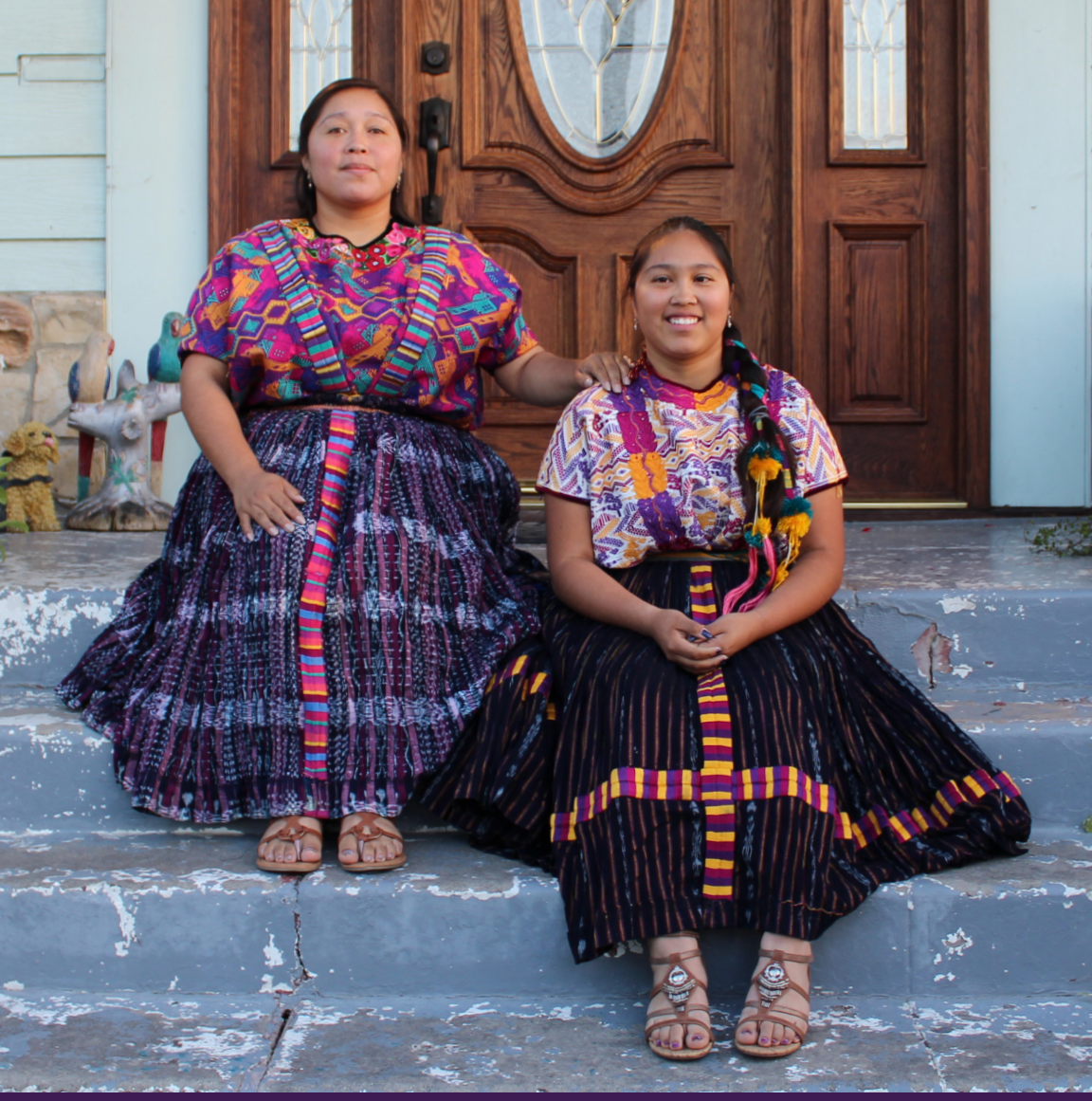

INDIGENOUS ARCHIVES

The Maya Diaspora and Mobile Cultural Production

FLORIDALMA BOJ LOPEZ

Indigenous Archives

Indigenous Archives

The Maya Diaspora and Mobile Cultural Production

Floridalma Boj Lopez

Duke University Press
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To the children of the Maya diaspora, especially my daughters Soledad and Luna. You are our collective hope for a today and tomorrow that honors the knowledge, joy, and struggle of our ancestors.

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Foreword

Dialoguing with Dr. Floridalma Boj Lopez, a Guatemalan migrant academic, is important because it allows us to know and understand contexts based on struggles that are invisible to the eyes of the world. *Indigenous Archives* is a relevant dialogue that explores the ways of life of families and extended kinship that gather in the Maya diaspora in Los Angeles. Without a doubt, this dialogue is strengthened by the life story of the author, who migrated to the United States without knowing it due to her young age. It should be noted that the migration of Floridalma Boj and thousands of other migrants is the result of economic, social, and political violence produced by the colonial model that enables the institutional-structural strengthening that rages against the Indigenous population of Guatemala, promoting a racist and exclusionary system in which being Indigenous is one of the worst social positions within Guatemalan society. This historical construction of power in all its spheres spreads, sustains, and reproduces a system that promotes national evils such as exclusion and racism against the Indigenous population of Guatemala.

As Dr. Boj states in her book, arriving in new and unknown territories causes migrants to confront "transnational structures of racism," which in my opinion becomes the dilemma of using culture as a compass that guides those who have little or no experience of their original homeland. This influences migrants to, as the author points out, naturalize settler colonial grammars, which opens the way to accepting the global-consumerist model and leaving aside their original culture. Dr. Boj's proposal is surprising in that it goes against the option of forgetting one's cultural roots and, to the contrary, argues that migrants turn them into strengths to solidly establish their own culture in diaspora.

Dr. Boj proposes that these "Indigenous archives" must be visualized in facts, objects, or things of daily use or contact as well as in other contexts

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that need a conscious impulse that stirs the seed, that activates the chlorophyll from its roots—but for this it is important to know the structural and systemic context that has caused the migration from its bases in the place of origin. In this sense the book introduces us to conditions that produced migration from the 1960s to the 1990s, through the experiences of Denese Joy Becker/Dominga Sic Ruiz, a survivor of one of the many massacres that were mostly suffered by the Indigenous population of Guatemala, in particular the Río Negro massacre (1982) in the northern department of Baja Verapaz. The book goes on to argue in a remarkable way and, from my point of view, in accordance with its name, that the Maya clothing of migrant women is a tangible example of Indigenous archives, because when we stop to contemplate it, we will find technology, nuances, and designs that at first glance can be conceived as clothing that fulfills the purpose of covering the body. However, when we understand the symbolism of the signs, the colors, and the techniques it contains, it shows the richness revealed by the knowledge of the civilization that sustained it.

The Indigenous archive cannot remain solely a discourse or a static folkloric costume. Instead, these practices are valuable because they emerge from a living culture that not only cares about surviving biologically but fights to gain spaces for "cultural creation" (to use Dr. Boj's term). In this sense, it is necessary to rediscover the basic ethical and aesthetic framework for practicing one's own cultural characteristics as elements of spiritual value. This need flourishes and is concretized in this book, which contains, indeed needs, colors that reveal the racism within "overlapping racial regimes in the United States" (Dr. Boj). Thus, in activating this knowledge, we can give fluidity to culture, activating that torrent which at one time seemed immobile when we did not know that it was the record that has always accompanied us, waiting to mobilize within that body that we recognize as diaspora.

Another of the contributions of the author's academic argument is to promote thinking about extended kinship through the images saved in photographs. It can be observed as distant and immobile memories of ancestors, grandparents, and grandmothers who stayed behind, yet if we dismantle that idea, as proposed by Dr. Boj, and on the contrary we propose them now as Indigenous archives, we can give life to our frozen, forgotten, or buried thoughts. These may have been buried in our memories for one or another reason, but we can now see them as the impulse that shows our strengths and the desire to live again, but now with our own forms, with our colors, flavors, smells, sounds, and textures.

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The discussion is open. If we recognize that our grandparents bequeathed us the values of agreement *and* discernment within the principle of the double gaze, now we must discuss the book which has represented hard work, sleeplessness, enthusiasm, and discipline, but above all the vision of valuing the ancient Maya ancestral culture. I can only express to Dr. Floridalma Boj Lopez my admiration, and to the public my wish for us to reflect on the proposal contained in *Indigenous Archives*. For my part I want to express my gratitude to the author because in this book, I feel her gaze back to the land where she left her Muxu'x (belly button). I allow myself to applaud the call for us to be aware of processes that must give rise to changes, in the direction of regrounding our Maya relationships regardless of the distance or other factors in these challenging historical moments.

Oscar Ubaldo Boj Chojolán
Xelajuj No'j, Ixim Ulew

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Acknowledgments

This book would not have been possible without the members of the diaspora who allowed me to interview them. I kept pushing along in my career because I knew that there were members of our community who needed to hear your stories. Much of what is written about our diaspora emphasizes the hardships we face. That is necessary work as we continue to push back against the policies and practices that harm so many of our families. Yet, I also want to honor the truth that when we gather, we share laughter, we share food, we share teachings that have been passed down through generations. We deserve to have space in academia for this love of our culture and history that binds us together. I often imagine a young person, not unlike all of you, who may be assigned this work and might feel that they, too, can gather with other people in the Indigenous diaspora to create community against structures that work to erase and eliminate us. I am so very grateful that, for those few hours, you sat with me and shared a part of your story.

This project was funded in part by the American Association of University Women and an American Council of Learned Societies postdoctoral fellowship. Both fellowships granted me the gift of time to sit, think, write, and revise. The Maya Womxn in L.A. project also received support from the Critical Refugee Studies Collective and was a collaboration with Las Fotos Project, which provided technical equipment, staff support for the exhibit, and hands-on support at every stage of the project.

I also want to thank the editors I worked with at Duke University Press, particularly Alejandra Mejía. From her first reading of my monograph, Ale was an enthusiastic collaborator, and her encouragement helped me find the courage to finish this book. I also thank the reviewers who, through multiple rounds of review, pushed my thinking and helped me take intellectual risks that I hope have paid off. I am also grateful to the production

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team at DUP that helped get this book completed. All errors are mine and mine alone.

I express my gratitude to my department, Chicana/o and Central American Studies, at the University of California, Los Angeles, whose members have always been supportive of and excited about my work. I especially thank my colleagues Leisy Abrego, Gaye Theresa Johnson, Laura Chavez-Moreno, Karina Alma, Veronica Terriquez, and Charlene Villaseñor Black. At the University of Southern California, Macarena Gómez-Barris, George Lopez, and Laura Serna were instrumental in getting me to the finish line of my PhD. By virtue of being from L.A., I have also been very lucky to connect with critical and committed scholars who have become friends and comrades. My gratitude to Akhila Ananth, Cecilia Caballero, Priscilla Leiva, Maurice Magaña, Steven Osuna, and Gretel Vera-Rosas.

Over time at multiple institutions, I have been fortunate to work with talented and inspiring students like Andy Aleman, Cindy Perez, Paula Ayala, Mario Alvarado Cifuentes, Omar Alvarado, Luis Soltillo, Kristie Valdez-Guillen, Sara Diaz-Montejano, and Madison Garcia. In at least a couple of instances, Kristie Valdez-Guillen supported me with data analysis and Institutional Review Board submissions, and Charlie Navarro helped me fix my citations before I submitted the manuscript. Personally, I try to be mindful of requesting student labor, even when it is compensated, so I am grateful for their support.

