What Happens in Vegas Does *Not* Stay in Vegas

Youth Leadership in the Immigrant Rights Movement in Las Vegas, 2006

Anita Tijerina Revilla

Abstract: *Students calling themselves the Las Vegas Activist Crew shut down the city's famed Strip on May 1, 2006, with an immigrant rights protest that was one of the largest demonstrations in Nevada's history. This research analyzes the ways that students engage in activism to improve their own social conditions and those of their communities. The theoretical framework for the study is critical race theory and Latina/o critical theory in education, which examine the intersection of race with ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, language, immigration status, culture, and color. Data for this study were collected over five years, starting with the immigrant rights mobilization of 2006 and continuing to the present. A multitiered approach was used, including participatory action research, one-on-one interviews, and focus group interviews. This research reveals the importance of youth leadership and contests deficit thinking about Latina/o students. It supports the notion that advocacy for social transformation, which includes the immigrant rights movement, must be informed by a shared vision of social justice, one that calls for eliminating multiple forms of oppression—including, but not limited to, racism, classism, imperialism, patriarchy, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, citizenism, nativism, xenophobia, religious/spiritual discrimination, body discrimination, ageism, and colorism.*

In 2004, I moved to Las Vegas from Los Angeles to teach at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). Coming from LA, a city well known for its social movements, I worried about what I would study, because my primary research focus was on student activism. I knew little about Las Vegas and shared the same misconceptions as most tourists—that the most important part of Las Vegas is "the Strip," with its glittering casinos and resorts. Most people know about the lights and glitz of the city, but few know much about

the history or population of the working-class neighborhoods that sprawl far beyond the Strip.[1]

On my first visit to campus, I attended a lecture in which the speaker addressed Samuel Huntington's claim that "Hispanics" are a threat to the United States because of their refusal to assimilate. The speaker argued that Hispanics do assimilate, offering as proof the fact that they enlist in high numbers in the military and often intermarry with other groups. I presented a critique of his argument, saying that Chicana/os have resisted assimilation for centuries and have insisted on the right to maintain strong links to their cultural heritage while also demanding human dignity and respect for their contributions to US society. Afterward, a group of students associated with MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán) approached me and thanked me for my comment, indicating that I was the first person they had heard use the word *Chicano* in a campus forum.[2] *Hispanic*, the more commonly used word on many campuses, suggests to many critically conscious activist students an assimilative, noncritical labeling assigned by the government for the purpose of the US census.[3] I walked away from that talk wondering what it would be like to work on a campus where using the word *Chicano* was considered unusual.

What I learned was that behind the façade of Sin City, students and local community activists are creating a different kind of Las Vegas. Many people are blind to the experiences of "real" people in Vegas, their struggles to survive, and the ways in which they are thriving. This article seeks to document their experiences and offer a counterstory of Latina/os in Las Vegas. This story focuses on the 2006 immigrant rights movement in the city, which was predominantly led by local high school, community college, and university students and included student walkouts. It is based on my five-year participatory action research project to document the experiences

Anita Tijerina Revilla is an associate professor and director of the Department of Women's Studies at the University of Nevada Las Vegas. Her research focuses on student movements and social justice education, specifically in the areas of Chicana/Latina, immigrant, feminist, and queer rights activism. Her expertise is in the areas of joteria studies, Chicana/o education, Chicana and women of color feminism, and critical race/ethnic studies. She received her PhD from the UCLA Graduate School of Education in social sciences and comparative education with an emphasis in race and ethnic studies. Her most recent publications are a coedited book, *Marching Students: Chicana/o Activism in Education, 1968 to the Present* (University of Nevada Press, 2011) and an article in the *National Women's Studies Association Journal*, "Are All Raza Womyn Queer: An Exploration of Sexual Identities in a Chicana/Latina Student Organization" (2009). She is working on two new book manuscripts, "Raza Womyn Re-constructing Revolution: Building and Sustaining a Muxerista Consciousness" and "What Happens in Vegas, Does *Not* Stay in Vegas: Social Justice Activism in Las Vegas."

of Latina/o and Chicana/o students in Nevada and to conduct an in-depth analysis of student engagement in acts of transformational resistance against discrimination.

Critical Race Theory and Latina/o Critical Theory in Education

Critical race theory (CRT) originated in the field of law but has flourished in many fields of study, including education (Crenshaw et al. 1995; Taylor, Gillborn, and Ladson-Billings 2009). CRT was built on the foundation of previous scholarship related to race and ethnic studies across various fields, but primarily it was a response to critical legal scholarship that focused on class and economic justice struggles while often overlooking the centrality of race in areas of discrimination. Hence, while race and ethnic studies scholarship already existed within academia, legal scholars created a framework that delineated core tenets that were crucial specifically within the field of law (Matsuda et al. 1993). Latina/o critical theorists felt that early CRT work reasserted some limitations by focusing on a black-white paradigm (Perea 1997). Thus, Latina/o critical theory (LatCrit) work extended critical race studies by examining the issues specific to Latinas and Latinos and the intersectionality of race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, and language (Valdes 1997).

Eventually this resulted in a cross-race, cross-ethnic, intersectional approach to scholarship and activism that Frank Valdes (1997) calls "outsider jurisprudence" or "OutCrit," meaning that LatCrit scholarship and organizing focuses on multiple marginalized communities outside of mainstream academia. Valdes was a co-founder of the LatCrit movement and his work continues to push the field forward. He writes, "We regard academic activism as a form of rebellious knowledge production . . . [an] oppositional stance in favor of democratic knowledge production [that] helps set the stage for ongoing work 'that must itself reflect and occasionally even usher in the world we hope to create'" (2009, 134–35, 147). This world is in opposition to majoritarian/mainstream stories and perspectives offered by academics and pop culture alike. Valdes further outlines the guiding principles of LatCrit as "intergroup justice, antisubordination, anti-essentialism, multi-dimensionality, praxis/solidarity, community-building, critical/self-critical, ethical, transnational, interdisciplinary" (135). My work and the research discussed here are directly aligned with the principles and goals outlined by Valdes and

other LatCrit scholars. Thus, the counterstory of the Las Vegas Activist Crew is "rebellious knowledge production," co-constructed by the author and the agents of change (also known as research participants) whose voices are represented.

Education scholars utilized the CRT framework and tenets packaged by legal scholars to address the continued impact of racism in educational institutions. Tara Yosso and her colleagues write, "Our working definition of critical race theory in education is to develop a theoretical, conceptual, methodological, and pedagogical strategy that accounts for the role of race and racism in U.S. education and works toward the elimination of racism as part of a larger goal of eliminating other forms of subordination such as gender, class, and sexual orientation" (2001, 90). Daniel Solórzano and Dolores Delgado Bernal (2001), for example, theorize and document student acts of resistance to oppression within institutions of education as "transformational resistance." Transformational resistance is students' oppositional behavior based on a multidimensional critique of social oppression and a commitment (personal and/or collective) to social justice. While they describe three other kinds of student resistance, including self-defeating resistance, conformist resistance, and reactionary behavior, their research primarily examines students' transformative resistance. Solórzano and Delgado Bernal assert that a student who is engaged in this kind of resistance "holds some level of awareness and critique of her or his oppressive conditions and structures of domination and must be at least somewhat motivated by a sense of social justice. With a deeper level of understanding and a social justice orientation, transformational resistance offers the greatest possibility for social change" (2001, 319). Conformist resistance, on the other hand, is motivated by social justice but is not fully aware of social oppression and lacks a sophisticated multidimensional critique of oppression or discrimination. For example, we see this often among elected officials who have a sincere commitment to creating social change but who lack a full, expanded critique of racism, classism, sexism, homophobia, and other institutional barriers that systematically prevent people from successfully achieving transformational social change.

