"I really didn't know what a hurricane was. I thought hurricanes were simply hard rain. The day before Katrina hit the Gulf Coast, everyone was leaving. But we went on cleaning: vacuuming, polishing the slot machines. They made us work extra hard that day. I said to myself, I wonder what Katrina is? What did I know? I was used to mountain thunderstorms like those in my hometown of Huancayo."

—Diana (Orner 2008, 19-20)

HORIZONTAL CONTACT ZONES: Undocumented Latina's Coalitional Practices During Hurricane Katrina

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Abstract: Undocumented Latina experiences are often invisible, including in narratives about Hurricane Katrina. News accounts and anniversary reports about Katrina focused on New Orleans and the devastation this city suffered, yet the rest of the Gulf coast went un- or under-reported. A lack of reporting included how undocumented immigrants were affected and also helped to rebuild the cities after the hurricane. This paper explores one testimonio by a Peruvian immigrant living in Biloxi, Mississippi as a counter story of Hurricane Katrina. I read Diana's testimonio for details about the Hurricane from her perspective as an undocumented woman. Drawing from Pratt's theorization of the "contact zone," I propose the concept of the "horizontal contact zone" as an analytical framework to identify modes of solidarity among communities of color. I develop this concept to explore how the immigrant Latina/o/x and Black communities weathered the storm together via everyday coalition practices. My aim is to expand the narrative of Katrina to include undocumented Latina immigrants and understand how inter-ethnic coalition is necessary for communities' of color survival and storytelling.

Underground America: Narratives of Undocumented Lives (2008), compiled and edited by Peter Orner, includes twenty-four testimonios by undocumented immigrants living in the United States. Diana's story is included in this anthology. I analyze Diana's testimonio to expand narratives about Hurricane Katrina to include undocumented immigrant women in the discourse about this catastrophic storm and articulate a framework for reading and analyzing coalitions between Brown and Black communities using a term I call "horizontal contact zones." I critically (re) define the concept of "contact zone" (Pratt 1992) by calling for an epistemic shift in its conceptualization; "horizontal contact zones" are social spaces where *marginalized* communities come into contact with *each other* in everyday interactions that informally set the stage for more formal coalitional networks. I reorient "contact zones" from vertical to horizontal contact zones considering Gloria Anzaldúa's concept of "borderlands" and situate those who are excluded, or who Anzaldúa terms "atravesados" (1999), at the center of analysis. The "borderlands" are a psychic and spatial location that the abhorrent and marginalized inhabit. It helps locate where the queer, femme, mongrel, mulatto (the marginalized among the marginalized) coexist horizontally among each other, in contrast to the vertical relationships they have with those who perpetuate and benefit from structural systems of oppression. The horizontal contact zone, then, reveals coalitional practices by Brown and Black communities as they come into contact with each other within the United States. I use the framework of horizontal contact zones to bring attention to the inter-cultural communal practices that illuminate the power Brown and Black communities share when they work with each other.

As a formerly undocumented queer Latina from Miami, I center the stories of undocumented people to understand their status from a critical-race-gendered

epistemology. More specifically, undocumented women's experiences are sources of information about agency and resistance (Delgado Bernal 1998) for my research. I read Diana's testimonio not only to amplify the voice of an undocumented Latina worker, but to also explore how coalitional practices emerge, "reinvent, and re-envision alternative forms of resistance and activism" (Téllez 2013, 243). Furthermore, I employ P. Gabrielle Foreman's methods of "reading" and "simultextuality" to explore Diana's testimonio to bring to light the multiple coalitional moments within the Latina/o/x[1] community and with the Black community (Foreman 2009).

