

and transformation of the human requires that the body reduced to labor and/or reproductive organs, and thus disappeared, become, be lived, related to, valued as a sentient, sensual, intelligent body as within, immersed in, habitats where interrelation with what there is takes the whole sentient body as permeable, seeking and providing inter-relational integrity and reciprocity in all aspects of living in connection. The coloniality of gender is centrally tied to the destruction or attempt at destruction of community. In my understanding of decolonial feminism, the communal is central, with communal intentionality and complex communality constituting the human.

Race, colonization, the colonial wound, and the coloniality of power, of knowledge, of being, and of gender are central to a politicized Latina/o and Chicana/o historicized analysis of oppression for our present. The decolonial imaginary, the season of decoloniality, delinking, borderlands, border thinking, differential oppositional consciousness, social erotics, and inhabiting interstices are the decolonial creative Latina/o and Chicana/o responses to this condition. When thinking of colonization and decolonization, of coloniality and decoloniality, we think in conversation, with an attention that is much larger than the confines of the United States or of national borders. Borders stand for colonial markers.

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Diaspora

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The following discussion tests out the viability and even pliability of "diaspora" as both critical concept and descriptive category for a decidedly varied set of historical formations, especially as they appear at this moment in the material and intellectual unfolding of the field of U.S. Latina/o studies, a field that appears finally to be experiencing a kind of institutional consolidation and stabilization. The fluid volatility of economic, political, and social conditions in the inter-American scene in the middle of the second decade of the twenty-first century both complicates and challenges the efforts of the field of U.S. Latina/o studies to make coherent historical and cultural sense of all of the processes of mass movement and settlement from Latin America and the Caribbean to the United States since the nineteenth century, and in whatever collections of formations the field takes to be its primary object(s) of knowledge. From its early history as a field, from the 1960s and into the early 1990s, U.S. Latina/o studies could divide its attention between work on historic communities of Latin American and Caribbean descent annexed by the United States in the course of its project of imperial expansion from the early 1800s on, and immigrant communities from a small collection of sending countries or spaces that seemed to account for the vast majority of Latina/o immigrant communities in the United States, including in order of prominence: Mexican Americans, mainland Puerto Ricans, and Cuban Americans. In these decades, the majority of

U.S. Latina/o studies work conformed fairly readily to the methodologies and practices of immigrant studies. By the 1990s, it found itself both expanding its scope to include more newly arrived immigrant populations from the Dominican Republic, Haiti, El Salvador, and Guatemala, and complicating its analytical work on immigration by deploying newly activated critical concepts such as the borderlands, *mestizaje*, and (multi) cultural hybridity. And, thanks to the contributions of many scholars and theorists of diaspora working in the course of the early 1990s (Hall 1990; Safran 1991; Boyarin and Boyarin 1993; Clifford 1994), what Juan Flores (2009) has called "the explosion of diaspora-speak" began in that decade to exert its own critical conceptual influence on the work of the field.

"Diaspora" as a concept took hold in part because it could complicate and deepen modes of analysis that comparable categories such as immigrant, exile, refugee, expatriate, and even guest worker too often kept within narrower, more restrictive scopes. First, "diaspora" insists on a mass and collective experience of displacement, scattering, and relocation: an individual could call herself an exile or immigrant or refugee or ex-pat or guest worker and no one would blink; calling oneself a "diasporic," however, necessarily suggests identification with a group, however scattered, committed to the same work of cultural retention, reproduction, and revival of a home culture in an alien, foreign, "host" setting. Second, "diaspora" insists on the expansion of the temporal range of study to include at least two, often multiple, sometimes numerous, even countless, generations committed to that work, living potentially indefinitely beyond the singular experience of displacement that only an originating or otherwise discrete generation of immigrant-"diasporics" can undergo. Third, "diaspora" also insists on the role that extreme necessity or even violence can play in forcing such displacement on

a mass scale (and these causes can range from forcible capture and transportation into slavery, to the threat of genocidal extermination, to extreme forms of structural economic privation, to mass expulsion following political upheaval, to flight from acute conditions of state failure that render whole sectors of a society vulnerable to extreme, even life-threatening, precarity); diasporic communities evince their lack of choice in migrating precisely by at least resisting if not entirely rejecting the often common, and for some understandable, "immigrant" impulse to assimilate fully into the host country and its culture. Finally, for the purposes of this discussion, "diaspora" also insists on naming a set of living human practices that inhabit a specifically *cultural* field; while "immigrant/exile/refugee/ex-pat/guest worker" all primarily denote forms of official legal, political, or economic status, "diasporic" retains an entirely informal, unofficial, ambiguous, even improvisatory, undocumented (and for this reason often expressive, imaginative, creative, *critical*) sense. To put it bluntly, no one can ever ask for, and no one could ever produce, official "papers" or documentation proving "diasporic" status (Edwards 2001; Gopinath 2005; Flores 2009).

Of the major national groups arguably contributing in the greatest numbers to the unfolding of the diverse processes of diasporic life in the multicultural United States, those hailing from Latin America and the Caribbean pose a distinctly heterogeneous and uneven set of examples, resulting mostly from the distinct effects of the United States' complex history of colonial and imperial ambition in the region, and the varying effects of two centuries of shifting terms in trade policy, labor policy, immigration policy, and foreign policy across the states in question. Because the large plurality of Latina/o Americans are people of Mexican descent, and because the formation of a hybrid and widespread Mexican American world predates even the 1848 Treaty of

Guadalupe Hidalgo, which settled the terms of the U.S.-Mexican War, any description of a Mexican "diaspora" in the United States would have to concede an intense internal complexity and heterogeneity, one that would have to reconcile the centuries-long, fully hybridized mode of "Mexican American" life on the actual territorial border with the more explicitly conscious, intentional, and activist modes of, say, "Chicana/o" cultural and political practice since the 1960s, and with the proliferation since the 1980s of multiple new outposts of Mexican immigrant settlement in the United States in locations as widespread as the Great Northwest, Midwestern cities like Chicago and Detroit, and the American South.