Furthermore, Alejandro Covarrubias and I have created a model that describes characteristics of activist organizations that are acting as "agencies of transformational resistance." We note that many organizations foster a commitment to transformative resistance by promoting a multidimensional consciousness, nurturing a commitment to social justice, providing and developing skills and services that enable participants to

engage in empowering changes, and creating and sustaining a community of inclusiveness (2003, 460).

Covarrubias's (2011) analysis of 2009 census data gives us an updated look at the Chicana/o educational pipeline that Yosso (2006) charted in an earlier work. It shows that overwhelming numbers of Chicana/o students are being "pushed out" of schools before they graduate.[4] While recognizing individual agency in students, critical race educators argue that society and schools are not providing the support and the high-quality educational experience that Chicana/o students need to succeed academically. According to US census data on Chicana/os, of every 100 elementary school students who begin the educational process, on average forty-four "drop out" or are pushed out of school. Twenty-seven enroll in college, but only ten graduate with a bachelor's degree, two with a professional or graduate degree, and less than one (0.2 percent) with a doctoral degree (Covarrubias 2011, 3).

Tara Yosso (2006) describes the multiple obstacles that Chicana/o students encounter as they travel through the academic pipeline. Examples include unequal funding for schools, racial segregation, overcrowded schools, poorly maintained facilities, undertrained and under-credentialed teachers, limited access to academic guidance counselors, minimal access to academically rigorous enrichment programs and courses, "tracking" of low-income students and students of color into remedial or vocational courses, lack of adequate bilingual and multicultural education, and inappropriate high-stakes assessments, to name a few. In addition to these areas of concern, my research examines the struggles against explicit manifestations of patriarchy, ageism, and homophobia—three areas that are generally overlooked in race-based and mainstream research. Yosso notes that the reasons why students "fail" in schools are most often explained by "majoritarian storytelling," which recounts "the experiences and perspectives of those with racial, [economic,] and social privilege" (2006, 9). She rejects the majoritarian story in favor of a counterstory that foregrounds "the experiences of racism" and other forms of discrimination and "resistance from the perspectives of those on society's margins" (2).

In another work, Yosso (2005) describes a model of "community cultural wealth" in opposition to Pierre Bourdieu's model of cultural capital. Bourdieu argues that children of the elite and higher economic classes not only inherit economic and social capital from their families; they also inherit cultural capital from them. He identifies cultural capital as the ability to participate in and consume "high" culture activities such as reading, theater, art, cinema, and museums. In this light, Bourdieu's argument can be viewed as deterministic

because he believes that students who do not possess the dominant culture have no possibility of succeeding in school. Essentially, his argument is that only students who possess the dominant culture can profit from schooling because they have developed a linguistic and cultural competence with the only culture that is accepted in schools. His theory lends itself to cultural deficit models that call for changing a student's culture in order to improve their educational experience (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977).

Yosso's model, by contrast, provides an approach that may be more useful for critical scholars and educators interested in identifying the assets of historically marginalized communities. Community cultural wealth can be used to resist the majoritarian narrative that insists on changing students and forcing them into Euro-centric assimilation models that reject their home/cultural identities and assets. According to Yosso:

> Community cultural wealth is an array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression. . . . CRT shifts the research lens away from a deficit view of Communities of Color as places full of cultural poverty or disadvantages, and instead focuses on and learns from these communities' cultural assets and wealth. (2005, 77, 82)

Community cultural wealth includes, among the accumulated assets and resources of students, at least six types of capital: aspirational, familial, social, linguistic, resistant, and navigational. In this essay I focus on three of these: aspirational, resistant, and navigational capital. Although the other forms of capital overlap and interlock with these three, the experiences of student activists help illustrate the critical need to foster and nurture aspirational, resistant, and navigational capital among students. This is crucial both for increasing student retention and for creating wider social change. While all six types of capital are important, these three in particular contest the majoritarian story told about youth involved in the immigrant rights movement. Many onlookers declared in 2006 that the student protesters were unruly, unfocused, and misguided. However, a closer examination illustrates the intensity with which students both pursued higher education and sought to defend immigrants' human rights.

Background: Latina/o Students in Las Vegas

The ethnic makeup of Nevada and Las Vegas has changed dramatically over the past ten years. According to data from the Pew Hispanic Center, by 2010 the total Latina/o population of Nevada was 716,501, or 27 percent of

the state's population.[5] By far the greatest share of this Latina/o population, about 78 percent, was of Mexican origin. Las Vegas had been one of the fastest growing cities in the nation for over a decade, and business owners in the service and construction industries heavily recruited low-wage immigrant labor to meet their needs. As a result, the Latina/o population of Clark County, which includes Las Vegas, surged. In the decade between 1990 and 2000, it increased by 264 percent, and between 2000 and 2007 there was another 69 percent increase.[6]

In 1980 the Hispanic student population in Clark County School District was only 5.3 percent, but by 2006 Latina/o students outnumbered white students (Planas 2006a), and today they account for almost half the student population. This change has posed new challenges for the district, according to administrators and educators. Most teachers in the district have no training or culturally relevant pedagogical approaches for working with these students. Thus, the population shift has contributed to a sharp increase in anti-immigrant sentiment on the part of local elected officials, administrators, and teachers. *Las Vegas Review-Journal* contributor Antonio Planas (2006a) wrote, "Asked whether the fact that Hispanics make up the largest ethnic group of students in Clark County would result in a spike in anti-immigrant sentiment, [Republican state senator Bob] Beers paused and then said only 'yes.'" True to his sentiment, Beers and other conservative senators have actively tried to deny undocumented students the state Millennium Scholarship, which is awarded to students based on GPA and state residency, even though the number of undocumented students who receive the scholarship is fewer than 100 in the entire state (Mower 2007).

According to a report by the Nevada State Assembly speaker, Barbara Buckley, Nevada has the second-lowest state and local taxes in the nation. In part for this reason, the state ranks 47th in the nation in terms of quality of life (based on schools, health, crime, poverty, and cost of living), 47th in per-pupil spending on K–12 education, and 45th for number of people with a bachelor's degree (Buckley 2008; see also Bach 2008). In 2008, $173.6 million was cut from K–12 education, resulting in a 50 percent cut in the textbook budget and the elimination of remedial, gifted and talented, vocational, disability, and adult education programs. In addition, higher education was cut by $83.8 million. The budget cuts continued to increase in 2009. Given these data, it is apparent that access to higher education in Nevada is elusive for many low-income students, and in particular for Latina/o students contending with multiple forms of discrimination along the educational pipeline.

