

Latino Studies, Latino/a/X futures: Provocations toward a prospectus

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Abstract

Is there a future for Latino/a/X Studies? This question – alternately anxious or ambitious – seems to have been haunting the field for many years. If it can be affirmed with reasonable confidence that the answer to this question is yes, the relative assuredness of the future of Latino Studies as an institutionalized area of academic inquiry may nonetheless be a sign of our domestication. After all, Latino/a/X Studies is a field that has emerged as the site of a potentially subversive and inherently insurgent form of knowledge. This field was always intrinsically an intrusion into the hegemonic and disciplinary organization of knowledge within the university. The more that our collective yet diverse critical project has been assigned its “proper” place, albeit still a diminutive one, within the university, the more that its critical purchase is necessarily at risk of being rendered safe for the dominant epistemic and political projects that govern higher education and its reproduction. Therefore, it seems judicious and productive to posit the question of the future of Latino/a/X Studies as a problem. Scholarship in our field has always been most compelling and relevant when it can illuminate something about the historically specific relationalities that situate Latino/a/Xs at the veritable center of larger processes of social and political formation and transformation, rather than retreating into culturalist insularity and parochialism. Arguably, this has never been so evident as in our present moment of danger during the Trump presidency.

Keywords

the future of Latino Studies, Latino/a/X, political mobilization and representation, migrant “illegality” and deportability, gentrification, labor, “zero tolerance” policy, family separation

Is there a future for Latino/a/X Studies? This question—alternately anxious or ambitious—seems to have been haunting the field for many years. In any event, I believe that I can affirm with reasonable confidence that the answer to this question is yes. But that may be the bad news. It is not a bad thing that our intellectual field has a future, of course, but

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rather that its future seems to be so secure. Without meaning to be deliberately mischievous, I want to declare at the outset that the relative assuredness of the future of Latino Studies as an institutionalized area of academic inquiry is a sign of our domestication. After all, Latino/a/X Studies is a field that has emerged—not merely once upon a time but in fact, repeatedly, multiple times—as the site of a potentially subversive and inherently insurgent form of knowledge posited from the intrinsically plural and contradictory (and therefore *living* and dynamic) standpoints of heterogeneous LatinX experiences and perspectives. Beginning with its first iterations in Mexican American/Chicano and Puerto Rican Studies, and ever since, including of course so many of the critical interventions to revise what we ought to understand to be the subject of our scholarly work, this field was always intrinsically an *intrusion* into the hegemonic and disciplinary organization of knowledge within the university. The more that our collective yet diverse critical project has been assigned its “proper” place, albeit still a diminutive one, within the university, the more that its critical purchase is necessarily at risk of being dulled and rendered safe for the dominant epistemic and political projects that govern higher education and its reproduction.

Therefore, it seems judicious and productive to begin by positing the question of the future of Latino/a/X Studies as a *problem*. Against the threat of its domestication, Latino/a Studies at its best, as I have argued for scholarship in all Ethnic Studies fields, can provide a genuinely counter-“American” studies framework whereby an unrelenting interrogation of White supremacy and the specifically colonial dimensions of US national formation supply the only viable avenue by which to meaningfully apprehend the United States as such (De Genova, 2007: 260; cf. De Genova, 2006). This means that we need to cherish and cultivate our role as veritable intruders in the otherwise genteel precincts of academic discourse. Similarly, following Walter Benjamin’s contention that we are challenged to resist an overpowering conformism that threatens to engulf our work, I have written elsewhere about the necessity for practitioners of Latino/a Studies to apprehend our present always as a “moment of danger” that unsettles our encrusted and brittle presumptions about identity, in favor of an appreciation of the potential subversive force that arises from the dynamic irresolution and sheer vitality of the social struggles through which various (Latino/a/X) identities coalesce (De Genova, 2010c). In a still more programmatic attempt to address this problem of the future of Latino/a Studies, I have argued:

If Latino Studies has a future at all ... it ... cannot be a quaint exercise in proverbial butterfly collecting, cataloguing the peculiarities of Latinos and verifying their putative “difference”; rather, Latino Studies must become a crucial and indispensable tool for the critical dissection and examination of the United States as a whole – its racialized political economy, its racialized social order, its nationalism and nativism, its security state, and its imperial chauvinism. Latinos have been, and will continue to be, centrally implicated in all of these manifestations and ramifications of U.S. power, both “domestically” (within the space of the U.S. nation-state), throughout the Americas, and on a global scale. Latino Studies is thus challenged to be robust and capacious enough – intellectually, theoretically, and methodologically – to live up to this urgent and vital task. (De Genova, 2010a; cf. De Genova, 2005: 13–55, 2017c: 34)

In short, work in our field has always been most compelling and relevant when it can illuminate something about the historically specific relationalities that situate Latino/a/Xs at the center of larger processes of social and political formation and transformation, rather than retreating into culturalist insularity and parochialism.