This essay is divided into five sections. The first section discusses the significance of testimonio as a narrative genre that centers undocumented women's voices in this essay. The second provides a summary of Diana's testimonio, illuminating the uniqueness of her narrative, especially since few media discourses of post-Katrina life integrate the experiences of Latinx and undocumented communities. The lack of media coverage about undocumented immigrants in Mississippi and surrounding areas in the discourse about Katrina silence the multiplicity of stories about post-Katrina life and the significant role undocumented people played in rebuilding cities along the Gulf Coast in the wake of Katrina. In the third section, I flesh out my conceptualization of "horizontal contact zones" and introduce Foreman's approach to "reading" and "simultextual" analysis as the methodology I use to explore Diana's testimonio and the intra- and inter-community collaboration it reveals. In the fourth section, I analyze Diana's re-telling of her experience on the eve of Katrina for the coalitional practices she details between undocumented women workers and the Black community in Biloxi, Mississippi, situating them within my conceptualization of "horizontal contact zone." By identifying these practices, my aim is to extend the legacies and forms of coalition building between Brown and Black communities into current political action that can intervene in current anti-immigrant discourses,

policies, and legislation. In the fifth and concluding section, I offer implications for Black and Brown coalitional practices that could work to oppose anti-immigration legislation proposed currently in the United States. I hope that this emerging concept will be useful for engaging analysis of coalitional practices in testimonios and other writing by Latina/o/x and Black communities.

Centering Undocumented Women's Voices through Testimonio

For Chicana feminist scholars, testimonio is a first-person method for recording women's history that "incorporates political, social, historical, and cultural histories, which accompany one's life experiences as a means to bring about change through consciousness-raising" (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, and Flores Carmona 2012). Such testimonios employ a Chicana/Latina feminist epistemology, one of many possible critical race-gendered epistemologies that are "dynamic and encompassing [of] various experiences, standpoints, and theories that are specific to different groups of people of color" (Delgado Bernal qtd in "Beautifully Powerful" Pérez Huber 2010, 847). To center undocumented women's voices, I chose to use Diana's already published testimonio because as one of several testimonios in *Underground America* (Orner 2008), Diana's highlights the unique experience of an undocumented Peruvian immigrant woman living in Mississippi pre- and post- Hurricane Katrina. Diana's country of origin and her location in Biloxi expand narrow narratives created about both undocumented immigration that focuses on immigrants from Mexico and narratives of Hurricane Katrina.

Furthermore, testimonios like Diana's illustrate how Chicana/Latina women's lived experiences inform their efforts towards social justice (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, and Flores Carmona 2012; Davalos 2008). Such testimonios often offer critiques of outer, intra- and, inter-community issues. Michelle Téllez explains that "Chicana and women of color feminist discourse speaks

to the issues that have been ignored by white feminists, most pointedly the fixation on gender that ignores the major elements of race/ethnicity and class" (2005, 49). Drawn from histories of oral storytelling, testimonios are part of a "Chicana feminist is discourse driven by a passion to place the Chicana [Latina], as a speaking subject at the center of intellectual discourse [and to] be concerned with the knowledge of Chicana[s/Latinas], about who generates an understanding of their experiences, and how this knowledge is legitimized or not," (Téllez 2005, 48-49). Testimonios thus create Chicana/ Latina feminist discourses on issues such as immigration, gender roles, education, domestic violence, worker's rights, and child sexual abuse that function to raise consciousness of our shared experiences and proposals to change the historical, social, and political conditions that lead to these experiences of oppression. Social transformation is a foundational goal of Chicana feminist work, particularly by utilizing testimonio. "The desire for social change has generated as a tactic, or method, that links divided theoretical domains," (Davalos 2008, 155) and testimonio is one such tactic. Additionally, Cruz states that "Latina/Chicana feminist testimoniantes bear witness to each other" (Cruz 2016, 110). As such, I bear witness to Diana's experiences, tracking a path towards consciousness-raising and political coalitions. Diana's testimonio centers Latina undocumented workers' experiences, allowing readers of Orner's collection to hear their own voices, as well as to work towards transforming the conditions elaborated in Diana's testimonio.

By sharing her personal experiences in navigating life in the Gulf South, Diana's testimonio elucidates the complex relationships, conflicts, and coalitions that undocumented women can have with their employers, their co-workers, and other communities of color. In her testimonio, we witness both intra- and inter-community's contact in Mississippi before and after Katrina.