The participants in my study have consistently advocated for increased educational outreach to Latina/o students in Nevada. They have been involved in an initiative sponsored by the Latin Chamber of Commerce called the Latina/o Youth Leadership Conference, which educates juniors and seniors about their cultural history, builds their leadership skills, and encourages them to go to college. After students complete this program, most of them transition directly into leadership roles in Latina/o student organizations on campus and go on to initiate their own student outreach and retention programs. Las Vegas has relatively few Latina/o community and nonprofit organizations working to meet the needs of the community. In this context, the role of student organizations in doing outreach and programming becomes very important. Some of the Latina/o student organizations on university and college campuses in Las Vegas are the Student Organization of Latinos (SOL), Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano/a de Aztlán (MEChA), League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), Latino Straight and Lesbian-Gay Alliance (SALGA), Central American Student Alliance (CASA), the Latino Alliance, CSN Hispanic Student Union, Sigma Delta Alpha (SDA), Kappa Delta Chi (KDC), and the United Coalition for Im/migrant Rights (UCIR). The organization that I followed most closely was MEChA, because most of the students who organized the immigrant rights protests in 2006 were members of it. Many of them also participated in other organizations, and eventually the key MEChA organizers founded UCIR.

Methods

This was a participatory action research (PAR) project, whose goal was to center the voices of the research participants, develop research by and for the community, and co-construct the research project with the participants. I was a part of this community while researching it from 2005 to 2010. I participated as an organizer, committed to the goals of the group, and simultaneously conducted research in an effort to document the experiences of the participants. According to Mary Brydon-Miller and Patricia Maguire,

> The overall purposes of PAR include three types of potential change: the development or expansion of critical consciousness of co-researchers, including community-based and university- or agency-based co-researchers; improvement in the lives of those involved, as they define change or improvement; and transformation of fundamental societal structures and relationships. (2009, 82)

The research participants, who served as co-constructors or collaborators in the research, largely determined the research foci. As a faculty member and mentor (or womyn-tor/queer-tor, as I have been called), I recognized my privileged and differential status in the research project; however, we worked together to decide the research questions and design, what needed to be included, and how it was to be represented. For two years, I attended organizing and planning meetings, which lasted two to fours hours, weekly. I met with student leaders regularly to provide advice and consultation about their personal, academic, and activist lives. When actions were planned or conflicts arose, students often confided in me, and together we solved the problem.

To determine the foci of the study, I asked students for their advice and leadership. They urged me to focus on what set them apart from other activists across the country; this included, in particular, the roles of feminists, queer people, and youth in the leadership of the movement. I identify this research as *muxerista*/feminist action research because as an activist scholar, I conducted this research through the lens of a *muxerista* (Chicana/Latina feminist activist) dedicated to social justice.[7] *Muxerista* action research is directly aligned with LatCrit scholarship and counterstory methodologies, as well as with Dolores Delgado Bernal's Chicana feminist epistemological approach to research (Delgado Bernal 1998; Yosso 2006). It builds on these methodologies by centralizing the experiences of feminist and queer activists.

"Adelita," a UNLV student at the time of the project, was the primary spokesperson for local activists during the immigrant rights movement in 2006.[8] She was working on her honors thesis on the immigrant rights movement while this research was conducted, and she became a co-researcher for this project. We developed the interview protocol, identified and recruited research participants, and conducted interviews together. She used the data for her thesis; I became her thesis adviser and participated extensively in the editing and development process. We conducted a thorough analysis of the data together and co-presented at six national academic conferences. My other co-researcher, "Tlaloc," became a leader of the local movement and spokesperson for the United Coalition for Im/migrant Rights after Adelita graduated and moved to California.

I shared my findings regularly with student leaders and participants in the movement and asked for feedback and analysis of the data. The students and I co-presented at ten panel presentations on the Las Vegas immigrant rights movement at national academic conferences; I ensured

that students had financial and academic support to attend. During these panels and conferences, we discussed the research extensively to determine its direction and to develop a deeper understanding of the findings for future reports. Furthermore, I exchanged e-mails and drafts of this article with at least ten of the student activists to confirm that the findings were adequately represented. I asked them to edit, change, and contribute to the article as they wished, and we had several phone and e-mail conversations to discuss the findings presented in this piece.

Data were collected using a multitiered approach that included participant observations, one-on-one interviews, and focus group interviews. I audiotaped and videotaped meetings, educational forums, and protests over three years, including the high school walkouts and many immigrant rights protests. I conducted one-on-one interviews with at least thirty students and six community members and held two focus group interviews—one with six students and another with fifteen community members. With permission, I used personal e-mails, blogs, MySpace, and Facebook as research tools to learn about people's organizing efforts, political messages, self-identifications, and thoughts about the movement. Some of the initial meetings were held in my home because students did not have a space to meet on campus that was open and safe for discussions about organizing collective direct action. Eventually, the planning meetings moved to UNLV, taking place primarily in the Women's Studies Department, which provided the venue for these organizing efforts. I spent many days and nights meeting with students and community members, discussing the local and national movement, and helping organize the protests. In 2006, organizing meetings lasted up to four and five hours and included dialogs, poster making, and newsletter writing sessions. At times students and I worked until three or four in the morning and even spent the night on campus in preparation for citywide actions.

The Immigrant Rights Movement in Las Vegas

On March 28, 2006, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that students in Los Angeles were in their fourth day of marching in opposition to HR 4437, a bill that passed the US House of Representatives in December 2005. Had it become law, the measure would have declared undocumented immigrants and their allies to be felons, further criminalizing immigrants who come to the United States to live and work as economic refugees (Cho and Gorman 2006).[9] Given the history of the 1968 blowouts in Los Angeles

and continuing student protests since then (Delgado Bernal 1998; Muñoz 1989), it was not surprising that nearly 40,000 students in Los Angeles walked out to protest the new anti-immigrant measure. But few people expected the protests that swept across the country, reaching cities where demonstrations of this magnitude were unprecedented, especially on the part of Latina/o and Chicana/o communities and youth. In particular, it was unheard of for Latina/o students in Las Vegas to walk out of school by the hundreds, so when grade school students left their classrooms and headed to the Strip and the federal building on March 28 and March 31, adults in Las Vegas were astounded. Some were appalled, and they made assumptions about the students and why they were walking out. Others were supportive and admired the students for being the first to initiate such audacious behavior in a conservative, anti-immigrant state.

National media reported that high school students were walking out and "abandoning" their educations—a sure sign, according to media reporters and school officials, that these "kids" (as they were dismissively termed) did not care about school.[10] In Las Vegas, the superintendent of Clark County School District implied that most of the students who walked out were "troublemakers" or had behavioral problems. A local paper reported:

> Schools Superintendent Walt Rulffes said Friday that students who took part in the protests aren't interested in performing well academically. He said he was annoyed that demonstrations took place during the week when high school students were taking the state's proficiency exam, which must be passed for students to earn a diploma. "I can't find any excuse for this behavior," Rulffes said. (Planas 2006c)

> "The notion that a student can just pick up and walk out of a school is not acceptable," Rulffes said. "Never mind the cause, students should not be participating in a protest during school hours." (Curtis 2006)

Rulffes's animosity to civic engagement resonated throughout the schools and the community. Many of students who walked out faced penalties for "student misconduct" upon their return, from not being allowed to make up missed exams to being banned from the school prom to not being allowed to cross the stage at graduation. The external narrative was that students in Las Vegas had no idea why they were walking out and that the only reason they did so was because they wanted to ditch class. Students responded with strong opposition to these assumptions, but not surprisingly, their narratives were left out of the reporting.