I have also benefited from the care and commitment of other Indigenous diaspora scholars whom I have learned from and learned with. Through their own work, they have shown me that, for those of us with ties to our communities on our ancestral homelands, being committed is a responsibility, but really it is a gift. Thank you to Daina Sanchez, Giovanni Batz, Alejandro Villalpando, Brenda Nicolas, Luis Sánchez-López, Gloria Chacón, Genner Llanes-Ortiz, Arce Tecun (Daniel Hernandez), Luis Urrieta, and Lourdes Alberto. Your work and the way you carry yourselves reminds me that academia can be what it is, and still we create space. I especially remember picking up a random book at the library at UC Santa Cruz and being blown away just reading the first couple of pages. The book was *Red Pedagogy*, and since then I have benefited from Sandy Grande's sharp thinking and mentorship.

As someone rooted in community in L.A., I have also had friends along the way who have consistently expressed their encouragement, and the times we have collaborated have been wonderful learning experiences. Thank you to Maricela Lopez Samayoa, Aurora Pedro, Melissa Espiritu,

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Cindy Mata, Ron Espiritu, Emily Grijalva, Karla Alvarado Goldberg, and Susie Parras.

I am grateful for the community I have built in Xelajuj No'j. This book is not about the community work I have engaged with in Xela, but you all have provided grounding and care as I turned this project into a book. Willy Barreno and Ixquik Poz, thank you for your kindness; I have learned so much from you, and I enjoy every time our paths cross. To the friends I've met at DESGUA: Jason, Rosita, Ramona, Mildreth, Fabiola, and many others—thank you for helping me build a community there. To EYCEJ, I have continued in academia in part because I have you all as my local community in East Los Angeles to remind me that the struggle toward justice is long, but it is collective.

I am grateful to my in-laws, both the Lopez and Gutierrez families, especially to Gabriel Gutierrez, who let me tag along with him to institutional archives as I was trying to understand what archival methods meant in practical terms. This book would not be possible without the support of my in-laws Gerardo and Elsa, who act as a second set of parents to my girls. I am likewise grateful to my family, the part of the Boj family that migrated to L.A. and faced the reality of loss in a huge urban city; all of us figured out our paths little by little. You all were the inspiration for my intellectual curiosity: I wanted to understand our history to make sense of our realities. I am so glad that many of you have made return trips back to the homeland, something that was not possible decades ago when we arrived, but the experiences of being rooted to Xela will always tie us together.

I also want to express my gratitude to my family in Xela, the Boj family that stayed firmly planted and has opened the door for me to learn and to heal. Every year, at the beginning of November, you go and lay flowers where my grandparents, my auntie, my uncle, and my father have been laid to rest. Every year, that action reminds me that I am loved because my ancestors are loved. Along this path there have been tremendous barriers, but I have always asked my father's spirit especially to guide me, to show me the paths I need to walk, and to help me walk them with integrity. We didn't know each other for very long before borders and death separated us, but it has been in becoming a mother and a scholar that I have felt his guidance. I am grateful to my father, Marlon; to my Tía Flori, my Tíos Fidel and Vinicio, and my grandparents, Fidelio and Paulina; and to the other relatives who have passed away but whose presence I still feel in my life—I remember you often.

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And last, but certainly not least, I want to express the sheer joy of belonging to my little family with mark!, Soledad, and Luna. I appreciate your love and kindness every day and, regardless of any struggle, I am so grateful that I get to have you three in my life. You've been very patient as I traveled this journey of being an academic, and I hope that you see the love you give me reflected back to you in this work.

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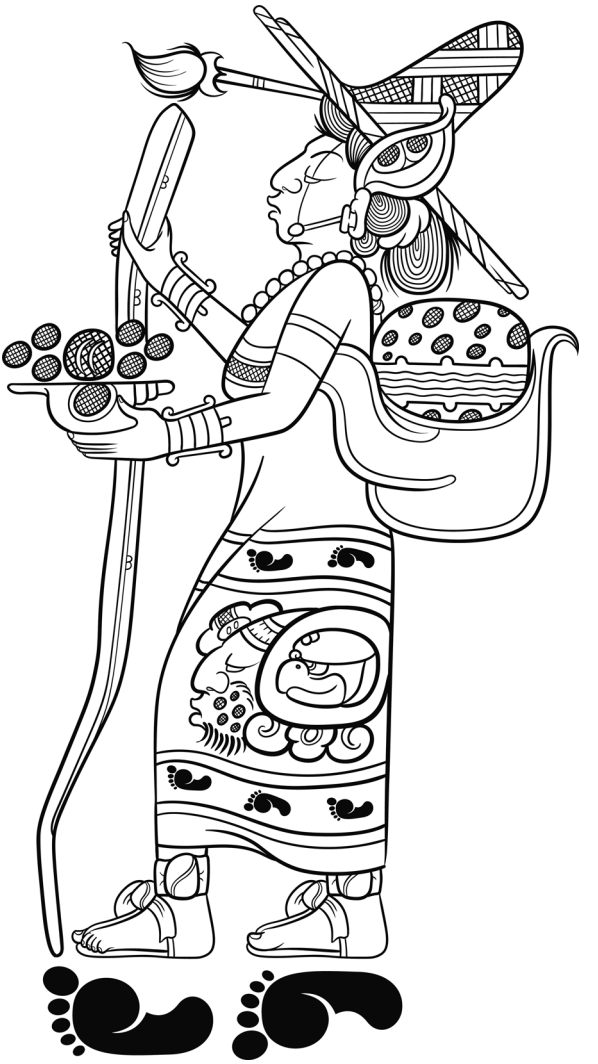

FM. 1 An image created by Walter Amilcar Paz Joj to illustrate the themes of the book and my life experiences.

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Introduction

In 2010, Teatro Frida Kahlo in Los Angeles, California, presented *Sentado en un árbol caído*. A play written by Emanuel S. Loarca and performed by Manuel Chitay, it was based on the narrative of one of the survivors of the 1982 Río Negro massacres in Rabinal, Baja Verapaz, Guatemala. In 1993, Jesús Tecú Osorio became a public figure when he submitted an official complaint of an illegal mass grave in his home village. This complaint led to the exhumation of some of his family and other community members whom the military had massacred and buried. Besides the exhumation, Tecú Osorio's testimony and his retelling of the massacre at Pak'oxom were crucial to prosecuting three top-ranking local civilian patrol leaders who had carried out the massacre.[1] Since the initial complaint, documentaries have featured Jesús Tecú Osorio's testimony, and he has written a book that became the basis for *Sentado en un árbol caído*. Centered on the prominent image of an eleven-year-old Jesús sitting on the trunk of a fallen tree as military officers brutalize women and children from the village, this play extends the power of testimony and memory to produce a new archive—one that is visual, audible, and also mobile.[2]

As the 2013 trial of Efraín Ríos Montt and subsequent appeals made painfully clear, seeking justice through juridical structures, especially when top-ranking military officials are involved, is often directly linked to the contest over whose narratives and memories are institutionally legitimate. When official state narratives continue to claim that there was no genocide—that if there were any massacres, they were not tied to the military—cultural productions like *Sentado en un árbol caído* shine light on the need to center Maya experiences to challenge national discourses of forgetting.[3] This type of cultural production directly challenges the layered and transnational anti-Indigenous politics that would have Maya people either dis-

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appear or survive solely as an exploited labor force. Cultural productions and practices like this become part of a larger process of organizing the Indigenous diaspora to make political critiques and social demands in a way that centers Maya epistemologies and experiences.

While Tecú Osorio's testimony can be analyzed within a context limited to the territory of Guatemala, the effort to showcase this testimony in Los Angeles demonstrates the power of Maya stories that invoke the armed conflict in Guatemala and use Maya epistemologies to make sense of diasporic life in Los Angeles. As I have seen this play performed across Los Angeles in university spaces, art galleries, and a community theater, it has constantly reminded me that Maya stories unveil the frictions between the necropolitics of state violence and Maya practices of life making. The emotional resonance of the performance is deep sorrow and grief because of the violent massacre, but the power of the performance also lies in audience members witnessing the survival of Tecú Osorio as a Maya person who uses his story to hold the state accountable. That the play was performed in Los Angeles is a testament to the mobility of the medium of performance art *and* to the desire to bear witness for the audience. For me, this bearing witness in the collective is always a powerful experience and reminder that these histories and forms of resistance are indeed carried collectively.

The forms of cultural production I analyze in this book are grounded in Indigenous experiences and critique violence while centering Maya survivance.[4] For instance, the use of Maya clothing in the diaspora, which is the focus of chapter 2, marks Maya bodies as belonging to a living ancestral homeland while simultaneously pointing to the very embodied reality of displacement when worn outside of that homeland. The tension between highlighting the reality of violence while centering Maya perseverance is also present in the cultural production of new space and experiences. For instance, take T-shirts produced by La Comunidad Ixim, the collective I highlight in chapter 3. Their T-shirt reads, "I [heart] L.A.," but the heart symbol usually found on these shirts is replaced with the quetzal, whose red breast is an important identity symbol for Guatemalans in diaspora.[5] The T-shirt becomes a material record of how children raised in the diaspora continue to assert their homelands but intertwine this assertion with their affective attachments to the places in which they have grown up. These cultural productions become artifacts that document longer histories of displacement and belonging and the process of making history while continuing to mark presence for many years to come.

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These cultural artifacts and the routes they travel alongside diasporic communities articulate the Maya diasporic experience through multidirectional intergenerational memory around the Guatemalan civil war. The issues of memory extend beyond the boundaries of the Guatemalan nation because so many people have relocated, migrated, and been dispossessed. Mainstream histories and portrayals have depicted diasporic Mayas as victims of brutal genocidal violence in the state of Guatemala and legal violence outside that country as predominantly undocumented immigrants. While these narratives are true, if we extend our analysis of genocidal violence both temporally and geographically, we can also draw connections between these histories to uncover how these systems operate differently across national borders while simultaneously hinging on the elimination of vibrant Indigenous communities.

Mayas represent a paradox of being both rooted in ancestral territory for millennia and hypermobile due to contemporary migration and deportation circuits. As archives move with migrants, Indigeneity travels across national borders and generates disjunctures that can help scholars reconceptualize belonging. Immigrant exclusion is organized around national citizenship, but scholars have highlighted that both historically and in the contemporary moment, the US immigration system is also classed, racialized, and gendered. For Mayas, Indigeneity becomes a critical site of difference in the ways they experience the violence of migration. As migration also represents dispossession from an *ancestral* relationship to specific territories, looking at material artifacts offers a distinct way to conceptualize the continuity that exists alongside deep disruptions. That is to say, Mayas have—and when necessary, create—routes to maintain or establish a relationship to land despite being physically removed from their ancestral territory. An Indigenous migrant identity, being deeply tied to both place *and* mobility, also illuminates a particular nonlinear relationship to racial categories of Latinidad and Indigeneity in the United States.

Mobile Archives of Indigeneity

Historical memory is anchored in Maya epistemologies (ways of knowing) and experiences through materials that move with migrants to support Maya community formation in a diaspora. The journey of migration often requires bringing only what one can carry, and while the things that migrants carry have a story to tell in and of themselves, that story is less about their episteme as Indigenous people and more about their knowl-

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edge as migrants attempting to survive an increasingly militarized border landscape that includes all of Mexico.[6] Even just one generation after immigration, the children of migrants do not always have access to family heirlooms or land rights. Within this context of Indigenous dispossession, what materials do Maya migrants keep to tell their stories?