Beyond these repeated past gestures on my part toward de-provincializing Latino Studies, therefore, recognizing the veritable centrality of Latino/a/Xs for any critical inquiry into the United States as such, today more than ever, in our present moment of danger, commands a more audacious programmatic vision for the field. The topical and thematic concerns of Latino Studies have quite literally been catapulted into centerstage in US politics. After all, a baldly anti-Mexican/anti-Latino racism and the ludicrous proposition that the US–Mexico border be physically barricaded with a 2000-mile wall supplied a defining centerpiece of Donald Trump’s electoral campaign for the US presidency. More recently, under direct orders from the Trump Administration through then-Attorney General Jeff Sessions’ notorious “zero tolerance” memorandum (6 April 2018), Central American migrant/refugee families have found themselves targeted at the spectacular center of the repugnant atrocity of state-sponsored kidnapping and child abuse perpetrated by the US Border Patrol, and perpetuated across the country by the US Department of Health and Human Services’ superintendence of the children’s secretive internment following their abduction from their parents. Through this perverse mass-mediated spectacle of the caging, encampment, and veritable torture of Latino/a infants, toddlers, and other children and their protracted, indefinite abduction from their migrant/refugee parents, the Trump regime—notorious for its wild governmental recklessness, unprecedented incompetence, flagrant corruption, and authoritarian disdain for the rule of law—has deliberately secured for itself an infamy of historic proportions, haunted by analogies with African/American slavery, Native American coercive “assimilation,” Japanese/American internment, and the Nazi Holocaust.

Indeed, over recent years, the autonomous subjective force of human mobilities from Central America has introduced radical alterations in the US context into the very meaning of asylum and thereby, of asylum-seeking (Coutin, 1993, 2000, 2007, 2011; Mountz et al., 2002; cf. De Genova et al., 2018; Thomaz, 2017). Recall that the “zero tolerance” dictat was issued following Trump’s fury, precisely in reaction to news media reports of a caravan of migrants and refugees (mainly Honduran and other Central American women, children, unaccompanied minors, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons)—organized annually in the run-up to Easter Sunday by the transnational migrant solidarity organization Pueblo Sin Fronteras to evoke the Viacrucis (“Way of the Cross”) associated with the biblical narrative of the passion of Jesus—as a model of collective, organized migrant/refugee self-protection against the predations of the migrant journey as well as an affirmative protest mobilization against unjust border and immigration policies. Indeed, the arrival of the caravan at the US–Mexico border between Tijuana and San Ysidro culminated in the migrants and refugees triumphantly scaling and perching atop the border fence in a joyous celebration of what, at least at that moment, appeared to be the success of their journey and their defiance and subversion of the barricaded border. Thus, what provoked Trump’s vitriolic reaction was precisely the sort of diminutive, but nonetheless, audacious refugee self-assertion and self-organization that Glenda Garelli, Martina Tazzioli, and I have designated as the “autonomy of asylum” (De Genova et al., 2018).

Central Americans have sought refuge from the full spectrum of remarkably heterogeneous but interconnected formations of state and societal violence and impunity—from the entrenched violence of US client regimes in the long post-Cold War aftermath of civil wars and counterinsurgency campaigns (cf. Bourgois, 2001; McAllister and

Nelson, 2013; Nelson, 1999, 2009; Sanford, 2003; Zilberg, 2007; 2011; cf. Grandin, 2004), notably including the prolonged and ongoing repression ensuing from the military coup in Honduras in 2009 (Gordon and Webber, 2013), to the predatory violence of street gangs that proliferated and diversified in El Salvador and other Central American countries following the aggravated escalation in the deportation of Latino youth raised in the United States as alleged “criminal aliens” following the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996 (Coutin, 2010; Golash-Boza, 2012, 2014, 2015; Zilberg, 2004, 2007, 2011), to the general impunity surrounding gender-based and sexual violence that has culminated in a prolonged escalation of feminicides, particularly in post-genocide Guatemala (Carey and Torres, 2010; Cházaro and Casey, 2010 [2006]; Menjivar, 2011; Morales Trujillo, 2010; Reimann, 2009; Sanford, 2008; cf. Fregoso and Bejarano, 2010; Wright, 2011)—as well as the more amorphous affiliated formations of violence that accrue to the status of some of these countries as the reputed “murder capitals of the world” (Swanson and Torres, 2016; Terrio, 2015a).¹ Likewise, alongside these new formations of asylum-seeking, there has also been the flight of so-called climate refugees whose lives and livelihoods were devastated by Hurricane Mitch in 1998 (particularly in Honduras) and Hurricane Stan in 2005 (particularly in Guatemala). Given the Central American countries’ deep and entrenched political, military, and economic relations of subordination to and dependency upon the United States since the nineteenth century (Grandin, 2004, 2006), these migrant and refugee mobilities epitomize what Juan González (2000) has aptly characterized as the “harvest of empire.”

