potential threat to homeland security, thus positioning “law reform and border enforcement…as frontline defenses against terrorism” (Coleman 2007, 54; c.f. Provine and Doty 2011). Indeed, on the U.S. ICE website, an overview of the National Fugitive Operation Program (NFOP) highlights their program: “We remove criminals from our communities” (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement). The undocumented, Cacho (2012) argues, becomes a criminal, the “illegal alien” (13).

LUPE and Derechos Humanos are adamant that increasing criminalization of migration is detrimental to their communities. Francisca described how decades prior to programs like Operation Streamline, which prosecutes immigrants en masse, she saw the beginning of the fomentation of an environment hostile to immigrants, and thus has “been speaking out against the criminalization of migration for a very very long time” (interview, 7 Sept. 2017). Additionally, she noted how she tried to raise the issue of “the criminalization of the immigrant before many, many organizations and bodies…” for several years because she “could see forward that this is where we were going and
nobody paid attention” (7 Sept. 2017). Evidenced by these activists’ expressions of disdain, Derechos Humanos and LUPE see criminalization of migration as a principal cause of policies responsible for the increasing vulnerability that undocumented migrants face, and thus confronting this criminalized category is central to their work.

LUPE and Derechos Humanos denounce this violence, demanding city government officials take a stand to defend their unprotected communities. After describing a history of immigrants’ rights activists fighting against the implementation of laws, such as Arizona Senate Bill 1070, that further criminalized immigrants, a LUPE member demanded the local government respond to the most recent attack on immigrants at the press conference:

I would like to know, where is the mayor today? [someone from the crowd echoes, “where is the mayor?”]. Where is the mayor [with crowd], city, city officials, council members? They should be here supporting us; they should be here standing with us, standing with the community that’s demanding they take a stand and defend them. We gotta demand they take concrete steps to defend vulnerable communities that are being, again, criminalized, persecuted, continuing to be attacked by the federal government. The city needs to take a stand in defending and protecting our communities. (September 5, 2017)

This LUPE member both denounced the government for its failure to provide relief to vulnerable immigrant communities and insisted the local government take a stand against violent policies that increasingly criminalize migrants. The following day, at the Defend DACA! March & Rally, another LUPE member demanded “concrete legislation to protect us” along with “no more conflict driven criminalization of immigrants and people of color” (6 Sept. 2017). In addition to providing education related to U.S. imperialism and the racialization of migrants, both of which are integral to capitalist accumulation at the expense of migrants being made increasingly vulnerable, LUPE and Derechos
Humanos bring concrete demands to the Tucson government to confront criminalization that serves this violent system.

1.5 Confronting criminalization: Demands!

Stemming from this appeal that the city government work on behalf of undocumented communities is the demand for legalization for all undocumented people. I heard the demand for legalization for all early on and consistently during my time in Tucson, Arizona. It may be the demand most often shared amongst immigrants’ rights groups in the U.S. While the immediate demand may be to “save” the DACA program, the overarching goal remains legalization for all, as demonstrated in the closing statement of the press conference:

This is not only about 800,000 DACA or 300,000 TPS recipients. There’s 11 million of us and let’s talk about that. We are not gonna settle for crumbs, bread crumbs that they’re offering. We are not. We’re gonna fight for legalization for all (5 Sept. 2017).

The demand goes far beyond calls for inclusion for just a particular segment of the undocumented community, instead demanding that all undocumented people have an opportunity for a pathway to citizenship.

I first heard this demand articulated shortly after I arrived in Tucson at LUPE’s Cultura Night in June 2017. A local rapper and LUPE participant opened up the evening dedicated to educating the community about the violent effects of the U.S. empire in Latin America. The rapper performed a song related to the destructive nature of

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3 Established in 1990, TPS stands for Temporary Protected Status and is “a humanitarian program whose basic principle is that the United States should suspend deportations to countries that have been destabilized by war or catastrophe” (Miroff 2018, n.p.).
neoliberal policies and military occupation in Latin America. The song’s chorus challenged the criminalization of undocumented migration and followed up with the demand for legalization, a demand shared by LUPE and many other immigrants’ rights organizations:

We not criminals, we not illegal,
We international working class people.
No ban, no war, no wall.
Justice and legalization for all. (June 29, 2017)

Beyond the demand for legalization for all, it is significant to note that this opening song rejects the “criminal” and “illegal” categorization of undocumented migrants. Based on the above discussion of criminalization, which serves to legitimize profit making for some at the expense of racialized Others, the public rejection of the categories “criminal” and “illegal” could be interpreted as an act of refusal to bolster or provide legitimacy to the racial capitalist formation. Instead, migrants are framed as valuable, part of the working class, followed by the demand for legalization.

There were many more instances where the calls for legalization came in the midst of immigrants attempting to (re)claim status as valuable via the working subject. For example, during an interview Natalia explained the following:

it’s the demand of legalizing all 11.5 million. 11 million people that are here working that contribute to an economy, that have been pushed to be here, that have been pushed and forced to come to this country to work, to work and to sustain their families. (November 13, 2017)

This LUPE member reiterated the demand is legalization for all currently undocumented immigrants since, in addition to being forced to migrate, the undocumented migrants end up working, serving the U.S. economy. Similarly, another LUPE member at the DACA press conference emphasized how DACA afforded her particular opportunities to fit into
the category of productive citizen. She stated, “DACA allowed me to work, to buy a car, to drive without fear of being stopped by a cop, without fear of deportation, to continue with my educational goals, professional goals…” (5 Sept. 2017). This LUPE member also framed herself as a potentially productive (and consumptive) citizen, if given continued security from the state through a program like DACA, which would allow her to continue studying, working and consuming. In other words, as Cacho (2011) notes, undocumented migrants are being “narrate[d] [as] productive, worthy, and responsible citizen[s]” (26). Thus, in multiple instances we see LUPE members underscoring undocumented migrants as workers or would be workers and contributors to the economy, if given the continued opportunity, followed by the demand for legalization for all.

The self-identification with and as workers occurs alongside sentiments of working class solidarity. One LUPE member pointed to the importance of this solidarity at the Defend DACA! March & Rally:

And let’s remember that this is about working class solidarity. We are all working class. All of the immigrant community is a working class community; the undocumented community is a working community…We run this country, this country runs because of our labor, all of us. Working class solidarity. Solidarity for the working class… (September 6, 2017)

Here again we see the identification of the immigrant or undocumented person with the worker. Moreover, this LUPE member encouraged a unity of the working class with working immigrants to confront the violent capitalist system. A radical working class politics to confront capitalism is logical based on LUPE’s and Derechos Humanos’ critique of capitalism due to its detrimental effects, both on communities in Latin America and on migrants in the U.S. Paralleling LUPE’s and Derechos Humanos’
identification of the deleterious transnational consequences of the capitalist system on those racialized, Roman & Velasco Arregui (2016) argue the following:

> on both sides of the border [labor] is tremendously important to U.S. capitalism both because of its low wages and poor working conditions and as… it provides a weapon in leveraging down wages and workers’ rights in the U.S. (361).

Capitalism understood as operating beyond borders provides a rationale for LUPE’s call for working class solidarity beyond a particular nation-state. In addition, this LUPE member’s call for working class solidarity encourages a more inclusive labor movement, which, Piper (2005) notes, traditionally largely marginalized many, including migrant workers and those working in the informal sector.

This inclination to find solidarity with the working class is further buttressed by one of LUPE’s tenets, namely that of understanding capitalism as carrying the seeds of oppression (interview 13, Nov. 2017; see also https://www.lupetucson.org/about/).

Similarly, Francisca believes capitalism produces violence, and thus explained how “first and foremost… [Coalición de Derechos Humanos] attack[s] capitalism, really. I mean the economic situation…” (14 Dec. 2017). LUPE’s and Derechos Humanos’ emphasis on the unification of the working class may carry with it the potential for a transnational struggle for justice against an oppressive capitalist system that produces violent ramifications across space.

1.6 From racialized subject to liberal subject: speaking the language of the state

As is evidenced earlier in this chapter, LUPE and Derechos Humanos provide the Tucson community education surrounding racial capitalism through their analysis of the
relational position of undocumented migrants. However, at the moment LUPE and Derechos Humanos make demands for citizenship upon the state, their critique of racialization is more muted. Instead, upon demanding legalization for all, undocumented migrants’ belonging to the working class is emphasized. LUPE’s and Derechos Humanos’ shift in discursive strategy may best be explained through an examination of the specific audience to which they are trying to appeal.

During their educational events that emphasize providing an understanding of the operations of racial capitalism, LUPE’s and Derechos Humanos’ audience tends to be primarily other activists who have chosen to attend their event, as well as some members of the general public. In contrast, at marches and rallies, where LUPE and Derechos Humanos demand citizenship, oftentimes emphasizing (undocumented) migrants’ working class status, they often are attempting to appeal to politicians, in addition to activists and the general public. Thus, when analyzing their demands, it is constructive to consider what their discursive shift suggests about the political structure within which they are organizing.

Rather than conceptualizing citizenship as pre-determined, Dahlstedt and Vesterberg (2017) suggest framing citizenship “as an ongoing formation of citizens as subject (i.e., citizens are constantly in the making)” (230), whereby “certain subjects are positioned as deviant in relation to normalized ‘national belonging’…” (232). In many nation states this valued national belonging has been increasingly connected to employment (235). Those who are able to perform the status of worker are, Fraser (2018) has argued, integrated into the political system as “free individuals and citizens” (4). Understanding the role of subject making, as it relates to producing the normalized
citizen, supports further comprehension of LUPE’s and Derechos Humanos’ framing of undocumented people as workers. Analyzing citizenship as a constant negotiation elucidates the fact that non-citizens and citizens alike do not occupy a predetermined space in the racialized logic of value, but rather always must vie to maintain or strive for their position of belonging or be relegated to a racialized state of vulnerability.