Diana's Testimonio

At the time Orner published Diana's testimonio, Diana was 44-years old. She came to live in Biloxi, Mississippi from Peru. Orner notes that she was working on a water casino on the Gulf Coast until Katrina destroyed it in 2005. She also helped rebuild the coast in the aftermath of Katrina and was arrested by ICE while working construction in the area. She spent several months in detention until she was released on bail to wait for an immigration hearing. In the opening quote, Diana explains that she had no idea what a hurricane was and was not prepared for the storm. She was asked to stay at work while her documented co-workers left to secure their homes and ensure their safety.

In the testimonio Diana shared with Orner, she details why she decided to move to the United States after the economic decline of Peru in the early 2000s. As a business owner, she had to close her unprofitable clothing and shoe store because she wasn't able to support her family. After visiting her son in Mississippi and working for five months in a poultry factory, she decided to move to the U.S. permanently. She began working cleaning hotels in Biloxi. She was employed at a water casino when Katrina hit.

Diana's story reflects the changing demographics of the region. Since the 1990s, following the boom in casino construction along the Gulf Coast and the displacement of Mexican and Central American people due to NAFTA and CAFTA,[2] there has been a steady stream of undocumented workers making their way or being recruited to work in the Gulf region of the United States (Bacon 2017). In the two decades leading up to Hurricane Katrina, the Latina/o/x population grew due to the demand for exploitable labor in the casino, chicken processing plants, farms, factories, and later to rebuild the damage of Katrina (Eaton 2011).

Hurricane Katrina In Mississippi

Neither Mississippi nor undocumented immigrants are often mentioned in mainstream media and popular representations about Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath. In fact, *Time Magazine's* ten-year anniversary article, "Ten Essential Stories About Hurricane Katrina," published in August of 2015, focused on New Orleans with no mention of any other regions affected by the storm. It also failed to mention undocumented workers either impacted by Katrina or contributing to the re-building of the city after the storm (Ten Essential 2015). The first season of the popular HBO show *Treme* (2010-2013), which follows the stories of multi-racial communities in post-Katrina New Orleans, does not include undocumented people or labor. The first season includes two scenes in which Latinos are present, but they have no speaking roles. One scene shows undocumented construction workers in the background. The other is a Latino heterosexual couple at a hospital. They do not speak and are not integrated into the story. The lack of stories about Latina/o/x people in the Gulf Coast works to erase the undocumented people who were also displaced and discarded by the ineffective response to this weather catastrophe, yet who returned to the area to rebuild the city. Diana's testimonio challenges this silence by providing a first-person account of the day leading up to the storm and the time after it ravaged the Gulf Coast. She not only details the hours before the storm, but also the period of reconstruction from an undocumented woman's perspective, which includes the exploitation of labor and abuse by immigration authorities that she and members of her community faced. However, what makes her story unique is that she also includes the Black community in retelling her story. By describing the help she received from the Black church in Biloxi, Diana's testimonio evinces horizontal contact zones—the interaction between communities of color, which in this case was central to the survival of this Latina immigrant.

Contact Zones: Conceptual Beginnings For "Horizontal Contact Zones"

Contact zones, according to Mary Louise Pratt, are "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination—such as colonialism and slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today" (1992, 2). Contact zones are the spaces where people have to constantly negotiate the legacy of colonial racial structures (Pratt 1992, 8). Specifically, contact zones are "space[s] of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality and intractable conflict" (Pratt 1992, 25). For Pratt, writing by the colonized is a response to racist enlightenment ideas of "the other" as illiterate and, therefore, less human. Within her theorizations, testimonios could result from contact zones and function as a re-telling of resistance to oppression. Testimonios, thus, both challenge enlightenment racial hierarchies because they offer counter narratives rooted in personal experiences that include multiple communities and also point to what I term horizontal contact zones.