Despite dispossession, Mayas in Los Angeles have changed not only the demographic definition of Latinidad, they have created economic and geographic space to maintain community ties and practices.[7] These include such seemingly contradictory spatial practices as holding Maya ceremonies in the parking lots of churches and open-air markets on the sidewalks of Union Avenue and Sixth Street in Los Angeles. Mobile archives of Indigeneity challenge displacement because they cohere Maya collectives in diaspora and seek to disrupt the way settler colonialism functions to disappear Mayas into a Latinidad defined through mestizaje to the exclusion of Indigenous subjecthood. Mayas in Los Angeles create and add new meaning to cultural materials that engage their experiences and histories. Unpacking these materials and processes through the stories of migrants and their children is critical to expanding how we understand both archives that exist and those that are in formation. The issue is not simply one of being able to access or produce institutionalized archives. The issue is actually much larger, in that the logic that anchors preservation and exhibition has historically relied upon dispossession. It goes beyond collaborating with "culture bearers" and challenges us to understand that mobile archives of Indigeneity are not vested in the preservation and exhibition of artifacts for the general public but instead are meant to retain knowledge of the cultural, spiritual, and political life of Maya migrants in order to build a collective.

Mobile archives of Indigeneity push back against institutionalized archives that consolidate national power by acting as repositories for information that facilitates legibility in the service of governmentality.[8] Given the settler imperative to categorize and organize people and histories in order to create or uphold a national discourse, institutional archives are a particularly difficult place for people who have a long history of being dehumanized. If, however, as María Cotera writes, we must "imagine the archive as both noun and verb,"[9] Black studies and Indigenous studies scholars have done critical work to analyze historical time and archival form creatively to understand diasporic formation. Black feminist historian Saidiya Hartman has powerfully articulated the absence from archives of some descendants of enslaved people brought to the "New World."[10] To combat this seeming absence from official archives, Black scholars—and Black queer scholars

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in particular—have instead turned to the archives that do exist to provide readings that anchor Black life in its complexity. Paul Gilroy's canonical text, *Black Atlantic*, alongside Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley's interventions in "Black Atlantic, Queer Atlantic," demonstrates that memory and history are stored in even the most fluid places, such as the ocean. These sites of knowing and historical materiality challenge the rigid definition of archives and open possibilities that flow through and outside of the histories valued and produced by institutionalized archives.

For Indigenous peoples, archives also act as a technology of settler colonialism because they naturalize "the righteous fiction of the nation-state and its fundamental desire to disavow the existence and rights of Indigenous peoples and communities."[11] The relationship between Indigenous people and archives is fraught with problematic inequalities, and while institutions hold on to everything, including human remains, Native communities have organized to pass the federal Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). Despite this federal law, which is meant to return sacred and funerary items back to Native nations, institutions have often fought to maintain their collections, and as a result, ancestral human remains, religious artifacts, and other critical materials have remained in the custody of institutions that do not build meaningful relationships with sovereign Indigenous nations. The historical records that become legitimated in settler institutions of museums and archives represent an attempt to understand objects divorced from their inherently complex relationships to living communities. Museums around the world exhibit everything from archaeological pieces to Maya clothing without acknowledging that acquisition is possible primarily through outright theft, or at best by purchasing materials in a deeply unequal economic reality. Their collections are recognitions of depoliticized art forms beautiful enough to exhibit but not meaningful enough to warrant an understanding of their political context under colonial structures. As a result, it is possible to visit museums that include representations of or focus on Mayas without ever learning about their ongoing struggles and the ways that Maya communities work every day to uphold their epistemologies and care for their ancestral lands and water.

In contrast, Indigenous archival work raises critical questions "such as who ought to own and control Native knowledge, who ought to store this knowledge and for what ends, and, of course, whose knowledge counts as legitimate."[12] Mobile archives of Indigeneity are different from institutional archives in their formation, intention, and audience, and therefore

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act as embodied sites for transfers of knowledge.[13] They serve as quotidian reminders that history functions differently in the contentious interplay between genocide and Indigenous survivance. Stuart Hall reminds us that cultural identities, "Far from being grounded in a mere 'recovery' of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past."[14] A mobile archive of Indigeneity functions as a practice and process of making a Maya diaspora that is not enclosed by colonial power or defined solely as a permanent Indigenous loss. Rather, the archives I write about allow Mayas to engage with each other in their own cultural vernaculars as they move within societies that benefit from their erasure or silence as Indigenous subjects. When a teenager who is born and raised in Los Angeles wears her great-grandmother's *corte* (skirt), she is literally wearing an archive shaped by her ancestors in the cosmological sense and also by her elders who made decisions throughout their lives to maintain certain practices and keep these textiles—which are instances of vibrant Indigenous social relations.

Beyond the quotidian embodiment of being Maya, there are ways that communities create or use material objects to grapple with this question around the transgenerational transmission of information and knowledge about what it means to be Maya outside of the homeland. The dialogical relationship between the objects themselves and the stories people tell through and with these objects enables us to recognize that this practice is not strictly oral, and that those who enact it make critical choices and thoughtful interventions. Balancing an analysis that looks at the cultural material and the lived experience of the cultural producers allows us to remember that Indigenous archives do not stand alone. Understanding Indigenous archives requires an engagement that fleshes out the nuances of their significance in relation to families and collectives.

The debate over the work of institutional archives and all other forms of documenting and remembering is a struggle over not just the past but also the future. Alternatives to mainstream institutionalized archives exist in multimodal archives, counter-archives, rebel archives, digital archives, unruly archives, and autonomous archives that emerge from communities that have been or continue to be marginalized.[15] These projects and theories are challenging not solely how an archive functions but ultimately reimagine a more expansive public and subvert the role of the expert. Arjun Appadurai's notion that "migrant archives" are a tool for "documentation

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as intervention" to create forms of collective consciousness is also vital to understanding the mobility of people and archival materials. As Appadurai asserts, "This deep function of the archive has been obscured by that officializing mentality, closely connected to the governmentalities of the nation-state, which rests on seeing the archive as the tomb of the accidental trace, rather than as the material site of the collective will to remember."[16] Appadurai understands the deeply agentic labor and creativity of migrants who, despite their precarious conditions, decide that to maintain their historical memory is meaningful. For Indigenous migrants, the "collective will to remember" also requires a consistent project of refusing assimilation into Mexicanness or Latinidad—in other words into mestizaje. This requires understanding that Maya migrants are not Indigenous to the places they migrate to, but their ongoing commitments to their own places constructed through cultural practice rather than through land tenure or tribal citizenship provides a model for how they contest settler colonialism.

For scholars like Rodrigo Lazo, archives collect artifacts in order to circulate histories, and at times those histories push back against official narratives of the nation. In pushing back or expanding national discourses, archives can participate in the democratization of the nation. These critical conversations between migrant and official narratives clarify that the mobile archive of Indigeneity is distinct from a mainstream archive in that it takes as a primary intervention the (re)production of an Indigenous social and cosmological worldview. For Indigenous diasporas, the archive is less about being included in their receiving country than about maintaining connections to ancestral territories, Indigenous epistemologies, and ties across multiple generations of displacement. As Maurice Magaña writes in his analysis of Oaxacan transborder multimodal archives, "Merely being seen, however, is not enough. Given the hypervisibility that accompanies racialized criminalization, the terms of visibility for Indigenous Latinx and migrant communities are just as important as being seen." This points to the critical function of archives that emerge from Indigenous diasporas. In the face of being physically removed from one's land, relatives, and larger communities there is a need to sustain an Indigenous collectivity rather than to inform the general public. As Appadurai reminds us, "the work of the imagination is not a privilege of elites."[17] The value of mobile archives of Indigeneity does not result from collection or circulation through a settler public, but from the efforts of sustaining ongoing social relations and connections across settler borders.

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These mobile archives of Indigeneity are also different from traditional archives in that they do not presume to be specifically about the past. Part of the Maya diasporic archival practice centers on what I understand as archives in formation. As a result, these contemporary archives prevent any single story from standing in for a totalizing view of Maya people. This ambiguity troubles the temporal prescription provided by scholars like Harriet Bradley, who argues that while there are multiple definitions and uses for the archive, it primarily reproduces the following sequence: "archive—memory—the past—narrative."[18] Instead, archives of Indigeneity cross generational divides and require multiple generations of Maya people to be in conversation in order to understand how the cultural materials enact a process of "gathering together signs" and setting "a bundle of limits which have a history."[19] By refusing to stay fixed in space, these sites and archives challenge the ongoing colonial regimes of power that, through various articulations, remain entrenched in positioning Indigenous peoples as disappearing or gone. This is one critical distinction between mobile archives of Indigeneity and migrant archives, which center moving across borders and landing in a new place.

Mobile archives of Indigeneity center Indigenous experiences, but the objects themselves move across borders and are therefore mobile as well. The mobility of the material objects, rather than migrant people, is why I have specifically included *mobile* as a descriptor for the type of archive I focus on. None of these materials remains in a single physical location, yet each contains specific land-based meanings that a migrant population can share across time and space. For instance, in the case of the photo exhibit that is the focus of chapter 4, the photographs are physically present on the walls of a community center in Xelajuj No'j (Quetzaltenango, Guatemala). The center often welcomes returned migrants or the children of migrants who are visiting their ancestral homeland for the first time, and the images become a visual representation of connection across borders and migrant generations. In moving across borders during or after migration, these cultural items acquire added layers of significance in relation to the process of migration, but at their core they are used by Indigenous subjects for the sake of Indigenous collectivity. Through the mobile archives of Indigeneity that Mayas create, all generations engage in cultural production as a site through which to document the process of erasure and the possibilities for intergenerational continuities for themselves, their families, and other Mayas.

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Settler Colonialism and the Formation of a Maya Diaspora

The cultural materials in archives of Indigeneity are imbued with political meaning. Before migration, Guatemalans experience the United States as a foreign imperial power. The United States played a key role in destabilizing Guatemala during a democratic and socialist period often termed the Ten Years of Spring, from the October Revolutions of 1944 to the coup that deposed Jacobo Árbenz in 1954. While US interests in Guatemala date to much earlier, it was during this period that the massive landholdings of the United Fruit Company were threatened when President Árbenz attempted to redistribute underutilized land to landless peasants. The agrarian reform prompted the United Fruit Company to leverage its relationships with US government officials to produce a discourse of Guatemala as a communist threat that required US intervention. This began a long-term process of the United States sending millions of dollars in aid to dictators and corrupt administrations, which continues today. While originally provided under the guise of stopping a communist threat, much of that aid is now sent under the pretense that it will deter migration and increase security. As Cecilia Menjívar and Néstor Rodríguez note, to understand the conditions of Guatemala we must acknowledge the role the United States has played and also interrogate how the United States has been able to align itself with a powerful elite in Guatemala who are just as responsible for the everyday precarity poor people in Guatemala face.[20] Examining this alliance between the United States as an imperial power and Guatemala as a settler nation helps us understand that more than one country is responsible for the contemporary repression of Indigenous Maya people. Once Mayas migrate to the imperialist nation, they also experience the United States as a settler colonial power that has its own ongoing project of Indigenous repression, genocide, and control. The normalization of settler technologies in Los Angeles raises the stakes of studying the intentional efforts that Mayas make to document their own histories, struggles, and existence.