The process of striving for belonging, as a citizen through categories deemed valuable by the state, is exemplary of liberal politics of recognition. Butler and Athanasiou (2013) illustrate the way in which recognition occurring through liberal discourse is “a regulatory ideal and form of managing alterity” (75). In addition, they have argued, “the demand to comply with the norm that governs the acceptability and intelligibility of the subject can and does lead to the deconstitution of the subject by the law itself” (77). This means western jurisprudence is structuring of subjecthood itself insofar as the law determines who is legitimate and of value. They also argue that to construct oneself as anathema to the liberal categories of state recognition threatens survival. Taken together, these points shed light on the assimilative nature of processes of liberal forms of recognition.

Taking into account the structuring power and assimilative nature of the state highlights the challenge of trying to escape embracing categories deemed valuable within the racist capitalist state when confronting violent liberal governance. Theorizing the state in relation to subjecthood illuminates LUPE’s and Derechos Humanos’ code switching when articulating their demands to state politicians. As argued by Butler and Athanasiou (2013), “[s]urvival is configured and differentially allocated by normative
and normalizing operations of power…” (79). For LUPE and Derechos Humanos, demanding citizenship is connected to survival.

As such, a pathway toward citizenship is assumed to be the first step to escape the state of vulnerability without rights that conditions life for undocumented migrants in the U.S. Alba expressed this sentiment in an interview when I asked her why citizenship for all is a principal demand of LUPE. She answered that citizenship for all “would mean a lot of safety and dignity for families that are affected…” (7 Oct. 2017). Similarly, Francisca articulated how, even though she sees their past work helping individuals attain citizenship (through citizenship drives and fairs) as “mainstream” work, she expressed, “it’s the first line of defense” (7 Sept. 2017). Here Francisca sheds light on the tension she feels doing work around citizenship. In calling their work around citizenship “mainstream,” she acknowledged that, from her perspective, helping undocumented people achieve U.S. citizenship is not radical, in the sense that doing so will not challenge the status quo. Nonetheless, despite Derechos Humanos’ critique of the racial capitalist state, the organization must help individuals achieve citizenship since the struggle for citizenship is, in Francisca’s words, the “first line of defense.” Thus, the assimilative state constricts LUPE’s and Derechos Humanos’ responses to the U.S. racial capitalist state’s foreign, imperial and domestic policies that, as they point out, violently and unjustly position migrants.

To summarize, the category of the citizen is dictated by the liberal state and is intimately connected to a sense of safety and security. In the case of fighting for citizenship as a means of survival, LUPE and Derechos Humanos depend on the category of the worker and/or consumer so the undocumented migrant may become intelligible
and valuable, worthy of U.S. citizenship. Thus, the experiences of LUPE and Derechos Humanos demonstrate, “one is fundamentally dependent upon terms that one never chose in order to emerge as an intelligible being” (Butler and Athanasiou 79).

I want to follow Butler’s and Athanasiou’s (2013) close reading of “the costs of recognition within the struggle for survival” (80), to bring to the ongoing analyses and advocacy of LUPE and Derechos Humanos. I recognize that the following critiques I make regarding liberal recognition do not offer a way forward for LUPE and Derechos Humanos related to their committed advocacy for undocumented migrants by way of engaging the U.S. state and politicians. Nonetheless, examining how liberal categories of recognition operate, as a form of management of dissent, may inspire aspirations to see beyond these liberal forms of classification.

1.7 Reflections on the (im)possibility of just inclusion within a racial capitalist state

Analyzing the cost of recognition as it relates to survival requires understanding liberal recognition as a form of ongoing racialization. As LUPE and Derechos Humanos strive to articulate a subject who is deserving of citizenship through the category of the worker, there remains the expropriated, categorized as “lesser beings… who lack an independent legal personality” (Fraser 2018, 4). Cacho (2011) has described how the hierarchical ordering of categories remain:

Value is ascribed through explicitly or implicitly disavowing relationships to the already devalued and disciplined categories of deviance and nonnormativity… In other words, the act of ascribing legible, intelligible, and normative value is inherently violent and relationally devaluing…In a sense, a comparative analytic assumes that in the United States, human value, legally universalized as normative, is made legible in relation to the
deviant, the non-American, the nonnormative, and the recalcitrant: the legally repudiated others of U.S. value. (26-27)

Cacho makes clear that the pursuit of value through normative categories occurs alongside the racialization of Others who are continually cast out, if unable to attain a normative status. The subject trying to claim value must reject he or she who is already devalued or marked deviant. Demands for legalization for all, via the embrace of the category of the worker, remains in relation to, and moreover requires, those marked criminal, threat, or illegal.

Numerous scholars suggest we cannot expect full, equal inclusion since the U.S. has depended on the production and upholding of exclusive racial categories since its inception. For example, Harris’ (1993) work delineates the way in which processes of hierarchical categorization has been enshrined in legal formations throughout U.S. history. She acknowledges that in a liberal social formation based in racialization, accessing possessive individualism is necessary for demanding rights (see also Roy 2017). Yet, possessive individualism has been and continues to be afforded to select individuals at the expense of the racialized who are not granted access. Those not granted rights are made vulnerable; vulnerability and exclusion from the political community is justified through ongoing racialization (Weheliye 2014). Thus, Roy (2017) argues, “freedom” is relational and established through the “unfreedom” of some (A9).

Within the framework of the U.S. racial capitalist state, the ability to leave behind a life conditioned by vulnerability is relational. To do so requires staking claims to individual “personhood as property” (Weheliye 2014, 81). Skeggs (2005) describes, “culture has become property invested in the middle-class person in the tradition of possessive individualism and institutionalized through law” (972). For Skeggs, property
is “determined as a set of entitlements, which are exclusive to an owner, or to the holder of the proprietary interest” (972). Read alongside Harris, it is clear that the particular individuals’ entitlements that are upheld through the western legal apparatus depend on continued racialization. Therefore, demanding entitlements to rights through liberal citizenship, by framing undocumented migrants as productive or consumptive individuals, LUPE and Derechos Humanos may inadvertently uphold/provide legitimacy to the property form that operates in an exclusionary manner.

Applying the understanding of racialized vulnerability as relational to propertied personhood to the work of LUPE and Derechos Humanos elucidates the impasse that immigrants’ rights groups face when trying to challenge positions of vulnerability through Western legal structures. Synthesizing my above exploration of the construction of human value through the liberal possessive subject that depends on racial formations with the work of LUPE and Derechos Humanos demonstrates the assimilative nature of the racial capitalist state. Within the racial colonial social formation, any response to the precarious condition of the racialized that does not embrace making claims to individual personhood through property, a condition born out of the racialized exclusion of others, becomes grounds for further legitimization of the racial formation. In other words, racialization is a tautology since it provides the very logic required for its own endurance.

Recognizing racialization as a tautology that is bolstered by western legal structures illuminates LUPE’s and Derechos Humanos’ embrace of the liberal terms and categories as it responds to the increased militarization in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands.

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4 See the work of Wynter (2003, 2006) for a description of how this assimilatory process occurs through the making of the particular Western bourgeois as the universal, human category. See also Weheliye (2014).
If they do not, they can expect to be (re)relegated to the racialized vulnerable position. To refuse to organize within the state’s categorical definition allows the racial state to frame racialization as legitimate, deserved.

While framing racialized migrants by way of staking claims to their (potential) personhood as property via the category of the worker and consumer may benefit individual migrants, as it allows for the potential of undocumented to leave their vulnerable position, this framing fails to challenge the overarching racial power structures. Weheliye describes how organizing within the racial state “facilitate[s] the incorporation of a privileged minority into the ethnoclass of Man at the cost of the still and/or newly criminalized and disposable populations…” (81). In other words, the attempted incorporation of undocumented people as U.S. citizens does not confront what Roy (2017) calls “foundational dispossession – the subject whose claims to personhood are tenuous and whose claims to property are thus always a lived experience of loss” (A9).

I posit challenging the increasing militarization of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands without falling into this hierarchical trap, whereby the safety and security of some rest on the construction of the racialized Other who remains vulnerable, would require imagining a system that lies outside of the racial capitalist state entirely. However, this is challenging, for the state formation has long employed technologies of power that make it difficult to imagine a social formation other than the racial capitalist one.

Ultimately, operating within categories of liberal recognition does not challenge processes of racialization that are constitutive of increasing militarization in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. Rather, even though particular individuals may be able to achieve a
sense of security, the racialized, dispossessed figure remains necessary for the constitution of the possessive individual. Moreover, reading academic literature related to racialization, property, and liberal recognition alongside the experience of LUPE and Derechos Humanos provides us with a robust analysis of the assimilative nature of the racial capitalist state. Put another way, through assimilative technologies of power of the racial capitalist state, liberalism is presented as the most likely solution to the violence it generates. Yet confronted with the structuring power of the racial capitalist social formation that consists of providing security for some at the expense of ongoing injustice for the continually racialized, there is an ongoing imperative to imagine other ways of relating.

Listening to alternative framings and narratives that move beyond demands for legalization for all is a good place to start. I find alternative frameworks coming from the Arizona Palestine Solidarity Alliance (APSA). I turn now to chapter two, which builds on my time spent with APSA members in Tucson, Arizona to explore another approach to understanding and confronting militarization in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands.
Chapter 2

2.1 Exposing settler colonial roots of violence in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands

On November 29, 2017 I joined the Arizona Palestine Solidarity Alliance (APSA) for the “Together We Struggle: For justice, equality and freedom!” event, an event I helped plan to recognize the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people. This event culminated my time spent with APSA, participating in their monthly meetings; attending a “Rally and March to End 50 Years of Israeli Military Occupation,” which they co-organized with several other, primarily local, organizations; and attending a couple of their Brews and Views, a series of film screenings, which largely centered stories of Israeli settler occupation of Palestine and Palestinian resistance, at times followed by discussions based on film themes. The “Together We Struggle” event was co-sponsored by APSA and the Chukson/Tucson Water Protectors and commenced with a homemade dinner. Over the course of dinner, attendees filled the Global Justice Center. A warm energy and animated conversations permeated the space, as friends greeted one another, new relationships emerged, and new alliances formed in a casual environment.