As the grotesque spectacle of punitive family separations by US border authorities abundantly verifies, however, the violence and persecution that shape and propel these particular migrant/refugee mobilities are not confined to their countries of origin, and may ultimately be most egregious precisely in their encounters with migratory transit and border crossing (Brigden, 2012; Brigden and Mainwaring, 2016; Swanson and Torres, 2016; Vogt, 2013), as well as the “legal violence” (Menjívar and Abrego, 2012) of interdiction, detention, and deportation in the United States (Terrio, 2015a, 2015b). Thus, the prominence of Central American migrations and refugee movements has significantly transformed how we must apprehend the dynamics of the US–Mexico border. The US southern perimeter has become an expansive border zone that literally extends into South America (Álvarez Velasco, 2015; Álvarez Velasco and Guillot, 2012), incorporating Latin American states as outsourced junior partners in the policing of an externalized detention and deportation dragnet (see. e.g. Castillo Garcia, 2003; Feldman and Olea, 2005; Flynn, 2002; Klein, 2003; Walker, 2018; cf. Andreas and Biersteker, 2003).² While the presumptive focus of Latino/a Studies has often been conventionally subsumed within effectively US nationalist narratives of “immigrant” or “ethnic” assimilationism or other expressions of US-centric insularity, such examples remind us that the true radicality and dynamism of our field has always derived, at least in part, from its capacity to confound any simplistic binary spatial oppositions between the United States and Latin America, in a manner that not only has profound implications for how we reconceptualize the United States in relation to the Americas but also for how we understand Latin America as such (De Genova, 2017b; cf. De Genova, 1998, 2005: 95–146).

Beyond the Trump administration’s deliberate, cynical, and malicious instigation of this humanitarian crisis³ at the border, the militarization of the US–Mexico border, more

generally, has systematically produced and intensified the conditions of possibility for a persistent escalation in border-crossing deaths. Indeed, for more than two decades, the US border regime has actively converted the most rugged terrain of the border zone, particularly the Sonora Desert, into a veritable mass grave (De León, 2015; Dunn, 1996, 2009; La Coalición de Derechos Humanos and No More Deaths, 2016; Martínez, 2001; Nevins, 2010 (2002), 2008; Ramirez, 2017; Regan, 2010; Rosas, 2006; Stephen, 2008; Sundberg, 2011; Urrea, 2004). Between October 2000 and September 2016, the Border Patrol documented 6023 deaths in Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas (Fernandez, 2017). In other words, on average, at least one person died crossing the US–Mexico border, every day, year after year. Intensified and increasingly militarized enforcement at border crossings of easiest passage relegates illegalized migrant and refugee mobilities into zones of more severe hardship and potentially lethal passage. Remarkably, US border enforcement authorities were quite deliberate and explicit about this strategy. In a notorious 1994 “Strategic Plan,” the Border Patrol wrote: “The prediction is that with traditional entry and smuggling routes disrupted, illegal traffic will be deterred, or forced over more hostile terrain, less suited for crossing ...” (US Border Patrol, 1994: 7). Thus, we see not only the outright violence of border policing and the extra-state paramilitary “hunting” of migrants at the border, but also an insidious kind of “killing at a distance,” in which the desert landscape itself has been converted into a geography that is made to kill (Heller and Pezzani, 2017)—a “killing desert” (Rosas, 2006, 2012). Nonetheless, the systematic production of mass death for predominantly Latino/a/X border crossers through the unrelenting militarization and physical reinforcement of the US–Mexico border over decades is a decisive feature of a larger production of illegalized Latino/a/X migrants’ lives as disposable in a manner that is overwhelmingly not devoted to their eradication and mass death but rather to their subordination as deportable labor (De Genova, 2002, 2005: 213–249; Golash-Boza, 2012, 2015).

The centrality of migrant labor has long been a pivotal focus of Latino/a Studies. What has been perhaps insufficiently foregrounded is that the extraordinary exploitation of Latino/a/X labor has also been accompanied by an extraordinary capacity for militancy and insurgency, and more generally, has supplied the premier impetus for an enduring renewal of organized labor movements in the United States. Particularly since the 1980s and 1990s, movements of predominantly migrant (and commonly undocumented and Latino/a) workers—such as the 18-month Watsonville strike of 1985–1987 by an overwhelmingly Latina workforce in California’s cannery and frozen food processing and packing industry (Bardacke, 1988), the Drywall Worker’s strike of 1992 that generalized across the full extent of southern California (De Paz, 1993), and the Justice for Janitors campaign of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) which has become a nationwide and decades-long struggle (Erickson et al., 2002)—spearheaded a reinvigoration of the organized labor movement in the United States and campaigns for a “living wage,” more generally (Bacon, 2004: 251–84; Delgado, 1993; Figueroa, 1996; Milkman, 2002; Ruiz Cameron, 1999). Indeed, beyond the narrow purview of labor alone, predominantly undocumented Latina migrant workers were arguably the veritable pioneers of the #MeToo movement. After nearly two decades of determined organizing with consumers across the country, the predominantly migrant women and men of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW, 2018) launched the Fair Food Program in 2011, and within a few years, virtually put an end to sexual assault and other abuses in the Florida

