VOICING CITIZENSHIP:
Undocumented Women and Social Media

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Abstract: *This essay explores how voice is mediated by social media through case studies of two highly visible undocumented women in the immigrant rights movement. Through a rhetorical analysis of the Facebook pages and blogs of the case studies, the essay documents the possibilities and constraints of deploying marginalized voices on social media. Ultimately, I argue that social media, as interactive and accessible platforms, enable these women to voice claims to citizenship in more nuanced and unconventional ways than in traditional media outlets. In particular, social media make it possible for these women to use multiple, and sometimes contradictory, voices that challenge conventional notions of citizenship and function as an addendum to more limited messages in traditional media outlets and demonstrations.*

Key Words: *immigration, social media, citizenship, voice, undocumented women, activism*

Immigration continues to generate heated debates in US politics and mass media. On the one hand, there is an anti-immigration rhetoric present that is particularly aimed at the undocumented and continuously present in mainstream media and politics. At the same time, there are activists challenging dominant discourses that construct immigrants as both physical and symbolic threats to the nation. These counter-narratives are especially present in social media where immigrants and their supporters organize for comprehensive immigration reform and a moratorium on deportations (an estimated 1,100 people are deported each day under the Obama administration [Nakamura 2013]). While the immigrant rights movement utilizes traditional forms of protest such as rallies, boycotts, and marches, it is also increasingly present online in social media (Costanza-Chock 2008, 2014; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Salas

2008; Voss and Bloemraad 2011). Indeed, many of the traditional forms of protest are mobilized and sustained through interactive online media such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Wordpress. What is particularly salient is that it is the undocumented—usually depicted as invisible, passive, and technologically illiterate in the popular imaginary—who are utilizing social media the most heavily and strategically for immigration reform. Even more significant, some of the most visible advocates of immigrant rights over the last decade are undocumented women and youth (Anguiano and Chavez 2011; Beltrán 2014; Cacho 2012; Pallares 2010; Pallares and Flores-González 2011; Toro-Morn and Flores-González 2011; Zimmerman 2012).

This essay explores how voice is mediated by social media through a case study of two undocumented women in the immigrant rights movement.[1] While there is burgeoning scholarship on the use of social media by undocumented youth, particularly those advocating for the DREAM Act[2] (Anguiano and Chavez 2011; Beltrán 2014; Zimmerman 2012), undocumented women's use of social media is understudied despite women's longstanding engagement in the immigration rights movement (Coll 2010; Fujiwara 2008; Pardo 1998; Pulido 2009) and presence in traditional news outlets (McElmurry 2009; Pallares 2010; Puga 2012; Toro-Morn 2013). While immigrants, and women in particular, are not new to using media for both personal and political purposes (c.f. Moran 2011; Katz 2010; Vargas 2009 in the case of Latina/os) and there is a robust body of scholarship on Latina/o media, scholars are just beginning to create theories to understand Latina immigrants' social media usage and how this activity dovetails and diverges from earlier uses of other types of media. Through exploring Latina immigrant self-representations on social media, this essay offers a preliminary theoretical framework for understanding Latina/o social media usage.

In examining undocumented women activists' use of social media, I am primarily concerned with the following question: How do social media enable undocumented women to voice citizenship, that is, to enact a form of belonging to the nation and/or beyond the nation in ways that are distinct from traditional forms of media (i.e., print and broadcast news)? Through an analysis of the voices of undocumented women on social media, I illustrate how marginalized voices are articulated online to voice citizenship in ways that are more dynamic and resistant than in traditional media outlets. I argue that the women's voices on social media enable the women to engage in self-representation and make claims to unconventional forms of citizenship. More specifically, the significance of these women's voices on social media is not so much in terms of reach, but the opportunities that these platforms offer as an adjacent field to offline spaces where users can tell less packaged and sanitized stories than in traditional media outlets.

Studying Voice and Citizenship

This essay focuses on two undocumented working mothers of Mexican origin, Elvira Arellano and Flor Crisóstomo, who have been highly visible in the press since the mid to late 2000s after taking sanctuary in a Chicago church.[3] Post-2010, these women also developed a strong online presence on Facebook and blogs to advocate for immigration reform and an end to mass deportations. Both women are part of a chorus of voices that led to the recent executive order on immigration in November 2014 to delay the deportation of millions of undocumented immigrants.[4] To document how voice is developed on social media among these undocumented women activists, I performed a rhetorical analysis of Arellano's and Crisóstomo's Facebook pages and blogs.[5] The texts studied were collected from a three-year period (January 2010 to February 2013) in order to track how the women's voices evolved online and to gain an in-depth understanding of the discursive strategies used in these social media platforms. For example, I closely analyzed the women's Facebook

posts and blog entries in terms of content (what they were discussing), tone, and any visual accompaniments (e.g., photographs, infographics, etc.). This time period yielded more than enough data to allow for both breadth and depth (e.g., over 7,000 Facebook posts and two blogs that each contained ten to fifteen posts). To sift through this large amount of data, I conducted a thematic analysis to determine which themes the women and their audiences discussed the most (i.e., what issues were posted about frequently and how many people commented on those posts). Once I determined what the women were most invested in sharing online, I then analyzed those posts inductively to figure out how these activists were communicating these issues.