Given the context of state violence and dispossession in Guatemala, migration has become a survival strategy against intergenerational precarity. However, migration does not necessarily guarantee that the Maya community will survive geographic displacement from ancestral territories: demographic erasure and a powerful structure of Indigenous elimination await Mayas upon their arrival in Los Angeles. The literature on

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Indigenous migrants from Latin America must be put in conversation with critical scholarship on the spatial politics of settler colonialism. These spatial politics include how we conceptualize ancestral territory in relation to coerced migration, the ways that structures of violence may shift across migrant regions, and greater numbers of contemporary arrivals in occupied and unceded Native territory.[21] Settler colonialism has gained wide circulation as an analytical framework because it articulates the ongoing struggle over territory that makes lives disposable.[22] In effect, it connects the violence Indigenous people have faced from the moment of invasion to our present, which is useful in articulating the ongoing power structures Indigenous people confront. While settler colonialism may be applied in various ways, ultimately for my work, settler colonial theory helps us make sense of the horrors Maya people confront today in the context of historical violence that is documented in colonial records. When we read about the burning of hundreds of Maya books by Friar Diego de Landa in 1562 and the co-optation of Maya textiles by fashion designers today, we can understand these as interconnected structures that extract Maya knowledge and make Maya bodies meaningless to settler societies.

Since the formulation of settler colonial theory, there have been questions about its limits when applied to contexts where Indigenous people remain the demographic majority (Were they eliminated?), what their territory was used for (Does use have the same meaning when we deal with extraction as when we think about private property?), and about the intersection of racial capitalism and settler colonialism (Does race matter under settler colonialism?). For this book, I take up settler colonial theory because it offers a set of useful tools that can illuminate the transnational nature of violence against Maya migrants as well as contemplate the complexity of Maya experiences in relation to race and migration.

Settler colonial theory expands the time frame for the study of violence against Maya people: the best-known period of violence is the Guatemalan civil war from 1960 to 1996, which reached its climax in the 1980s. During this time, more than 200,000 people were murdered and 40,000 were disappeared; 83 percent of the victims were Maya, and various branches of the government, military, police, and paramilitaries committed 93 percent of the violence.[23] The coalescing of economic and political elites in Guatemala with the financial and military support of the United States resulted in one of the deadliest epochs of Maya history.[24] Guatemala continues to deal with the material remnants of this violence by exhuming mass graves, archiving police records, and convicting military perpetrators. In

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this book, however, I want to consider a longer historical context because we cannot understand the precarity migrants flee nor their strategies for survival and resurgence if we consider only the civil war period. Taking a longer and more expansive view of the structures of colonialism in Guatemala is critical to understanding how Maya people themselves understand contemporary violence as interconnected to a racism that persists from the colonial period.

To do this I build on the work of scholars who have provided a critical analysis of settler colonial structures in Central America. Shannon Speed has pointed out that one contribution of settler colonial theory is that it does not take settlement as a permanent and finished project. She challenges frameworks of coloniality and internal colonialism because they "view [power relations] as residual or a legacy of past colony rather than an ongoing settler colonial process."[25] Giovanni Batz illuminates the ongoing settler colonial process in Guatemala by discussing the ways that Maya Ixil communities understand the invasion of their territories by mining and mega projects as a fourth wave of colonialism that falls in line with three previous colonial waves: Spanish colonization, plantation owners, and the 1980s genocide.[26] Each of these invasions has continued the project of colonialism grounded in territorial dispossession, though the time period spans hundreds of years and multiple political economies.

In similar fashion, Juan Castro and Manuela Picq carefully lay out a historiography that threads together colonial, revolutionary, leftist, conservative, and genocidal dictatorships that all rely on the theft of Maya land and the elimination of Maya sovereignty.[27] The spatial relationships between Maya people, the massacres of the 1980s, and territorial dispossession today have been demonstrated through mapping projects that overlay the locations of massacres during the war on the locations of current mining and mega projects. Such mapping demonstrates that both are located in the highlands, where Indigenous people remain the majority.[28] Looking at the ways invasions and settler colonialisms are articulated across centuries is critical in demonstrating that Maya migrants are fleeing deeply precarious situations that have long historical roots beyond the genocide of the 1980s. These connections also help us understand why Mayas continue to migrate despite the signing of peace accords in 1996. The current iteration of settler colonialism revolves around territorial dispossession due to debt, drought, and mega projects, but these are contemporary iterations of a much older logic and structure that have perpetuated the violence experienced by Maya people.

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In Guatemala, drought and violent extractive projects result in the dispossession of Maya people at the same time as we continue to see the murder of land defenders and human rights defenders who are organizing to address these systemic issues. Human rights organizations and scholars have documented attacks on campesino and Indigenous collectives that directly challenge the projects disrupting the ecosystems that communities rely on. While this remains a critical issue globally, in Guatemala the assassination or criminalization of organizers, students, academics, and journalists represents an extension of genocidal practices of the 1980s and earlier. Global Witness released a report documenting that the murder of land defenders rose from three in 2017 to sixteen in 2018.[29] These murders and the more widespread issue of threatening social leaders are challenging to document because they occur under suspicious circumstances and at times involve police agents. Leaders from effective change-making organizations like the Comité de Desarrollo Campesino (Committee on Peasant Development, CODECA) have been especially targeted for remaining on the front lines of fighting incursion into and extraction on Indigenous territories. The Alejandro Giammattei administration (2020–24) and the most recent election cycle where Bernardo Arévalo was elected as the next president was an especially tense period. This period saw the manipulation of legal systems to exclude Thelma Cabrera, a Maya Mam organizer and co-founder of CODECA, from running for president. In addition, university students and journalists were also targeted, criminalized, and subjected to police brutality when they contested the corruption occurring within the country and their own institutions. In response, Indigenous ancestral authorities called for a historic level of nationwide organizing that lasted until Arévalo officially took office as president in January 2024. In the context of the genocide of the 1980s, which sought to instill distrust and terror in the general population, it is important to note that there are still many social actors who continue to safeguard the well-being of their communities through their labor, bodies, and organizing.[30] Nonetheless, in the face of these ongoing issues, many Guatemalans find themselves with few alternatives but to migrate to alleviate poverty or simply safeguard their lives from the threats they receive because of their organizing or cultural work.

Settler colonial theories highlight that the nation has always relied on territorial dispossession. The state has never been a site of justice precisely because politicians across the political spectrum have relied on dispossessing Indigenous people of their land and labor. Critical Indigenous studies scholars like Sarah Hunt have also pointed out that structural territorial

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dispossession is deeply entangled with gendered violence because both effectively limit the social reproduction of Indigenous peoples. Thus, alongside and intersecting with violence against Indigenous people is femicide. Shannon Speed's recent multilayered analysis of Indigenous women in detention looks at the ways individual men, narcotics cartels, and government agencies all participate in making Indigenous women particularly vulnerable to violence—a system she names as neoliberal multicriminality.[31]

The other arm of this violence is the perpetual poverty that Maya families encounter across generations. The loss of land is tied to the widespread poverty within Maya communities, because when pushed out of their original territories the people are coerced into marginal wage labor or into being debt workers. Understanding intergenerational economic poverty as part of a colonial project positions genocide as encompassing not only violent physical deaths, but also the series of social and political deaths that result when Mayas are fundamentally excluded from society or are included only through unequal relationships grounded in multicultural neoliberalism.[32] Speed argues that one iteration of settler colonialism is neoliberalism and the free-market structure that has given rise to the narco state and resulted in a shifting terrain of labor. While migration within Guatemala to work on sugar, coffee, and banana plantations has been a historical reality that constituted brutal violence against Maya people, the current period of migration to the United States has been sparked by unprecedented inflation and a reliance on debt to finance everything from migration to basic everyday survival.[33] The gap produced by multiple waves of settler colonialism now finds its expression among those families who are supported by migrants who have crossed into the United States successfully versus those who have lost what little they did have due to deportation and unsuccessful attempts to cross. In light of the powerful historic, economic, and political forces that Mayas must confront, they have an equally longstanding history of refusal, regeneration, and persistence.

One way that these communities have contested the national project of Indigenous dispossession has been through a turn toward a Maya movement that, while decentralized, operates on the logic that Maya people must push back against these projects of social death.[34] Here, it is critical to understand that the label Maya is not necessarily always used by people we would understand as Maya. The very use of the term *Maya* as an umbrella identity for more than twenty distinct yet related ethnolinguistic groups is part of a strategic move to make Indigeneity legible within national and international forums. As Victor Montejo clarifies, the turn to a Maya identity

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directly ties to the work of scholars and activists who sought to challenge Ladino discourses claiming that contemporary Mayas are not really connected to precolonial societies.[35] While the international public recognizes Mayas as a civilization with a deep understanding of astronomy and math, elite Ladinos in Guatemala claim that those ancient civilizations are only distant ancestors of the Mayas whom landowners exploit through plantations, mines, and debt peonage today. The supposed distance from the great civilization that "disappeared" has justified the ongoing state violence to which Maya people have been subjected. Maya is a category that exists in relation to older terms signifying Indigeneity that include *naturales*, *indígenas*, and terms governed by ancestral authorities and identified by local town or *aldea* names. In this sense it is important to remember that the challenge of thinking about Indigenous migrants in relation to their country of origin and country of reception is that although all settler colonialism is rooted in elimination and territorial dispossession, how settler colonists actually accomplish this and manage Indigenous peoples is distinct across local and national scales. R. Aída Hernández Castillo importantly reminds us that "the social, cultural and political processes through which the meaning of being indigenous has been constructed . . . have involved various dialogues of power with national and global discourses."[36] This perspective is critical to thinking about the Maya community as a diasporic, rooted, and migrant experience that is geographically, historically, and culturally constructed.

Maya scholars and activists use the term *Maya* to contest the temporal rupture just discussed, although many continue to identify with their hometown or language group, not necessarily with a Maya identity. One of the complexities involved in analyzing Maya politics is that Maya also represents one way the government of Guatemala promotes one of its major economic streams, the tourism industry. The limitations of Maya identity in relation to a tourism industry operating under a settler colonial imperative to eliminate Maya people as sovereign political subjects opens critical questions around how Maya and Ladino vendors use Maya regional clothing to fulfill international tourists' desire for "authentic" Maya culture.[37] María Jacinta Xón Riquiac notes that Maya men who were doing the work of defining and cohering a Maya identity in the 1990s positioned women as cultural bearers whose function was to reproduce culture, a move that reifies patriarchy and gender norms as essentialist categories at the expense of political subjectivities.[38] Edgar Esquit has also launched an important critique of the way that Maya identity is produced by scholars and activists who ignore the reality of Indigenous people living in poverty

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who find a sense of belonging and empowerment through religious institutions like the Catholic Church or Evangelical denominations instead of through Maya spirituality. These insightful critiques push back on earlier Maya scholars like Demetrio Cojtí Cuxil and Raxche', who defined political and cultural agendas based on their understandings of Mayaness, which may not resonate for all Mayas.[39] My own choice to use the term *Maya* is in line with a long-standing commitment to acknowledge ourselves as a collective with diverse experiences and perspectives but with millennial roots and ongoing responsibilities relative to our specific territories and each other. In this book, I choose to use *Maya* to signal a political claim to a subjecthood that is not given and must instead be constantly reconstructed generation after generation.

The notion of a Maya diaspora as a purposeful and consciously constructed identity tracks with the repositories of memory I analyze in this book, which do not take for granted that a Maya diaspora already exists. Instead, it is through the archives themselves that Mayas lay out and grapple with the parameters around Maya diaspora. Tensions may exist among those whom the "Maya" identity leaves out, who may struggle internally with questions of cultural authenticity. As a result, the mobile archives emphasize that, rather than forcing a complete rupture or "new alternative," Maya migrants weave in and out of multiple identities and collectives to form a Maya diaspora. Internal diversity generates multiple definitions of Mayaness; generation, geography, gender, queer identity, and class are all important axes of differentiation within the diaspora. While sometimes contradictory, these tensions and frictions also form the basis from which second- and third-generation Mayas in the United States articulate claims to Maya identity that make sense of their lived realities outside of Guatemala.