After the attendees and organizers finished eating, an APSA member greeted us with an acknowledgement that we were gathered on unceded Tohono O’odham land. After the land acknowledgement, a member of the Chukson/Tucson Water Protectors told the audience that, as Yaqui, he comes from further south. He then proceeded to describe how, to him, a colonizing settler state is expansive and its expansion occurs at the expense of indigenous peoples. He highlighted how the name Tucson comes from
Chukson, the name given by the indigenous peoples who have lived in the area for thousands of years to reference the “fertile earth, the darker” ground you can see near A mountain (29 Nov. 2017). Following these introductory remarks, the event featured presentations by two APSA participants, who are also members of the Tohono O’odham Hemajkam Rights Network (TOHRN), as well as a professor from the University of Arizona. While each talk varied, a common thread tied them to the Chukson/Tucson Water Protector’s introductory comments, namely accounts of indigenous presence in relation to ongoing settler colonial violence.

APSA participants’ experiences of dispossession alongside settler possession shape their perspectives and provide insight into APSA’s approach to militarization in the border region. In an interview, Omar, a Palestinian member of APSA and one of its founders, described his experience of dispossession: “the European empire, England at the time, promised to create another state, in another place called Palestine, for Europeans” (2 Nov. 2017). In this state created for Europeans emerged opportunity for some at the expense of others, evidenced in the way that shortly after the creation of the Israeli settler state, Ben-Gurion “launched the Israel Bonds Campaign and encouraged Jews in the Diaspora to start up private companies in Israel” (The Israel/Palestine Mission Network of the Presbyterian Church 2014, 15). For Omar, opportunity for settlers comes at his and other Palestinians’ loss:

I know that…Israel, not only took my land [gestures forcefully with hands on the table for emphasis], they destroyed my house; they left me with

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5 TOHRN emerged as space where people could “share their grievances” and organize in response to the actions of Homeland Security and Border Patrol (Interview, 9 Nov. 2017). One of TOHRN’s goals “is to protect the Tohono O’odham hemajkam, our lands and our rights to live as we always have since time immemorial” (TOHRN).
absolutely nothing, k? And I’m not the only one. I know it, personally, okay? Like some of them know the Holocaust, personally, okay? (Interview November 2, 2017)

He then explained his drive to organize with APSA comes from not “really see[ing] much difference between the plight of the Palestinian people [and] the plight of our indigenous people here…” (2 Nov. 2017). In other words, even though the violent occupation of Palestine is occurring thousands of miles away from the U.S.-Mexico borderlands/occupied O’odham territory, APSA members see parallels in the O’odham and Palestinian experience. These personal experiences of dispossession, alongside the recognition of comparable settler colonial violence elsewhere, essentially motivates Omar’s, as well as other APSA members’, enduring commitment to organizing with the solidarity alliance.

In an interview, Omar described in further detail the connection between the borderlands and Palestine that is fundamental to the work of APSA:

Our slogan is In Solidarity from the Borderlands to Palestine. So that is really our focus, is to make the connection, k? That the struggle against militarization, against actual occupation…here in our borderlands, and in Palestine is very closely connected, not because…of the direct involvement of Israel in it, and, of course, the United States involvement, in both locations, but because we believe that… we have shared… goals …that is the Palestinians always thought that… the issues that the First Americans, the natives, the indigenous people in this country are facing are exactly the same as… they themselves are facing, that they… in one way or another, are occupied people, okay? (November 2, 2017).

It is noteworthy that Omar used the present tense to describe the occupation, revealing Israel’s and the U.S.’s occupation as continual, occurring in the present.

The firsthand experience and acknowledgement of current occupation of both Palestinian and O’odham lands inspires both APSA’s opposition to militarization of indigenous peoples and lands, and their approach in the region. One of APSA’s primary
goals is “to build a regional movement opposing the ongoing US/Israeli partnership that supports the brutal occupation of the Palestinian people and lands, and the increasing militarization of the U.S./Mexico border region” (APSA n.d.). APSA members believe providing education about ongoing settler colonial occupation is central to opposing ongoing militarization in both the U.S-Mexico borderlands/occupied O’odham territory and Palestine. By providing this education, APSA attempts to honor Palestinian “self-determination,” as well as to “support border justice and indigenous rights and power” in the context of the US border (APSA).

I dedicate the remainder of this chapter to detailing the way APSA confronts the increasing militarization in the borderlands/occupied O’odham land by identifying the origin of the violence as being born in the U.S. settler colonial state. APSA sheds light on settler colonial violence by providing the Tucson community education related to settler occupation alongside indigenous resistance, as well as by elucidating technologies of power that serve ongoing settler colonial occupation. Next, inspired by scholarly work on the politics of refusal, I will consider how APSA’s refusal to make demands upon the settler colonial state may signal an opening toward a politics that diverges from that of the settler colonial sovereign. Finally, I will explore how APSA’s critical education lays a foundation that may work to unsettle the settler colonial formation.

2.2 **Educating from O’odham lands and Palestine**

O’odham APSA participant, Matthew, said he specifically chooses to engage in the work of APSA, rather than immigrants’ rights or humanitarian groups in the region, because he feels a particular solidarity with the group. The solidarity driving his
participation stems from APSA’s support of indigenous self-determination, as well as their commitment to educate the broader community on issues related to indigenous presence and concomitant dispossession. In Matthew’s words:

> a big part of APSA is acknowledging and informing people that the Palestinian people are the aboriginal people of the area they live and their lands are being taken over and occupied… In the same manner that… Native Americans are indigenous here and… our rights, our lands, and everything has been taken away. (Interview November 9, 2017)

He described how the tireless work of APSA to educate people about the injustices of colonial occupation, despite potential family or community “backlash,” not only encouraged him to get involved in their work, but also inspired and strengthened his own work in the struggle for defending indigenous self-determination on his Nation.

One O’odham APSA member drew the Tucson community members’ attention to indigenous presence when he presented the work he does on the Tohono O’odham Nation (T.O.N.) related to confronting the settler state’s ongoing occupation at the “Together We Struggle: For Justice, Equality, and Freedom!” event. He said he started giving presentations on the T.O.N. in 2012 as a way to oppose the Integrated Fixed Towers (IFTs) that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) proposed to build on the T.O.N. around that time. He described how he began giving the presentations after a Border Patrol agent came to the T.O.N. Youth Council to try to convince youth to support the IFTs. He shared the presentation he normally gives on the T.O.N. at the “Together We Struggle Event.” He started the presentation by pointing to the location of the proposed IFTs on the T.O.N., mentioning that three of the proposed towers are in his home district, the Chukut Kuk District. He described one of the proposed towers as being very close to his family cemetery and another tower proposed on his family’s old saguaro harvest
camp. Lastly, he explained that a third IFT is proposed to go in front of a sacred mountain.

The education around O’odham presence provided by this APSA participant is essential to APSA’s goal of supporting indigenous power and self-determination because of the way it challenges settler colonialism’s imagined indigenous erasure. Another O’odham TOHRN presenter at APSA’s “Together We Struggle” event described imagined erasure:

that’s a basic worry that the indigenous people [have] here because our issues are all… confined to the past. People think of indigenous people as if we’re extinct, or we’re… no longer here. People think of the desert as a barren wasteland (November 29, 2017).

This APSA participant pushed the Tucson community members to recognize the imagined temporal erasure of indigenous peoples within settler colonial society as problematic, since it allows for the denied responsibility for ongoing systemic violence indigenous peoples confront. Temporal erasure of indigenous peoples has been a part of the settler colonial strategy since the outset, essentially helping to maintain the settler colonial project since there is no need to interrogate a project that is complete (even if only imagined as so). One such example of the temporal erasure is the settler colonial nation’s ongoing attempts to affix “indigenous sovereignty and histories to anachronistic space…” (Luna-Peña 2015; see also Alfred 2005). According to Alfred (2005), confining indigeneity to a time preceding the present “allows the state to maintain its own legitimacy by disallowing the fact of indigenous peoples’ nationhood to intrude its own mythology” (44; c.f. Rowe and Tuck 2017; Lawrence and Dua 2005).

In addition to voicing her worry related to the temporal erasure of indigenous peoples, this APSA participant called on the audience to recognize the imagined spatial
erasure of her people that ensues when settler society engages in depicting the desert as a barren wasteland. Upon the founding of the U.S. settler colonial state, the land was imagined to contain barely any population, a spatial erasure, despite the vast “network of Indigenous nations” that existed prior to establishment of the U.S. (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014, 30). This erasure is exemplified in the particular case of Arizona. For example, Warren (2015) describes how in the case of “southwestern Arizona words and phrases like ‘remote,’ ‘sparsely populated,’ and ‘uninhabited’” (128) have worked to erase particular connections, whether it be the O’odham’s and/or undocumented migrants’ attachments, that animate the region (129). He notes that the failure to recognize the landscape as cultural has generated dispossession.

In sum, as Byrd (2011) has argued, part of the settler nation’s mythology is based on imaging “indigenous people are located outside of temporality and presence, even in the face of the very present and ongoing colonization of indigenous lands, resources, and lives” (6). Essentially, the APSA participant invited the audience members to confront the settler nation’s mythology as anathema to her people. This type of education encouraged the Tucson community to recognize imagined erasures as responsible for foreclosing indigenous peoples’ ability to voice matters considered important to their people.

These settler colonial imagined erasures of indigenous peoples are exemplified in current U.S. state border policy. For example, in contrast to the APSA member’s presentation that depicts the region as storied (with his family cemetery, old saguaro camp and the sacred mountain), DHS renders the Southwest border region as a threatening space, in need of improved security that new technologies, such as the IFTs,
can help provide (Homeland Security 2016). For example, the DHS website released a written testimony stating the following:

[t]he U.S. Border Patrol…has primary responsibility for the border security mission…through the coordinated use of integrated assets to detect, interdict, and prevent acts of terrorism and unlawful movement of people, illegal drugs, and contraband toward or across the borders of the United States. CBP implements intelligence-driven counter network strategies focused on areas of greatest risk, and deploys its capabilities to adapt to emerging threats along the border. (Homeland Security 2016)

What is of particular interest in this quote is the way it renders the U.S. borderlands, which includes occupied O’odham territory, as a space of risk, threatened by potential “terrorists” and/or “illegal” people or drugs. Instead of a place animated by the Tohono O’odham’s existence, DHS’ depiction requires an imagined erasure of current O’odham inhabitants of the region. At the same time, the discourse of Homeland Security manufactures a racialized Other who poses a threat to national security. This is reminiscent of the historical depiction of the West as “wild” during Manifest Destiny rhetoric and concomitant westward expansion of the U.S. settler state. Again, the region is rendered as in need of management to interdict any threat to U.S. sovereignty. These racialized narratives of the “terrorist” or “illegal” in the borderlands are always also dependent on the imagined spatial temporal erasure of the indigenous inhabitants of the region.