Analyzing texts on two different platforms (i.e., Facebook and blogs) allowed for triangulation in being able to compare and contrast which kinds of texts invite the most interaction and garner support from audiences. While the women do not reach as many audience members as they do in traditional media outlets,[6] social media does afford them alternative spaces to share more fleshed out and nuanced versions of their stories. The analysis of rhetoric from various platforms also sheds light on how each modality offers different opportunities and challenges. For example, blogs give activists the most freedom in terms of the amount of content one can post, but Facebook is more popular with friends and followers given the short and more frequent messages.

I use voice[7] as a theoretical lens to elucidate the salience of Arellano's and Crisóstomo's discursive strategies in social media. Nick Couldry defines voice as "giving an account of one's life and its conditions" (2010, 7) and distinguishes between voice as *process* and voice as *value*. Voice as *process* refers to the capacity humans have to craft narratives about their experiences whereas voice as *value* emphasizes that voice matters and necessitates recognition. Couldry argues that contemporary neoliberalism undermines voice as *value*, and asserting our

voices is the foremost way to challenge oppressive conditions. Ananda Mitra and Eric Watts (2002) apply a similar conceptualization of voice to the specific site of the Internet where they argue that voice is powerful in very particular ways because cyberspace is placeless and inherently discursive. They argue that voice is a key strategy used by marginalized groups to enact agency online because the internet offers an alternative to traditional media institutions with their high barriers to entry. In this essay, I analyze both voice as *process* and *value* by examining the kinds of narratives the women create online and how and why they matter both online and offline. In this way, an understanding of voice as *process* and *value* allows for a micro and macro analysis.

This conceptualization of voice is also informed by Chicana and Latina feminist epistemologies that foreground personal narratives as central to one's politicization and struggle for social justice (Anzaldúa 1987; Benmayor 2012; The Latina Feminist Group 2001; Moraga and Anzaldúa 2002; Pérez Huber 2009). While using media to voice personal and political subjectivities is a central strategy deployed by many women of color activists, the tradition of *testimonio* especially underscores the types of storytelling analyzed in this essay. Originating in Latin America and also deployed by Latinas in the US, *testimonios* entail telling one's story in public forums for the purpose of political change. *Testimonios* highlight individual stories to underscore the ways that lived experiences are implicated within larger power structures, such as the state, transnational corporations, and mainstream media. Latina and Latin American women have especially deployed *testimonio* through an intersectional optic to foreground how issues of gender, race, ethnicity, and class shape their access to resources and liberation. *Testimonio*'s foregrounding of lived experience makes it is an optimal platform for intersectional analysis.

Latin American *testimonios* tend to be mediated by outside authors and publishers who hear the subject's oral story and translate it into written

text (e.g., *I, Rigoberta Menchú* 1984). On the other hand, Latina feminists in the US have self-authored their own forms of written *testimonios* (c.f. Moraga and Anzaldúa 2002; The Latina Feminist Group 2001). Rina Benmayor (2012) argues that *digital testimonios*, a storytelling practice where participants tell their stories through the audio-visual medium of a short video, enable subjects to self-represent themselves unencumbered by an external translator and publisher. Like *digital testimonios*, social media functions as an accessible and interactive platform for telling one's story for political purposes. Social media users not only document the self, but because of the interactive nature of social media they also incorporate and respond to feedback from an audience. Thus, social media embody elements of both written and performed *testimonios* that tie individual stories to larger socio-political issues in a public forum.

Overall, this study reveals the cultural and communicative dimension of social media by underscoring the voice as a key aspect of the form and function of social media used to express unconventional forms of citizenship. In doing so, this study contributes to the literature on gendered and racialized immigration rhetoric, especially as it concerns Latinas (Anguiano and Chavez 2011; Chavez 2013; Cisneros 2014; Demo 2005, 2007; McKinnon 2011; Ono and Sloop 2002). In particular, this essay builds on Kent Ono's and John Sloop's (2002) treatment of "vernacular discourse," or rhetoric conveyed by marginalized groups, by underscoring discourses of belonging and citizenship in social media and, thus, foregrounding "Latina/o vernacular rhetorics" (Calafell and Holling 2011; Cisneros 2014). Furthermore, this essay offers an interdisciplinary approach to the study of vernacular discourse in digital media by placing communication studies, Chicana/Latina feminisms, and LatCrit theories on personal narratives in conversation with one another.