The Maya Diaspora on Occupied Indigenous Lands

Mayas began coming to the United States as a direct result of either outright genocide or generational poverty resulting from virulent discrimination and exploitation. While Guatemalan Mayas began migrating to escape the civil war and genocide, they have continued to migrate in relatively large numbers even after the official end of the war. However, demographic data that distinguishes between Maya and Ladino Guatemalans is very difficult to find, which makes Maya visibility complicated. In addition, so many Mayas have migrated that, as geographer Juan Herrera documents

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in his research on day laborers, the terms *Maya* and *Guatemalan* have become conflated.[40] This in some ways obscures the challenges Mayas face as Indigenous immigrants, while also making their culture and Indigenous difference visible as part of Guatemalan folkloric culture. Although quantitative data does not document Ladino–Indigenous distinctions, scholars suggest that Mayas represent a large proportion of Guatemalan migrants to the United States and an even larger proportion of those deported back to Guatemala. Research suggests that Mayas constitute at least 50 percent of the Guatemalan population in the United States, but scholars acknowledge that this may be a severe underestimation.[41] The challenges of obtaining accurate demographic data for this particular population highlight the ongoing need for qualitative work and methods and for those who understand the racial dynamics in Guatemala to support either the creation or disaggregation of data about Mayas.

The contribution of this research to the study of the Maya diaspora is best contextualized by briefly reviewing the literature that exists about Maya migrants in the United States. Early research about the Maya diaspora was largely concerned with language retention; later studies focused on the experience of migration after being targeted by state violence, the transnational economic and cultural practices of migrants in Los Angeles, and the experiences of those people as undocumented migrants.[42] Other research emphasized the notion of diaspora as grounded not only in Mayas' external migration to other parts of the world but also in their internal migration within Guatemala.[43] More recent research on the Maya diaspora has also critically intervened within Latina/o studies to challenge popular notions of what it means to be Latina/o and how this identification often directly contradicts the Maya experience.[44] In particular, this scholarship challenges how the casual lumping together of Mayas with other Latinas/os conceals the direct racism that Maya migrants face from Latinas/os, including Central Americans, who do not identify as Indigenous.[45] This racist discrimination is entrenched and reinscribed in structures of inequality in the countries of origin, and it finds new modes of expression in the diaspora.[46] To distinguish themselves from the Latina/o category, Indigenous migrants often identify as Native American.[47] Pushing Indigenous migrants to the margins actively incentivizes a form of self-policing whereby they may strategically choose to hide their cultural practices or prioritize various forms of acculturation. These "choices" must be understood in the context of ongoing state violence in both Guatemala and the United States. Ultimately, what is clear is that part of the Maya diasporic experience is

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the difficult project of understanding how and when distinct racial structures (those in Guatemala versus those in the United States) coalesce to produce a politic rooted in the continuous erasure of Indigenous people.

Within the diaspora, youth make sense of their realities through the stories passed down, or at times silenced, by generations of their family in Guatemala and the United States, as well as their own experiences of exclusion from Latinidad due to their Indigenous roots. Maya positionalities in the diaspora create complex linkages between historical family legacies and the political economies of their places of origin, as well as the colonial structures of Guatemala and the United States and how these relationships are configured within Los Angeles, the city in which they live and work. This rich complexity allows Maya collectives to enact an archival practice that searches for commonalities and differences to create materials that embrace multiplicity and a diverse understanding of Maya persistence.

Furthermore, the visible presence of Mayas in parts of Los Angeles like Pico Union–Westlake and South Los Angeles also creates a need to reconsider Latinidad as a category that ostensibly includes all migrants from Latin America. Most research about Maya migrants highlights the ways that Latina/o identity and politics are often premised on notions of Mexican mestizaje. Maya organizers have questioned or outright refused incorporation into Latinidad because it is often defined through an uncritical approximation to whiteness that refuses to engage with Indigeneity and Blackness. Granted, within Chicana/o studies there has been a commitment to Indigeneity due to the movement that led to the formation of the field—much of that discourse, cultural production, and political position rested on a rejection of popular assimilationist projects of Americanization vis-à-vis whiteness in the United States. As a result, Chicanas and Chicanos—deeply informed by Black radical movements, both in the United States and globally—developed key claims to being Indigenous but premised those claims primarily on Mexican national discourses of an ancient Aztec or Nahuatl past. Indigenous scholars like Gloria Chacón and Lourdes Alberto highlight how this identity remains an ongoing tension to which Chicanx subjectivities need to be attuned because these forms of mestizaje, pan-Indigeneity, and generic Indigeneity exist in contradiction to Indigenous diasporas from Mexico and Latin America who have specific and contemporary claims to their territories, communities, Indigenous languages, and cultural practices.[48] A cadre of Indigenous scholars whose territories are in Mexico, including Lourdes Alberto, Luis Urrieta, Luis Sánchez-López, Gabriela Spears-Rico, Brenda Nicolas, Daina Sanchez,

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and Michelle Vásquez Ruiz, have dedicated themselves to recentering their *pueblos* and demonstrating how their communities have been relegated to the margins by non-Indigenous Mexicans and by Chicana/o discourses. Similarly, because Maya people in Guatemala still have a strong relationship to their territory, language, spiritual beliefs, and political practices, the Aztec-centric, pan-Indigeneity of the Chicana/o movement missed the mark in overlooking the experience of not being Mexican but still laying claim to a specific Indigenous identity. These tensions with Latinidad are also a critical reminder not to reproduce erasure through absorption, but instead to understand that these identities are political projects with historical contexts and collective stakes.

Beyond the limitations of Latinidad and the lack of quantitative data on Indigenous migration is the issue of how we understand places of arrival. Previous research has looked at the ways that Maya migrants make and remake community, but typically without examining the site of arrival through settler colonial frameworks. Los Angeles is a city built through layers of dispossession in which every iteration of Native and Indigenous erasure informs how space is shaped in the city and how race is relationally constructed.[49] From the onset of colonial invasion by Spanish priests, the particularly restricted mobility of Indigenous women has been linked to the economic survival of political institutions that rely on their gendered and racialized labor.[50] Looking at Los Angeles as a site of contested settler occupation rather than just a city of immigrants can help us unpack how systems produced through settler colonialism in the United States come to bear on Maya migrants and their children in particular ways.

Until very recently, generations of Angelenos have been taught to conceptualize Indigenous people as already gone or vanishing through the infamous mission projects. These projects required that children reproduce models of the first European settlements in present-day California and sanitize, ignore, and erase these places as sites of sexual violence and Native genocide. Through an analysis of K–12 curricula and textbooks, Dolores Calderon argues that this instruction produces settler colonial grammars and what Mark Rifkin calls the settler common sense.[51] Consequently, people in Los Angeles are taught to understand the city specifically through histories that normalize and even celebrate the genocide of California Natives both historically and in the present moment. Identifying Los Angeles as a city of immigrants reproduces this erasure and avoids a serious examination of how Indigenous migrants risk perpetuating the same discourses and institutions.

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When Indigenous migrants arrive, they step not only onto Native territories, but onto territories that have a vested interest in eliminating Indigenous claims to land, often through the erasure of Indigenous presence in the present. Through entering these structures that actively work to erase Native people, Indigenous migrants are explicitly eliminated as Indigenous people as well. For instance, it is no coincidence that the US Border Patrol recognizes only country of origin, thereby creating structural barriers for scholars and organizers who seek to document the number of Indigenous migrants and their particular needs.[52] The erasures produced through migration actually *reproduce* the Indigenous elimination to which Maya migrants were already subjected in Guatemala. The realities of the Maya diaspora force us to think about Indigenous survivance in the context of arriving in occupied Indigenous territory and the continuities that exist in their receiving country despite their having been displaced from their ancestral territory.[53]

(Un)Mapping Power in the Production of Knowledge

Alongside these conversations about what a Maya diaspora is are critical discussions about what it means for members of these communities and scholars in academia to take up the pen as part of a political commitment to sovereignty. Our choice to become what Dale Turner terms "word warriors" forces us to constantly question our roles, the sites of knowledge that we privilege or reproduce, and the uneven consequences of academic knowledge production.[54] The need to think outside of and with a clear view of the constraints of an academic industry built through settler colonialism and racial capitalism requires us to examine all the ways that Black and Indigenous people survive(d) genocide then live to tell of that survival. The literature on Black and Indigenous methods is built on distinct ontological grounds that run the gamut from using fugitivity to Maya traditional dress as ways to narrate our positions.[55] As Indigenous scholars, we need to walk a line between how we think our work can support our community and what academia requires of us, and in that process we must make critical choices for which many of us do not have a blueprint.

My own methodological choices interweave multiple qualitative methods, including thirty-five interviews alongside cultural analysis, to inform frameworks that bend categories established by academic disciplines. The framework of the mobile archive of Indigeneity emerged from my academic

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scholarship, but as I worked through the concept, I also began to recognize the ways that it echoed my own lived experience. For instance, upon my undergraduate graduation, I wanted to honor both my elders and my own journey to self-understanding as a young Maya K'iche' woman from Xelajuj No'j. I asked my uncle, Oscar Ubaldo Boj Chojolan, to weave me my very first *po't* for the occasion. Po't are brightly colored blouses, often referred to as *huipiles*, that are handwoven and contain designs related to Maya cosmology, spirituality, geography, and mathematics. Tío Oscar's happy agreement set in motion my first encounter with the complex circuits of diaspora and the travel of cultural objects across settler borders. I had requested my huipil months in advance while visiting my hometown for the first time, but I had to ask an extended relative to pick up and deliver the garments months later. In the hustle and bustle of graduation preparations, three of my aunts helped me put on my traditional clothing for the very first time. While adjusting my skirt, my eldest aunt began to cry: Getting me dressed reminded her of my grandmother. I stood semifrozen, not knowing how to respond, as my other aunt put her arm around her and shared a funny story about tricks she would use as a little girl to try and put her corte on correctly.

I realized at that moment that wearing my own Maya clothing was also the act of wearing a history of place, defiance, and dispossession across generations. My decision to wear my po't and corte was made based on my excitement over graduating, yet I couldn't deny that this decision reminded my aunts of loss and grief. However, creating a complex emotional space out of my excitement and pride alongside one aunt's grief and another's sense of humor is what makes these cultural objects so special and meaningful. As I have continued to examine the materials that create these spaces of intergenerational engagement, I have realized that what a younger generation chooses to remember and to continue has everything to do with reopening and acknowledging old wounds. An article of clothing that held its own significance in our hometown where it was woven by a relative of mine also acted as a portal to our intergenerational grief and survival as immigrants in the United States. I believe my aunt was reminded in that moment not only of her mother, who had died much too young due to the systemic neglect many Maya people face in Guatemala, but also of everything she had lost because of poverty and migration. I became a living reminder of where we had been, what had been lost, what had remained, and what could be renewed. More than a decade later, my niece Andrea asked to have a corte for her fifteenth-birthday celebration. I happily bought it

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for her, again asking my uncle to weave it, and gifted it to her. As part of this gift, my uncle traveled to South Los Angeles to conduct a ceremony where we showered Andrea with flowers, as is customary to do for young women in our community. I continue to see in my family and my extended Maya diasporic community the blossoming of these transnational ties that sustain us despite ongoing state violence against Mayas in Central America, Mexico, and the United States.