Part of settler colonialism’s power resides in its ability to conceal its ongoing violent nature by framing colonialism as always already done and, with it, indigenous autonomy a story of the past or nonexistent at all, as is evidenced in the DHS’s account of that pays no heed to indigenous presence in the borderlands. Thus, scholars’ and activists’ insights into the operations of these technologies of power, which include
imagined erasures, illuminate the importance of APSA’s education, which brings indigenous presence to the fore. This education helps to expose the U.S. as a settler colonial entity.

L. Simpson (2011) argues indigenous survival and presence is demonstrative of resistance, since, in the case of her indigenous ancestors, for example, “[they] resisted and survived what must have seemed like an apocalyptic reality of occupation and subjugation in a context where they had few choices” (15). By shedding light on indigenous existence in the face of ongoing settler colonialism, APSA pushes attendees to perceive settler colonialism in their midst, perhaps allowing the Tucson community to begin seeing its operations as conflictive and dispossessive, rather than natural.

In addition to confronting settler colonial violence through teaching the Tucson community about the lands as inhabited with and animated by indigenous peoples, despite colonial occupation, APSA provides space for APSA participants to educate the Tucson community about particular sovereignty related conflicts between the O’odham and the U.S. settler colonial state. At the “Together We Struggle” event, the APSA participant who shared the presentation he normally gives on the T.O.N. brought a conflict related to the IFTs into plain view. He explained, “[t]he Border Patrol…wants right of way on the land that the towers sit on” even though “our reservation’s supposedly sovereign land” (29 Nov. 2017). By framing the land as “supposedly sovereign,” he exposed the conflict and contradiction that ensues with U.S. Border Patrol’s claims to access O’odham land. The O’odham Solidarity Across Borders Collective provides a useful analysis to understand what this APSA participant may be referring to when he says “supposedly sovereign.” The Collective describes how the T.O.N. was set up by the IRA (Indian
on which the towers are installed, the Border Patrol wants to claim dominance over 70 miles of roads that lead to the towers, as well as to build 14 new roads and improve already existing roads for easier access to the towers. He estimated that this would all add up to about 214 acres of land to which the Border Patrol wants access. By pointing to O’odham sovereignty, he pushed the audience to think U.S. settler sovereignty as incomplete, an ongoing conflict that is not settled. His narration of the incompleteness of settler sovereignty further challenges the attempted imagined spatial and temporal erasure of the indigenous inhabitants in the region where Homeland Security wants to place the IFTs. His presentation of indigenous sovereignty as at risk of being overrun by Border Patrol encouraged an interpretation of settler colonialism as unnatural, a continued waged war: a nation continually trying to maintain itself by building itself over and on top of an autonomous nation.

In contrast, the Homeland Security report cited earlier suggests the U.S. has the duty to protect national security, which includes averting threats coming from “terrorists” or “illegal” people. The Border Patrol frames technology, such as the IFTs, as necessary “to better detect, identify, monitor, and respond to threats to the Nation’s borders” (U.S. CBP 2012, 15). What is more, the U.S. Border Patrol considers the mission to protect Reorganization Act) of 1934 and, as such, has been challenged by Traditional O’odham who do not feel that the T.O.N. represent the community in its entirety. The Collective emphasizes a split related to conceptions of sovereignty that ensued and continues to endure since the T.O.N. was created under the IRA. To sum up their point, the O’odham Solidarity Across Borders Collective states, “DHS’s push to militarize our lands, and tribal government’s cooperation in doing so not just shows how tribal sovereignty in the border region does not really exist, but shows how the voice and concerns of the O’odham people have been disregarded by both federally backed institutions. Regardless of how you see the immigration issue, the O’odham are stuck in policies that have been created not by them, but by the bigger ever-existing colonial system where borders are established to maintain capital flow…”
national security as tied to the maintenance of freedom, evidenced in the way they conclude their 2012-2016 Strategic Plan with the following quote from General Douglas MacArthur: “No man is entitled to the blessing of freedom unless he be vigilant in its preservation” (U.S. CBP 2012, n.p.). This evocative quote is paired with a photograph of a Border Patrol agent who stands on a rock, elevating her above a desert landscape over which she watches, presumably so she is able to safeguard the “land of the free.”

The APSA member, who shared the presentations he does on the T.O.N., framing the IFTs as threats to indigenous sovereignty is juxtaposed by the U.S. Homeland Security’s and Border Patrol’s framing of new technologies, such as the IFTs, as providing a safeguard necessary to avert threats to freedom and security. This APSA member’s critical analysis of the IFTs is relevant because, as Reyes and Kaufman (2015) indicate, “[w]hat appears within jurisprudence after Hobbes... [is] the conceptual disappearance of conquest, the ability within the West to present sovereignty as a question of “right” rather than domination” (53). This presentation of Western sovereignty as a “right” instead of tyranny is born out of a form of exceptionalism, which Rafael (2014) describes as being shared by imperial powers (be it the United States or Europe before it). Rafael suggests imperial powers organize themselves around the following ideology:

the insistent association of empire with a civilizing order...directed at quelling the barbarism of native societies (crudely put), hence of conquest and exploitation with salvation...and of colonial occupation sustained by military interventions with the evangelical-like spread of universal truths. (335)
Reading Reyes and Kaufman with Rafael it is evident that the capacity to articulate domination as a right within Western sovereignty is born with a racial narrative that positions the West as the necessary civilizing power.

Thus, through educational events, APSA is challenging Western presentations of settler sovereignty as legitimate, by instead unmasking its oppressive force, while also providing space for alternate conceptions related to sovereignty that are born out of other ways of knowing and conceiving of the land. In essence, through educational programs, APSA challenges the imagined erasure of the O’odham, and rejects the sovereign settler state’s racial narrative that frames itself as the inevitable civilizing state. In presenting the IFTs as just the most recent iteration of settler colonialism on O’odham land, the above APSA member challenged the audience to recognize U.S. sovereignty as violent and ongoing. Read alongside his narrative, Homeland Security, which claims the IFTs are a part of its mission to provide security for the nation, could actually be considered an example of “the deployment of settler violence and warfare…which focuse[s] on directly removing whole communities from their land base and gradually destroying tribal sovereignty” (Lawrence 2004, 7).

In an interview, Matthew acknowledged ongoing settler colonial violence as a driving factor for his opposition to IFTs on O’odham land and, therefore, his presentations on the T.O.N.:

Something that for me it's kind of hard to deal with…because I…think that it's so hard to predict the future… because if you…see any maps, you’ll see ‘em sometimes where they have…the maps of…reservation land or treaty land and how it's…shrunken, like throughout the history of the United States, it's gotten smaller and smaller. That’s one of the reasons why I started doing these presentations on the nation… because the Border Patrol, Homeland Security, they want a lot of land, they want right of way on a lot of the nation’s land when they put up the IFTs.
He considered proposals to build IFTs on O’odham land as exemplary of the continual attacks on O’odham sovereignty. Accordingly, he noted how during presentations he points out how “the loss of land” has been “continual” and questions, “when it will stop? Whether it will ever stop,” noting that this commentary resonates really well with O’odham communities (Interview Nov. 9, 2017).

In a similar vein, at a workshop called Toward a World Without Walls! 
Combating the Violence of Border Walls and Militarization from Palestine to the US/Mexico and Beyond, held during the School of the Americas Watch Border Encuentro [event in the borderlands], a TOHRN member, also involved in APSA events, called on her audience to think about settler sovereignty as fraught with contradictions and as clashing with indigenous self-determination:

with the Integrated Fixed Towers…they are…not getting the consent of the communities and they’re lying and saying they are getting consent, but they’re not… and we’re seeing unprecedented surveillance, discrimination, and many of us believe that they’re trying to run us off our land. (November 11, 2017)

Once more the audience was invited to realize the lack of Tohono O’odham consent. She reiterated the lack of consent at “Together We Struggle,” when she described how, despite letters demanding the Border Patrol respect the Gu-Vo district’s position to reject the IFTs, the Border Patrol refused to hear the O’odham community voice their non-consent at community meetings she attended (Nov. 29, 2017). Moreover, she noted how

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7 See Vanderpool (2017) and Norrell (2016) to read about the Gu-Vo district’s opposition to the IFTs.
8 The lack of consent this APSA participant described has a long history. The O’odham were not consulted during the Gadsden Purchase, despite the fact that this purchase resulted in the U.S. defining its boundary with Mexico as bisecting O’odham land, nor
“unprecedented surveillance” and “discrimination” on the part of the U.S. state has already pervaded the Tohono O’odham Nation and feels like a constant attempted dispossession of the O’odham. In conclusion, APSA’s message pushes the Tucson community to see settler colonial sovereignty as questionable and problematic due to the complete disregard for O’odham consent, and U.S. state surveillance and discrimination already unjustly and illegitimately operating on O’odham land.

APSA’s narratives contrast with those of the DHS and Border Patrol, encouraging us to read U.S. settler sovereignty as partial, rather than as an all-encompassing, already finished project. They provide a space to challenge taken for granted notions of the U.S. as “the land of the free” in need of constant vigilance. APSA may prompt its audience to ask ‘free for whom’? APSA confronts that which is oftentimes regarded, albeit uncritically, as “democratic governance—consent, citizenship, rule by representation…” (A. Simpson 2011, 209). Indeed, Simpson argues, a democratic form of governance is “revealed to be precarious at best when the experience of Indigenous peoples are brought to bear on democracy’s own promises and tenets” (209).