tomato industry. Similarly, beginning in 2016, the *¡Ya Basta!* campaign of the Justice for Janitors struggle exposed how gender and sexuality serve as vicious multipliers of the vulnerability to exploitation and abuse that are the systematic result of illegalized migrants' precarity and deportability (Yeung, 2018; cf. Cranford, 2004; Gutiérrez de Soldatenko, 2005). Especially following the utterly unprecedented mass mobilizations of predominantly Latino/a/X migrants and their children across the United States in 2006 (De Genova, 2009, 2010b), moreover, an intractable politicization of migrant "illegality" and deportability have instigated a veritable stalemate in US immigration politics (De Genova, 2017b).

During the past decade, furthermore, we have seen the bold and courageous political movement of undocumented youth, widely known as "DREAMers,"²⁴ who have generally been raised and educated in the United States after having been brought to the country as children by their migrant parents. The audacity of the DREAMers has derived from their increasingly militant preparedness to "come out" as "undocumented, unafraid, and unapologetic" (Negrón-Gonzales, 2015), enacting what I have elsewhere celebrated as a queer politics of migration, an anti-assimilationist and counter-normative politics of incorrigibility (De Genova, 2010b). Nonetheless, as is well known, many DREAMers were induced for a time to voluntarily expose themselves to state surveillance and subject themselves to extraordinary scrutiny and penalties by immigration authorities in exchange for a temporary—and pronouncedly retractable—deferral of their susceptibility to deportation and a provisional eligibility for work authorization under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which was initiated in 2012 (under Barack Obama). The cruel truth—that this deferral of deportation merely revised the terms and conditions of DREAMers' deportability—was fully exposed only thereafter, in 2017 (under Trump), when this putative "protection" was callously thrown into jeopardy. Indeed, controversy over the fate of DACA was cynically manipulated by Trump to become the centerpiece of the federal budget stalemate and the resultant government shutdown that was instigated on 20 January 2018. Thus, the predominantly Latino/a/X undocumented youth movement summarily assumed a monumental significance with unforeseen political repercussions. We must recognize, therefore, the simultaneity of radical political openings arising from the struggle over the disposability (and specifically, the deportability) of Latino/a/X lives and the invidious potential of such selective exceptions for sorting and ranking the deportable according to divisive distinctions of greater or lesser "deservingness." "The act of ascribing legible, intelligible, and normative value," Lisa Marie Cacho (2012) notes incisively, "is inherently violent and relationally devaluing." (p. 149). In this respect, the greater nexus of controversy around DACA and "the" DREAMers must inevitably confront the task of challenging the deportability of *all* illegalized migrants and the urgency of obstructing and subverting the larger deportation regime.

Compromises and complicities with the hegemonic narratives of "American" assimilationism and the moral economy of "eligibility" for a "path to citizenship" work to ideologically interpellate and recuperate some DREAMers (namely, those who have been able to qualify for DACA—also known as the "DACA-mented") by repudiating and commonly criminalizing those undocumented youth and other undocumented migrants (including the DREAMers' parents, of course) who could not satisfy the program's stringent eligibility requirements. This pernicious bifurcation was amplified to the point of grotesque caricature in Trump's "State of the Union" address on 30 January 2018, in which he exploited tragic

stories of street violence in Latino communities in order to supplant the figure of the meritorious DREAMer with the spectacularized figure of “the savage gang MS-13” who, he alleged with characteristic contempt for the truth, “took advantage of glaring loopholes in our laws to enter the country as unaccompanied alien minors.” Invoking the lurid image of a deliberate and devious manipulation of US immigration law by criminals intent to infiltrate the United States, Trump insinuated that such migration was tantamount to home invasion, underscoring that such “deadly loopholes . . . have allowed MS-13, and other criminals, to break into our country.” Indeed, he later resorted to this same discourse as a justification for family separations and the detention of children at the border, insisting that his draconian border enforcement policies would serve to protect the country from an infestation of migrant criminals, particularly MS-13 gang members. (Thus, the ghoulish figure of “MS-13” as a generic racial signifier of Latino criminality in Trump’s discourse has been incisively likened to the notorious exploitation of Willie Horton, converted into the iconic racial figure of African American criminality during the 1988 presidential campaign of George H.W. Bush; see, for example, *The New York Times*, 2017.) In his State of the Union address, however, Trump emphatically juxtaposed the question of immigration (and implicitly, the prospect of regularization and naturalization for DREAMers) to US citizens’ purported “right to the American Dream,” and invoked his duty—“the sacred duty of every elected official in this chamber”—“to protect our citizens . . . to defend Americans Because Americans are dreamers too.” (Trump, 2018). If the ideological script that has legitimated “the DREAMers” has reinvigorated the classic xenophilic impulses of US nationalism (Honig, 1998, 2001; cf. De Genova, 2005: 56–94), therefore, that same discourse’s intransigent proclivity for disqualifying the predicaments of other illegalized migrants and their children from the hallowed status of “DREAMers,” and thereby repudiating *their* dreams and desires, has merely exposed the deeper contradictions that situate the undocumented—with Latino/a/Xs most prominent among them—at the veritable center of the contemporary immigration debate in the United States, as well as racialized disputes over “American” national identity.