My own lived reality of belonging to this community grounds my theory and conceptual framework of mobile archives of Indigeneity. Shawn Wilson, in his book *Research Is Ceremony*, articulates an Indigenous research paradigm that acknowledges lived experience as a site of knowledge but extends this notion by stating that as Indigenous people embedded in a collective, our lived experience is not individualistic. He writes, "I think that my entire upbringing, culture, teachers, experiences, and lots of other things (some that I cannot explain) came together to allow me to form a relationship with these ideas."[56] As he continues to articulate an Indigenous research paradigm, he notes that how we understand every part of a research study is saturated with how we exist in the world, and as Indigenous scholars we should embrace the relationality that guides us.

From this vantage point of diasporic Maya relationality, it's clear that there is no one prototypical experience among those who are actively trying to cohere a Maya diasporic community. Hence, I emphasize archives that are contemporary—in formation, continuously engaged in publicly setting boundaries *and* opening spaces. Recognizing the work that goes into spaces that are processing Indigenous migration and responses to state violence, I am compelled to conceptualize this project as an extension of what exists and what may be useful within the Maya community. As a Maya scholar who is trained in an interdisciplinary approach, conceptualizing the mobile archive of Indigeneity has forced me to grapple with disciplinary boundaries and tensions. The mobile archive of Indigeneity as a conceptual tool sits (un)comfortably between social science and humanities. This is rich ground from which to reconsider the place of Indigenous studies in social science and in relation to disciplinary boundaries.

For Indigenous diaspora scholars, our projects force us to confront contradictory modes of being that are often unrecognized in our fields. This is part of a longer project of genocide where accessing formal education made Indigenous people "civilized" and therefore no longer Indigenous.[57] Even in the contemporary moment there are contradictions around what it means to talk about our own stories through our own logics, something

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that became especially evident in the conflict around Rigoberta Menchú's *testimonio*. David Stoll, an academic anthropologist, argued that, based on his interviews and fieldwork, he identified multiple fallacies in Menchú's account that made her entire testimonio questionable. Published in 1983, Rigoberta Menchú's testimonio contributed to her winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992, which some credit as one of the factors that turned the tide toward peace talks in Guatemala. David Stoll's critique of Menchú's testimonio was often taken as an attack on the developing and well-received field of testimonio, but since then, there have been critical contributions to expanding our understanding of the possibilities and limitations of this approach.[58] This controversy may seem old, but as a Maya K'iche' scholar interested in telling our stories and our analysis of these stories, the way academics treated Menchú reminds me of the possible risk in telling our stories in fields and institutions that have often extracted our community's knowledge while reproducing our exclusion from those places.

These conversations remain charged as a new generation of Indigenous diaspora scholars with the knowledge of lived experience and formal academic training have stepped in to write about their own histories and their community's experiences. The advent of scholar activism and the ongoing discussion around insider/outsider positionalities provide important opportunities for us to consider the unintended consequences of our research and the ways our research can support social movement work.[59] However, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color scholars have also discussed critical issues that arise in the process of conducting research with their own community members. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang encourage scholars to reject what they term "inquiry as invasion."[60] In relation to my work, their emphasis that the stories most desired, consumed, and prized in academia are those of vulnerable pain and trauma highlights the need for stories about survivance that center powerful critiques of structures of colonialism. I couch each community-based intervention as existing partially in response to the violence of institutions that ensnare our families and communities but also as a way of pushing back against that violence. I do this work particularly to speak to young Mayas who deserve to learn not just of their community's struggles, but also of its many creative strategies to affirm their dignity.

While outsider scholars of Indigeneity propose frameworks that seem universal, the experiences of Indigenous scholars who write about their own communities are rarely discussed. Even though Indigenous scholars remain a small demographic in academia overall, they offer frameworks

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that are informed by the knowledge they have beyond their role as researchers. Audra Simpson's critical work on ethnographic refusal is but one way in which we as scholars navigate important tensions in the field. Simpson writes:

> The ethnographic limit then, was reached not just when it would cause harm (or extreme discomfort)—the limit was arrived at when the representation would bite all of us and compromise the *representational* territory that we have gained for ourselves in the past 100 years, in small but deeply influential ways, with a cadre of scholars from Kahnawake whose work has reached beyond the boundaries of the community.[61]

To be part of the community one studies means not only theorizing interviews through transcription and coding procedures but also being responsible for the real-world consequences of those interviews, which some scholars argue is extraction and plunder. The consequence we risk as Indigenous scholars is the potential that our research will have a negative impact on those with whom we hold a collective future. While some sectors of academia still claim that academics should be neutral and objective outsiders, those of us who work within our communities, nations, and pueblos are accountable not just to university standards, but also to our elders, youth, families, and leaders. Unlike outsiders who work with our communities, this accountability is not a choice because who we are informs how the community receives us. For instance, when I decided to begin research with a community space in Xela, leaders of that space had already known my family for years, which I had not realized because I did not grow up in my ancestral territory. Being an Indigenous diasporic scholar means that I am part of social relations that are older than I am, and I am responsible for recognizing how my research may affect those relationships. I have been fortunate to receive both my family's understanding and the organization's permission to do this work, but again, this is an issue that outsiders do not need to contend with. This accountability produces uneven terrains of power that I hope more Indigenous diaspora scholars will take up in their work.

Indigenous scholars like Linda Tuhiwai Smith have been pointing out the limits of these (neo)colonial forms of extractive research for decades, and Native, First Nations, and Indigenous scholars have responded by thinking through their own people's epistemologies to understand land, history, archives, interviews, and research practices. In the process they propose that by looking deeply at their relationships to their nations and

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people, they can force open a space that acknowledges research as more than data collection. We can take Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's notion of the method of Kwe as one critical example of this. Simpson tells us that Kwe is a refusal to accept and reproduce binaries that divide not only genders but also thinking and doing, the oral and written, the cultural and political.[62] Noelani Arista also uses Koana as a possible methodology.[63] According to Arista, Koana is about the inner meaning of a phrase, chant, or song, which may be obvious or unknowable to outsiders. In looking toward their respective nations' own epistemological pillars, these works point to the scholars' investment in recognizing the limits of research and disciplines as mainstream academia has constructed them. These interventions also depart from others in that they do not seek to present universal concepts, meaning that I as a Maya scholar may not necessarily take up Kwe or Koana as a methodological framework, but instead I can begin by looking to all the ways that my communities understand themselves and, within that conceptual space, begin to build frameworks for what social scientists understand as data collection and analysis.

One example of this practice from a Maya perspective is the work of literary scholar Gloria Chacón in *Indigenous Cosmolectics*. Several of the analytic strategies that Chacón foregrounds in her book speak to possibilities of pushing back on disciplinary norms. For instance, she uses *Mesoamerican* as a contemporary and regional term that allows her to acknowledge Mayas across settler borders and in conversation with Zapotecs. Similarly, she states, "I propose *cosmolectics* for Mesoamerica, tying together the fundamental role that the cosmos and history, sacred writing and poetry, nature and spirituality as well as glyphs and memory play in articulating Maya and Zapotec ontologies."[64] For Indigenous scholars, this process of looking backward even as we examine the present is a form of world building within academia. These concepts are not necessarily new within our communities, but how we use them to ground our academic work, and thereby push back on many of the problematic norms that do not make sense to our communities, opens the possibility for a multiplicity of epistemological frameworks and maneuvers.

The interventions and the embodied tensions Indigenous scholars point to helped me clarify my commitments to intersectional politics within my community. Ultimately, it is important to recognize that for many Indigenous scholars, writing about our communities comes with additional challenges that are unique and rarely articulated in academia.

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This requires us to be able to take a step back and articulate the methodological choices we have made.

A Maya Multimethodology

Most academics readily acknowledge that the binaries of social science versus humanities, hard science versus social science, qualitative versus quantitative methods remain entrenched in many disciplines. As a Maya scholar I have to grapple with the reality that many of these divides go against the way we are taught by our elders and cultural teachers.[65] If we take my graduation textile as an example, it is a piece of art, a text that can be read, an ancestral map, an embodied archive, and the outcome of a mathematical process of design and weaving. Similarly, when we are told our ancestors read the stars and tracked the movement of the sun, we mean they calculated large mathematical quantities to track the future movements of the sun or Venus thousands of years in advance, all while sculpting these astral movements and calculations into stelae and visually representing them in codices. How, then, can Maya scholars make sense of being in academia while knowing how contradictory academic boundaries between disciplines are to our own understanding of life?

In this context, a Maya multimethodology crosses disciplinary and methodological limits to be responsive to my own communities. For instance, because of my graduation huipil and many experiences before and after, I continue to look at my and my family's history as a resource that informs how I see and hear other people's experiences and stories. Knowing these embodied histories and witnessing the multiple ways that other Mayas in diaspora and in Guatemala circumvent or outright rebel against the structures that produce and benefit from their precarity has encouraged me to engage multiplicity in my analysis and methodology. The history of genocide and dispossession has also guided my choice to focus on the type of organizing in my community that is thoughtful, hopeful, committed politically, and grounded in our lived and embodied experience. I am primarily interested in telling the stories of a diaspora who do not necessarily have a formal structure yet still find or make space for their experiences with other Mayas. In diaspora, people remain tied to ancestral territories in many ways that have not been analyzed. In each of these spaces and practices of survivance, there is a vibrancy that can be contextualized as an intentional refusal of dispossession and necropolitics.

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Such a multimethod approach can center these creative modes of survivance if it can make space for the lived experience and intuition that Indigenous diasporic scholars have.[66] The Maya multimethodology remains committed to being in conversation with academic literature but balances this with a consistent engagement with Maya communities to understand interviews and cultural analysis alongside social movements and ancestral cultural practices. As a result, methodologically speaking there is no rigid definition of what a Maya multimethodology looks like. Instead, the intention here is that we can train in multiple methods so that we can be responsive to what the communities we work with share with us.

As I have begun to work with colleagues and students who are from similar social positions as me, we often acknowledge that most academic training does not necessarily account for what it means to create academic knowledge about your own people when your people are Indigenous *and* deeply impacted by displacement. Reading, writing, teaching, or presenting histories of violence that continue to be relentlessly enacted against our communities today exacts an emotional toll. In my own experience, reading and writing about the Guatemalan civil war and genocide often seeps into my dreams and literally becomes nightmares. Confronting the horrific level of violence, ongoing malnutrition, deaths during migration, territorial dispossession, and gendered violence reminds me of family stories that are hard to share, stories that I live with but that don't necessarily count as part of my formal academic training. These stories are part of a longer legacy that as Indigenous diaspora scholars we must acknowledge is embedded in how we return to our communities and also informs what we hope our knowledge production within the academy will achieve. For instance, Giovanni Batz has honored a steadfast commitment to critically examining powerful institutions in support of the Ixil community's efforts to retain the land they have and, perhaps, one day have the entirety of their land returned.[67] For me, this mindset has meant fashioning projects and writings that acknowledge the deep sorrow and marginalization we experience while remaining committed to a hope that within our relationality we can find spaces of reprieve, love, and joy.

The uncomfortable balance of deciding what we share or how we distinguish what is fieldwork and what is just living is both a practical and an ethical issue that reminds us that academia was not built by those of us who are most often objectified as sites of study. As a result, we often craft our projects with a deeply embodied awareness of ongoing genocide, yet we push ourselves to also recognize and write about what exists despite

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genocide, like the vibrant, dynamic nature of Indigenous lives. In my own work, a Maya multimethodology allowed me to bring together thirty-five semi-structured interviews and cultural analyses to contour and texturize the traces of Maya social worlds more completely than I could with just one methodological approach.