Voicing Citizenship on Social Media

Elvira Arellano became a public media figure in 2006 when she took sanctuary in a Chicago church in response to a deportation order. Arellano asked for her status to be legalized based on her then five-year old son's US birthright citizenship, but when her request was denied she was deported to México in 2007. Upon returning to México, Arellano continued to advocate for the legalization of mixed status families, or those in which some family members have legal citizenship while others do not have documentation. In addition to her continued commitment to immigrant rights in the US, Arellano also organized for undocumented Central Americans in México. In March 2014, Arellano received mainstream and Spanish-language press attention when she re-entered the US with her two sons after filing for asylum based on threats of kidnapping and violence. In solidarity with DREAM activists, Arellano urged President Obama to halt deportations (in response to the failure of the House of Representatives to pass comprehensive immigration reform in the summer of 2013). She awaits her hearing date in Chicago later this year.

Not until after her deportation did Arellano begin to participate significantly in social media. Between 2008 and 2010, she ran a blog (www.familialatinaunida.org), where she updated readers on her current activist work and posted letters to US politicians, notably President Barack Obama and Senator Dick Durbin (IL-D). Since joining Facebook in 2009, her postings have crossed the line between the political and the personal[8] as her Facebook friends extend their support to her cause along with concern for her well-being and that of her older son Saul. These social media sites allow Arellano to describe her story in her own words, enlist political and emotional support from her friends and followers, and create a virtual space where participants can discuss immigration issues.

Flor Crisóstomo migrated to the US in 2000 in search of employment, leaving behind her three children in Oaxaca, México with her mother. She was arrested in Chicago in 2006, during an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raid at her workplace, IFCO Systems. In early 2008, Crisóstomo took sanctuary in the same church as Arellano had earlier. In October 2010 she left sanctuary[9] after the isolation became unbearable and began travelling around the US to meet with farmworkers and cultural centers to raise awareness about issues affecting indigenous migrants in the US and Latin America (Crisóstomo 2010). Based on her Facebook page, it appears that Crisóstomo currently resides in the Bay Area in California and that her legal status remains unresolved.

Upon taking sanctuary in 2008, Crisóstomo began employing a blog (http://floresiste.wordpress.com) and maintaining two Facebook pages that include one personal page ("Flor Crisóstomo") and one fan, and later group, page[10] titled "Floresiste Media." Her personal Facebook page includes both personal posts intended for her closest friends and political comments, and calls to action for immigration rights. Her group page, Floresiste Media, consists mostly of news links and online petitions. After leaving sanctuary in 2010, she maintained her blog for a short time and remained active on her two Facebook pages. It appears that social media provided an important means for Crisóstomo to connect to the world and tell her story before and after sanctuary, given that they can be accessed anywhere with an Internet connection.[11]

Arellano and Crisóstomo vary in their use of Facebook and blogs and the types of voices they deploy in each of these platforms. In particular, Arellano relies on a discourse of family reunification through underscoring the plight of mixed status families and requesting legal status based on her

son's birthright citizenship. In contrast, Crisóstomo's voice is anchored in rallying for indigenous rights and deploys a postcolonial critique of migration. Whereas traditional media outlets, including both the English-language and Spanish-language press, treat these women as either sympathetic suffering mothers (Puga 2012) or criminals who take advantage of their children (McElmurry 2009; Oboler 2007), social media affords these women a space to express themselves outside this dichotomy of mother-criminal as dynamic subjects, contextualize their experiences within larger political-economic forces, and challenge normative modes of citizenship discourse that deem only documented citizens worthy of rights and subjectivity. Judith Butler's (2007) concept "performative contradiction" is useful here, a paradox whereby marginalized groups "have no right of free speech under the law although they're speaking freely, precisely in order to demand the right to speak freely" (2007, 64). She further argues that these iterations are powerful not because they lead to immediate, tangible results, but instead "unfold in time." Similarly, as Claudia Anguiano and Karma Chavez (2011) write of undocumented DREAM activists, the women's use of the voice to assert belonging is a radical act given that "they speak without the legal right to speak" (98) due to their undocumented status. Furthermore, as Mitra and Watts assert: "To be able to speak could, in cyberspace, be more important than being widely heard in cyberspace. For many marginalized subcultures, the ability to gain that agency, and the moment of speech is perhaps more of a determinate moment than the moment when the voice is heard" (2002, 490). The analysis of the online voices of undocumented women—subjects that are often invisible in public discourse and constructed as undeserving of rights due to limited notions of personhood based on legal citizenship—provides an important intervention in the study of citizenship discourse, especially as it is articulated as a form of *testimonio*.

Below I outline these women's social media use and the two distinct voices they convey on Facebook and their blogs. Some of these voices are more emotional, particularly those on Facebook, drawing on familiar tropes of womanhood, motherhood, and nation, while others are more formal and overtly political as evident in their blog posts. In unpacking their voices on social media, I illustrate that the women's labor on social media disrupts conventional notions of subjectivity as determined by legal personhood. Through challenging the assumption that only documented citizens are deserving of rights and recognition, these *testimonios* assert subjectivity and belonging by demanding visibility and respect within the public space of social media.