The escalating US deportation dragnet over the past 20 years or so notoriously reached an utterly unprecedented visibility under Obama. During his two terms in office, Obama operated a ramped-up immigration enforcement machinery that formally deported (“removed”) more than 3 million migrants, and also informally deported more than 2 million more (overwhelmingly consisting of those migrants who were apprehended at the border and forcibly “returned,” without formal “removal” proceedings) (Migration Policy Institute (MPI), 2017). Consequently, Obama has been decried for presiding over radically more (formal) deportations than any other president in US history. Notably, these figures are artificially inflated because of a shift in policy under Obama. Thus, under Obama, immigration authorities came to count as formal deportations (“removals”), what had formerly been counted separately as the informal deportations of migrants who were apprehended at the US–Mexico border and coercively “returned” without formal deportation proceedings (also known as “voluntary departures”).⁵ This shift in border enforcement policy was itself significantly draconian, insofar as the Border Patrol began to routinely and comprehensively initiate formal deportation (“removal”) proceedings against unauthorized border crossers in order to facilitate the likelihood of their prospective prosecution for a criminal felony offense upon re-entry and re-arrest.

Nonetheless, the deportation machinery was eventually recalibrated under Obama to focus primarily and disproportionately on border crossers apprehended along the US–Mexico border, or to target interior enforcement more strictly against alleged “criminal aliens” (although only a very small minority had ever been convicted of any violent offense). In fact, fewer than one-fifth of those deportations involved convictions for serious criminal offenses, whereas roughly two-thirds of those deported as “criminal aliens” had been charged with only minor infractions (frequently nothing more significant than a traffic violation), or none whatsoever. In this manner, Obama boasted that his immigration enforcement strategy was “smarter,” more targeted, and selective, purportedly going after “criminals, gang bangers, people who are hurting the community,” as he claimed, “not after students, not after folks who are here just because they’re trying to figure out how to feed their families,” while nevertheless substantially broadening the scope of the detention and deportation dragnet (Thompson and Cohen, 2014). Congratulating himself for heightened immigration enforcement yet simultaneously dissimulating the fact of staggeringly unprecedented numbers of deportations during his presidency, Obama made the disingenuous proclamation that deporting millions is “not who we are”: “Mass deportation . . . would be contrary to our character.”⁶ Thus, on 20 November 2014, Obama announced executive action to expand DACA and institute a reprieve from the immediate threat of deportation for select categories of undocumented migrants (notably, amounting to fewer than two-fifths of the total estimated undocumented population, and contingent upon numerous eligibility restrictions and compliance with various penalties). While de-emphasizing indiscriminate immigration enforcement in the interior and proposing modest relief for some illegalized migrants already resident in the United States, Obama’s executive action upheld the criminalization of non-citizens who were commonly culpable of offenses that would otherwise be classed only as misdemeanors for citizens, and predictably promoted yet another expansion of policing at the US–Mexico border aimed at the interdiction of new “illegal” arrivals (by this time, inevitably including countless returning migrants who had been previously expelled by Obama’s prolonged campaign of deportations). As usual in US immigration lawmaking, even modest relief for select categories of deportable persons—most of whom were DREAMers (child arrivals who had not even migrated of their own volition)—was proposed with the seemingly obligatory legitimating justification that there would be a further expansion of the enforcement spectacle at the US–Mexico border. Meanwhile, more aggressive immigration enforcement likewise has dramatically expanded the extent and scope of immigrant detention, such that a more far-reaching encounter between Latino/a/X (and) migration studies with the renewed critical study of mass incarceration (particularly in African American studies) is overdue and long overdue (Lloyd et al., 2012; Macías-Rojas, 2016).