By training and through further research, I have carved out an approach that relies on qualitative methods in general and semi-structured interviews in particular. This approach is not necessarily new because the Maya diasporic community has been written about in academic projects that have often focused on ethnographic and interview-based data. However, being able to meld cultural analysis with ethnographic data allowed me to consider not just what Maya people told me, but also how these expressions exist in tandem with new and ancestral cultural productions reflecting Maya epistemological principles that do not create divisions between what is spoken or read and other forms of knowledge. The approach Marianna Mora writes about in *Kuxlejal Politics* resonates with my own methodological decisions: While her work with the Zapatistas was meant to be ethnographic and interview-based, members of multiple communities had been given interview questions ahead of time and arrived with or produced written accounts based on community conversations related to her questions. In the process, Mora realized that when we deal with marginalized subjects, we often focus on the oral modality then take it upon ourselves as supposed experts to create the written accounts and the coding schemes we deem appropriate, as if we, "the real scholars," are the only ones with this capacity. With regard to Maya people, overreliance on the oral modality also ignores all the ways in which Maya society depends on layers of textuality in the forms of clothing, textiles, performance, glyphs, poetry, art, and other mediums. Moving away from anthropological research or even strict definitions of archival research allows me to consider the Maya sociological imagination in ways that link the lives of Maya people with a process of creating memory that rejects Indigenous dispossession.

As I have thought about the notion of storytelling, I have also become interested in the afterlives of immigrant narratives beyond the stories we tell and inherit. I began to wonder about the things we use to tell these stories, the objects we hold on to, and the ones that we create. The decision to consider material culture as well as stories became necessary to engage with a community that deals with dispossession, and to assess how we create and use the very objects and materials that are often levied against us. Within this context, I attempted to think about the interviews I conducted alongside

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the tangible materials present. In other words, this is neither strictly an oral history study nor an interview-based study nor one that looks at, say, Maya clothing as a secondary and supplemental object of analysis. Rather, I seek to understand how stories and material culture have become mirrors for each other. A community member's story about traditional clothing would be limited without an understanding of the clothing's relationship to local Guatemalan landscapes, how it has functioned in relation to gendered state violence, why there is pressure to stop wearing it after migration, and why it may be possible for the second generation to continue finding value in the clothing as "practice, meaning, site, and process."[68]

My interaction with the collectives that feature in the chapters of this book did not actually begin when I took on the researcher role. At no point would I claim to be an objective scholar when writing about my community. Instead, I often participated in or created spaces that I thought were needed, and after years of participation, I decided to write about the collectives. For instance, I was directly involved in forming the Maya Womxn in L.A. youth photo project that is the basis for chapter 4. However, I did not originally conceptualize the project as part of my research, which is why I waited years after the project had ended to conduct interviews and analyze some of the photos. This dual role can be challenging because having boundaries around when you are a researcher versus when you are a community member is still necessary.

In cases where the organized collectives are still active, I shared with them drafts of my work and created formal presentations where I would highlight their direct quotations and my own interpretations of them. I also presented my primary findings, and while there were varying levels of interest in them, making the effort was important. In an ideal world, we would get close reads and notes from our interviewees, but the reality of being a community member is that your interviewees already trust you by the time you sit with them. This trust is not necessarily automatic but is at times premised on the reality that you are raising families together, working in the same spaces, and the like. Most of the community members appear with pseudonyms, but our relationships are so close that they have spent time with my family in Xela without me being present. In another case, I thought I was interviewing a community member I did not know, but when I spoke to her mother she asked me about my last name and went on to tell me how her family had married into my family—something I had no idea about. This is a dynamic that makes a Maya multimethodology unique: A Maya multimethodology acknowledges that we have been and will be

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part of our community across generations and spaces, and as a result our social relationships exceed the confines of interviews in more ways than traditional methods acknowledge.

Ultimately, I wrote this book for my community—I wanted it to be the book I never had, I wanted more people to experience what I experienced when I first read K'iche' social anthropologist Irma Alicia Velásquez Nimatuj's work: A world opened up in which we as Indigenous scholars could use research and written words to call to task the structures that constantly bring us closer to death, to name them, to denounce them, to link our struggles together, to remember that we are interconnected even when we struggle to understand how. I do not take our future as Indigenous people for granted; it is guaranteed, but not without work—our work, all of our work—to make it so. We maneuver in, out, and around the structures, remembering that they have not always been here, remembering that there are reaches that cannot be known or understood, acknowledging that we each contribute, but we are each limited as individuals and amazingly bountiful as a collective.

Outline of This Book

Chapter 1 offers an analysis of the human rights film *Discovering Dominga* (2003) to argue that Maya intergenerational relationships are disrupted when Indigenous migrants in the United States are folded into the logics of settler colonialism. The documentary follows Denese Joy Becker/Dominga Sic Ruiz, who was adopted by a white family as a child, as she comes to learn that she is a survivor of the 1982 Río Negro massacres committed in Baja Verapaz, Guatemala, against the Maya Achí people. Through a transnational reading of Indigeneity, this chapter argues that the film portrays Indigenous genocide as something that occurs only in foreign countries and not in Denese's/Dominga's US hometown of Algona, Iowa. As a result, the film erases Algona's own history of Indigenous dispossession and absolves everyday white US citizens of extending to Indigenous migrant people the genocidal practices produced through settler colonialism. Nonetheless, the film itself acts as an archive that can be reframed if we consider how various Maya people in it set their own terms for reproducing intergenerational knowledge and historical memory with each other, even when that is not the central narrative of the film. This chapter provides important context around how discourses of Indigenous migrants are produced in relation to their places of arrival.

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In order to position the cultural and political commitments that guide my analytical frameworks, in chapter 2 I lay out key tenets that define mobile archives of Indigeneity—especially as they relate to more traditional notions of Indigenous epistemologies—and argue that these archives link historical struggles of Maya people and the contemporary diaspora. Through an analysis of Maya clothing and interviews with people who wear that clothing, I chart how these textiles function as archives because they facilitate the documentation and transmission of geographic, gendered, and classed histories across multiple Maya generations. I use this chapter to argue that mobile archives function through a twofold understanding of mobility: Maya clothing is mobile by its material nature, but it also reflects added layers of meaning in relation to the migrant experience. In Guatemala, scholars and spiritual leaders of the Maya community consider Maya spirituality as an ethical and aesthetic framework for how to be in the world. Building on this notion, I examine how Maya clothing is a relatively traditional cultural practice that migrants utilize to continue claiming their ancestral homelands—in terms of not the country of Guatemala but the local regions of Quetzaltenango and Huehuetenango, among others. I conclude the chapter by contemplating the challenges and possibilities for continuing this practice in diaspora as part of an anti–settler colonial politic.

Chapter 3 builds on the preceding chapter by examining how young adults in the diaspora engage new forms of cultural production to respond to the overlapping racial regimes in the United States. This chapter focuses on La Comunidad Ixim, a young adult group of 1.5- and second-generation Mayas in Los Angeles who produced a children's coloring book. I analyze a series of interviews with organizers in the collective to understand how their family histories and social justice organizing shaped how they created the coloring book. Thinking about the coloring book as the archive they produced, I pay close attention to how queer Maya positionalities, along with investments in social justice, extend the function of these mobile archives outside of the extended kinship networks I laid out in chapter 2. In this extension beyond the settler colonial notion of heteronormative and biological nuclear families, Mayas engage in forming communal notions of what it means to be Maya in diaspora. Family genealogies still play a critical role in how members of La Comunidad Ixim understand being Maya and challenge each other across boundaries of race, citizenship, and sexuality to demonstrate that second-generation Maya organizing positions itself as intersectional and social justice oriented. These first three chapters also establish the importance not just of biological families but of inter-

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generational relationships within the community. These intergenerational relationships are where the communal is deeply engaged and where these material products take on additional meaning.

Chapter 4 considers how the youth photography project Maya Womxn in L.A. takes up themes of transnational racism, intergenerational dialogue, and the flexible nature of new and old forms of cultural practice. By analyzing interviews with youth participants as well as the exhibit itself, I examine how mobile archives of Indigeneity can use traditionally problematic mediums (like photography) in ways that anchor and expand how we think about consent, reciprocity, and relationality, and actually engage youth and young adults in the formation of mobile archives. Photography has historically been used as a technology of settler colonialism because through its use in the archival process photographs fix Indigenous people as static vestiges of the past. Chapter 4 instead reconsiders how this medium can be used to create archives that can be mobile and even respond to issues of language and literacy as they visually demarcate the wide range of what it means to be a woman in the Maya diaspora.

The conclusion reiterates the primary claims of the book but also meditates on the need for more work on Maya diasporas that attempts to encompass the complexity of our community on our own terms. The works that outsiders have written about the Maya diaspora are useful, but I emphasize the increasing need to engage Latinidad and Indigeneity as categories of power that take on distinct articulations based on the spaces they inhabit.

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Notes

Introduction

1 For a detailed account of the initial complaint, the trials and prosecutions, and the appeals that followed, see Dill, "International Human Rights and Local Justice." In addition, note that it was members of the civilian patrol who were prosecuted. While established and overseen by the military, the patrol was not considered an official part of the military. As a result, the successful prosecution of these officials still safeguarded military personnel.

2 I use the term *testimony* because the play uses Tecú Osorio's court testimony. However, Tecú Osorio's book and public appearances rely on his *testimonio*. A testimonio differs from testimony in that it does not rely on normative understandings of truth and instead centers the stories of marginalized people as legitimate counterstories to disciplining discourses. See Beverly, "Margin at the Center"; Montejo, *Testimony*.

3 In the context of Central American state violence, war, and massive displacement, cultural production takes on a sharp political edge that, according to Karina Alvarado (now Karina Alma), "is not the passing down of a historical artifact or past but the process through which people dialogue, engage, and transform these from their current and present locations." Alvarado, "Cultural Memory and Making," 490.

4 For more on survivance in Native Studies, see Vizenor, *Manifest Manners.*

5 Ester Hernández states, "Within Los Angeles public space, Central American identity symbols provide mnemonic cues to individual, collective, and intergenerational pasts of Angeleno/Salvadoran/Central American social justice struggles." In the context of ongoing silence and erasure, we cannot assume that there is a consensus regarding what stories should be told and how. Instead, Hernández draws our attention to specific sites that Central Americans have created and the multitude of perspectives that emerge as they create venues to engage history, including the histories of state repression. Hernández, "Remembering Through Cultural Interventions," 144.

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6 De León, *Land of Open Graves*; Vogt, *Lives in Transit*.

7 Estrada, "Reclaiming Public Space."

8 Featherstone, "Archive."

9 Cotera, "Unpacking Our Mothers' Libraries," 305.

10 Hartman, *Lose Your Mother*.

11 Adams-Campbell et al., "Introduction," 110.

12 Adams-Campbell et al., "Introduction," 111.

13 Taylor, *Archive and the Repertoire*; Alma, *Counterpoetics*.

14 Hall, "Cultural Identity," 394.

15 Schweizer's "Counter-Archive" discusses how we can think about counter-archives, migrant archives, postcolonial archival theory, and dissemination alongside the new possibilities of open archives. Among important interventions against traditional and normative archives are Kelly Lytle Hernández's *City of Inmates*; Genevieve Carpio's "Tales from the Rebel Archive," and Alana de Hinojosa's "El Rio Grande as Unruly Archive."

