TEACHING ETHNIC STUDIES IN TIMES OF PERPETUAL RACIALIZED WARFARE

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The social mobilizations for justice carried out by communities of color during the 1960s and 1970s included a demand for inclusion into academic spaces. They did not only seek physical inclusion, but they understood knowledge production as implicated in power. In part through their participation in academia, these communities sought to transform their material realities. The creation of Ethnic Studies was central to this endeavor. Simultaneously, their rebelliousness was met with a radical reorganization by the state that responded to the perceived loss of state authority with the militarization of society, evidenced in the discourse of warfare deployed against constructed threats. Criminalization and imprisonment of communities of color became central tools for this reorganizing project. The author interrogates what it means for Ethnic Studies teachers that their students, and often themselves, form part of communities under siege. Using feminist testimonio, the author demonstrates how racial violence follows students of color into academia and suggests the adoption of abolition pedagogy by Ethnic Studies teachers to address some of the violence students and their communities' experience.

Key Words: *Ethnic Studies, race and gender, domestic warfare, prisons, criminalization, abolition pedagogy, testimonio, testimoniadoras*

Introduction: Violent *Takings* of Students

Ethnic Studies forms part of the social transformations that occurred as a result of the various movements of the 1960s and 1970s, which centered on bringing about freedom and self-determination for marginalized communities of color in the United States. Rather than simply disciplinary fields, Ethnic Studies and related fields were envisioned as tools to bring about changes needed for these communities within and outside of academia. These departmental transformations were simultaneously accompanied by a reorganization of the

state that responded to the perceived loss of state authority. The reorganization of the state in part manifested itself in the militarization of society, evidenced in the discourse of warfare deployed by various state representatives against constructed threats and the use of military strategies, technologies, and discourse to restore "law and order." The moment following the 1960s and 1970s civic mobilizations should be understood as a moment when the state militarily reorganized itself by declaring war against perceived domestic threats. In this case, the threats were imagined as rebellious communities of color, and a key tool for social reorganization was criminalization.

In this essay I center this understanding of the significance of racialized warfare in the state's domestic militarized reorganization, which is inherently a heteropatriarchal project, and argue that our actions as Ethnic Studies teachers need to be read within the framework of warfare. Domestic racial warfare is largely waged through the logic and materiality of the U.S. prison regime that promotes the containment and incapacitation of perceived social threats. Centering feminist testimonio, I draw from my experiences as an Ethnic Studies student and teacher and discuss the various violent *takings* of students. Over the years I have witnessed several students disappear temporarily or permanently due to arrests, deportations, economic situations, and many other reasons. These *takings* are products of the various wars declared by society, particularly against communities of color. What does it mean for Ethnic Studies teachers that our students, and very often we, form part of communities under siege? This question drives this essay.

Roadmap

I begin with a discussion of the origins of Ethnic Studies and how this moment where communities of color forced institutional changes was met with a violent and racialized reorganization of society. I then spend time

discussing feminist testimonio and argue that similar to Latin American testimonio, it is a useful lens to view struggles for survival and liberation in the United States. I follow this with my own testimonio. I bear witness to how racial warfare, waged in part through the logic of the U.S. prison regime, shapes experiences for students of color. I conclude, by arguing that as Ethnic Studies teachers, it is imperative that we engage the notion of abolition pedagogy. This perspective maintains that the logic of the U.S. prison regime permeates and makes possible public educational spaces, and this fact demands that we interrogate its impact in our classrooms and beyond.