Subsequently, beginning in the very first week of his administration, Trump made spectacular efforts to stage his dedication to a shift back to more aggressive *interior* immigration enforcement by initiating an unapologetic retreat from any qualitative deportation priorities in favor of indiscriminate sweeping enforcement. In two executive orders issued on 25 January 2017, alongside performative calls for the construction of a “border wall” (White House Office of the Press Secretary, 2017a)—which, like a dramatic increase in the number of interior immigration enforcement agents, prescribed in the second executive order (White House Office of the Press Secretary, 2017b), remains a purely fanciful and bombastic gesture in the absence of funding appropriations from the US Congress—Trump

initiated the expanded use of fast-track deportation procedures and prioritized criminal prosecution for virtually anyone who could be charged with “illegal” entry, as well as an increase in the number of local jurisdictions deputized to enforce immigration law. Subsequent memoranda issued by Trump’s then-Secretary of Homeland Security, John Kelly, further clarified and emphatically reinforced the directive to revoke the existing (Obama administration) guidelines regarding deportation priorities in favor of belligerent and feckless enforcement (Human Rights Watch (HRW), 2017: 12).⁷

The ongoing unprecedented and aggravated deportation of undocumented youth raised in the United States to their migrant parents’ countries of origin—often places where these young people have no meaningful social ties despite their ostensible citizenship there—has been likened to a condition of coercive exile or banishment where life is effectively inviable, where they are confronted with new formations of stigmatization, hostility, marginalization, suspicion, criminalization, detention or imprisonment, police abuse and sometimes brutality, prolonged surveillance, destitution, and compounded precaritization (Brotherton and Barrios, 2011; Coutin, 2010; Golash-Boza, 2015; Golash-Boza and Ceciliano, 2017; Golash-Boza and Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2013; HRW, 2017; Zilberg, 2004 cf. De Genova, 2017a; Khosravi, 2017). Peter Nyers (2010 (2003)) has memorably characterized the abject reverse diaspora of deportees as a *deportspora* and Daniel Kanstroom (2012), specifically discussing the intensification of the US deportation regime, has similarly invoked the image of a “new American diaspora.” Notably, this means that an important new horizon for Latino Studies involves the predicaments of US Latino/a/Xs expelled by the deportation regime and redistributed across Latin America (Brotherton and Barrios, 2011; Coutin, 2010; Golash-Boza and Ceciliano, 2017; Golash-Boza and Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2013; O’Neill, 2015; Zilberg, 2004, 2007, 2011), and the question of the conceivable futures of Latino Studies is palpably reconfigured by the unforeseen futures and hitherto unfathomable futurities of an ever more heterogeneous and variegated spectrum of illegalized or criminalized Latino/a/Xs. Paradoxically, if Latino/a/X Studies has played a key role in the reconceptualization of “American” (US) Studies along hemispheric lines, it is now overdue for our own critical energies in Latino/a/X Studies to be similarly re-tooled.

A parallel and indispensable case in point regarding the co-constitution of the US nation-state, US imperial power, and Latin America, and likewise another decisive site for interrogating the punitive abjection of Latino/a/X lives, is the scandalous disregard and callous contempt of the Trump administration toward disaster relief in hurricane-ravaged Puerto Rico. Ever “foreign in a domestic sense” (Burnett and Marshall, 2001), Puerto Rico’s agony following Hurricane Maria exposed anew the violent contradictions of the island’s enduring colonial status as an open wound (Cabán, 2017; Thomas, 2017). In a manner that has been strikingly reminiscent of the racialized derision that accompanied accounts of African Americans in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the utter abandonment of Puerto Ricans is incomprehensible without a critical appreciation of racism’s systemic production of what Cacho (2012) identifies as “spaces of living death and populations ‘dead-to-others,’” characterized by an outright “ineligibility to personhood” (p. 7). Of course, as Adriana Garriga-López (2018) reminds us, there is an “other Puerto Rico becoming-free at the razor’s edge of neoliberal precarity” where the island’s inhabitants are persistently engaged in “the fluid, dynamic, paradoxical, and collective process of building and enacting solidarity amid this chaos.” In the wake of the disaster, the mass population movement of

Puerto Rican colonial citizens as climate refugees from the island to Florida (among other mainland destinations) notably reveals how the contradictions of Puerto Ricans' colonial condition may yet play a pivotal role in US national political life. Thus, it is increasingly implausible to pretend that one can truly understand anything about US politics without a deep appreciation of the particular insights generated by scholarship in Latino/a/X Studies, none of which is reducible to any banal matter of mere demographics.