Voicing Motherhood and Domesticity

Arellano and Crisóstomo are the most active on Facebook when compared to their blog usage. This preference for Facebook is likely because it is the most popular social networking site in the world and because it is primarily used to connect users that already know one another (Miller 2011; van Dijk 2013). Both Arellano and Crisóstomo rely heavily on their personal narratives (both written and visual) via online *testimonios* on Facebook. In particular, these women tell their stories on Facebook through the lens of motherhood and domesticity. Rhetoric about motherhood and domesticity, work that is gendered as feminine and often goes unrecognized, function as counterpoints to undocumented men's waged labor. Furthermore, Arellano and Crisóstomo invoke tropes of motherhood and domesticity as forms of substantive citizenship that are contributions to society.

On Facebook, Arellano mainly deploys sentimental discourses of motherhood in order to garner sympathy from her audience. Posting some of the same photographs present in the press, images of Arellano on her Facebook page often depict the activist embracing her son lovingly. Arellano also uses written

text to identify herself primarily as a mother. For example, she regularly posts messages such as the following: "LO ÚNICO QUE LE DA SENTIDO A MI VIDA ES MI HIJO!!!!Su complemento es la justicia social.....Cuando mi saulito está lejos, mi vida es vacía!!!!!....." [sic][12] A Facebook friend[13] supports her responding: "Su sufrimiento no es en vano Elvira, Dios esta formando a su hijo para una gran mission [sic]"[14] (8/9/11). In this exchange, Arellano and her Facebook friend invoke the ubiquitous woman-as-nation trope whereby Arellano is fashioned as raising the nation (embodied in her son). Politicizing motherhood, where children serve as the impetus for action, is not a new endeavor, particularly among Latin American and Latina mother-activists (Coll 2010; Guzmán Bouvard 1994; Pardo 1998), but Arellano employs it within a new sphere online. In this sense, her Facebook page is not only a platform for advocating for immigrant rights, but also a source of emotional support in mobilizing for change. Furthermore, there is little separation of the public and private spheres. This melding of spheres can be read as a feminist understanding that the "personal is the political," but it is also specific to Latina immigrant political agency. As Kathleen Coll (2010) finds in her study of Latina immigrant activists, emotion is a central strategy in Latina immigrants' claims to citizenship where deeply intimate issues concerning the family serve as an impetus to activism. Moreover, within the immigrant rights movement family is a central narrative deployed to advocate for legalizing the status of mixed status family members (Pallares and Flores-González 2010). What is noteworthy about Arellano's sentimental motherhood discourse is that she uses it, along with Christian rhetoric reminiscent of abolitionist and civil rights movements discussed below, to demand recognition from the state as a legitimate citizen.

Crisóstomo's voice on her individual Facebook page is less entrenched in motherhood. Indeed, she rarely mentions her children nor does she post

pictures of family.[15] Instead, Crisóstomo's timeline is steeped in domesticity and emphasizes *lo cotidiano*, loosely translated as the "daily" or "the ordinary." For example, she posts photographs of herself cooking, cleaning, and sewing. In addition to posting news and petitions promoting immigration reform, Crisóstomo also publishes recipes and pictures of dishes she prepares. Loida Martell-Otero argues that *lo cotidiano* is an important representational strategy for Latinas because it is "a concrete sociohistorical location where women struggle daily for the survival of their families and communities" (2009, 676). In this way, Crisóstomo melds the public and domestic spheres through locating her voice within *lo cotidiano*. She also foregrounds labor within the home as opposed to her relationship to her children. In other words, while Arellano's voice builds on her images in traditional media as a suffering mother that struggles for her son's access to the American Dream, Crisóstomo's voice deemphasizes her role as a mother, but nonetheless captures her contributions to the domestic sphere. These voices are significant because they redirect the focus on (male) immigrant labor (Tyler and Marciniak 2013) to the care of one's own family and home (as opposed to employers' families and homes in the case of domestic workers). In doing so, the women situate the feminized (and often undervalued) labor of motherhood and domesticity as central to their claims to personhood and citizenship.