Dynamics of Puerto Rican migration from the island to the mainland, especially since the 1898 annexation of the island after the Spanish-American War, might as readily avail itself of an insistent set of internal complexities. In the Puerto Rican case, that different set of complexities comes in part from the island's neocolonial status in relation to the U.S. state (rendering all Puerto Ricans U.S. citizens, for starters), the more focused bilateral formation of immigrant movement between the island and locations of settlement closely collected around New York City and its surrounding tristate area, the perhaps more constant movement of whole populations back and forth between island and mainland, and the distinctly different racial challenges that especially Puerto Ricans of African descent encountered across a twentieth-century United States transitioning from Jim Crow to the civil rights movement to a more complex mode of "multicultural" racial consciousness that finally understood that Latina/o and black were not actually mutually exclusive states of existence.

Cuban Americans in turn also arrived into their own modes of diasporic life and practice in a manner that reflects their country of origin's irreducibly distinct

geopolitical relationship with the United States. While Cubans had also been leaving the island and moving to mainland North America since the early 1800s for both political and economic reasons, the mass exodus of almost a million people who fled the island after the 1959 Castro Revolution came to determine the defining characteristics of whatever formation could call itself "Cuban America": more politically conservative than the other major Latina/o groups, more readily ascending to "model minority" status thanks to favorable immigration policies in the United States and the cultural if not political capital it brought with it as a primarily displaced elite class, likelier in its earlier waves of migration to be whiter, and likelier too to reflect the attitudes and values of the dominant, vocal political class that settled in Miami and in a few short decades converted that city into as important and influential a Latina/o American metropolis as New York or Los Angeles or San Antonio. Similar kinds of historical accounts of this complexity and heterogeneity could also be offered for the other national groupings settling into their American diasporic life in as large numbers, if more recently, especially from the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Guatemala, and El Salvador (Flores 2009; Ortíz 2009a, 2009b; A. P. Rodríguez 2009; Zavella 2011; López 2012).

For the remainder of this discussion, however, we will need to take a step back and consider some larger, more amorphous but perhaps more viable diasporic formations that demand as much if not even more attention from the field of Latina/o studies, especially going forward, than those organized around the more conventional and always problematic logics of the nation-state. One of these formations is regional, or perhaps in other ways alternatively geographical: this means, for example, studying diasporic formations coming not from Cuba, Puerto Rico, or the Dominican Republic specifically, but from the Caribbean more generally, or even

specifically from the "Spanish" Caribbean, or from the Island of Hispaniola; it also means studying a more general Central American transnational diasporic formation, one including all the significant sending nations in the region (Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Panama) and tracking thereby a decidedly transnational political exodus driven by the threats to life and livelihood of an intensely violent several decades of civil war, gang war, drug war, and genocide. Such "regional" analysis would in turn take shape in North American sites of diasporic settlement mostly by looking specifically at forms of trans-diasporic interaction and exchange: for example, when increasing numbers of Central Americans modify to the point of transforming the Mexican-dominant Latina/o character of Los Angeles, or the Caribbean-dominant Latina/o character of New York City, or when the intensifying Latina/o diversity occasioned by increasing numbers of Colombians, Venezuelans, and Haitians overwhelm and recast the once Cuban-dominant Latina/o character of Miami.

Certainly other alternative logics of diasporic formation can be as fruitfully studied; these include racial logics that would, for example, focus on the African (or American, Indigenous, or mestiz@) diasporic dimensions of the U.S. Latina/o diaspora; they could also include economic logics that distinguish between the practices of displaced elites fleeing dictatorships in countries like Cuba, Haiti, or the Dominican Republic from the practices of more conventional, working-, under-, and subaltern-class "economic" migrants primarily responding to the push-and-pull forces of a fully globalized transnational labor market. In addition, these also might include the "logics" of family, gender, sexuality, and physical ability, wherein conditions forcing mass displacement and enabling stable-enough resettlement and cultural reproduction elsewhere might differently impact men and women (especially but not exclusively

depending on their parental status and the citizenship status of their children), sexual minorities forced to confront queer- and trans-phobic violence in both home- and host-lands, and the growing number of "medical" migrants seeking access to health benefits and services.

In the mid-2010s, the most telling indicators of how future mass movements of peoples from a variety of Latin American and Caribbean locations might grow from or redirect the course of such movements from the past include: the viral and incipient growth of extreme criminal violence related to the drug trade and the cartels and street gangs that manage that trade in countries like Mexico, which struggle with effects of government corruption so pervasive that politically they operate emphatically as narco-states, and where, in countries like El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, already vulnerable and unstable national states are literally ceding aspects of direct political and social control to gangs; the Puerto Rican government's failure to meet its mounting debts, threatening to plunge the island's economy into a deep and perhaps irreversible depression; the intensifying racist, anti-immigrant legal initiatives on the Dominican side of Hispaniola to displace and depatriate hundreds of thousands of people of Haitian descent born in the Dominican Republic as far back as the early twentieth century but never acquiring official documentation of Dominican citizenship; the reestablishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba after nearly fifty-five years of animosity, stalemate, and blockade; and, finally, the epochal state failure of the United States' federal legislature itself to pass the kind of comprehensive immigration reform that would meaningfully transform the character and the promise of the U.S. Latina/o diaspora writ large by incorporating into the nation's political, economic, social, and cultural life the many millions of undocumented Americans hoping to remain, and to rise as, Americans.