APSA exposes the relational violence of settler sovereignty, as well as O’odham communities that have and continue to exist in spite of settler colonialism. In other words, APSA is doing work to “critically interrogate the contradictions between the United States articulating itself as a democratic country on the one hand and during the implementation of new Border Patrol policies in the 1990s that pushed migrants through the Tohono O’odham Nation (O’odham Solidarity Across Borders Collective 2010). The O’odham Solidarity Across Borders Collective also notes that lack of consultation with the O’odham people is reflected during the Department of Homeland Security’s “construction of vehicle barriers, checkpoints and integrated camera-radar systems…” as well as during the passing of the REAL ID Act of 2005 and the Secure Fence Act of 2006.
simultaneously founding itself on the past and current genocide of Native peoples on the other hand” (Smith 2008, 311).

The critical interrogation provided by APSA and its participants and shared with the Tucson community through educational events is timely. It provides a counter narrative to the settler state, and puts settler colonialism in its place, so to speak. By doing so, APSA challenges what Alfred (2005) refers to as “fictions of a single sovereignty” that are “[c]ontrolling, universalizing and assimilating” (33).

2.3 Responding to restrictive spaces: Articulating a politics of refusal

This fiction of an all-encompassing, ahistorical settler sovereignty that universalizes and assimilates grants settler colonialism its staying power. For instance, Povinelli (2016) points to what she calls the “cramped space” (6) from which her Indigenous colleagues must operate due to their position within settler society. Povinelli (2002) suggests this space – so restrictive of particular ontologies and epistemologies – is an exemplary feature of liberal multicultural assimilation. Byrd (2011) describes how liberal assimilative space operates:

[a]s indigenous peoples struggle for agency and authority on their own lands through discourses of antecedent and originary rights, such articulations are perceived by others as exclusionary, essentialist, and counter to a pluralistic society that proffers indigenous peoples cohabitation within a liberal nation-state on the lands that had been stolen from them as remediation for their ongoing colonization. (113)

The perception of struggles for indigenous autonomy as exclusionary, essentialist or anti-democratic can be interpreted as the continuation of racializing discourses that have always been employed alongside the enduring settler colonial capitalist nation.
Building on Povinelli, I suggest the violent assimilative nature of the settler sovereign is responsible for creating a constricted space within which APSA articulates demands. In other words, only certain demands are considered legitimate within settler colonial logics. APSA’s focus on education related to settler colonialism, instead of articulating demands to the U.S. state, may occur due to the constricted space they occupy. For how does one call for decolonization without being labeled a “terrorist,” “national security threat,” or “anti-immigrant” within settler society? Indeed, Byrd (2011) suggests, “[i]n the United States, the Indian is the original enemy combatant who cannot be grieved” (xviii). This position of being the non-grievable enemy, in relation to the U.S. settler state that presents itself as the liberal multicultural democracy, is stifling.

Beyond theorizing this cramped space, APSA does not articulate demands of the state. In contrast to the demands that immigrants’ rights groups make to the state (such as the demand for legalization for all), APSA makes no such demands. As Matthew put it, the goal remains to “educate and end… [APSA] want[s] to end the occupation of Palestine and they draw connections between that and the occupation of indigenous homelands…here” (interview, 9 Nov. 2017). Three APSA participants emphasized education as fundamental because it challenges settler state “propaganda” or particular “narratives” – abhorrent to indigenous peoples – framing of settler states, such as Israel or the U.S., as “heroic.” As is evidenced, APSA remains committed to teaching, refusing to engage in terms dictated by the settler colonial state.

Building on Indigenous scholarship on the politics of recognition and refusal, I interpret APSA’s non-articulation of demands to the state as political. It is in line with the argument made by Dene scholar, Coulthard: “empowerment….must be cautiously
directed *away* from the assimilative lure of the statist politics of recognition, and instead fashioned toward our own on-the-ground practices of freedom” (2007, 456). This “directing away” of politics from the state, he argues, is essential if indigenous peoples are to “transcend” the oppressive colonial power structures (439). This directing away could be considered a refusal. McGranahan (2016) argues “[r]efusal is often part of political action, of movements for decolonization and self determination, for rights and recognition, for rejecting specific structures and systems” (320). In a recent talk on Canadian politics of reconciliation, Audra Simpson (2018) drew on Coulthard’s work to call for activating a critique of the settler state rather than its embrace. Failing to do so, she argues, implies “indigenous subjects become objects of repair, rather than the relationship.” The relationship to which Simpson is referring is the relationship between the settler state and indigenous nations. Simpson reminds us that a focus on the relationship would require us to examine settler colonial political structures that perpetuate violent dispossession.

Analyzing APSA’s non-articulation of demands to the state alongside the works of the aforementioned scholars suggests that “[t]o refuse can be generative and strategic, a deliberate move toward one thing, belief, practice, or community and away from another” (McGranaham 319). APSA’s refusal to articulate demands to the state allows their analysis and politics to maintain its critique of U.S. settler colonial violence as it relates to ongoing indigenous dispossession. APSA provides a unique space to illuminate the violent relationship born out of and maintained in the settler colonial formation.

APSA’s refusal to make demands of the settler colonial state may be generative of a politics that is alternative to the settler sovereign. This alternative form of politics is
exemplified in the desire for decolonization articulated by some APSA participants. For example, Matthew expressed the following desire in an interview:

> It’s always been kind of…a, a dream of mine that more land will be added to…Not just Tohono O’odham Nation but other reservations. Like we’ll get land repatriated to us. But as time goes on that seems more and more of…not really what’s happening. If anything it’s more loss of…our land

(November 9, 2017)

His dream signaled an aspiration not only to halt the violent settler colonial project, but also to reverse it. During my time in Tucson, these aspirations for decolonization were articulated more often in individual interviews than at educational events. Hence, I think Povinelli’s theorizing of “cramped space,” as well as Byrd’s work on Indigenous struggles being interpreted as counter to a pluralistic society and Indigenous peoples as the enemy that cannot be grieved within U.S. settler society, are useful here. Again, I posit that within settler colonial society, there is an attempt to silence demands that run counter to the very bedrock of the settler colonial sovereign’s ambitions.

Despite the settler colonial racial formation constricting the public expression of particular decolonial desires, APSA events still challenge settler colonialism by demonstrating its ongoing violence to which indigenous communities respond. APSA’s educational events invite the Tucson community to reassess the role of the U.S. Border Patrol and DHS, as continued occupying forces for some instead of as protectors of freedom. In doing so, APSA helps encourage an unsettling of settler colonialism, as its educational events contest the universalization and assimilation that have been and continue to be fundamental components to settler colonialism’s survival.

Scholarship coming out of critical indigenous studies has highlighted Indigeneity “as a case that… fundamentally interrupts what is received, what is ordered, what is
supposed to be settled” (A. Simpson 2011, 209). APSA members provide an alternative framing of sovereignty through depictions of O’odham land as continually storied. These stories disrupt settler colonial narratives of a single sovereignty. Additionally, APSA participants remind the Tucson community members that indigenous sovereignty is at stake when Border Patrol wants increasing access to indigenous lands, highlighting the Border Patrol’s failure to garner O’odham consent. Revealing the land as storied with O’odham presence, as well as settler sovereignty as incomplete and in conflict with indigenous autonomy may bring forth the possibility for an “anthropology of Native North America [that] may call up and reveal the impermanence of political boundaries, the constructedness of nation-states, the fundamental issue of consent in modern political orders” (208). In conclusion, education provided by APSA encourages attendees to pay attention to stories coming from outside the discourse of settlers and/or the settler colony, so as to expose the current militarization of the region as ongoing violence that is part and parcel to the settler colonial project. In providing this alternative education that exposes settler colonialism as violent and unjust, I posit APSA may be helping to sow the seeds required to unsettle the settler colonial state.
Chapter 3

3.1 The search for solidarity

There is a long history of coalition building to oppose militarization in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands/occupied O’odham territory. As explored in the introduction, in some cases, these formations of solidarity are successful in foiling plans for further militarization as laid out by the U.S. government in the region. However, at other times, coalitions break down or activists are unable to establish the solidarity amongst groups necessary to come together around a particular issue. In the context of increasing militarization in the region, it is timely to consider the possibilities for or fissures in attempts to build solidarity. Exploring the (im)possibilities for coalition building requires us to examine how various activists and activist groups conceive of solidarity.

Sentiments around solidarity differ amongst activists, revealing limitations to coalition building. An exploration of these varying attitudes nonetheless encourages alternate understandings of solidarity that may inspire openings for other ways of organizing. In this chapter I will first explore the way some LUPE and Derechos Humanos members think about solidarity in relation to some APSA participants. Then, I will discuss how these contrasting conceptualizations of solidarity may present limitations to building coalitions in the region. Next, I will analyze how the differing perspectives between activists may provide insight into a reconceptualization of solidarity altogether. Finally, I will discuss the importance of each groups’ work, as they provide a nuanced analysis to understanding the violence of U.S. (setter) colonialism in the region and beyond.
LUPE’s and Derechos Humanos’ understanding of militarization and approach to confronting violence in the region contrasts that of APSA and these varying approaches emerge out of the disparate positions that activists inhabit in relation to the U.S. settler colonial capitalist nation. Nonetheless, the majority of the activists involved in APSA, Derechos Humanos, and LUPE expressed solidarity as important to their organizing work in the region.

In an interview, Robert, who is a member of both Derechos Humanos and APSA, described solidarity as fundamental, expressing the following sentiments when asked what solidarity meant to him and what it looks like:

[y]eah, well I think solidarity is…basically…even though our issues may be different, they are the same and they are the same because we have the same oppressor…you know, divide and conquer and the system has done a good job to try to separate the various groups…we have a lot more in common, class wise and otherwise, and it’s a matter to build those bridges (October 23, 2017).

This quote is significant because he first acknowledged people are confronting varying forms of oppression. Yet, his deep-seated desire to find commonality seemed to supersede his recognition that “issues may be different” amongst people. Moreover, he described class as providing the common struggle around which to organize.

Francisca expressed a similar sentiment:

[Solidarity is] fundamental because we must be united. We must show that we are 98%, or at least 90% because… the 2% control it all, but you know that the other 8% is well entrenched too… (Interview, December 14, 2017).