Drawing on the notion of "borderland" as articulated by Gloria Anzaldúa, I use the concept of horizontal contact zone to imagine how the colonized create contact zones of their own *among each other*. The borderland is "a physical yet undetermined space, a wound that does not heal," where space produces and reinforces structural, communal oppression and modes of resistance (Anzaldúa 1999, 25). Anzaldúa lists the people who are relegated and live within the borderlands as racialized, female, queer, mixed, and non-normative—in short, what she terms the atravesadas/os/xs.[3] The borderland, like the contact zone, provides a metaphorical spatial understanding about the experience of marginalization for people who are often left out of discourses of oppression (Anzaldúa 1999). Whereas the contact zone identifies the colonized in relation

to the colonizer and the structures of colonial relations, the borderland is an undetermined space where the unwanted (femme, queer, stateless, mongrel, mulatto) can be together and be recognized by each other because they are rejected by mainstream categories of race, gender, sexuality, and nation/citizenship. Considering these two spaces together rather than focusing only on the hierarchical, vertical structure of the contact zone—the relations of power between the colonizer and the colonized, as I understand Pratt and other scholars to use this concept—I want to also think about what happens among the colonized, or horizontally, within the spaces that Brown and Black communities share. Together, the contact zone and the borderland both help to theorize the site of coalition building or sites of possible coalitions when people of color share space(s) and come into contact with each other—such as in Biloxi, Mississippi.

How do we begin to have a sense of the horizontal interactions among the atravesadas/os/xs at the margins of discourse on a daily basis? How are these relationships articulated and oppression/resistance recognized, enacted, and negotiated? What coalitional work happens and how is solidarity built in horizontal contact zones? When reading work by people of color, we can identify horizontal contact zones when they discuss their interactions with members of other communities of color.[4]

In reading testimonios like Diana's and the nuances articulated through her experience of surviving Katrina, we can formulate the "physical and undetermined space" and the wounds present in spaces where Black and Brown people live among each other with differential access to resources for survival on an everyday basis and in times of crisis. In Diana's testimonio about Hurricane Katrina, we are able to understand the experiences of undocumented women who were able to survive the storm because of their intra community networks and because the Black church opened their doors to them. The proximity of

the undocumented and Black community in a state of emergency becomes evident, and how these communities have and will continue to be intertwined in Mississippi is generative for the future of the area. The horizontal contact zone reveals the layered and complex connections made among these communities. In order to further understand the coalitional modes in these horizontal encounters, I use a methodology grounded in African American vernacular and literary history to "read"/analyze Diana's testimonio, which peels back and engages layers of meaning made when the marginalized craft stories of survival.

Methodology: "Reading" and "Simutextual" Texts

In *Activist Sentiments*, P. Gabrielle Forman (2009) explains "reading," as "the vernacular signifying practice embedded in the active verb/al practice "to read" (Foreman 2009, 2). An emphasis on "reading" is a living legacy in contemporary African American culture. To "'get read' or 'be read' is to be dressed down or told about yourself [...]" (Foreman 2009, 2). Therefore, when "reading" something, you can discern what may be hidden from most but must be made obvious to enable a deeper understanding, which stems from a social consciousness of the histories and need of Black and Brown communities. Forman's methodology traces this practice of reading to nineteenth-century Black women's literature (Foreman 2009, 2-3). "Reading" as method of analysis works together with her concept of "simultextual" writing. She argues that literature produces multiple meanings simultaneously, rather than subtextually or intertextually. Reading is a method of stripping down the meaning of texts with a layered multidimensional perspective. I understand this method as gathering a deeper understanding by examining the layers of meaning in a text. Therefore, understanding writing as simultextual requires and is available to "culturally and historically literate readers" and goes beyond "the primary level of narrative interpretation" (Foreman 2009, 6). Our ability to "read" and interpret narratives, thus, is tied to our cultural, historical background, and knowledge. I would also

add that it is also tied to our political and social justice commitments, which constitute our reading abilities. Explained further she states,