Ethnic Studies and U.S. Domestic Racial Warfare

Ethnic Studies includes compartmentalized programs such as African American Studies, Asian American Studies, Chicana/o Studies, and Native American Studies, as well as programs specifically titled "Ethnic Studies". Here I use *Ethnic Studies* as an all-encompassing term. Its origins are rooted in communities of color declaring their right to existence and well-being. The 1960s and 1970s movements that gave life to Ethnic Studies sought to transform the social conditions that made these communities violable. My understanding is informed by Ethnic Studies scholar Dylan Rodríguez's (2006) conceptualization of white supremacy, which he defines as "the inscription of a fundamental relation between freedom and unfreedom, life and death, historically derived from the socially constitutive American production of white life/mobility through black, brown, and indigenous death/immobilization" (14). In other words, white life and freedom are predicated on black, brown, and indigenous people's vulnerability to immobilization and death. Consequently, the role of Ethnic Studies teachers is not only to interrogate the production of white supremacy and the impacts on various communities, but remaining focused on its original purpose, it must center on the dismantling of white supremacy if we are to assert and ensure our communities' rights to freedom and life.

The vulnerability of communities of color in the United States to violence and premature death is enabled significantly through the waging of domestic warfare. One area where we witness the discourse of warfare deployed is poverty. The war on poverty declared by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1964 and its programs were largely imagined for people of color, particularly blacks. Almost immediately, there was a neoconservative backlash that deployed notions of personal responsibility to argue against government intervention (Roberts 1997, 64). Central to this ideological maneuver was the representation of poverty in gendered terms. For example, political representatives narrated stories of lazy black women dependent on the government to sustain them, often by having many children. Thus, the subsequent retrenchment of the welfare state was ideologically secured through the construction of poverty as self-made, and women of color were explicitly targeted. The short-lived war on poverty almost immediately transformed into a war on the poor (Neubeck and Cavazene 2001; Gans 1996; Katz 1989). We see its consequences in the racialized disparity levels of education, wealth, unemployment, and health.

Domestic racialized warfare was further materialized through the declaration of a war on drugs and war on crime. Neoconservative responses to the perceived rebelliousness moved attention away from structural inequality and instead placed responsibility directly on the rebellious communities. Criminalization of drugs was central to this project. The ideological narrative provided to the public was that drugs were a threat to society because they led people to engage in criminalized activities. Thus, addressing the issue of drugs would reduce "lawlessness." Since drugs were constructed as an urban, and specifically black problem, the declaration of the war on drugs by President Richard Nixon in 1971 was essentially a declaration of war on poor urban communities of color (Parenti 1999, 9). Drugs served as a useful veil,

with which to wage these wars, and the general idea of "war on crime" was employed to reorganize society along racial lines. This is when we began to observe the massive expansion of the prison regime that today holds captive over two million people. It is important to note that it is precisely when communities of color forced institutional changes that society responded with criminalization and incarceration.

The framework of racialized warfare extended to (im)migrant communities. The U.S.-Mexico border was constructed as a main site of entrance for illegal drugs. Concern over lawlessness was extended to the border as the issues of unauthorized (im)migration and drug trafficking were conflated (Dunn 1996, 2), and the brown bodies associated with the border were linked to illegality. Furthermore, central to the 1990s' anti-(im)migrant mobilizations was the criminalizing construction of (im)migrant women entering the nation to have children (Roberts 1996). Thus, not only were (im)migrants made targets of the domestic wars on drugs and crime, but the gendered discourse of dependency was developed (Lindsley 2002; Roberts 1996). We observe the consequences of these wars in the massive expansion of (im)migrant detention and deportations (Lopez and Light 2009), as well as the thousands of children in foster care as a result of forced family separations (Wessler 2011). The post-9/11 moment further expanded warfare against (im)migrants, in this case racially associating Arabs and Muslims with terrorism. While Middle Eastern communities and individuals were explicitly marked as threats, the state's response affected (im)migrants in general. The post-9/11 moment greatly contributed to the expansion of what some term the immigration industrial complex (Magnes, Saenz, and Saenz 2013; Díaz 2011; Golash-Boza 2009).

As the examples of the war on the poor, war on drugs, war on crime, and war on terrorism demonstrate, racialized domestic warfare is central to the way the

United States is organized, and connections to gender are fundamental to these militarized mobilizations. Central elements to wars are the constructions of the enemies and victims, the militarized mobilization against such enemies, and their incapacitation and often death. U.S. domestic wars are not exceptions.