Paralleling Robert’s position, Francisca also expressed an inclination to emphasize the importance of solidarity due to its potential to unite people. She also implicitly saw promise in unifying around a class-based struggle to confront the minority that controls
the wealth at the expense of the majority of people. In emphasizing solidarity be born in the working class struggle, both Robert and Francisca insist all oppression, including the injustices faced by undocumented migrants, is bound up with the oppression faced by the working class. This notion of solidarity was expressed at the Defend DACA! March and Rally when another LUPE member described working class solidarity as fundamental because, in her words, “[w]e are all working class. All of the immigrant community is a working community; the undocumented community is a working community” (6 Sept. 2017).

Alongside the desire to build unity in the struggle around the category of the worker, immigrants’ rights groups demand legalization for all as a human right. Natalia described why the demand for legalization for all is so essential to their work:

because they’re people… cuz they’re human beings. They’re human beings… we shouldn’t still have to be telling people to treat other people as human beings… they’re people, they’re human beings and they have the right, just like you, to live in society without fear of being deported every second of their life, you know? (Interview, November 13, 2017).

Natalia described the humanity of the immigrant as providing the rationale for the fight for a pathway to citizenship for all. Similarly, Francisca explained how, while former iterations of La Coalición de Derechos Humanos were inspired by the civil rights struggles, they realized that civil rights were not enough since they failed to protect non-citizens:

And so back then we were already thinking expansively. We’d always been thinking civil rights is not enough. It’s human rights. We need a human rights perspective. (interview, September 7, 2017).

Francisca emphasized how Derechos Humanos was born out of a desire to protect immigrants by embracing a framework that centers the human. For her, organizing
around the category of the human is the most comprehensive form of justice since she sees human rights holding the potential to provide protection beyond what the nation state offers.

While Francisca described the choice of organizing around the human due to the expansiveness of the category, the demand for human rights is also intimately tied to articulations of immigrants’ position as part of the working class. Humanity, first and foremost, appears to be born out of being a productive member of society. According to Natalia, it is the worker who has the “right… to live in society…”:

Well, I mean it would provide documentation to people, for people to be able to work, to not have to…work “under the table.” We see labor abuses, right? Um they’re being paid under the minimum wage…you know what I mean, like just the opportunity to be able to be a part of society… and they work and they pay taxes and they contribute to the society (Interview, November 13, 2017).

Here she elucidated the connection between seeing the struggle for the rights of the working class as intimately connected to the struggle for citizenship. These arguments that position the laborer as deserving of inclusion parallel liberal ideology. For Locke lays out the argument that “man” is born in the industrious laborer and it is he (alongside his property) who the state should protect (Rahe 2005; c.f. Wolford 2007).

Synthesizing LUPE members’ and Derechos Humanos members’ perspectives evidences how desires for solidarity emerge around the working class, since, from their point of view, it is the laborer who deserves the (human) rights that come with citizenship. Natalia emphasized how her commitment to fighting for immigrants’ rights through legalization for all stems from her belief that immigrants should be able to be a part of the society to which they contribute or in which they labor. Correspondingly,
members of LUPE and Derechos Humanos see promise in building unity around the category of the worker.

The sentiment expressed by these activists sits comfortably within the ideology of the American Dream. The American Dream proffers integration into U.S. society through “success and economic advancement [for] anyone who is willing to work hard” (Rosenbaum 2017, 3; c.f. Kimmage 2011). Historian Kimmage (2011) argues the ideology of economic opportunity has been foundational since the first immigrants and continues to be a driving force of immigration to the U.S. Highlighting the immigrant as part of the working class, and thus deserving of benefitting from the rights of U.S. citizenship, bolsters a continued embrace of this ideology.

Correspondingly, the youth and young adults involved in the immigrants’ rights movement, many of who drive the work of LUPE and Derechos Humanos, are called “Dreamers.” Born out of the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (Dream) Act (Walters 2017), the name “Dreamers” has taken on a life of its own.⁹ Although the Dream Act never passed, Obama did pass Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), which gave those children who arrived to the U.S. without documents temporary protection from deportation and the ability to obtain a work permit. DACA recipients are often referred to as “Dreamers.” The “Dreamers” have the opportunity to be a part of society since they can work without fear. In a remarkable placement of the Dreamers in the American Dream, a Distinguished Professor of Education at UCLA,

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⁹ The Dream Act was first drafted in 2001 and would have granted children who arrived to the U.S. without documents a pathway to legalization (American Immigration Council).
Noguera (2017), likens them to the first Pilgrim immigrants who came to the U.S. without documents for an “opportunity to create a better life” (n.p.).

This may help explain why so many were devastated by the possibility that the Trump administration would rip DACA away from Dreamers. From professors to state representatives and leaders in the technology sector, numerous people admonished the Trump administration’s decision to rescind DACA, arguing that it chipped away at the very essence of the United States of America, which, they claimed, was built on providing opportunity and a better life for immigrants. LUPE and Derechos Humanos also quickly responded to the announcement, organizing a press conference the day the Trump administration rescinded DACA and holding a rally the following day. At both of these events they demanded a pathway to citizenship for all, emphasizing the working class immigrants as deserving of the rights and opportunities that come with integration into U.S. society through legalization.

In contrast to the frameworks shared by LUPE and Derechos Humanos members, APSA participants suggest limitations to solidarity oriented around the worker and the American Dream. One APSA participant expressed her concern with making the worker the universally celebrated category around which to organize during the “Together We Struggle: For Justice Equality, and Freedom!” event, an event I helped organize with APSA to honor the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The November 2017 event featured three speakers, one professor from the University of Arizona and two members of the Tohono O’odham Hemajkam Rights Network

10 In addition to Noguera (2017), see Blanc et al. (2017) and Panetta (2017).
A TOHRN member had recently returned from a trip to Palestine, which was coordinated as a part of the World Without Walls delegation. She outlined the sentiments of solidarity she felt throughout her time meeting with Palestinian people due to parallel experiences of colonization experienced by the O’odham and Palestinians (29 Nov. 2017). She also described a “rough day” with “a lot of… feelings…” for both her and another TOHRN member on the delegation. What made this particular experience so hard was hearing an uncritical embrace of the “American Dream” by a Palestinian man on the delegation they met in Jericho:

He kind of gave this story about the American Dream. And he had an experience in Chicago where he…thought everything was…so wonderful, different cultures living together, and that was his ideal and…it was to kind of show us that…we can live in peace and harmony and all of that… I could get what he was saying, but…the American Dream that he was talking about, I… couldn’t vibe with that… (“Together We Struggle” event, November 29, 2017).

This particular story stood out for two reasons. One: it represented a rupture from how she described other delegation experiences: as inspirational, refreshing, unique, garnering connection. Before and after this described experience, sentiments of solidarity seemed to run deep between TOHRN members and the Palestinian people they met on the delegation. However, the delegation member’s uncritical embrace of the American Dream, presenting it as that which should be sought, caused a fissure in their solidarity. Two: this story signals a disjuncture between an immigrants’ rights activists’ demand for inclusion based on the deservingness of the immigrant worker and this ASPA participant’s disavowal of the form of inclusion embodied in the American Dream.

TOHRN emerged as space where people could “share their grievances” and organize in response to the actions of Homeland Security and Border Patrol (Interview, 9 Nov. 2017). One of TOHRN’s goals “is to protect the Tohono O’odham hemajkam, our lands and our rights to live as we always have since time immemorial” (TOHRN).
What can we make of desires for building solidarity around the category of the willing worker, the subject of the American Dream, when the above APSA participant articulates her discomfort with integration into society through upholding the American Dream? The diverging responses to inclusion in U.S. society signals a limitation to finding solidarity around the worker through the defense of his or her (human) rights and full integration into U.S. society. In fact, the above O’odham APSA participant describes this “narrative” exalting the American Dream as “against [her] people” (29 Nov. 2017).

The APSA participant’s concern with the uncritical embrace of the American Dream stems from her and the O’odham community’s position in relation to the immigrant finding opportunity to demand inclusion into the U.S. settler society through hard work. Johnston and Pratt (2017) underline this concern when they argue that narratives centering the hard-working immigrant in the settler colonial context can do so in relation to indigenous peoples and operate in the following way:

[It] breathes new life into an argument that laid the philosophical foundations for British claims to property in North America and justified dispossession of indigenous peoples from their land: this is the Lockeian argument that appropriation through labour underpins rights to ownership. (978)

Thus, by questioning the ubiquity of the American Dream due to what she describes as this narrative being set “against” the O’odham, the APSA participant sheds light on how the subject of the American Dream, namely the worker, may be wrapped up in the settler colonial project. Centering the worker is contrary to the O’odham as it potentially naturalizes their dispossession.

Moreover, this APSA participant voicing her concern with the American Dream ideology calls into question the inclination of some immigrants’ rights activists to
construct the subject of the American Dream, namely the worker, as the universal category around which to demand human rights while the O’odham continue to experience colonization. Recent scholarship echoes the notions brought forward by this APSA participant, highlighting the way in which particular struggles for rights within the settler colony take place in relation to ongoing colonization experienced by indigenous peoples. As Day (2015) has described, “for Indigenous populations in North America,… there are... no demands that the exploited worker can put forward to solve the experience of Indigenous elimination and dispossession” (116). To put in more general terms, so long as Western political structures in which “indigenous peoples remain colonized liminally…human rights, equal rights, and recognitions are predicated on the very systems that propagate and maintain the dispossession of indigenous peoples for the common good of the world” (Byrd 2011, xix). In short, the APSA participant’s discomfort with the form of inclusion purported by the American Dream indicates a limit to solidarity around the fight for inclusion of undocumented immigrant workers.

If this is the case, from where does the desire to build unity, in spite of differences, emerge? Recall Robert’s yearning for solidarity despite the recognition of issues being different. What is responsible for his recognition of issues as particular alongside his desire for finding a common struggle?

The desire for commonality may be born out of the (settler) colonial forms of power and social relations. (Ongoing) colonialism has depended on the universalization of Euro or Western ways of understanding, being and relating for the assertion of Western power and governance on top of already operating forms of governance in particular places (see Seed 1995). Matthew described the experience of universalization,
mentioning the Indigenous-European colonial encounter. He emphasized how Europeans arrived with a mindset that was completely “different than a mindset of the people here…” which caused a “collision between the two” (Interview, Nov. 9, 2017). He detailed how he views this collision:

You know the deity in Christianity is…a human… a male human form and then of course in these other cultures…it could be an animal, it could be a woman, it could be…the sun, and so…these two were just so polar opposite…from each other that…One had to, from the mindset of the people conquering the land, they had to rid one of the other. (Interview November 9, 2017, emphasis mine)

This APSA member emphasized the particularity of Christian culture that centers the male human. Additionally, he underlined how the settler colonizer determined that non-Western cultures, which did not center the male human, needed to be eliminated. Elimination by way of assimilation and genocide is central to settler colonialism.