> These strategies allow readers who do not always enjoy shared fields of cultural and social knowledge to take multiple interpretive paths through narratives. Simultexts exhibit their multivalent meanings on the surface for those who can access and then interpret them in accordance with collective political and literary concerns. (Foreman 2009, 6-7)

Our collective political and literary concerns give us access to multivalent readings that are not available to readers who do not have understandings of shared histories of oppression or even a interest in how immigration affects the South region of the U.S. post-Katrina. Both "reading" and "simultexts" are vital to understanding the horizontal contact zone. "Reading" and understanding text—like Diana's testimonio—as structured with several stories and layers of meaning enables an analysis that reveals the interconnectedness of Black and Brown communities. Therefore, horizontal interactions are complex because they happen simultextually among different sets of marginalized people within one text or across texts and experiences. For example, if we only read Diana's story for her interaction among her "American" coworkers—a vertical relation—or other undocumented women, like her roommate, we would leave out the interactions with the Black community and, therefore, privilege a primary level of interpretation. Reading to unveil these other inter-community interactions requires our ability, as readers, to be aware of inter-communal histories of oppression and political concerns when reading for the nuances of coalition and solidarity among people of color. That is, Hurricane Katrina did not only impact Black communities, yet immigrant communities cannot speak to their experiences of Katrina without considering their relationship to Black communities in the area.

By "reading" Diana's testimonio in this way, the horizontal contact zone's complex relations are revealed. When situated within the histories of North American race structures and experiences, we are better able to understand the simultexual meanings and coalitional possibilities within and outside of the text. Therefore, reading testimonios is not only about what they are denouncing, but also what possibilities they provide for their readers.

In the next section, I read Diana's testimonio to understand the conflicts, the interconnections, and solidarity with Brown and Black communities in her account of Hurricane Katrina. This simultextual "reading" of the Gulf South as a horizontal contact zone broadens Diana's testimonio from a story about immigration and labor rights to a narrative about the many communities of color affected by Hurricane Katrina and their practices of coalition and solidarity that take place within a horizontal contact zone.

Diana's Testimonio: "Reading" Horizontal Contact Zones for Coalition

Diana's experience as an undocumented immigrant is tied to larger political, social and migration patterns, NAFTA, CAFTA, and a demand for cheap labor in factories and casinos, which are the socio-political backdrop that guide this reading. By detailing her experiences as an undocumented worker, Diana addresses how these policies shaped her life when she moved to Mississippi and impacted the horizontal contact zones created through her migration from Peru to Biloxi. These horizontal contact zones reveal how coalitional networks are necessary for her survival before and after Katrina. I make visible her interactions with other Latin American communities and the Black community in the context of Mississippi.

Diana explains that after the economic downturn in Peru, she was able to receive a tourist visa to come to the United States to visit her son who she had not seen

for six years since he crossed the border to look for work. During this visit, she stayed for five months and worked at a poultry processing plant in Carthage, Mississippi. Upon her return to Peru, the economic downturn continued, which led to her decision to permanently return to the United States.

She returned to Mississippi even though her son had moved to New York because she had a network of people she knew in Carthage. She explains how the area's immigration policies were changing quickly; nonetheless, through the local resident networks, she was able to use to secure a job,

> But when I arrived in Carthage, I learned that the poultry plant was no longer offering jobs to undocumented workers, only those with papers. I had no job. But then in a store run by Hispanics, I saw an ad in a Spanish-language newspaper. It was for a job three hours away, in Biloxi. (Orner 2008, 20)

The Spanish-language newspaper can be understood to be part of the network of resources created by the Latina/o/x community in the area and, therefore, a horizontal contact zone in which Diana finds resources to help her get a job and move to another city. When she arrived in Biloxi, she did not know anyone.