As Ethnic Studies teachers that aim to teach about the relationship of communities of color to the U.S. nation-state, it is critical that we understand and center in our work the substantial role of racialized domestic warfare in configuring social relations. Related, it is also essential that we recognize how our students experience warfare. Students in Ethnic Studies often come from communities under siege, and this fact does not end when they step into our classrooms.

Feminist Testimonio as Methodology

In this essay I draw on testimonio methodology to provide narratives of racialized domestic warfare. Testimonio is rooted in the late 1970s' and 1980s' Latin American struggles for liberation, specifically of poor and indigenous communities. Rather than narrating their stories as individuals, testimoniadoras (witnesses) narrate their stories as agents for a collective community. A central feature of Latin American testimonios is that they are narrated by witnesses that are moved by a sense of urgency of the situation, which includes war (Yúdice 1991, 17). Testimonios are created to bring about social transformation and thus are inherently political. They disrupt master narratives in attempts to intervene in the material organization of society (Yúdice 20).

Another significant aspect of Latin American testimonios is that they appeared to organically develop as feminist projects (Saporta Sternbach 1991). While bearing witness has historically been a male practice, women in Latin America took control of this literary space precisely to transform exclusionary and destructive relationships of power, especially patriarchal military rule.

Feminist scholar Nancy Saporta Sternbach draws parallels between the testimonial genre and feminist theory. Both are invested "in retrieving, reconstructing, and recovering women's history" (93). She writes,

> Even the characteristic traits of the two sound familiar: both include theory based on and grounded in the reality of a people who are breaking silences; both include theory for those who envision a future distinct from their past of oppression; both use discourse which gives voice to many others in their same situation; and both influence and are influenced by people who, with their new consciousness as a political subject, make evident the relationship between the personal and the political in an historic moment when the subject sees herself/themselves as an integral part of the collective process. (93)

While Latin American testimonio developed as a response to patriarchal military rule, these shared defining elements of testimonios and feminist theory enable Chicanas/Latinas in the United States to embrace testimonios in their own resistance struggles. However, while Latin American testimonios are characterized by texts written collaboratively by the activist testimoniadoras and "politically committed or empathetic transcribers/editors" (Yúdice 17), many Chicana/Latina feminists narrate their testimonios without an interlocutor. Testimonio expert John Beverley (1991) maintains that testimonios are largely intended to mobilize international support for Latin American struggles, and in this sense, they are created "…for people like us to participate as academics and yuppies, without leaving our studies and classrooms in the concreteness and relativity of actual social struggles" (3). Beverley understands testimonio as a pedagogic tool for academics to use in creating solidarity with "liberation movements and human rights struggles" within and outside the United States (3). The understanding of "actual social struggles" being located outside of

academic space is problematized by Chicana/Latina feminist scholars who maintain their very existence in such spaces constitute social struggles.

Cherríe Moraga and Gloria E. Anzaldúa's *This Bridge Called My Back* (1981, reprinted 2002) is a defining text that directed women of color, especially Chicanas/Latinas, to engage in what the Moraga terms "theory in the flesh" (23). Moraga calls on women of color to engage in creating knowledge from a racialized feminist perspective that is derived from lived experiences. Theory in the flesh signifies how "the physical realities of our lives—our skin color, the land or concrete we grew up on, our sexual longings—all fuse to create a politic born out of necessity" (23). Thus, for feminist women of color in academia, we theorize from our subjectivities out of a sense of urgency. Unlike Beverley, who infers that social struggles are located outside of academic spaces and that the role of academics is to be in solidarity, feminist women of color academics live their struggles on an everyday basis. This is exemplified by the Latina Feminist Group's *Telling to Live: Latina Feminist Testimonios* (2001). The title epitomizes the role of testimonio for Chicanas/Latinas as a tool for survival: "telling to live." Through testimonio, the Latina Feminist Group creates relations amongst Chicanas/Latinas to theorize their lived experiences, connect them to larger social forces, and make these experiences visible in efforts to transform society.