I’d like to suggest that the eliminatory nature of settler colonialism continues to influence how we relate to one another within settler colonial society. Indeed, “[s]ettlers carry with them the socio-cultural foundations of the colonizing sovereign and are, in a sense, representatives of that larger settler society, reflecting the hegemony of colonial power” (Mott 2016, 197). Therefore, yearnings for solidarity built around the worker as the deserving beneficiary of rights, despite the recognition that people are confronting varying issues, may reflect certain tendencies in activism remain tied up in settler colonial ways of organizing and understanding that are assimilative.

Matthew articulated the risk of an uncritical embrace of solidarity when he explored how APSA’s work can at times get “diluted with a lot of the [other] local activist groups…” (9 Nov. 2017). He elaborated:
There are always ways of trying to make connections between them and sometimes that message of Palestinian solidarity gets lost… I kind of think sometimes it’s more out of convenience for people that are involved with other groups to kind of mix everything…but the only thing that I have is a little bit of a concern that sometimes that makes it a little bit convoluted… [APSA] do[es] have a focus and their focus is clear but a lot of times it like kinda strays away from that. So it might… go towards… a human rights…, with … the detention court… (November 9, 2017).

Matthew provided insight regarding the risk of adopting a form of solidarity that “mixes everything,” as people try to find commonality between struggles. What is more, he expressed a concern that particular focal points may get lost as they get confused or tangled with other struggles. Matthew’s synthesis signals a desire that we take care not to make connections at the expense of disappearing particular struggles, noting that a human rights perspective is not applicable to APSA’s central focus. Instead, as demonstrated in chapter two, APSA centers (hi)stories of ongoing settler colonialism and dispossession experienced by the O’odham and Palestinian people. In doing so, struggles around indigenous land and sovereignty, rather than human rights, are key to APSA’s work. Similarly, Rowe and Tuck (2017) warn, “questions of landedness, racial categories, and settlement” could be disappeared if we are to solely focus on issues related to “equality” and “civil rights” (8).

The wish to find a common struggle based on class can be complicit in covering over ways of organizing society beyond the waged and other economic and social relations of settler colonial forms. Solidarity around the figure of the worker signals the erasure of indigenous peoples’ experiences of ongoing dispossession and concomitant racialization, assimilation and genocide. Indeed, making class the universal concern, in

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12 Critical analyses of Occupy Wall Street taken up by Indigenous scholar-activists are helpful here, as they demonstrate the “movements’ basic elision and erasure of
spite of indigenous struggles transcending those focused solely on wealth, essentially erases entanglement with particular (hi)stories of indigenous peoples, thus naturalizing the position of the settler. In the words of Morgensen (2011), “[s]ettler colonialism is naturalized whenever conquest or displacement of native peoples is ignored or appears necessary or complete…” (16). Thus, attempting to conceive of the working class struggle as universal can be understood as compatible with settler colonial forms of relating that have always depended on the universalization of European ways of understanding at the expense of other non-Western experiences and forms of knowledge. To conclude, APSA members encourage us to see how building solidarity on a human rights framework or the worker as the universal concern may work to weaken or erase other struggles. Additionally, trying to make the worker the common category around which to demand rights through citizenship fails to acknowledge how incorporating migrants as U.S. citizens occurs on indigenous peoples’ lands, risking the perpetuation of indigenous dispossession and erasure.

3.2 Confronting universalizing desires

Walia (2012) has argued against the “saming” tendency – “forcing Indigenous identities to fit within our existing groups and narratives,” – as it risks embracing violent forms of assimilation on which the liberal nation state depends. Sundberg (2015) agrees, writing that mobilizing on the basis of citizenship in settler societies “eliminates or masks forms of identification that exceed citizenship, leaving little or no space for attachments” Indigenous peoples as the first and already ‘occupied’ peoples of this land” (Grande 2013).
that are otherwise (223). Thus, inspired by Tuck and Yang’s (2012) argument, I suggest confronting forms of solidarity that privilege colonial forms of relating requires finding “opportunities for solidarity [that] lie in what is incommensurable rather than what is common across these efforts” (28). Indeed, finding openings for solidarity in what is incommensurable responds to APSA participants’ concerns related to making the fight for human rights or the American Dream a panacea, since their plight remains and cannot be answered in these terms.

Therefore, in the context of increasing militarization in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands/occupied O’odham territory, it may be more useful to recognize difference based on particular subject positions. This recognition could provide an opening to listen to and learn from multiple subject positions, replacing the tendency to universalize one struggle through the search for a single oppression that is common to all. Putting wisdom from immigrants’ rights groups, LUPE and Derechos Humanos, into conversation with visions from APSA and recognizing difference may provide a more nuanced understanding of how the U.S. settler colonial capitalist nation functions. Moreover, an exchange in which both APSA’s and LUPE’s and Derechos Humanos’ analyses, and the corresponding distinct positions of their members, are given weight may bring us closer to the possibility of a decolonized form of solidarity. Towards this vision of solidarity, in the following section I will illuminate what I interpret as some core insights provided by LUPE and Derechos Humanos.

3.3 Challenging the binary: Neocolonialism and the racialization of arrivants
Education provided by LUPE and Derechos Humanos that centers race and capital to reveal the effects of U.S. imperialism and criminalization of migration provides insight into the technologies of power required for the settler colonial capitalist nation to maintain itself. Moreover, their education helps complicate tendencies to automatically conceptualize settler colonialism through a binary lens, whereby all people easily fall into the category of native or settler. Challenging this binary is important because “to say that all non-natives are settler may fail to explain how settler colonialism conditions non-natives by “race” or migrant/immigrant status” (Morgensen 2011, 19). LUPE and Derechos Humanos challenge the binary by shedding light on the unique positioning of undocumented migrants in the U.S. Their education advances the Tucson community’s understanding of how the U.S. Empire conditions the lives of people living in Latin American through dispossession, followed by racialized undocumented status upon their arrival to the U.S. Thus, an engagement with the work of both LUPE and Derechos Humanos creates an opening to consider undocumented migrants as “arrivants,” rather than as settlers (see Byrd 2011).

Additionally, LUPE and Derechos Humanos hold the U.S. responsible for causing mass migration, highlighting policies that provide economic benefits to U.S. capital at the expense of people in Latin America. LUPE and Derechos Humanos point to the ways free trade policies, such as NAFTA, or the U.S.’s “war on drugs” and “fight against terrorism” in Latin America, allow U.S. capital continued access to natural resources and control of markets in the region. They emphasize how these policies along with other U.S. imperialist and neoliberal foreign policy dispossesses people from Latin America, causing some of those dispossessed to migrate. This education plays a fundamental role
in exposing what Sánchez and Pita (2014) call “modern forms of imperialism” to the

Tucson community. Sánchez and Pita describe:

there need be no outright war of aggression or territorial appropriation, as
a population can be dominated and dispossessed through economic…or
extraeconomic means, such as laws and government-backed policies and
practices. Economic domination often takes the form of enclosures
established in the colonized or neocolonized nations by an imperialist
power or its surrogates to separate workers from their means of production
and force them into wage labor or to migrate or emigrate… (1043).

LUPE and Derechos Humanos provide insight into the ways an imperial power is able to
wield its influence without actually physically occupying a particular place.

Additionally, LUPE and Derechos Humanos provide crucial insight into new
racial formations in the U.S., pushing us to consider new ways profit is made off of
racialization in the context of increasing migration that is, oftentimes, spurred by imperial
U.S. foreign policy. More specifically, LUPE and Derechos Humanos emphasize the
way in which the increasing criminalization of migration functions to provide a profit to
private detention centers. Providing education about the criminalization of migration,
LUPE and Derechos Humanos reveal how the U.S. settler colonial formation profits from
the production and maintenance of “local racial hierarchies,” thereby legitimating “state-
sanctioned death and the militarization that characterizes black and brown life in the
settler colonial state” (Inwood and Bonds 2016, 525). Through their illumination of the
political regimes that allow for the criminalization of migrants, LUPE and Derechos
Humanos expose how, in the words of Hong and Ferguson (2011), the “creation of
categories of value and valuelessness underpins contemporary racialized necropolitical
regulation” (16; c.f. Inwood and Bonds 2016).
3.4 Inclusion as assimilation: Uncovering the settler colonial foundations of the U.S.

Meanwhile, the centrality of settler colonialism to APSA’s analysis and work brings ongoing occupation and sovereignty to the fore. For example, at an educational event, one APSA member presented settler colonialism as ongoing occupation by describing how the U.S. Border Patrol want right of way on “supposedly sovereign” O’odham land to build and manage their proposed Integrated Fixed Towers (IFTs). He challenged the Tucson community to see the U.S. as a continual waged war against the O’odham people. By doing so, his work helped expose settler colonialism as a violent process, rather than natural. Additionally, this APSA participant juxtaposed the U.S. DHS and Border Patrol proposal to install the IFTs in his home community with a description of O’odham places, which include his family cemetery, the place where his family used to have a saguaro harvest camp, and a mountain sacred to the O’odham. In doing so, he pushed attendees to reconsider the region as filled with stories, contrasting the U.S. DHS’ and B.P.’s portrayals of the region as risk-ridden and filled with threats.

These aforementioned examples highlight APSA’s commitment to encouraging community members to reimagine space differently. In this sense, APSA participants are creating an opening by providing education related to the U.S. as a settler colonial entity that is continually occupying and expanding over the O’odham Nation, a nation that continues to exist in spite of ongoing settler colonial violence.