The question of an expanded purview for Latino/a/X Studies that can encompass the full extent of Latin America begs other questions, moreover. For decades, Latin Americans have been steadily advancing and consolidating their presence in Canada, not only as migrants but also as refugees (Goldring and Landolt, 2014). Under the draconian immigration regime of the Trump administration, there can be little doubt that Latino/a/Xs will increasingly also seek refuge in Canada as they find themselves compelled to flee from the US deportation regime's mundane but ever more capricious and insidious reign of terror. Likewise, we need only contemplate the preference in Italian homes for undocumented South American migrant women as care workers for the elderly and infirm (Hepworth, 2015), or the complex intersections of domestic work and sex work for undocumented Latin American migrant women in London (Gutiérrez-Garza, 2018), or the prominence of Ecuadorian migrants in struggles against predatory mortgages and home foreclosures in post-crisis Spain (Suárez, 2014, 2017), to begin to appreciate how the Latino/a/X experience has become also a European affair. These unforeseen or revised racial formations of *Latinidad* invite us to extend our scholarly imaginations into Canada as well as Europe as new horizons for Latino/a/X Studies, and remind us that we must critically situate the experiences of Latino/a/Xs within a larger dialectic that has always articulated Latin America globally.

None of this should be taken to suggest that there is not vital work to do in more customary locales and contexts within the space of the United States, however. One particularly salient area where Latino/a/Xs have long found themselves literally caught in the agonistic proverbial middle ground between White and Black is in the racialized segregation of urban space. Latino working-class aspirations toward home-ownership as well as new formations of the Latino middle class increasingly manifest themselves in particularly contradictory ways when situated in the context of struggles over "the right to the city" (Lefebvre, 1968; cf. Harvey, 2012). The rampant gentrification of cities across the United States that is radically exacerbating the dispossession and displacement of longstanding Black and Latino poor and working-class communities indubitably continues to recapitulate well-worn scenarios in which middle-class Whites displace poorer racially marginalized communities, but gentrification has very notably also increasingly assumed the previously counterintuitive form of the Latino and African American poor and working poor losing urban space and housing to Latino/a/X and/or African American professionals (alongside their White counterparts, or alternately, as a pioneering vanguard of displacement, blazing the trail in advance of the White middle class waiting in the wings for the all-clear). Likewise, in such contexts of what are tantamount to serial displacements, we are increasingly witnessing impoverished (and often, hitherto segregated) African American neighborhoods confronted with the unprecedented arrival of working-class Latino/a/Xs who have been driven out of their neighborhoods by rising rents and skyrocketing property values. Simply put, the struggle for the city has assumed new forms that reflect new formations of class and race inequalities that command a renewal and refinement of our critical

sensibilities and analytical sensitivities. In any event, urban questions—particularly, eviction and displacement—have achieved a momentous significance for Latino/a/Xs as the classic thematics of barrio formation and urban marginalization have increasingly receded or been reconfigured as communal self-defense in the face of aggressive gentrification, speculative property development, and housing crises (see, e.g. Anderson and Sternberg, 2013; Mumm, 2017; Wilson et al., 2009).

As questions of Latino political mobilization and representation dangle in the precarious balance between the realities of urban displacement, endemic poverty, pervasive labor exploitation, and racial subjugation, on one side, and the treacherous seductions of “assimilation,” middle-class formation, and selective integration into the hegemonic sociopolitical order, on the other, the very noteworthy ascendancy and rising prominence in the United States of Latino/a political operatives, particularly on the conservative right, such as Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio, is another key area of concern. The opportunistic subservience of the aspiring “Hispanic” elite reminds us of the productivity of Latino racial intermediacy and ambiguity for the ongoing recomposition of Whiteness and the unresolved struggles over the renovation of the sociopolitical order of White supremacy. Of course, these matters are not confined to the upward social and political mobility of ascendant “Hispanic” elites. In this light, it is also instructive to recall the equivocation and confusion regarding questions of race that surrounded George Zimmerman, the acquitted vigilante murderer of (African American) Trayvon Martin. As the watershed event that launched the Black Lives Matter movement, it is of special salience that the (“half”-)“White” assailant in the case was likewise the (“half”-) Latino son of a Peruvian/migrant mother, and someone who, despite his Germanic surname, will undoubtedly have spent much of his life racialized as *not-White* and who, at least part of the time, is known to have self-identified as “Hispanic.”

As has been true literally from the very inception of the sociopolitical production of racial Whiteness in the Americas, Latino/a/Xs are presented with the Faustian bargain of paying what James Baldwin (1985) famously called the “price of the ticket,” for agonistic entry into the elusive orbit of privilege, prestige, and protection within the treacherous hierarchical order of White supremacy. The “price of the ticket”—for those who would eventually come to be racialized as White, as well as for so many others who could at least be partially insulated from the scourge of Blackness—has always been complicity with the hegemonic anti-Black racism that has been foundational for US national formation, whether that has meant actively joining the ranks of a lynch mob or merely integrating into the motley crew of those whose self-serving complacency supplies an indispensable bulwark for the continued fortification of that more mundane everyday regime of racist terror. Of course, once any social group or category begins paying the price of that ticket, the extortion never ends, because racial meanings are not fixed, once and for all time.