Voicing Christianity and Indigeneity

Whereas the previous section was concerned with rhetoric that tied the feminized domestic sphere to claims of citizenship, the following discussion details how Arellano and Crisóstomo draw upon larger public discourses tied to US and global social movements. Even more so than her Facebook wall, Arellano's blog is largely centered on legitimizing herself as worthy of US citizenship. To make this claim to legal status, Arellano's voice draws on US discourses of Christianity. For example, she re-appropriates Christian rhetoric promoting family values—a strategy often invoked by US political conservatives,[16] yet also reminiscent of

religious abolitionist rhetoric and later civil rights tactics to resist oppression. This rhetoric also harks back to Mexican American Cesar Chavez's activist work United Farmworkers Union, which was steeped in Christian (mainly Catholic) rhetoric (Ontiveros 2010). Playing on the popular Christian saying "What Would Jesus Do?", Arellano on occasion sports a T-shirt that reads, "Who Would Deport Jesus?"[17] in mainstream press photos and as her profile picture on Facebook. In February 1, 2010, she wrote the following in her blog:

> Why did so many millions of us go to the north to work and raise families? Well, why was Joseph sold into slavery in Egypt only to rise with God's hand to bring his own people to Egypt and save them from starvation? God brought so many million Latinos to the United States so that our families and our people would survive, be fruitful and multiply. It is our destiny and we will change the United States for the better. Latinos will not only save themselves but when we win legalization the Latino community will help that nation work its way out of its economic depression—because we are the workers!—Take Your Place in History on March 21st!

This likening of Arellano and other immigrants to biblical figures invokes liberation theology rhetoric, particularly in the invocation of salvation as a trope for social justice.[18] Furthermore, as Daisy Machado (2002) contends, the "unnamed woman" in the biblical story of Hagar (Book of Genesis) portends the plight of undocumented women who suffer from patriarchy, poverty, and invisibility due to their outsider status in the US As such, drawing from biblical narratives of salvation and redemption can be a powerful discursive strategy for undocumented women whereby they write themselves into the grand narratives of US Christianity. Furthermore, by invoking a religious rhetoric Arellano reworks dominant constructions of criminalization and legal personhood and positions

undocumented immigrants as deserving and contributing members of society. Arellano deploys sentiment and feeling to encourage sympathy and empathy in a manner that parallels rhetoric associated with both the US (e.g., abolition, civil rights, and farmworker movements) and Latin America (i.e., liberation theology).

On Crisóstomo's blog, "Floresiste,"[19] she posts short essays, letters to politicians, and videos in English and Spanish. Crisóstomo also depicts herself as an activist in videos and photographs of her speaking and participating in protests. Unlike her personal Facebook page, the blog does not depict Crisóstomo performing labor in the home such as sewing or putting away groceries. Rather, the focus in Crisóstomo's blog is on her presence in the public sphere, while her Facebook page represents "*lo cotidiano*" within the home. As such, Crisóstomo's blog appears to be much more formal than her individual Facebook page.

While religious rhetoric is not as central to Crisóstomo's claims to citizenship (although religious imagery, such as the cross, is sometimes visible in the background of her videos and photographs), she relies heavily on a trope of resistance to the hegemonic order in her blog. In particular, as in her Facebook pages, Crisóstomo overtly identifies as an indigenous Zapatista woman from Oaxaca. For example, the signature on her blog states, "Ser mujer es mi condición de vida, ser Indígena es mi razón para actuar…y ser MUJER-INDIA a la misma vez."[20] As such, she takes on an intersectional voice that emphasizes her oppression as both a woman and an indigenous migrant. Central to this "mujer-india" voice is a strong sense of displacement. Sylvia Marcos (2005) and Maguerite Waller (2005) note that indigenous women's voices often offer alternative forms of knowledge that operate outside of individualistic Western notions of the citizen-subject. Indigenous understandings of citizenship are hinged more upon smaller communities living together whereas contemporary US notions of citizenship are predicated upon documented legal personhood.

During a forum on undocumented immigration held at the University of Illinois at Chicago in August 2007, Crisóstomo explained that she did not belong anywhere—neither in México as an indigenous woman nor in the US as an undocumented immigrant. Her statement is reminiscent of the "countryless woman" characterized by Chicana feminist Ana Castillo (1995) who, like Crisóstomo, is without a home on either side of the border. Emblematic of this sensibility is this excerpt from one of Crisóstomo's blog posts:

> I am the second generation of my family which finds itself in economic exile. The first generation affected [by] forced displacement were my parents, whose rights to self-sufficiency were destroyed along with the loss of land and right to traditional artisanry.

Crisóstomo's individual voice of dispossession and displacement echoes larger indigenous rhetoric around the globe, including the US, Canada, Latin America, and Australia, that decries the marginalization of indigenous groups. Crisóstomo emphasizes the forced migration of indigenous groups when she firmly states that undocumented women like her are the "new slaves" in the contemporary global economy. As "new slaves" these women have few if any rights and live in a constant state of surveillance and fear. She maintains a postcolonial critique on her blog that bases her current predicament on a history of marginalization as an indigenous woman. Crisóstomo asserts that "the current immigrant situation I am in is not accidental nor temporary." In her "About" section she writes, "This blog is inspired in resistance to the actual economic policies (NAFTA) in México and Latin America that have been imposed by the North American government that cause us to be displaced to the United States." In this way, Crisóstomo constructs herself as a resistant agent who has been displaced—physically, emotionally, and economically—by structural forces. Crisóstomo's use of a postcolonial voice as an exploited

indigenous woman illustrates Saskia Sassen's (2000) notion of the "feminization of survival" whereby women, particularly immigrant women, function as "significant sources for profit and government revenue enhancement" (506) and as crucial resources for the survival their families and communities.