As I learned from this research, Latina/o student activists in Las Vegas drew on a long history of employing resistance capital to plan and organize the immigrant rights marches that made the headlines. In an article in the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, Lisa Bach (2006) traced student walkouts in Las Vegas to 2001. In 2005, black students protested in support of a teacher who had been denied the opportunity to produce a play for Black History Month. In 2006, Vegas youth were demonstrating in early March, before the national protests and walkouts, as Bach and others reported: "High Schoolers Stage Walkout: Students Complain of Discrimination at Green Valley High" (Bach 2006) and "Kids Leave Class: Hispanic Students Object to Comment; Teacher Apologizes" (Planas 2006b). On March 3, a coalition of Latina/o, black, and white students walked out of Green Valley High School to protest the unfair and unequal treatment of students of color. One student said, "If I wear a black bandanna, or another minority student wears a black bandanna, someone will stop and tell us to take it off. But a white student can wear the same kind of bandanna, and no one says anything" (Bach 2006). Students, who wrote messages on their hands, demanded equality and insisted that their voices be heard. The principal claimed that many students told him they took part in the walkout to get out of school or participated because of peer pressure, and he insisted that the protest did not signal problems with race relations at the high school. One student countered, saying, "I want to get across to the teaching staff that there's a problem in judging people by their skin."

On March 16, 2006, at Del Sol High School, students walked out after a teacher told US-born Latina/o students, "Well, you guys are immigrants. You guys shouldn't even be here. I could get arrested if I teach immigrants, and you guys should be thankful that you're in school right now because you're immigrants" (Planas 2006b). Later the teacher apologized and said she did not mean to be racist. The principal defended the teacher, saying, "She would never imply that someone should not be here. . . . She's a government teacher who understands the nature and background of how America began." Students reported that they had prepared a petition at Del Sol and provided it to the principal to complain about various kinds of discrimination they were encountering on campus. When MEChA students met with the principal, he maintained that there were no race-related problems at the school, even pointing out that he could not be racist since he was married to a Latina woman. Both the principal and the teacher claimed that their actions were not "racist," but what they ignored was their whiteness, their racial privilege, and their furtherance of a system

of advantages that favored white students. As race scholar Beverly Daniel Tatum (2003) points out, one only needs to follow the status quo in order to reinforce racism. If people are not actively anti-racist, they are simply following suit and allowing for racially hostile environments to be sustained.

Students tried to create a Latina/o student organization at school, but to little avail. A second-year Chicano student from MEChA de UNLV, whose younger brother was trying to start a MEChA chapter at Del Sol, explained in an e-mail to the MEChA listserv:

> Earlier today, I got together with some of the students who walked out from Del Sol high school. They informed me that they want MEChA's help. A huge issue at Del Sol is that the school does not allow what the administration calls "ethnic clubs." The principal told me that "ethnic clubs" are not allowed because they create division. In other words, students are allowed to join clubs, just not clubs that represent their culture.
>
> Del Sol students have attempted in the past to establish clubs such as SOL [Student Organization of Latinos] and BSU [Black Student Union], but their attempts have been turned down. They are asking for our help and support in combating the forces which are denying them a club that adequately represents them. I will arrange a meeting with the individuals who participated in the walkout.

University students met with the principal and were disappointed again to find that they made little progress with their discussion. Repeatedly, the students attempted to bring attention to discrimination and to their needs for a safe space within the schools. The administration insisted that any kind of "ethnic organization" creates divisions among students, revealing a lack of knowledge of the value of race/ethnicity-based organizations. The officials' mistaken assumption was that the goal of such organizations is to increase divisions and hostility between groups. Students resisted this interpretation, pointing out that race/ethnicity-based organizations offer support and a safe space to students who feel marginalized in hostile environments. Their goal is not to reinforce or re-create the hostile environment that already exists for them in schools.

The collaboration between undergraduate and high school students to contest the rejection of a MEChA chapter at the high school is an example of resistance capital. The university students had created MEChA de UNLV in resistance to the hostility and marginalization they encountered in higher education, and they wanted to share the strategies they learned with high school students.[11] Although they were ultimately unable to create

a MEChA chapter at Del Sol, several of the high school students eventually became active in the UNLV chapter.

Many of the students who walked out of school traveled ten to fifteen miles, on foot, from their schools to join the other students along the Strip and at Clark High School, the federal courthouse building, and Freedom Park.[12] The university students, community college students, and I agreed to carpool students back home so they would not be stranded at the end of the march. These trips were very enlightening, as we listened to students excitedly describe their experience with the marches. They asked questions about the law, demanded respect from the media, and rallied together to insist that they be taken seriously. Even the most basic question reveals their insight about a collective struggle. A middle school student asked me on the trip home, "Miss, why do they hate us so much?" We heard story after story about racial injustices that the students and their families were facing.

At one of the protests, I met a twelve-year-old middle school student. She was wearing a baseball cap representing a local union. When I asked why she was protesting, she replied with all confidence, "I'm out here for my mother. She worked for years as a union worker and now she is unfairly being pushed out. I'm out here for her."

Adults in the community and the schools were highly judgmental. This did not deter the students, but it created new obstacles with which they had to contend. "Nate Guanaco Pipil," an eighteen-year-old senior at Rancho High School, of Central American descent born in the United States, responded to the accusation that the youth did not know what they were doing:

> How can you call these students ignorant and uneducated?! Just because they do not know the name of the bills or what the Senate Judiciary Committee is, does not mean they are ignorant! Just by witnessing the labor their parents or families must endure on a daily basis due to their status or color of their skin makes them aware of the social injustice! So who's really ignorant? . . . ! Personally I believe that the individual who speaks about ignorance without being aware of the oppression we face on a daily basis in this country is the ignorant one! (Activist Crew 2006)

Given his personal and political interests, Nate may have been better versed in the language of social analysis than some of his peers. But others made his point as well: the students who walked out were aware and critical of the discrimination that they and their families had experienced.[13]

Students were forced to defend their actions, admonished for their will to resist, and punished by teachers and school officials for participating in

the political process. As a result, new coalitions formed between middle and high school students and college and university students, effectively merging their stores of resistance capital and navigational capital. The outcome has been yearly protests, educational forums, citywide coalitions, and youth-led grassroots organizations.