In their introduction, the Latina Feminist Group draws on the metaphor of "papelitos guardados," or "secret little papers," which are ideas, memories, and secrets that each contributor "store[d] in safe places waiting for the appropriate moment when we can return to them for review and analysis, or speak out and share them with others" (1). Through this work the Latina Feminist Group share their papelitos guardados as a process of healing, and engage in political consciousness-raising. In this essay I take my queue from

the Latina Feminist Group and narrate some of my own papelitos guardados, pieces I wrote to myself to make sense of the violence I witnessed. I draw from my papelitos guardados, developed largely from my experiences as an Ethnic Studies student and teacher, to speak to the ways that wars are waged against communities of color wherever our bodies are present—including academic spaces. As I witness the violent takings of students, I am driven by a sense of urgency that guides my narrative.

Testimonio: Early Experience of Being Under Siege

I grew up knowing that some bodies were not considered worthy of protection and were ideologically perceived as threats. In 1994, when I was a freshman in high school, California's Proposition 187 (Prop. 187) was introduced. Prop. 187 was an anti-immigrant, particularly anti-Latino, legislation that attempted to bar unauthorized (im)migrants from access to social resources, including health care and education (Chavez 2013; Ono and Sloop 2002; Roberts 1996). Notions of gender and race were central to Prop. 187's targeting of unauthorized (im)migrants. Similar to the narratives of black motherhood first developed in the 1960s that marked them as breeders of criminality, Prop. 187's ideological narrative targeted Latina (im)migrants' reproduction and represented their children as undeserving and prone to criminality. The targeting of women marks how gender is central to the construction of racial threats.

I was fourteen at the time. There was a statewide student movement to organize against this legislation. Students at my high school organized a walkout as part of a statewide action. While I was generally a compliant student, I felt very strongly against Prop. 187's message since I perceived it as a direct attack on me, the daughter of a Mexican (im)migrant family, and on my community at large. The entire lunch I deliberated whether I would participate. As the bell rang, I made up my mind and along with many others

refused to return to class and participated in a demonstration. I was unaware at the time, but my sister Gabby, who was in eighth grade in middle school, also participated in a student walkout. As they ran across a field and climbed a fence to leave the school in protest, the vice principal pulled on Gabby's pants, which got caught on the fence and cut through her skin. Prop. 187 passed despite of our mobilizations, but was later declared unconstitutional at the federal level. However, many of its elements were implemented with the Welfare Reform Act of 1996.

This early experience is in part representative of what it means for communities to be under siege. My understanding of racialized and gendered violence was not developed from exercises of theoretical musings, but rather from intimate knowledge. While in academia I learned to articulate my arguments better; I already possessed knowledge that was grounded in lived experience. These experiences shaped my interaction with academic spaces.

Violence Follows Our Bodies, Even Into the Haven of Academia

In late 1998 and early 1999, during my first two quarters as an undergraduate at the University of California, Riverside (UCR), my understanding of racial violence was further solidified through the police murder of Tyisha Miller. Miller was a nineteen year-old black woman who, while unconscious, was parked at a gas station in the middle of the night. Apparently, family members found her unresponsive and called the Riverside Police Department. To the police, Miller appeared to have a small pistol on her lap. Her unresponsiveness prompted the police to force themselves into her vehicle. As she seemed to wake up, rather than investigate her condition, the police shot more than twenty bullets. Most were shot from behind and resulted in her death. I became active in the movement to demand justice for Miller, who was just one year older than me. Her death crystallized for me how nonwhite

bodies are constructed as expendable, and thus made vulnerable to state violence that is institutionally justified. As demonstrated by the recent case of Trayvon Martin, the sixteen-year-old black youth who was killed by George Zimmerman for looking suspicious, nonwhite bodies, particularly black bodies, are already constructed as threats to white bodies and their incapacitation is written as socially logical and legally legitimate. Miller's death was a decisive moment that informed my activism at UCR.