In contrast to Arellano, Crisóstomo's voice on both social media platforms is rooted in an indigenous identity that is expressed visually and textually. Unlike Arellano who usually wears Western clothes such as T-shirts and suits, Crisóstomo displays indigenous dress in almost all of the photographs she posts. One photograph of Crisóstomo is a headshot with her covered face showing only her eyes, evoking images of Subcomandante Marcos, the Zapatista leader.[21] Consider also what she writes in her individual Facebook profile description:

> Listen to me!...Listen!
>
> I am the Indian Voice...Hear me crying out of the wind, Hear me crying out of the silence...I am the Indian Voice...Listen to me!!
>
> I am the Indian Voice
>
> I am a chorus of millions.
>
> Listen!!.....

In the above excerpt, Crisóstomo affirms a distinctly "Indian voice" that is connected to other indigenous communities when she states "I am a chorus of millions." Her commitment to indigenous people all over the world is also present in her Floresiste group page where she posts on political and cultural events and online petitions to support social justice movements for indigenous communities across the Americas. This indigenous conception

of belonging provides a radical understanding of citizenship that challenges Western conceptions of humanity as recognized through legal status. Crisóstomo's voicing of an indigenous sense of global belonging renders invalid juridical notions of US state-based or Western nation-based citizenship that is tied to the nation-state and that critiques colonialism.

While there are overlaps in the voices that Arellano and Crisóstomo deploy across social media platforms, their individual voices do diverge in distinct ways. These differences lie in Arellano's desire to legalize her status in the US, while Crisóstomo claims a more global citizenship, viewing herself as existing beyond the nation-state due to her displacement as an indigenous woman in México. Arellano's voice in social media is more invested in the plight of mixed status families and legalizing undocumented family members. In contrast, Crisóstomo's voice is more committed to social justice for indigenous communities at large. Motherhood is prominent in Arellano's voice across social media platforms while kinship, including motherhood, is less present in Crisótomo's voice. As such, Arellano occupies a stance more aligned with a notion of citizenship that is tethered to the US Crisóstomo, instead, makes her claim to belonging and rights through a framework of global citizenship rooted in an indigenous identity that is beyond the boundaries of the nation-state (Toro-Morn and Flores-González 2011a). Their individual voices also shift slightly depending on the specific social media platform they use. For example, both women seem to use Facebook in more intimate ways that overtly meld the personal and political while their blogs are more singularly focused on issues of policy. This difference is largely due to the structure of each of these platforms. Posts on Facebook are usually much shorter than blog entries. Also, blogs take more time and energy to maintain as the posts are longer and choices need to be made about which templates to use compared to the more limited options on Facebook. As such, it is unsurprising that both

women have been more consistently active on Facebook, which requires much less time and energy than blogs.

Both Arellano and Crisóstomo use gendered emotive discourses grounded in US and Latin American movements that underscore womanhood, motherhood, and domesticity. Arellano's voice certainly can be read as more normative and steeped in respectability drawing from dominant US discourses of the Christian family (Pallares and Flores-González 2010; Toro-Morn and Flores-González 2011). That said, although Arellano mobilizes normative tropes of suffering and motherhood in her conceptualization of citizenship, her voice still breaks the legal protocols of conventional understandings of citizenship. She is demanding recognition of a subjectivity and personhood that is not recognized under current law and, thus, Arellano is inherently expanding and enacting citizenship beyond juridical discourse. Crisóstomo's voice tends to be more transgressive and radically disrupts nation-state concepts of citizenship to assert an indigenous belonging that transcends ongoing colonization by nation-states. She clearly asserts how policies, such as NAFTA, have constrained her experiences and actively searches for ways to resist these structures. This is significant because, as Lisa Cacho (2012) argues, the focus on heteronormative family rights, embodied by Arellano, distracts from the more radical critique that Crisóstomo provides. Likewise, Imogen Tyler and Katarzyna Marciniak (2013) argue that this tension is quite common within the immigrant rights movement. Essentially, to effect change within legal institutions, activists' voices must register with dominant discourses in order to not only share one's story (voice as *process*), but to also be discerned as a voice with *value* as Couldry (2010) describes. Moreover, Arellano and Crisóstomo draw on US colonial narratives of motherhood, abolition, and indigeneity and place them squarely within Latinidad. Given that mainstream news organizations privilege normative discourses in hopes of garnering the largest

audience possible, it is unsurprising that Arellano, who uses a more normative voice, has been more visible in traditional news outlets. Similarly, the US legal system favors immigrant women that rhetorically frame themselves as "good women" (read: conforming to patriarchal norms of womanhood) and pushes more "threatening" women to the margins (McKinnon 2011). However, both women, and particularly Crisóstomo, are able to espouse a more complicated, and sometimes radical, voice vis-à-vis social media due to the platforms catering to niche audiences. In addition, the women are able to clearly distinguish their specific stories, demarcations not evident in traditional media that tends to homogenize undocumented women's experiences.