In a 2006 MySpace blog, a seventeen-year-old Chicana high school student, "Rita," wrote a poem titled, "Walkout!" In it, she responds to criticisms that students protested merely because others were doing so in Los Angeles and Chicago. She rejects the idea that students walked out just to follow a trend; instead, she details the reality of her struggle and her family's struggle in Las Vegas. She provides a class critique of labor exploitation and debunks the myth of Las Vegas as nothing more than a glitzy vacation getaway. She notes that this issue affects not only immigrants, but also their allies who work for social justice. Finally, her poem clearly states that she marches for her mother, father, and community. Her resistance is intimately connected to their struggle and their aspirations. Upon interviewing Rita, we learned that her parents came to Las Vegas so that she and her siblings could live in an affordable home and have a good education, which they found nearly impossible in Mexico and California. In a blogged letter (2007) she wrote to her mother, she said:

> Made in Mexico, carried across the border, and conceived in San Jose; thank you mom for giving me this opportunity . . .
> Mom you look at me strangely when I speak of the revolution to come. The people who seek to extort our people and drive you out. You attempt to join my struggle. You march by my side at protests and care to go. I know you seek to understand me . . .
> I am a radical, passionate, political, feminist, Chicana, proud, strong, giving, revolutionary and open minded: a muxer that cries openly and dares to say "I love you."
> The years to come I know will be hard, but I shall always remember you and dad's work. I shall keep in mind that in comparison to what you do, my work will always pale. You and dad have worked so hard and I thank you.

Hence, when Rita writes of walking out and proclaims that she does it in the name of her mother, father, and *raza* (community), it is clear that her actions are well thought out, sophisticated, and connected to a personal *and* wider struggle. She points out, in the poem below, that the desire to resist and pursue her goals comes from within.

Walkout!

Walkout!
NO it is not a cry from the outside,
It is a call from the inside of our schools,
Not from a video or a newspaper,
— But from our reality,
From our *estudiantes*.

Tourists do not clutter our Las Vegas sidewalks today,
The *causa*, our movement, our rage, our passion, our cry for justice,
That is what fills the streets today!

Casinos line the background,
Trees and grass in a desert,
A constructed world,
Finally slapped with a dose of reality,
Immigrants and allies fill the streets,
Por mi Madre,
Por mi Padre,
Por nuestra Raza!

Our presence blocks the freeways, puts traffic on pause for a second,
But do not forget that the rest of the day it is our ongoing presence and work that keeps this country going.

Our children long underestimated have stood up!
And finally no other option but to stop and listen is yours.
Our fists stand in the air, unmoved,
But they are not alone, for in this *causa* we stand together.
You may question our motivation, our reasons,
But one thing is clear,
We are all here.[14]

Her critique of the "constructed" world of casinos in Las Vegas is apt because the protests intentionally attempted to reveal the hypocrisy of mottos such as "What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas." Popular among tourists, this saying implies a nonconsensual encounter between tourists and locals based on the notions that local residents have no connection to the world outside, that their role is to create pleasure and consumption for tourists, and that they do not contest the exploitative labor conditions that they must endure for their survival. Thus, the headline of the newspaper article reporting on the citywide student-led protest of April 10, 2006, "What Happens Here, Happens Elsewhere," is more accurate, because it holds all participants accountable (Planas and Curtis 2006).

MEChA students supported the youth. Feminist leadership emerged, which had not previously been the case, and met with some internal and external resistance on the part of students and community members. Mechistas and high school youth worked together to organize future actions, calling themselves "Students Stand Up" and eventually "the Activist Crew." They planned additional protests for April 10 and May 1, which became the largest immigrant rights protests and largest student protests in the history of Nevada. All of this was accomplished within a matter of three months.

And the students did much more. Even as they were planning the protests, e-mails to the MEChA listserv show, the student activists announced scholarships, university lectures, a poetry night dedicated to Gloria Anzaldúa, updates on the anti-immigrant bill in the US Senate, and the MEChA national conference. New MEChA chapters were planned at high schools and the community college; the students organized the Latina/o Youth Leadership Conference in June; they fought the Latin Chamber of Commerce to hold a workshop on homophobia; they created a multiracial/ethnic coalition called the Alliance of Students of Color (ASOC); and they demanded and won a multicultural center at UNLV.

In undertaking and accomplishing so much—perhaps more than they themselves ever imagined—students drew on their aspirational, resistance, and navigational capital. Aspirational capital speaks to the aspirations that Chicana/o youth inherit from their parents, families, and communities, whose very survival at times depends on these students' success in higher education. Aspirational capital is a direct rejection of majoritarian stories that assume that Mexican families do not value education. Resistant capital comes from a lifetime of resisting racist, sexist, classist, homophobic, and citizenist ideologies and acts of discrimination in their homes, communities, schools, and societies. Navigational capital includes the skills and resources that youth need to make it through the educational pipeline—from elementary and high school to community college and/or undergraduate school, to graduation and beyond—without being pushed out by the forces arrayed against their success.

Student Leadership versus Community Leadership

Before the big marches of spring 2006, I attended an action on September 11, 2005, calling for a path to legal status for immigrant workers. The protest was organized mainly by Latina/o community leaders and local business

interests, including several business owners, a community alliance, a radio station, four unions, and a law office. Many participants at the protest carried American flags and signs thanking Nevada senator Harry Reid, as well as signs that read, "Proud to be working in the USA" and "Liberty and justice for all."[15] A handful of students from MEChA attended the protest, and I asked them why so many of the signs were celebratory rather than critical of anti-immigrant discrimination. They explained that in the past, students had been admonished for making signs that were "offensive" to city leaders. In fact, the only signs that did not celebrate the United States and praise the senator were a few that the students had scrawled hastily on brown cardboard, reading "Dignidad y respeto para inmigrantes," "La unidad es la fuerza," "Brown is beautiful," and "No human is illegal" (fig. 1). As "Neza," a UNLV graduate and longtime Las Vegas student activist explained to me,

> The [protest] "leaders" were stuck in that immigrant mentality that tells us we should be grateful for the scraps they feed us . . . telling us we should thank our bosses for exploiting our labor. The [adult] organizers were also aspiring politicians or conservative individuals whose very real immigrant experience turned them onto activism yet in the end remained conservatives. In many ways, they had more to lose than we [the youth] did.

The elder leaders had warned students that some of their messages were "too radical" and could cause problems for the alliance with the legislators

Figure 1. Immigrant rights protest at Jaycee Park in Las Vegas, September 11, 2005, organized by city leaders. Photo by Anita Tijerina Revilla.

in town. Instead, the leaders preferred to send the message to spectators that they were thankful and proud to be in the United States. The problem with this message was that it left little room for a full critique of social oppression, especially with regard to historical and contemporary US racism and citizenism.[16] The attitude of the adult leaders could be classified as conformist resistance, a kind of resistance that seeks a measure of social justice but does not have a *multidimensional* critique of social oppression. In particular, a critique of the social structures of inequality related to capitalism and political oppression is absent from this resistance approach favored by mainstream community leaders.

Adelita, a UNLV student born in Mexico and raised in Las Vegas, pointed out, "The [early] *marchas* were conformist because the intent behind the 'leadership' was immigration reform. They did not connect our struggle to a more encompassing movement for liberation." Furthermore, the students struggled to teach many of the community members about issues related to gender and sexuality. As Neza pointed out, "These [organizing] spaces were very patriarchal, sexist, and homophobic." In the midst of organizing the general immigrant rights marches, students tried to teach elder community members how to support youth, women, and queer members of the movement. Hence, the students were implementing a movement based on a transformative resistance model with a multidimensional consciousness that did not focus solely on immigrant status, race, or class.