Nonetheless, she was able to find housing by tapping into the small Peruvian community living in Biloxi, another horizontal contact zone. The first place she lived was a room she shared with a coworker, but she had to leave because it was too hot and there were no fans or air conditioning. She then found a one-bedroom apartment she shared with five or six people before moving into her own apartment on the coast; living in small spaces with lots of people helps create networks of survival—another horizontal contact zone. Notably, horizontal interactions are complex and while they help people

survive, they can also include conflict and negotiation, which is why Diana had to move several times.

Diana's testimonio also details how local community resources helped her learn working class survival skills. She did not make much money and was exploited working at the hotel and casinos:

> I never held that kind of job before. It was very hard work and the conditions weren't fair. The management exploited us. I only stayed at that hotel for about two months and then got a job at a place called the Grand Casino Biloxi. […] I made $6.50 an hour as part of a cleaning crew. That came out to a little over $200 per week before taxes. Wages in Mississippi are very low." (Orner 2008, 21)

Diana described the networks of people who help her navigate her new life in a new city and the hardships that she endured in order to make a living, offering details about how the small Peruvian communities of undocumented immigrants enact solidarity and coalition everyday. Moreover, Diana gives us a glimpse of the relationships she first created within the Peruvian community in the Biloxi area and then with the other Latina/o/x co-workers. These points of contact can be understood as horizontal contact zones between several Latina/o/x communities.

Diana does not describe interactions outside of Latina/o/x communities until the arrival of Hurricane Katrina, probably as a result of high levels of segregation between immigrants and Black communities. A 2010 study of the South revealed there was limited residential overlap between the two groups (Waters, Kasinitz, and Asad 2014). However, once Hurricane Katrina hit the gulf coast, segregation patterns were rearranged due to the necessity of the residents of the

area. Hurricane Katrina, like any natural disaster, drew new boundaries and brought people necessarily into contact with each other.

As the Hurricane approached Mississippi, Diana explains how her contact with her community and proximity to the Black community changed as the threat of the storm approached:

> We lived only a half-block from the Gulf, but my roommate said, "I'm not going anywhere." "You'll die," I told her. "The roof will fall on you." But she wouldn't leave. […] Where could I go? Then my friend Marisol called me. It was like a call from God. She asked me where I was going to go to get shelter from the hurricane. When I told her I didn't know, she said she'd come by to pick me up. We drove to a church—a Black church. […] We watched out the window the trees falling, the cars being blown around, and finally it was just a cloud—we didn't see anything. And then some men told us that there was a message that the worst was coming, and that the roof might be lifted from the church, and that we should all go into the kitchen where the roof was supposedly more secure. Everyone started to sing Christian music in English. That night we slept on the floor and on the pews. We were there for about twenty-four hours. (Orner 2008, 25)

We can read both the urgency and fear Diana felt in this passage, as well as the relief of finding shelter. Diana urging her roommate, a Honduran immigrant, to leave the apartment for fear that the storm might harm or kill her speaks to the threat the storm posed on the lives of the residents on the coast. Also evident is the intra-Latina community formed by these women living together and caring for each other. For one, Diana is worried and frustrated because her roommate refused to leave. We see this care once more when Marisol calls Diana to offer to take her

to a shelter, which saves her from the storm. The horizontal contact zone provides a way to form coalition for these immigrant women who have an understanding that they don't have family or many resources and, therefore, must check on each other and make sure they are safe; these Honduran, Peruvian, and Mexican women are trying to survive the storm by providing support for each other.

Relief from the threat of the storm, then, comes from another horizontal contact zone as Diana and Marisol take refuge at a Black church for twenty-four hours. In the church, they are sheltered from the storm because the congregation took them in and took care that they were safe, asking them to move to a sturdy part of the church and providing comfort through song. Diana mentions that they sang Christian songs in English. Again, horizontal contact zones are not always comfortable; they include meeting and grappling with the differences and possible conflict between communities. In Diana's retelling, she expresses her feeling of being an outsider of the Black community because she is not a native English speaker; she was not familiar with the songs in English, yet was grateful she had shelter and could share this time with other people who also believed in God—a belief she shared and made evident by interpreting Marisol's call as one from God. Diana's own Christian faith enabled her to find herself in this Black church accepting help from its members, sharing the space and their practices via a horizontal contact zone brought on by the storm. Churches can be read as places where horizontal contact zones occur. The Black churches, in particular, play an important role in ensuring the safety of communities of color, by providing spaces where people are invited and fed, spaces for spiritual growth, and spaces for local meetings and for community organizing and political solidarity (Pulido 2006).[5] Therefore, local churches that were main points of contact for shelter during the storm fostered horizontal contact zones. Diana's friend Marisol was aware that the church would provide a haven, and both her and Diana were able to weather the storm and its aftermath. Diana explained:

> We spent fifteen days without water or electricity. And there was a shortage of food. Even the church we had gone to wait out the hurricane was without anything. Later on, that church and some other churches got food and began to try and help people. We stayed at one of the churches because there was no way we could stay at our apartment. (Orner 2008, 23)

Diana attests to how traditionally segregated communities came together because of the storm, working together to meet the needs of all impacted by the storm. The Black church Diana found herself in provided food and shelter as soon as they were able to. They were part of other local churches who networked to try to help people since it took a month for any aid to arrive to this community (Baptist Press 2008). The horizontal contact zone, then, brought people together for coalitional work because of the catastrophe wrought by Hurricane Katrina, yet it was not without estrangement, confusion, and conflict.

Conclusion

Diana's account of her experience explains the non-governmental, local, and quotidian networks that facilitated her survival during this moment of crisis, namely the Latina/o/x community and the Black church congregation opening their doors to undocumented immigrants during and after Hurricane Katrina. In retelling her story, Diana provides us with a snapshot of the horizontal contact zones that brought undocumented peoples like herself and Marisol together with Black communities to withstand the storm. Underlying her story are alternative forms of activism based in coalition and solidarity practices, which in this instance, included sheltering members of the community across interethnic and interracial lines. Diana's story shows us several moments of interaction between different communities of color,—horizontal contact zones—allowing us to ask questions about how the Latina/o/x community

can interact and build relationships with the Black community in Mississippi. Importantly, Hurricane Katrina's impact on her life highlights the central role Latin American acquaintances, undocumented immigrants, and the Black community played in Diana's survival, rather than governmental agencies or state employees. "Reading" and analyzing this testimonio for instances of horizontal contact zones uncovered the impact of both Hurricane Katrina and immigration on an undocumented woman in the U.S. south. Furthermore, we can envision how undocumented communities can participate in coalition and solidarity with Black communities and vice versa. I contend that this analysis and simultextual reading allows us to recognize the unanimity that is possible when communities of color draw on their shared histories of struggle within the United States (Pulido 2006). The network of immigrants and the Black community that ensured Diana had shelter from the storm is clearly an example of solidarity among the Latina/o/x and Black communities.

Recognizing the horizontal contact zone in Biloxi as experienced by Diana broadens the dominant narrative about Hurricane Katrina to include undocumented women's experience and the effects of the hurricane in Mississippi. Notably, my simultextual reading of Diana's testimonio illustrates that her narrative is not solely a critique of the disparity caused by national immigration policy or a description of the vertical contact zone Pratt (1992) writes about, but also a shift in perspective to a grounded view, placing readers among the differing power dynamics Diana experiences in order to celebrate the strength found in the coalition within communities of color who meet in a horizontal contact zone.

My aim in analyzing Diana's story is to reorient our epistemic standpoint to understand how we benefit from our horizontal contact because this interaction can lead to other types of essential Brown and Black coalitions. Diana's testimonio alerts us to the relationships that need to be strengthened