Conclusion

Overall, the two cases discussed in this essay demonstrate some of the possibilities social media affords marginalized voices when compared to discourses in traditional media outlets. Arellano and Crisóstomo employ social media to not only document their lives through storytelling, but also presume that others share their concerns and work to foster a new audience to join them in a new political imaginary. Building on the Latin American and Latina/o tradition of *testimonios*, the women use social media as a form of self-directed representation. However, in contrast to earlier forms of *testimonios* that were mediated by others in published writing (e.g., Menchú 1984), Arellano and Crisóstomo are active speakers and have a history of performing *testimonios* in front of live audiences offline or later on videos shared on social media. As such, this essay offers unique insight into the linkages and differences between *testimonio* as a verbal performance, a written text sometimes requiring an interlocutor, and digitally self-authored voice.

A closer look at Arellano's and Crisóstomo's voices on social media illustrates how marginalized groups can use multiple voices as a tapestry

upon which to claim citizenship to the nation, or beyond the nation in the case of Crisóstomo. To be clear, I am not arguing that social media increases their audience size—instead social media often cultivates more specific, niche audiences. Indeed, Arellano and Crisóstomo do not primarily rely on social media to organize because they are already public figures with the institutional support of community-based and national organizations committed to immigrant rights. The significance of their online activity is precisely that the particular space of social media operates as an addendum that expands the sound bite version of their stories told in traditional media outlets and offline protests. In Arellano's case, social media also enabled her to continue to voice her narrative when traditional print and broadcast news were no longer interested in her story (i.e., post-deportation before returning to the US). In this way, social media served as a stopgap whereby Arellano could continue to advocate for her cause even when the news outlets moved onto other stories. Lastly, and most importantly, social media allows these women to expand on the reductive discourses news media produced about them (e.g., as suffering women immigrants or criminals). Although Arellano invokes some of these discourses (i.e., as a suffering mother), she also talks back to these discourses and uses social media to voice concerns for other issues (e.g., abortion, immigrant fathers separated from their children, and Central American undocumented immigrants) that fall outside of the normative rhetoric of the immigrant rights movement. Crisóstomo's voice on social media is even more radical, asserting a postcolonial and neoliberal critique of the US and México, a position that defies the "safe citizenship" (Weber 2013) that mainstream media outlets advocate as sanitized forms of difference. Certainly their activism is not limited to the online space—indeed their advocacy is more consistent and less ephemeral offline in protests and rallies—but social media does enable

both women to express themselves in more depth (compared to the sound bite standard of print and broadcast news) and in a more radical fashion (i.e., through indigeneity and postcoloniality) that expands conventional discourses of immigrant womanhood.

Arellano's and Crisóstomo's self-fashioning of themselves as political actors through multiple gendered and racialized discourses (i.e., motherhood, domesticity, Christianity, and indigeneity) is not new and certainly draws on older US and Latin American rhetorics of social movements. However, what is noteworthy is that these women use social media to demand multiple and nuanced ways of voicing and claiming citizenship in a media environment where undocumented women are relegated as simultaneously invisible and criminal (Marciniak 2013). In the case of Arellano and Crisóstomo, social media platforms function as "spaces of alternative power" (Salomón 2014, 314) whereby users create content that offers us oppositional ways of thinking about what it means to enact citizenship and belonging. Activism requires messaging to be simple, short, and direct in order to gain attention in mainstream media and organize as many people as possible in demonstrations. Social media operates as a "space of alternative power" because users can provide an addendum to the limited ways their stories are constructed in larger immigration discourses circulated in media and protests. It is not that social media are entirely emancipatory vehicles, but their power lies in the ability to function as an extension, as an addendum to more limited messages in traditional media outlets and demonstrations. In other words, Arellano and Crisóstomo are able to flesh out more multidimensional versions of their stories in social media compared to other outlets that require much simpler messages. Overall, by voicing citizenship on social media these women offer an even more complex counter-narrative to dominant narratives that de-humanize undocumented immigrants.

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Notes

[1] See Chavez (2013), Tyler and Marciniak (2013), and Voss and Bloemraad (2011) for an overview of the contemporary immigrant rights movement and Borsella (2005), Bulmer and Solomos (2012), Das (2006), García and García (2005), Naber (2012), and Ochoa and Ochoa (2005) for more historical perspectives on immigrant activism.