In doing so, APSA encourages us to question the very foundations of the U.S. since their analysis helps expose settler colonialism as ongoing appropriation of indigenous lands. Thought alongside the work of Derechos Humanos and LUPE,
APSA’s analysis invites community members to consider how attempts to evade racialization through calls for state inclusion (i.e. calls for pathways to U.S. citizenship for all), naturalizes the settler colonial state that has depended on and continues to depend on forced assimilation, genocide, and dispossession. Byrd (2011) describes how this naturalization of the U.S. settler colony occurs:

The cacophony of competing struggles for hegemony within and outside the institutions of power, no matter how those struggles might challenge the state through loci of race, class, gender, and sexuality, serves to misdirect and cloud attention from underlying structures of settler colonialism that made the United States possible as oppressor in the first place. As a result, the cacophony produced through U.S. colonialism and imperialism domestically and abroad often coerces struggles for social justice for queers, racial minorities, and immigrants into complicity with settler colonialism. (xvii)

APSA participants’ centering of O’odham and Palestinian experiences of ongoing dispossession serves to redirect attention to U.S. settler colonialism so as to expose its foundational violence upon which other oppressions occur. In revealing this violence, APSA encourages the Tucson community to question what it means to ask for inclusion in a settler colonial society that was and continues to be forged through dispossession.

Additionally, this opening provided by APSA inspires attendees to recognize that which exists in spite of the U.S. settler colonial capitalist nation, namely the O’odham with concerns related to culture, sacred places, and autonomy in the face of ongoing militarization in the region. These openings compel listeners to conceive of U.S. settler colonialism as violently relational, rather than natural. Exposing this relationality sheds light on “how racial categories interact with occupation, the extraction of wealth, and the ongoing settlement of land that continues to dispossess Native populations…” (Rowe and Tuck 2017, 8). In short, APSA’s emphasis on settler colonialism allows attendees to
recognize settler colonialism as relational, thus laying the groundwork to analyze calls for settler citizenship as relational as well.
Concluding discussion

Capturing further complexity through dialogue and listening

I would like to dedicate this concluding discussion to considering the importance of allowing insights from LUPE and Derechos Humanos, as well as from APSA, to remain intact alongside visions for solidarity. Put another way, this section asks the following question: What is the benefit of hearing analyses that center critiques of settler colonialism and dispossession and those that center critiques of imperialism and racial capitalism?

Putting analyses produced by LUPE and Derechos Humanos into conversation with those that APSA presents may prompt more nuanced understandings of how the U.S. settler colonial state operates, at times forcing or coercing people into particular positions that always remain in relation to others’ locations. Allowing LUPE’s and Derechos Humanos’ evaluations related to militarization to remain intact would avoid erasing the struggle of the dispossessed from Latin America who are fighting criminalization upon arrival to the U.S., emphasized by Derechos Humanos and LUPE. Meanwhile, enabling the maintenance of APSA’s critiques of militarization in the region may prevent the covering over of the existence and resistance of indigenous peoples in the face of ongoing settler colonial occupation. In fact, to make invisible either position or their relationship to one another would fail to capture the complexity of the U.S. settler colonial capitalist nation that requires both.

Giving voice to the analyses offered by LUPE and Derechos Humanos as well as APSA reveals multiple technologies of power the U.S. settler colonial state uses to make profit through processes of racialization and dispossession. Dispossessing the original
inhabitants and then disciplining arrivants by way of racialization has a long history within the settler colonial formation. As Dunbar-Ortiz (2014) explains, the U.S. “has welcomed—indeed, often solicited, even bribed—immigrants to repopulate conquered territories ‘cleansed of their indigenous inhabitants’… requiring these immigrants to treat “those outside the covenant as enemies or potential enemies of the exceptional country that has adopted them, often after they escaped hunger, war, or repression, which in turn were often caused by US militarism or economic sanctions” (50-51). Analyzing the perspectives of LUPE, Derechos Humanos, and APSA side by side points to similarities in Dunbar-Ortiz’s historical account and contemporary conditions in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands/occupied O’odham territory. LUPE’s and Derechos Humanos’ education highlights the plight of communities in Latin America due to U.S. imperialism and capitalist interests in the region. If forced to migrate, many experience a racialized position in relation to the U.S. empire, a position that structures their response to vie for inclusion into said empire. Meanwhile, APSA’s education calls attention to imperialism and racialization on O’odham (and Palestinian) lands, and thus encourages recognition of ongoing attempts to erase indigenous peoples.

Listening to LUPE and Derechos Humanos alongside APSA enables an insightful analysis of how the U.S. Empire requires ongoing dispossession of the land’s original inhabitants, as well as foreign policies that dispossess people beyond its territorial boundaries and profit from these same bodies who are racialized upon their arrival to the U.S. The above synthesis pushes us to recognize the U.S. empire as operating both from within and from outside the bounds of the U.S.’s violently self-ascribed and appropriated territory. In addition, LUPE’s and Derechos Humanos’ analyses, as well as APSA’s
contributions, suggests U.S. imperialism employs similar technologies of power, such as racialization and dispossession, across space.

And yet, a commitment to Tuck’s and Yang’s call to finding solidarity in what is incommensurable rather than in what is common across struggles invites us to see how these similar technologies of power operating across vast regions produce circumstances and desires that differ amongst activists.

Hearing these positions as incommensurable may be a first step to confront the universalizing desires that seep into activism. Indeed many activists in Tucson said listening to and learning from various perspectives are fundamental components to building solidarity. For example, Omar said: “solidarity…begins with understanding the issues… and the hopes and the struggles of the other” (interview, 7 Dec. 2017). Later he described how this understanding is born through an openness to new ideas and people “com[ing] and shar[ing] their thinking….” (ibid). Alba expounded on the importance of this idea, specifying that solidarity requires one to show up in a particular way:

Showing up in a way that’s compassionate and meaningful. So are you showing up for folks to…give a listening ear? (Interview, October 7, 2017).

She then suggested listening must be accompanied by a willingness to “be uncomfortable… when people call you out….,” (7 Oct. 2017). While not stated explicitly, the discomfort to which Alba referred may come from putting oneself in a position to listen to the conditions or experiences of someone who is differently positioned. The type of listening and critical self-reflection she centered challenges notions of solidarity that require unity at the expense of erasing differences (whether in position, experience, or way of understanding).
In fact, when I asked if she thought solidarity or coalition building is important to LUPE’s work, she said even though “they always say there is strength in numbers…there’s always organizations that do work differently and that can be different in very positive ways” (interview, 7 Oct. 2017). She then explained that paying attention to organizations that do work differently could demonstrate how LUPE’s work speaks to a particular audience, and fails to resonate with other audiences. Most noteworthy is her explanation for pausing around the notion that solidarity is solely about attracting large crowds. Instead, Alba speaks to incommensurability in coalition work. She encourages us to see openings in the incommensurability, requiring activists to listen to and learn about the work of others.

In this same vein, Matthew emphasized that possibilities for collaboration lie in teaching people who come with their “own perceptions…base knowledge of history…” to look at an issue in a new way, prompting them to “step back and say, ‘oh, I didn’t really look at it that way’” (interview, 9 Nov. 2017). To sum up, these above activists recognize listening and learning as essential to the emergence of solidarity. A form of solidarity requiring reciprocal exchange, whereby communities will be listening and learning in some instances and teaching in other contexts and visa versa.

In fact, this form of mutual exchange of education and learning could be required for successful coalition building, even amongst communities who are thought to already be in solidarity with one another. A case in point is the APSA participant who described how she was caught off guard by the World Without Walls delegation participant’s uncritical embrace of the American Dream at Jericho. She had not expected his espousal of the American Dream due to their shared experience of colonization. This APSA
participant reflected on the importance of teaching and listening, even when doing so may not seem obviously necessary:

And so that was a teaching moment for us and…it caused me to reflect…because I think it goes both ways. Here in the U.S., we…watch the news…and we’re inundated with this whole terrorism narrative. We’re inundated with lies about Israel being this, you know, poster child of heroism and we don’t…challenge that. And I would say that there are native people on this land and I know that some of us know those people that make jokes to us about terrorism and so…every time I think about Jericho, I think about how we have this great connection—we have this great solidarity—but we also have so much to learn from each other. And we still have a lot to teach each other about colonialism and these false narratives. The reason that guy was telling us about the American Dream was because…the…United States and every entity that has supported the United States has produced education that has told us about the American Dream and it’s become so ingrained…so…when we talk about decolonization, I think that is what we’re talking about. We’re talking about…deconstructing those narratives of the American Dream, or, you know, of this big black hole in the Middle East where everybody’s the same, and there’s…this fundamentalism… (November 29, 2017)

This APSA participant’s reflections are significant because they further understandings of the importance of ongoing learning and teaching required to build connection, despite what may seem like obvious links due to parallel experiences. Moreover, this APSA participant described how a form of solidarity that requires teaching and learning is part and parcel to the project of decolonization.

Confronting desires for universalism and colonial forms of relating in activism might entail reimagining solidarity as occurring through mutual exchange of disparate (hi)stories. Deconstructing settler narratives, such as the American Dream, may be an important first step. Listening and learning from multiple perspectives allows us to ask: What to make of an American Dream that is built on dispossession, and thus not a dream shared by all? Examining the American Dream from the perspective of peoples who
have inhabited the land for far longer than settlers opens the Tucson community to a reorientation in understanding.

In conclusion, my time spent with activists in occupied O’odham territory/the U.S.-Mexico borderlands sheds light on simultaneous limits to and potentials for solidarity in the region. Limits to coalition building emerge when desires for universality run up against refusals to be assimilated into categories defined by settler colonial society. Exploring what at first may seem like an impasse in the search for solidarity reveals possibilities for a distinct form of solidarity that does not lie in finding one figure or struggle that is common to all. Rather, this sort of solidarity is born out of hearing the particular experiences of oppressed communities based on specific positionings in relationship to and within the settler colonial capitalist nation. Engaged listening to particular experiences may encourage activists to seek a deeper understanding of how a particular position structures desires, demands, or perceptions that may be entirely different, or even run counter, to their own. A more profound understanding of the (hi)stories of others may challenge activists to embrace a decolonial solidarity.

Additionally, in learning and teaching from multiple and varying positions of oppression, activists may be better equipped to recognize the complexity of and the multiple technologies of power at play in the U.S. settler colonial capitalist nation.
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