As I note above, the violence experienced by poor communities of color travels to wherever our bodies are present, including academia, even though it is conceived as a safe haven. During winter and spring quarters of 2002, UCR students were protesting the *Highlander*, the official campus newspaper, for publishing various racist, sexist, and homophobic articles and cartoons. The newspaper published images that criminalized black men. They also published cartoons that associated transsexuals with Satanists and trivialized the rape of women. One of the artists of several homophobic cartoons, when critiqued in a public town hall meeting about his work, responded by stating that he liked to depict "strange things." Many of us protested. This artist then retaliated by filing a report with the director of the Student Conduct Office (SCO). The *Highlander* cartoonist accused a queer woman of color activist of harassment. In response, the SCO director warned the activist to stop harassing him, an action that was solely grounded on the artist's claims. In doing this, the administrator displayed his willingness to repress this student activist and protect homophobic hate speech at UCR. Instead, we were informed by UCR administration that while the content was disrespectful, it was legally protected.

Our organizing led to a larger critique of UCR and its role in maintaining an environment where such violence was not only possible, but expected. During our discussions, one of the young female student organizers approached

a number of us and revealed that another female student had sexually assaulted her while she was unconscious. Immediately following the assault were attempts to silence her by male friends of the person who violated her, and most were members of a campus fraternity. The attempts to silence her included anonymous death threats. During a meeting where she thought she was going to receive assistance to file a restraining order, the director of the SCO, his assistant, a UCR PD sergeant, a detective, and the director of the Women's Center questioned her about the incidents. With the exception of the director of the Women's Center, all present were men. The student later related that during the meeting she felt uncomfortable and as if her testimony was intended for the sexual enjoyment of the men, and the director of the Women's Center said almost nothing. During the meeting, she was accused of imagining the various incidents. Later, when she attempted to file a restraining order, several staff and administrators discouraged her from doing so. Not only did the administration and UCR PD do very little to address her situation, but the cumbersome and discouraging process of filing a claim became an additional site of violence. This motivated us further to address violence against women of color and mark the university as an enabler and perpetrator of violence.

Many demonstrations took place and on April 18th, 2002, during one of these events a *Highlander* photographer, a white male member of the aforementioned fraternity, charged toward one of the women protesters and shoved her with his forearm. He then raised his left fist as if to hit her. One of the Ethnic Studies professors present who was filming the rally stood in front of the photographer, who hit the professor on the forehead with his camera. The next day the photographer filed a complaint with the UCR PD against the professor, claiming he was the victim of assault. When the young woman who was the target of the photographer's violence attempted to file a report, the UCR PD's

receptionist informed her that the photographer was the actual victim, that the professor had shoved him. The student insisted on filing a report and when an officer met with her, he stated that the photographer's aggression was "understandable." In stating this, the officer condoned the aggressive behavior of a white man against a woman of color. The director of the SCO, his assistant, and a friend of the *Highlander* photographer stated they witnessed the professor "battering" the student. Two video recordings of the rally showed that the battery that the photographer claimed never occurred.

Part of the violent response to our organizing included two vehicular incidences where individuals associated to the fraternity aggressively followed student activists, including my sister Gabby, and appeared to attempt to rear-end them. On another occasion, I parked my car overnight near campus and it was physically turned on its side by morning. I never found out who was responsible, but I suspected it was members of the nearby fraternity.

On different occasions, Gabby and I had to deal with used condoms being left at our doorstep. I understood these acts as threats of sexual violence. The facts that I provide here come from personal archives and a formal complaint that I submitted to the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs, along with one of the condoms. His response was that because these incidents happened off campus, there was nothing the administration could do.