Students indicated that although they were a part of the informal alliance for immigrant rights in town, their ideas were often overlooked because elder leaders feared that the students did not know how to organize in Las Vegas. The students blamed ageism and classism. Because of their youth, their maturity and organizing strategies were highly contested. The strategy taken in town was often to negotiate with businesses and powerful elected political figures in order to gain modest community advances. In an e-mail Neza wrote,

> We were told to wait our turn, that we were not ready, *que no hemos vivido* [that we haven't lived] enough. We were talked down to, referred to as *mijos/as* [my children], and not seen as equal partners. *"Ustedes no saben, no han vivido."* [You don't know, you haven't lived.] If any action or event was a success they would take credit for it and cite their "guidance" as the root cause for its success. We were recruited to do the actual labor of organizing and not the organizing itself. Youth were there to make signs, volunteer, clean up, etc. and were not at the heart of the decision making.

A student leader, "Xuanito," also recalled the early days of organizing with the elder leaders as "frustrating and paternalistic." A prominent male business leader told him, "I was in MEChA. I know. I was radical. I was revolutionary, but that doesn't work." When Xuanito rejected this sentiment and called it "bullshit," the other community members became furious with him. Xuanito said, "They expected us to be followers, while the youth challenged us to be leaders. According to them we didn't know better because we were radical and revolutionary. It was an invalidation of all the work that we've ever done in protest of the xenophobia and immigrophobia we have encountered in Las Vegas."

The youth were dedicated to organizing even when they were not at the forefront of the leadership and decision-making process. However, when they took the leadership as a result of the massive walkouts and actions in 2006, they received heavy criticism and backlash, even from elders in their own community. Their activist vision was distinctly different from what they had experienced in previous organizing. Specifically, they were committed to honoring youth, queer people, and feminists, and they were most definitely not interested in reproducing the status quo. Neza, one of the key early leaders of the student contingent, declared, "Our leadership as youth was more inclusive of womyn, queers, and other marginalized people. We also had hit a point of no return. We were angry and tired of 'asking.' . . . We were demanding legalization. The previous leadership was also very complacent and obedient in many ways to the existing political establishment."

Adelita, Neza, and Xuanito played key roles as student leaders and mentors, or queer-tors and womyn-tors, as they refer to themselves. They and several others set the precedent for a feminist, queer-friendly, youth-led movement that rejected previous models of leadership developed by elders and youth in the Latina/o community. While this new form of leadership met with much criticism and resistance, it was sustained primarily within the United Coalition for Im/migrant Rights.

In 2009, UCIR organized another May 1 protest during which student activists were again forced to assert their goals amid hostile community reaction. Students were criticized for "allowing" community members the freedom to carry flags of their choice, for not publicly denouncing and discouraging student walkouts, for holding a queer immigration forum on the eve of the May 1 demonstration, and for not canceling the protest at the last minute for fear of a swine flu breakout. Student leader Tlaloc was cornered by two of the most vocal community members, "Oscar" and

"Alejandra" (also pseudonyms), and was repeatedly insulted for not canceling the march. In an e-mail sent to me, he said,

> When I spoke to [Oscar] and [Alejandra], they told me that we were "irresponsible" and did not know what we were doing. They told me that they "have been organizing since before all of [you] students were born" and that they will continue to do so "after this *little* march." They forcefully talked down to me and devalued many of the things that I said. I told them that I would not let them talk to me that way and that I would leave if they continued.

Tlaloc was told he was young and did not realize that because of his decisions, the local political figures would not respect UCIR. He insisted that the student contingent and UCIR, as a collective, had made a decision, and they continued with the protest as planned. Tlaloc explained the contradictions of working with this coalition of students and community members:

> It's interesting, because many of the community organizers praised the students for their activism and hard work. Many of them would say, "This is your march. We are here to support you," but would turn around and criticize us for our transformative politics. So I believe that they wanted the march to happen as much as we did, but they did not want students to shape it. They wanted us to superficially be the leaders of this movement and regurgitate what they wanted us to say which was in the confines of a conformist attitude, to celebrate politicians. However, we said no. We are going to make this march happen and it will be queer, feminist, and youth-inspired. And that is why we have conflict, because they don't want to see us have that power and talk about it.

After several heated meetings and intense debates, the students led a successful demonstration on May 1. Some of the community members apologized to Tlaloc, but the tension and contradictions continued. After deliberate discussions about the ageism that particular members of the coalition continued to exhibit, the students voted to ask these individuals to no longer participate in UCIR. This decision was made in the interests of the coalition's survival: they wanted students to continue to participate without feeling battered and abused by the members of their own coalition. Tlaloc concluded:

> Asking them to leave the coalition provided us with a way to continue with our transformative politics without being limited in what we could say and do. We want to continue in radicalizing the immigrant rights movement. In letting "Alejandra" and "Oscar" know that we do not want to work with them, we are essentially creating a safe space for other

> activists to develop their progressive ideology. We are also asserting our power as students to hold community members accountable for their racist, patriarchal, homophobic, and ageist ways.

The difficulty of building and sustaining coalitions that are healthy and productive has been one of the biggest challenges these young activists have faced. The goal of resisting ageism, sexism, and homophobia is integrally connected to the immigrant rights movement in Las Vegas because the students have made it so. They have expanded the vision of social justice as they seek to foster a social movement guided by a transformative resistance design.

The Las Vegas Activist Crew

This group of students became known as the Las Vegas Activist Crew (fig. 2). They offer an excellent counterstory for critical race scholarship in education, providing a model of community cultural wealth and agency aimed at transformational resistance. Student activists faced harsh critiques and dismissals from a variety of people. Even when they created petitions, tried to start organizations, and communicated with administrators, their concerns were overwhelmingly rejected. Their goals were obviously focused

Figure 2. Members of the Las Vegas Activist Crew after the April 10, 2006, protest at the Lloyd D. George Federal Courthouse. Photo by Beverly Thompson.

on much more than one policy issue related to immigration. When the immigration protests arose, students were already poised to object to the racist, exclusionary practices that they were experiencing in their schools and communities. Thus, when students walked out to protest HR 4437, they were actually walking out in protest of the wide-ranging injustices they faced as youth of color, Latina/os in the United States, working-class people, children of exploited laborers, feminists, queer people, and much more.

These students dispel many myths constructed by majoritarian stories, especially those that use deficit perspectives to explain the so-called "failures" of Chicana/o students. As they come together for a common cause, to fight for the human rights and dignity of immigrants in the United States, they illustrate the following:

- The ways in which students build coalitions to navigate the educational pipeline (high school to college in this case).
- The way that their families' aspirations guide their goals, visions, and determination to persist in their journey through higher education.
- The multiple facets of discrimination they face and overcome as activists and organizers.

This kind of counterstory is underreported but not uncommon. Across the nation there are scores of student and community organizations led by youth who are at the forefront of social justice movements, pedagogy, and theory making. Students are well aware of the work they are doing as well as the work that their peers are engaged in across the nation and the world. But few outsiders understand the level of commitment and struggle that youth must maintain in order to fight for social justice while simultaneously pursuing a formal education.