between undocumented immigrants and the Black community in horizontal contact zones all over the United States and specifically in the south. Political organizing by groups like Mississippi Immigrants Rights Alliance (MIRA), which connected both communities with the political aim to raise awareness of the shared struggles of Black and Latina/o/x populations in Mississippi, is now more important than ever since the number of detained asylum seekers and undocumented immigrants is increasing by the day (Freedom for Immigrants). Finding strength in the differences and similarities of Black and Latina/o/x immigrant communities is not simple, yet it is necessary to build coalition and solidarity. Coalition work between our communities, as Diana's testimonio demonstrates, is both organic and organized. For example, in the essay "How I Became a Person of Color: Black and Brown Organizing in Post Katrina New Orleans," Dennis Soriano, an undocumented day laborer and organizer with the New Orleans Workers Center for Racial Justice, explains that working for racial justice is to actively work against the racist stereotypes and internalized racism that divide Black and Brown communities to achieve unity and social transformation (Soriano 2014, 132). Soriano explains,

> There are serious divisions within and between our communities. In the African American community, many people believe that immigrants are taking their jobs, while in the Latin@ community some believe that black people don't want to work, that they are lazy drug addicts. We know these divisions exist, so we need to create dialog within and between our communities. (2014, 132)

Soriano provides a lucid example of the tensions and possibilities for change inherent in horizontal contact zones. The New Orleans Workers Center for Racial Justice works with undocumented Latino day laborers to hold events such as the "Congress of Day Laborers," the "Right to Stay!" campaign, and vigils

outside of Immigration and Customs Enforcement offices; and the African American community supports these protests (Soriano 2014, 133). The center also joins the Black community to fight for housing and the right to government jobs. Together the Brown and Black communities "understand that we need to organize together against the systems that oppress both communities" (Soriano 2014, 133). Solidarity and coalitional work are urgent; in the case of Soriano, Hurricane Katrina created horizontal contact zones in New Orleans like in Biloxi, where Black and Brown communities met, clashed, and had to negotiate their relationships and experiences of oppression in the aftermath of the storm. In California, the Latina/o/x and Black community has historically lived in horizontal contact zones, and much inter-community organizing happens and has been researched to work on ending misconceptions about both communities. For example, The Day Labor Center at the University of California Berkeley has held trainings about Latin American immigration for the C. L. Dellums African American Union Leadership school in an effort to raise consciousness, change racist stereotypes, and develop solidarity around immigrant issues with their members (Pitts 2008, 48). The trainings addressed popular misconceptions about immigrants: they centered the experiences of African Americans in the United States including Black migration patterns by discussing the Great migration, and racial and economic exploitation in the south in relation to the apparent opportunities of the north and west in the twentieth century. Lastly, the training included activities to understand how leaving home affects people and their communities in order to raise consciousness of the struggles faced by undocumented immigrants when they migrate. Developing trainings like these compares differences and similarities from the historical specificities and experiences of Black/African American people in relation to undocumented immigrants, enabling a deeper understanding of the complex and valuable relations made within communities that live in horizontal contact zones. The relationships developed through these deeper understandings help Brown and

Black communities build nuanced relationships, especially in instances where they share geographies and in the event of a crisis, that can lead to demands for social change. Diana's testimonio provides insight into how solidarity and coalition can happen between differently disenfranchised communities. That is, testimonios are a valuable resource for political organization and building coalitions because they make tangible how horizontal contact zones allow Black and Brown folks, citizens and non-citizens, to negotiate differences and similarities in order to demand political and social justice for all marginalized communities.

Notes

[1] I merge the term Latinx with Latina/o as it is a neologism that makes visible the gendered nature Spanish, which inherently excludes gender non-conforming people and people within the spectrum of gender expression.

[2] North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) are foreign policies that promised to help revitalize the economies of Latin American nations including Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Dominican Republic.

[3] Anzaldúa does not use the "x" in her definition of atravesados, I add this spelling change to include gender non-conforming and community members who have transitioned from one gender to another.

[4] I am grateful to my friend and scholar Xhercis Mendez, University of California-Fullerton, for generative intellectual conversations that helped me come to this idea.

[5] Elvira Arellano, a Mexican undocumented woman who took refuge in a Chicago church revitalized the sanctuary movement in the 21st century and is an example of the role churches have in facilitating coalitional practices and political activism.

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