16 Appadurai, "Archive and Aspiration," 16.

17 Lazo, "Migrant Archives"; Magaña, "Multimodal Archives of Transborder Belonging," 707; Appadurai, "Archive and Aspiration," 20.

18 Bradley, "Seductions of the Archive," 108.

19 Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 10.

20 Menjívar and Rodríguez, *When States Kill*.

21 Indigenous geography is complex, and I use the term *Native* primarily in relation to nations that exist within the territories of Turtle Island currently occupied by the United States. I use *Indigenous* as a pantribal term, especially in reference to nations located in territories occupied by the countries of Latin America.

22 Shannon Speed points to Daiva Stasiulis and Nira Yuval-Davis's earlier articulation of settler societies, which was then popularized by Patrick Wolfe. Since these earlier writings, settler colonialism has also been utilized in conceptualizing sexuality, gender and feminism, environmental studies, migration, and the occupation of Palestine. See Speed, "Structures of Settler Capitalism in Abya Yala"; Stasiulis and Davis, *Unsettling Settler Societies*; Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism*.

23 Commission for Historical Clarification, *Guatemala*.

24 Menjívar and Rodríguez's *When States Kill* is an excellent anthology that demonstrates the interrelated projects of state violence that continually link the United States with economic and political elites in Latin American countries.

25 Speed, "Structures of Settler Capitalism in Abya Yala," 786.

26 Batz, "Ixil University." Mega projects are typically funded by entities like the International Monetary Fund or foreign corporations (such as mining companies). These have been the site of social conflicts related to land disputes because they dispossess Indigenous people, and when Indigenous communities resist, they are deemed terrorists, criminals, and

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enemies. For more information on key sites of contemporary struggle in Guatemala, see Rasch, "Transformations in Citizenship"; Grandia, "Road Mapping."

27 Castro and Picq, "Stateness as Landgrab."

28 Jennifer Cárcamo's documentary *Eternos Indocumentados* features Irma Alicia Velásquez Nimatuj giving a presentation in which she utilizes a map that overlays the sites of massacres and sites of social conflict. See also Batz, "Ixil University."

29 Global Witness, "Enemies of the State Report."

30 For more information on these issues, I strongly recommend the news outlet of Prensa Comunitaria, as well as North American Congress in Latin America reports written by Giovanni Batz.

31 Hunt, "Violence, Law and the Everyday Politics of Recognition"; Speed, *Incarcerated Stories*.

32 Hale, "Rethinking Indigenous Politics."

33 Jason de León has noted that human smugglers have increased their charges in parallel with the increased danger of crossing the border since the United States implemented Operation Gatekeeper and prevention through deterrence. In addition, Lauren Heidbrink looks at the impact of debt on migrants and their families in their homelands, as well as the ways debt is (un)regulated in Guatemala. See de León, *Land of Open Graves*; Heidbrink, "Coercive Power of Debt."

34 There has been ongoing discussion on the relationship between social death and genocide. In this book, I use social death to mark the consequences of state violence beyond the destruction of bodies or villages. The genocide Mayas experienced in the 1980s fits the criteria set by the United Nations to be classified as genocide. What I lay out in this chapter, however, is also a concern for the enduring consequences that make Maya social reproduction difficult. This includes the murder of large swaths of elders, children, organizers, and healers. It also includes children who are orphaned or are born outside of their ancestral territory as a result of the violence of the genocide. The concept of social death was developed by Orlando Patterson in relation to the experience of Black enslavement; however, this framework can also help us analyze the situation of bodies that survive but have to remake themselves into communities while living in dehumanizing conditions. For more, see Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*; Card, "Genocide and Social Death."

35 Montejo, *Maya Intellectual Renaissance*. It is important to distinguish between the terms *Ladina/o* and *Latina/o*. *Ladina/o* is a term used for Guatemalans who do not identify as Indigenous and instead highlight their European ancestry. For an excellent analysis of contemporary Ladina/o identity, I recommend Charles Hale's *Más Que Un Indio*.

36 Hernández Castillo, "Indigeneity as a Field of Power," 379.

37 Little, *Mayas in the Marketplace*.

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38 The work of Gladys Tzul Tzul is also an in-depth examination of how Indigeneity functions through communal organization in the community of Chuimeq'ena' (Totonicapán). These critiques about the limitations of a larger umbrella term *Maya*, alongside the importance of specific Indigenous governance models, are critical in the context of Guatemala, and my hope is that they will also shape diasporic conversations and formations. See Xón Riquiac, *Entre*; Tzul Tzul, *Sistemas de Gobierno*.

39 Esquit, "Nationalist Contradictions"; Cojtí Cuxil, "Politics of Mayan Revindication"; Raxche', "Maya Culture."

40 Herrera, "Racialized Illegality."

41 Estrada has estimated that half of Guatemalan migrants are Maya based on personal communications with both the Guatemalan embassy and grassroots organizations. See Estrada, "Ka Tzij" and "Ixoq tzi'j." In *Migranthood*, Heidbrink also notes that according to the Guatemalan government, 95 percent of minors ages birth to seventeen who are deported are Indigenous.

42 On language, see Peñalosa, "Trilingualism in the Barrio." On migration after state violence, see Foxen, *In Search of Providence*; Hagan, *Deciding to Be Legal*; Wellmeier, "Rituals of Resettlement." On economic and cultural practices in Los Angeles, see Popkin, "Guatemalan Mayan Migration to Los Angeles" and "Emergence of Pan-Mayan Ethnicity." Finally, on undocumented migrants, see Camayd-Freixas, "Interpreting After the Largest ICE Raid in US History"; Reynolds, "(Be)laboring Childhoods."

43 Loucky and Moors, *Mayan Diaspora*.

44 For critical reflections on these contradictions, see Batz, "Maya Cultural Resistance in Los Angeles"; López and Irrizary, "Somos pero no somos iguales"; Lopez, "CRT and Immigration." Other works have described the experiences of Mayas through a sociological lens; see, for example, O'Connor and Canizales, "Thresholds of Liminality"; Canizales, "American Individualism."

45 Barillas Chón, "K'iche', Mam, and Nahua Migrant Youth."

46 Estrada, "Ka Tzij," 213; Batz, "Maya Cultural Resistance in Los Angeles," 195.

47 LeBaron, "When Latinos Are Not Latinos"; Hiller et al., "I Am Maya."

48 Alberto, "Nations, Nationalisms, and Indígenas"; Chacón, "Metamestizaje."

49 Lytle Hernández, *City of Inmates*; Carpio, *Collisions at the Crossroads*.

50 Sepulveda, "Our Sacred Waters"; Lytle Hernández, *City of Inmates*.

51 Calderon, "Speaking Back to Manifest Destinies"; Rifkin, "Settler Common Sense."

52 International Mayan League, "Indigenous Peoples' Rights to Exist."

53 On Indigenous survivance, see Vizenor, *Manifest Manners*.

54 Turner, *This Is Not a Peace Pipe*.

55 Velásquez Nimatuj, "Memory/Memoir."

56 Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony*, 14.

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57 Cadena, *Indigenous Mestizos*.

58 See Stoll, *Rigoberta Menchú*; Menchú, *I, Rigoberta Menchú*; Arias, "Rigoberta Menchú's History"; Nance, *Can Literature Promote Justice?*

59 Scholar-activist literature in anthropology has broadly challenged notions of objectivity, especially with respect to research about marginalized communities that face a disproportionate degree of violence and discrimination. These interventions recognize that knowledge production is fundamentally political. Mariana Mora's work on Kuxlejal politics with Zapatista communities recognizes that, when these communities set boundaries and procedures for research, they are acknowledging that dialogue, autonomy, and knowledge production are intertwined in such a fashion that all three take place at once during interviews with elders. In addition, Aída Hernández Castillo has critically acknowledged that her own work on the violence Indigenous women have faced under the rubric of "traditional" law was used by Mexican conservatives to argue that Indigenous communities should not have autonomy because they would violate the rights of women within the community. Hernández Castillo documents this as part of her conversation about thinking through the consequences of our research. Scholars like Aída Hernández Castillo, Shannon Speed, Mariana Mora, and Charles Hale have all advanced a critical conversation around research with Indigenous people caught in complex and ultimately repressive relationships with settler nations. See Hernández Castillo, "Indigeneity as a Field of Power"; Hale, "Rethinking Indigenous Politics"; Heidbrink, *Migranthood*; Mora, *Kuxlejal Politics*; Speed, *Incarcerated Stories*.

60 Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor."

61 Simpson, "On Ethnographic Refusal," 78; emphasis in the original.

62 Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*.

63 Arista, "Navigating Uncharted Oceans of Meaning."

64 Chacón, *Indigenous Cosmolectics*, 12.

65 In "Familia and Comunidad-Based Saberes," Luis Urrieta lays out how forms of teaching and learning within Indigenous heritage communities in Mexico are part of everyday life, involve various generations including small children, and create a social world that anchors children and youth to extended kinship networks and community.

66 Mixed methodology is typically defined as a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods. Multimethod is a more accurate description of the approach I use in the book because I mix qualitative sociological methods with those of cultural studies and humanities. Rather than focus on one strictly defined method, I approach each set of oral histories and cultural objects to glean what they can say that has not already been said about the Maya diaspora. I analyze the cultural objects, the interviews, and their relationships to each other through an inductive method, and in each chapter I include a method section to more directly state how I

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developed the methodology for that study. For more on multimethodology, see Brewer and Hunter, *Foundations of Multimethod Research*.

67 Batz, *Fourth Invasion*.

68 Gray and Gómez-Barris, *Toward a Sociology of the Trace*, viii.

Chapter One. Contesting the Logics of Displacement in the Production of the Indigenous Migrant

1 The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption sets out parameters regarding international adoption that seek to curb child trafficking by ensuring that biological parents give consent to the adoption. While the United States signed the convention in 1994, implementation did not occur until April 2008. Articles of the convention can be found at the HCCH (Hague Conference on Private International Law) website, "Convention of 29 May 1993 on Protection of Children and Co-Operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption": https://www.hcch.net/en/instruments/conventions/full-text/?cid=69.

2 Posocco, "On the Queer Necropolitics."

3 Rotabi et al., "International Child Adoption."

4 Rotabi and Bromfield, *From Intercountry Adoption to Global Surrogacy*, 66.

5 From this point forward I will use "Denese/Dominga" to refer to the protagonist of the documentary. Rather than privilege either "the American Denese" or "the Guatemalan Dominga," as she states in the film, I will use both to emphasize the reality of multiplicity and give space to the possibility that the two can remain distinct and yet connected as part of her experience. In her critique of how Chicana/o nationalism attempts to create resistance narratives through the practice of naming, Nicole Marie Guidotti-Hernández uses this strategy of double naming the historical figure of Josefa/Juanita because "by calling attention to all of Josefa/Juanita's names, we defy the practice of making her nameless and problematize the question of truth in historical scholarship" (Guidotti-Hernández, *Unspeakable Violence*, 43). Use of the name Denese/Dominga challenges the assumption that either name is her "real" name, because both names are inextricably tied to the macro processes and personal experiences that are part of her story.

6 In *Beyond Terror*, Elizabeth Swanson Goldberg argues that human rights films emerge in a post–World War II context to document extreme forms of political violence in order to direct international pressure toward stopping these forms of brutality. However, human rights films also make use of the documentary form, which Trinh T. Minh-Ha critiques as uniquely producing "a whole aesthetic of objectivity" grounded in "the power of the film to capture reality 'out there' for us 'in here.' The moment of ap-

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