The pedagogical approach pioneered by Paulo Freire (1993) calls for oppressed people to develop a critical consciousness and become agents of their own liberation. However, students seeking to make their way through the educational pipeline face a particular dilemma. Once they develop a critical consciousness and a critique of social oppression, they must find ways to contest institutionalized discrimination while at the same time continuing to participate in the educational institutions that oppress them. They need to remain critical and resistant among peers, co-workers, and colleagues who did not receive a critically conscious education. Many of these students must reconsider how best to employ their critical consciousness. Future analysis of the data from our project will further illuminate the struggles of these marginalized students, who navigate the higher education

pipeline while participating in networks of resistance guided by their visions of social justice.

While the focus of this work was on youth leadership and ageism in the immigrant rights movement, it is important to note that there are many elders and longtime activists who value youth and work with them as equal partners. In Vegas, many of those elder community members came from the community-based organization called Hermandad Mexicana, as well as from several Mexican community organizations (federations from Durango, Hidalgo, and Michoacan) and a few others. They worked very well with the students and engaged in extensive dialog and mutual education. In fact, when issues of gender equality and respect for sexual identity arose, these elders were open to learning and to eliminating sexist and/or homophobic practices that were common in other organizing environments.

The Vegas Activist Crew counterstory illuminates many of the internal and external struggles that take place in civil rights and human rights movements. Too often, we look at broad movements through a generic lens and do not learn enough from the day-to-day struggles that take place behind the scenes. Internal oppression, toxic climates, and activist battle fatigue, or what I call multidimensional battle fatigue, are common in activist spaces.[17] This is largely because we lack a shared vision of social justice, one that calls for eliminating multiple forms of oppression, including but not limited to racism, classism, imperialism, patriarchy, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, citizenism, nativism, xenophobia, religious/spiritual discrimination, body discrimination, ageism, colorism, and so forth. When the vision of change only includes resisting one or two of these types of oppression, we fall short of our goal of large-scale social transformation.

Xuanito, a Mexican/Chicana/o non–gender conforming queer student, read the following poem at the grand opening of the UNLV Multicultural Center. The center was created as a result of the protest and vision of students from the Activist Crew, who worked in coalition with students of color, queer students, and other allies on campus. I conclude with his poem to further illustrate an example of community cultural wealth in the personal narratives of student activists.

Brown people know of walls

Tall, wide, steep,
We know of walls
Because they separate us
From our loved ones

Our culture
Our legacy
And overall, our potential
We know about walls

And our children know of walls
That suffocate us
Since the breeze of opportunity can't reach our faces
The wall of immigrophobia
The wall of sexism
The wall of institutionalized racism
The wall of homophobia
The wall of segregation
The wall of ignorance
The walls raised over our borders and our educational institutions
A week before I started attending UNLV
I had a dream of high walls surrounding the university
In my dream I could fly, sit on top of the wall and contemplate

Thinking about those who couldn't make it over
Because not everybody was born with wings
Since our mothers' and fathers' flights were brought to abrupt halts
After they lost their dreams, they could not see beyond those walls

. . .

Remember?
1971, '72, Latino/a students protests to increase the number of Chicano/a faculty and implement a Chicano/a studies program
2004 Chicano/a studies minor is established
2006, community activists and UNLV students stage the largest demonstration in the history of Nevada; they planned it here, in this very building
2007, students protest the lack of spaces for people of color not just in the new student union but in the institution itself

And in 2009, the opening of our multicultural center.
Let the walls barring access crumble

The glass ceilings fall
And the obstacles of doubt implode
Let us be free of the structures that murder our spirits

We will be free
Like the *Rio Grande* used to be
Like the desert of Sonora
Free, as the voice of our ancestors

Free and beautiful
Libre como los vientos

Let this place be
A small rupture through the wall
Through which we can smuggle our dreams.

Notes

1. *The Grit Beneath the Glitter* (Rothman and Davis 2002) challenges many of the perceptions held about Las Vegas. A seldom-mentioned aspect of the city's history is deep racism, which has caused Las Vegas to be dubbed the "Mississippi of the West" (Orleck 2006).

2. MEChA is a Chicana/o student organization that was founded in 1969 as the student wing of the Chicana/o movement. Its primary goal is to encourage and support the success of Chicana/os in higher education. Referring to the naming of the organization, the MEChA national website states: "Adamant rejection of the label 'Mexican-American' meant rejection of the assimilation and accommodationist melting pot ideology that had guided earlier generations of activists. Chicanismo involves a crucial distinction in a political consciousness between a Mexican-American (Hispanic) and a Chicana/o mentality" (http://www.nationalmecha.org/about.html).

3. The term *Chicano* originated as a derogatory term used to insult the poor, indigenous people of Mexico who came to the United States. It was redefined and reclaimed by activists of the Mexican American civil rights movement, and its use continues to suggest a connection to the struggle against discrimination by Mexican-origin people and Latina/os in general. For many activists, it signifies a critical, political consciousness beyond cultural and ethnic identity.

4. The term *push out* (rather than *drop out*) is used to reject the notion that students are solely responsible for not completing a K–12 education. The push-out approach seeks to understand not only the student's role in the "decision" to leave school before graduation, but also the role of parents, teachers, schools, administrators, and legislators in reinforcing and sustaining the conditions in which so many Chicana/o students do not fulfill their educational aspirations. Lack of support, low expectations, and discrimination are excellent examples of push-out factors.

5. PEW Hispanic Center, Census 2010 Nevada County Database, http://pewhispanic.org/data/census2010/. I use the term *Hispanic* here to be consistent with the survey data reported.

6. Data, originally from the PEW Hispanic Center, provided by Dr. Cristina Morales, University of Texas, El Paso, and Leticia Saucedo, UNLV Boyd School of Law, in a research talk on "Hard Hats in Sin City," University of Nevada, Las Vegas, March 12, 2009.

7. A *muxerista* is a person whose identity is rooted in a Chicana/Latina feminist vision for social change and is committed to ending all forms of oppression,

including but not limited to racism, classism, sexism, homophobia, and citizenism (see Revilla 2004).

8. All of the students named in this essay are identified by self-chosen pseudonyms.

9. For a discussion about using the term *economic refugee* as opposed to *undocumented* immigrant and *illegal* immigrant, see Lakoff and Ferguson (2006). See also "What are economic refugees?" at Project Economic Refugee, http://www.economicrefugee.net/what-does-economic-refugee-mean.

10. I write "kids" in quotes to point out that the word as used by media outlets and others has conscious and perhaps subconscious implications (see Planas 2006b). "Kids" is used to refer to children who are assumed to be too immature to make difficult adult decisions. Thus when educators call youth (in their teens to mid-twenties) "kids," the effect is to dismiss the possibility that the youths may be their equal in thought and vision. When the word is applied to youth activists, it reinforces the belief that their acts of resistance derive from lack of experience and maturity. The student co-resarchers and I consciously chose not to use the word *kids* to refer to the activists; the preferred identifier is *youth*. Indeed, the students hold that their activist vision is equal to and even more expansive than that of many adults in Las Vegas.