I share these various moments of violence that I collectively experienced as an undergraduate student because they speak to the response by the UCR PD and UCR administration. They demonstrate that the structure that we have available to deal with the racialized and gendered violence that follows students of color onto university campuses is not only unable to obtain any semblance of justice, but often serves to perpetuate additional

violence. The individuals attempting to create changes on campus faced various forms of repression. Administrators silenced the queer woman of color activist and the *Highlander* did not face any official action for its racist, sexist, and homophobic publications. The survivor of sexual assault, also a woman of color, was further violated through an interrogation where she was told that she probably imagined the various incidents of violence. The professor accused of battering the *Highlander* photographer continued to endure harassment and a legal investigation while the photographer, who had charged aggressively toward a woman of color, faced no repercussions. Finally, the administration refused to investigate the attempts to rear-end my sister and friends, the incidents where condoms were left at our doorstep, or when my car was turned over. Gabby left UCR for a year—in part due to this culture of violence.

It is significant to note that the majority of UCR administrators and employees who not only failed to ensure our well-being but also actually carried out further violence were men of color. The one woman involved was the director of the Women's Center, and she did very little to support the student that was sexually assaulted. This speaks to the ways that marginalized groups, including people of color and women, participate in reinforcing hegemonic relations of power. Patriarchal white supremacy is a collaborative project that many, albeit often unconsciously, work to sustain.

The accounts of UCR and the violence we underwent in response to our efforts to address violence against women of color are not exceptional. Rather, they form part of a larger structural arrangement where people of color are marked as violable and expendable. Tyisha Miller's murder by Riverside PD highlights the function of police as enforcers of the line between lives that are worth protection and lives that can be violated, and even killed. This same

logic is evident in the experiences that I have recounted here where UCR police, administrators, and employees judged the lives of students and faculty of color as violable and in need of discipline.

Testimoniadora

After graduation, I began the Ethnic Studies doctoral program at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD). Spring 2010 was a very difficult time. I was preparing to defend my dissertation on the criminalization of Latina migrants, teaching a course on the U.S. prison regime and its impact on Chicanas/os-Latinas/os, and I became involved in the movement to organize against institutionalized racism on campus. The organizing was prompted by a series of anti-black events at UCSD. This included a Compton cookout-themed fraternity party where attendees were invited to engage in blackface to mock Black History Month. The representation of black women was especially problematic. Women attending the party were encouraged to be "ghetto chicks," which were defined as having gold teeth, starting drama, and wearing cheap clothes. Derogatory constructions of black womanhood have a long history, but this particular representation is connected to the 1960s and 1970s construction of black women as dominant matriarchs mostly located in urban spaces. The Compton Cookout was followed by a campus television show that defended the event and engaged in anti-black rhetoric, the hanging of a noose at the Geisel Library, and a KKK-style hood placed on a statue outside of the library. Similar to the experiences of those of us who organized against racialized and gendered violence at UCR, UCSD student activists marked the collective violence experienced as being institutionalized by the university itself. Not only were the number of students of color low, compared to the overall demographics of the state, with blacks historically never exceeding three percent, but as the UCSD's Black Student Union noted in a public statement, most outreach and retention efforts aimed at students of

color were fought for, developed, and sustained by students through student fees (Ritcherson and Keflezighi 2010). Rather than merely focusing on their studies, students of color were compelled to take on the struggle for their right to exist at UCSD.

During this time, I dedicated much of my class connecting these events to the course material. My course, "Criminalization of Chicanas/os/Latinas/os and the U.S. Prison Regime," provided a comparative and relational analysis of the criminalization experienced by Chicanas/os/Latinas/os and the development of U.S. prisons as an inherently anti-black project. Nadr (this is a pseudonym), a student enrolled in this course, is in great part the motivation for this essay.