For Latino/a/Xs, such “entry” into some arguably greater proximity to Whiteness remains ever plagued by the equivocations that accompany the status of being classed as neither White nor Black (cf. De Genova, 2005: 167–209, 2006, 2008; De Genova and Ramos-Zayas, 2003)—and it is worth underscoring emphatically that this treacherous racial condition is even more vexed for those Latino/a/Xs who *do* tend to be routinely racialized as “White” or “Black.” Nevertheless, it is also crucial to begin to take greater stock of the political ramifications and potentialities that arise from the fact that many Latino/as are *also* African Americans (Menchaca, 2001; Milian, 2013 cf. Dzidzienyo and Oboler,

2005)—indeed, that much of the experience of Blackness in the Americas has always been a precisely Latin American affair, even if the dominant self-understanding of virtually all Latin American nationalisms has involved a self-deluding collusion with the silencing or dissimulation of that historical experience (Whitten and Torres, 1998). The indisputable racial crisis that convulses the contemporary United States has plainly been galvanized and articulated by the Black Lives Matter movement, particularly its profound confrontation with the abject disposability of Black life that continues to be an elemental and defining facet of US culture and the dominant sociopolitical order. Meanwhile, whether we contemplate how the callous and malfeasant mismanagement of Hurricane Maria converted a natural disaster into a sociopolitical catastrophe of mass death and illness, escalating mental illness and suicide, and protracted mass misery in Puerto Rico, or how the militarization of the US–Mexico border has systematically augmented the conditions of possibility for an unrelenting escalation in border-crossing deaths, or how Trump’s terroristic, even sadistic, “zero tolerance” policy of family separation at the US–Mexico border has gratuitously but systematically subjected migrants and their children to traumatizing abuse—the vexed question of whether *Brown* Lives Matter achieves an ever more urgent salience.

In conclusion, there is little room for doubt that Latino/a/X Studies has secured its future in US academic life, but the urgent concern remains whether that future will be a domesticated and parochial one or a future that sustains the insurgent momentum of Latino/a/X struggles within and against the global postcolonial sociopolitical order of White supremacy and capitalist dispossession, displacement, and labor subordination. It is this insurgent energy that has distinguished our past and galvanized our present as a distinct field of interdisciplinary critical inquiry, and it is likewise through the renewal of this critical role that Latino/a/X Studies promises to remain indispensable for any serious study of the United States and the larger hemispheric and global configuration of the Americas.

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Notes

1. Notably, another front in the struggle over asylum has played out precisely in the juridical arena: on 11 June 2018, former US Attorney General Jeff Sessions overruled and vacated a 2014 precedent known as the “Matter of A-R-C-G,” a legal precedent allowing for victims of domestic abuse and gang violence to qualify for asylum (see 27 I&N Dec. 316 (A.G. 2018; Interim Decision #3929; available at: <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/1070866/download>).
2. Peter Andreas (2003) tellingly notes that tendencies toward a “multilateral policy harmonization and a ‘pooling’ of sovereignty to build a formal North American security perimeter (a ‘fortress North America’) . . . would represent a Europeanization of border controls” (p. 15). For a discussion of border externalization in the European context, see “Externalization” in Casas-Cortes et al. (2015: 73–77); cf. De Genova (2017b). See also Brigden and Mainwaring (2016).
3. For a problematization of the notion of “humanitarian crisis” in the context of migration and refugee movements, see Tazzioli et al. (2016).
4. The moniker is derived from the abortive legislative bill, the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act, first introduced in the US Senate in 2001 (intentionally so named in order to be popularized as the DREAM Act). The original version of the bill was

first introduced in the US House of Representatives earlier in 2001 by Representative Luis Gutiérrez (Illinois), with another title: the Immigrant Children's Educational Advancement and Dropout Prevention Act.

5. The combined numbers of formal and informal deportations—"removals" and "returns"—were actually substantially *higher* under George W. Bush than under Barack Obama, and still higher under Bill Clinton than under George W. Bush or Obama (MPI, 2017).
6. Video of speech available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/21/us/obama-immigration-speech.html>.
7. Memorandum of John Kelly, US Department of Homeland Security Secretary, to Kevin McAleenan, US Customs and Border Protection Acting Commissioner, et al., "Implementing the President's Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements Policies," 20 February 2017, <https://www.dhs.gov/publication/implementing-presidents-border-security-and-immigration-enforcement-improvement-policies> (accessed 19 November 2017); Memorandum of John Kelly, US Department of Homeland Security Secretary, to Kevin McAleenan, US Customs and Border Protection Acting Commissioner, et al., "Enforcement of the Immigration Laws to Serve the National Interest," 20 February 2017, <https://www.dhs.gov/publication/enforcement-immigration-laws-serve-national-interest> (accessed 19 November 2017).

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