11. As a way to continue the collaboration between the students, MEChA de UNLV has created an annual Raza Youth Conference to share education, resources, and networks with high school and middle school students. They have hosted the conference at both UNLV and local community centers. This is in addition to the summer Latina/o Youth Leadership Conference, created by the Latin Chamber of Commerce eighteen years ago and primarily organized by youth. See http://www.lvlcc.com/LYLC.

12. Photos of the walkout are available on the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* website at http://www.reviewjournal.com/news/march/slideshow/index.html.

13. Since then, Nate has earned both a bachelor's and master's degree in political science and is very active in the local politics scene in Las Vegas.

14. The poem was written in 2006 and accessed from Rita's MySpace page on March 2, 2009, with her permission. Born in San Jose, California, Rita was attending Community College High School in Las Vegas in 2006. Today she has graduated with a bachelor's degree in social work and is applying for graduate school programs.

15. After the 2006 protests, it became more common for immigrant rights activists to carry American flags during demonstrations, in part because of heavy criticism from the media and anti-immigrant folks who were offended by the presence of Mexican flags and flags from other countries.

16. Citizenism is a system of advantages that unfairly privileges citizens (people born within a nation) while justifying discrimination against and exploitation of noncitizens. It allows for the economic and political exploitation of immigrants (documented and undocumented) and advances an ideology of citizen superiority similar to white superiority. See Revilla and Rangel-Medina (2011).

17. For a description of racial battle fatigue, see Smith, Hung, and Franklin (2011).

Works Cited

Activist Crew. 2006. *Students Stand Up* 1, no. 1 (April 5). Locally distributed newsletter created by student members of the Las Vegas Activist Crew.

Bach, Lisa. 2006. "High Schoolers Stage Walkout: Students Complain of Discrimination at Green Valley High." *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, March 3.

———. 2008. "Nevada Still Near Bottom in Per Pupil Spending." *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, April 3.

Bourdieu, Pierre, and Jean-Claude Passeron. 1977. *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Brydon-Miller, Mary, and Patricia Maguire. 2009. "Participatory Action Research: Contributions to the Development of Practitioner Inquiry in Education." *Educational Action Research* 17, no. 1: 79–93.

Buckley, Barbara. 2008. "Overhauling Nevada's Financial Structure: Assembly Speaker Barbara E. Buckley." http://www.nv2020.com/images/overhauling nvrv9a.pdf.

Cho, Cynthia, and Anna Gorman. 2006. "Massive Student Walkouts Spread across the Southland." *Los Angeles Times*, March 28.

Covarrubias, Alejandro. 2011. "Quantitative Intersectionality: A Critical Race Analysis of the Chicana/o Educational Pipeline." *Journal of Latinos in Education* 10, no. 2: 86–105.

Covarrubias, Alejandro, and Anita Revilla. 2003. "Agencies of Transformational Resistance: Dismantling Injustice at the Intersection of Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality through LatCrit Praxis." *Florida Law Review* 55, no. 1: 459–77.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, and Kendall Thomas, eds. 1995. *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement*. New York: New Press.

Curtis, Lynnette. 2006. "LV Students March in Solidarity with Protesters Nationwide." *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, March 29.

Delgado Bernal, Dolores. 1998. "Using a Chicana Feminist Epistemology in Educational Research." *Harvard Educational Review* 68, no. 4: 555–82.

Freire, Paulo. 1993. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Translated by Myra Bergmen Ramos. New York: Continuum. First published 1970.

Lakoff, George, and Sam Ferguson. 2006. *The Framing of Immigration*. Rockridge Institute, Berkeley, CA.

Matsuda, Mari J., Charles R. Lawrence III, Richard Delgado, and Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw. 1993. *Words That Wound: Critical Race Theory, Assaultive Speech, and the First Amendment*. Boulder, CO: Westview.

Mower, Lawrence. 2007. "All Immigrants in the Same Bind: Bill Keeps Even Those in U.S. Legally from Getting Scholarships, Other Benefits." *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, April 27.

Muñoz, Carlos Jr. 1989. *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement*. New York: Verso.

Orleck, Annelise. 2006. *Storming Caesar's Palace: How Black Mothers Fought Their Own War on Poverty*. Boston: Beacon.

Perea, Juan F. 1997. "The Black/White Binary Paradigm of Race: The 'Normal Science' of American Racial Thought." *California Law Review* 85, no. 5: 1213–58.

Planas, Antonio. 2006a. "Clark County School District: Hispanic Students Outnumber Whites." *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, November 18.

———. 2006b. "Kids Leave Class: Hispanic Students Object to Comment." *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, March 17.

———. 2006c. "LV Students March Again." *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, April 4.

Planas, Antonio, and Lynnette Curtis. 2006. "What Happens Here, Happens Elsewhere: National Day of Action for Immigrant Justice Draws about 3,500 Southern Nevadans." *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, April 11.

Revilla, Anita. 2004. "Muxerista Pedagogy: Raza Womyn Teaching Social Justice through Student Activism." *High School Journal* 87, no. 4: 80–94.

Revilla, Anita Tijerina, and Evelyn Rangel-Medina. 2011. "The Las Vegas Activist Crew." In *Marching Students: Chicana and Chicano Activism in Education, 1968 to the Present*, edited by Margarita Berta-Avila, Anita Tijerina Revilla, and Julie López Figueroa, 167–87. Reno: University of Nevada Press.

Rothman, Hal K., and Mike Davis, eds. 2002. *The Grit Beneath the Glitter: Tales from the Real Las Vegas*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Smith, William A., Man Hung, and Jeremy D. Franklin. 2011. "Racial Battle Fatigue and the MisEducation of Black Men: Racial Microaggressions, Societal Problems, and Environmental Stress." *Journal of Negro Education* 80, no. 1: 63–82.

Solórzano, Daniel, and Dolores Delgado Bernal. 2001. "Critical Race Theory, Transformational Resistance, and Social Justice: Chicana and Chicano Students in an Urban Context." *Urban Education* 36: 308–42.

Tatum, Beverly Daniel. 2003. *"Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?" and Other Conversations About Race*. 5th ed. New York: Basic Books.

Taylor, Edward, David Gillborn, and Gloria Ladson-Billings, eds. 2009. *Foundations of Critical Race Theory in Education*. New York: Routledge.

Yosso, Tara J. 2005. "Whose Culture Has Capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth.'" *Race Ethnicity and Education* 8, no. 1: 69–91.

———. 2006. *Critical Race Counterstories along the Chicana/Chicano Educational Pipeline*. New York: Routledge.

Yosso, Tara, Octavio Villalpando, Dolores Delgado Bernal, and Daniel G. Solórzano. 2001. "Critical Race Theory in Chicana/o Education." Paper presented at National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies Annual Conference, April 1. http://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/naccs/2001/Proceedings/9.

Valdes, Francisco. 1997. "Poised at the Cusp: LatCrit Theory, Outsider Jurisprudence and Latina/o Self-Empowerment." *Harvard Latino Law Review* 2, no. 1: 1–59.

———. 2009. "Rebellious Knowledge Production, Academic Activism, and Outsider Democracy: From Principles to Practices in LatCrit Theory, 1995 to 2008." *Seattle Journal of Social Justice* 8: 131–56.