Nadr is a member of a Muslim family that migrated to the United States. Throughout the quarter I witnessed Nadr attend various marches and protests and one day he stopped showing up to class and to these events. Later his sister informed me that Nadr had been arrested for burglary and he asked his family to seek my help. This essay is largely informed by the feelings of incapacitation that I experienced when I received Nadr's family's request for help. I gave Nadr's family as much information as I could and provided a letter of support. Writing that letter was extremely difficult. I was asked to speak to how deserving Nadr was and I was simultaneously constrained from making any of the critiques that Nadr had heard in our classroom. In the letter, I could not speak of prisons as racial legacies of slavery; I was not allowed to discuss how prisons today serve to incapacitate bodies that are considered social threats and excess; nor could I address the anti-Muslim and Arab context within which his incarceration took place. Essentially, the letter I was asked to write to try to prevent juridical violence from being inflicted onto Nadr legitimized the very system that ensured his captivity. Nadr was twenty years old at the time and was admitted into Donovan prison in San Diego the summer following the

end of the school year. The coincidental nature of this situation never evaded me. There I was, hoping to empower students by teaching them how the U.S. prison regime served to immobilize and at times annihilate communities, and there Nadr was, experiencing this incapacitation in the flesh.

Conclusion: Abolitionist Pedagogy as a Tool for Liberation

As an assistant professor, I continue to witness the *taking* of students. On more than one occasion, students have missed class because they have to attend a family member's deportation hearing or travel to see family members who were recently deported. Unauthorized students share with me their fear of being stopped by the police or ICE and being deported. While many are now eligible for Deferred Action, in some occasions, as with one of my students, they have a criminal record or an issue pending in court and are unable to qualify. On other occasions, students leave because they feel the responsibility to help sustain their families. Every time I witness a student *taken*, I am reminded that their disappearance is a predictable social production grounded in the logic of racial warfare. The experiences of having students *taken* and be incapacitated crystallized for me the significance of teaching, especially the discipline of Ethnic Studies. There was almost nothing that I could personally do for Nadr or any other student that was temporarily or permanently *taken*.

Dylan Rodríguez (2010) provides a careful analysis of the symbiotic relationship between teaching and the U.S. prison regime and demonstrates how the site of education and the ability to have order and peace in the classroom is premised on the racist state's ability to discipline, incapacitate, and if necessary, liquidate those that are deemed threats. The position of students in this symbiotic relationship is dependent on their social identities and how they engage existing relationships of power. According to Rodríguez,

> Within the schooling regime/prison regime nexus, many are taught into freedom in order to administer, enforce, and passively reproduce the unfreedom of others, while some are trained into a tentative and always-temporary avoidance of unfreedom, meagerly rewarded with the accouterments of civic inclusion (a job, a vote, a home address). Numerous others are trained to inhabit a space across or in between these fraudulent modalities of freedom. (12)

If, as Rodríguez maintains, someone's freedom is dependent on others' unfreedom, then as teachers we are placed in a position to reproduce existing relationships of power to mitigate the violence our students experience. The best hope for some students is to try to avoid criminalization and unfreedom by disciplining their bodies and actions. Rodríguez asserts, "As teachers, we are institutionally hailed to the service of genocide management, in which our pedagogical labor is variously engaged in mitigating, valorizing, critiquing, redeeming, justifying, lamenting, and otherwise reproducing or tolerating the profound systemic violence of the global-historical U.S. nation-state building project" (17). How should Ethnic Studies teachers respond to the position within which we are structurally placed? Rodríguez suggests, and I agree, that at this moment the most significant pedagogical position that we can assume is abolition. This means that we center the way that the U.S. prison regime organizes education, including our own complicity. More importantly, however, it means that we make it possible in our classrooms for students to envision the creation of a world that is not organized on the racialized dialectical relationship of freedom and unfreedom. In other words, our responsibility as Ethnic Studies teachers is to struggle for our communities' liberation and life and this is not possible without first engaging in the labor of imagining the unimaginable. What would a world where

someone's life does not depend on another's immobilization or death look like? This question must drive our pedagogy if we are to end the racist and heteropatriarchal violence that our students and communities endure.

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