[2] The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act is a bill that would provide a pathway for citizenship for undocumented students after completing high school, applying for college, and/or enrolling in the military if they entered the US with their families before the age of sixteen.

[3] Arellano and Crisóstomo have appeared in mainstream news outlets such as *The New York Times, The Chicago Tribune, The Washington Post*, and CNN. Arellano was named as one of the "People Who Mattered in 2006" in *Time* magazine and featured in two documentaries (*Elvira* 2009; *Immigration Nation!* 2010). Both women are also the subject of academic scholarship (Cacho 2012; De Genova 2009; Flores-González and Gomberg-Muñoz 2013; McElmurry 2009; Pallares 2010; Pallares and Flores-González 2011; Puga 2012; Oboler 2007; Toro-Morn 2013; Toro-Morn and Flores-González 2011a, 2011b; Weber 2011, 2013).

[4] Arellano was one of the immigrants President Obama consulted with while planning the executive order.

[5] While the Institutional Review Board determined that this project is not human subject research, and therefore does not require informed consent, I did verbally gain Arellano's and Crisóstomo's permission to analyze their social media activity for this project.

[6] As of April 6, 2013, Arellano had 410 friends on Facebook and no subscribers, while Crisóstomo has 130 friends and ten subscribers on her Facebook page and four members on her Floresiste Media group page. Arellano's blog does not count site visits, but Crisóstomo's blog has over 17,000 as of February 27, 2013.

[7] As a theoretical concept, voice has a long history within the humanities and in communication studies in particular. See Mitras and Watts (2002) and Yancey (1994) for an overview.

[8] The blurring of the personal and political is characteristic of social media (Baym 2010; Papacharissi 2010; Thumim 2012). Melding the personal and political is also central to *testimonios* and community organizing in general (The Latina Feminist Group 2001). Moreover, it is an important tactic used by mother-activism (Coll 2010; Guzmán Bouvard 2002; Pardo 1998).

[9] Arellano and Crisóstomo do not operate in a vacuum outside of larger social movements. They are part of the New Sanctuary Movement (NSM) taking place across the US, Canada, and Europe, of which *testimonio* is a key messaging strategy. See García (2006) and Freeland (2010) for a more elaborate discussion of the NSM.

[10] Facebook is constantly changing the structure and appearance of the site. When Crisóstomo initially began using Facebook users had the option to create an individual page or a fan page that other users could follow. Recently Facebook converted fan pages to group pages. The main difference between a fan page and a group page is that fan pages could be followed by anyone while group pages are more private because users have to request permission from the group owner(s) to join the group before gaining access to the page. In general, both women accept friend requests from anyone, thus, treating their Facebook pages as public spaces.

[11] Blogging in isolation while under the threat of government surveillance and repression bears some resemblance to Cristina Venegas' (2010) study of Cuban activists' use of online media in response to and within the constraints of the US embargo. Both are involved in expanding notions of democracy within and beyond the nation and take significant risks (i.e., deportation, imprisonment) to engage in a global public sphere. See Venegas (2010) for a further discussion.

[12] Translation: "The only thing that gives meaning to my life is my son!!!! His companionship is social justice. When my little Saul is far my life is empty!!!!!....."

[13] It is not always clear when Facebook friends are also offline friends. Sometimes Arellano's Facebook friends will mention meeting somewhere offline, but often it is unclear whether Arellano knows them outside of social media.

[14] Translation: "Your suffering is not in vain Elvira, God is preparing your son for a great mission."

[15] In their interviews with Crisóstomo, Flores-González and Gomberg-Muñoz (2013) note that downplaying Crisóstomo's separation from her children in the press was a publicity strategy on the part of Centro Sin Fronteras since, unlike Arellano, she would not be able to request legalization based on her children's birthright citizenship. Instead, Crisóstomo challenges conventional notions of the "good mother" who is physically present by asserting that her children are learning about social justice through her activism.

[16] See Pallares (2010) and Pallares and Flores-González (2011) for an examination of how this use of Christian family values can be read as an adoption of normative discourses.

[17] This image is also displayed in Cynthia Weber's "I Am an American" film project (see Weber 2013).

[18] It should be noted, however, that liberation theology focuses on the New Testament while Arellano's argument is hinged on biblical figures from the Old Testament.

[19] Although "Floresiste" can be translated in more than one way (i.e., "Flor blossoms" or "Flor flowers"), Crisóstomo deliberately translates this word as "Flor resists" on her "About" page.

[20] Translation: "To be a woman is a condition of life, to be indigenous is my reason for action… and to be an indigenous-woman at the same time."

[21] This likeness to the Zapatistas is not limited to Crisóstomo's visual image. The Zapatista movement was one of the first to be documented as using the Internet to amplify their supporter base (see Martínez-Torres [2001] and Wray [1999]). For audiences unfamiliar with the Zapatista movement, this photograph could also conjure dominant images of Arabs, including Palestinian and Taliban insurgents.

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