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Insurgent Kinship: Queer P'urhépecha Migrations and Kinship

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Abstract

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My doctoral dissertation examines how Indigequeer P'urhépecha people in Michoacán and the diaspora face precarious presents and futures where their role within a nuclear family, belonging to society, and safety are conditional and based on their cooperation with racialized colonial heteropatriarchal norms. The concept of insurgent kinship weaves together this project, kin made through, as Adele E. Clarke explains in *Making Kin not Population*, “daily actions that transform partial relations into deeper ones” and “crafted through the exchange of sharing activities and other practices”¹ with humans and more than humans that create “viable presents and futures”² for queer P'urhépecha, with humans, more than human species and land.

¹ Clarke and Haraway, “Making Kin Not Population,” 32–33.

² Clarke and Haraway, 33.

This dissertation is about the P'urhépecha migrant diaspora, a largely ignored academic topic. Also, until recently, P'urhépecha scholarship was predominantly by external white and Chicano scholars. *Insurgent Kinship* is a part of the current resurgence of P'urhépecha creative and intellectual scholarship about Michoacán and the P'urhépecha people. Further, this dissertation intervenes in existing P'urhépecha by centering a queer feminist perspective and analysis. *Insurgent Kinship* examines the manifestations of colonial heteropatriarchy on P'urhépecha and mestizo people and pueblos near the P'urhépecha Plateau. I explore the roles of the church, family, and state institutions in enforcing dominant and violent heteropatriarchy. *Insurgent Kinship* makes inroads into queer theory by re-reading the P'urhépecha historical archive that non-P'urhépecha scholars have relied on to theorize on the colonial roots of queer indigeneity.

This dissertation uses the methods of autoethnography, oral history, poetry, genealogical archival research, and Indigenous Feminist analysis. It is multi-genre and combines conventional academic writing with personal narrative, stories, and poetry. This writing style works to center the unarchivable sensations and argues for the importance of felt knowledge in historical projects. I argue that resurging matriarchal and queer P'urhépecha kinship structures with biological family, land, ancestors, and more-than-humans is central to a more viable present for queer P'urhépecha and an anti-colonial future. Insurgent kinship connotes queer P'urhépecha kinship made with biological family, land, ancestors, and more-than-humans is insurgency to colonial heteropatriarchy.

Using Lionel Cantú and Chandan Reddy's work on migration and gender and sexuality, I contend that the colonial heteropatriarchy from Mexico is layered with the United States through the immigration process. For this reason, Indigequer migrants face a stronger vulnerability to

violence based on their sexuality and gender in the diaspora. The vulnerability can result in migration to the city where Indigeequeer migrants find their “homing” place rather than in their communities. This was the case for me. The city became a place of belonging, rebuilding, repairing, and resurging P’urhépecha knowledge and cultural practices, especially with intertribal Indigeequeer insurgent kinship. I argue that Indigenous migrants are entangled with settler colonialism. Lastly, insurgent kinship with dogs is made by understanding the eight millennia of relationships that Indigenous people in the Americas had before contact that are severed further by ongoing white supremacist settler colonialism that normalizes domination over more-than-human relationships and understanding.

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DEDICATION

This project has two dedications. First this is dedicated to my mom, Maria, mi abuela, Enedina, and my great-grandmother, Catalina. Secondly, this dedicated to my Suki.

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation uses the methods of autoethnography, oral history, collaborative theorizing, genealogical archival research, poetry, and Indigenous Feminist analysis. My writing style combines my storytelling voice, poetic voice, and analysis. I go back and forth between the three to relay and center embodied knowledge. My use of poetry and poetic voice are insurgent poetics, as defined by Hannah Burdette in *Revealing Rebellion in Abiayala: The Insurgent Poetics of Contemporary Indigenous Literature*, as a “mode of writing that narrates and/or performs acts of resistance and that partakes in the struggle for political and intellectual sovereignty.”³ Insurgent poetics is “a refusal” to understand P’urhépechidad “only in the terms imposed by the colonizer.”⁴ The poems at the end of each chapter refuse the contemporary colonial heteropatriarchal narrative of P’urhépecha culture and work to imagine possibilities beyond it. As I argue later, my poetry is essential to making *Insurgent Kinship* a queer P’urhépecha counter-archival project.

My conceptualization, insurgent kinship, argues for queer P’urhépecha futures by resisting colonial heteropatriarchy. For this reason, I define insurgent kinship as kinship made with humans and more-than-humans that resurges pre-contact matriarchal and queer P’urhépecha kinship structures. I argue that insurgent kinship is necessary to remake a world without white supremacist settler colonialism and colonial heteropatriarchal structures.⁵ The section entitled “Insurgent kinship and resurgence” in this chapter further elaborates on insurgent kinship.

³ Burdette, *Revealing Rebellion in Abiayala*. 6

⁴ Burdette. 6

⁵ Comtassel and Gaudry, “Insurgent Education And Indigenous-Centred Research.”

The reflections on the lockdown and my life in the “Pandemic fatigue and settler atmospherics” section autoethnographically or otherwise do two things. The first is to make theories of settler colonialism, colonial heteropatriarchy, and white supremacy more *real*. Using my experience, I argue that there is a difference between cognitively understanding that white supremacy and settler colonialism exist and knowing they are real. By real, I mean that white supremacy and settler colonialism are institutional structures that affect everyday life for Black and Indigenous people and that I am entangled in them. Before they were real, white supremacy and settler colonialism were considered events that could be resolved with forgiveness.⁶ Rage and grief made them real because they provided clarifying information,⁷ released me from victimization and freed a desire for liberatory futures.

Thus, my writing style works to sentientize the subjects of settler colonialism, white supremacy, and colonial heteropatriarchy. By sentientize, I mean that my writing style accounts for some of the emotions and bodily sensations of the subjects of this research project. Sentientize problematizes the commonly used word humanize, which relies on colonial grammars⁸ to argue for sympathy, empathy, or inclusion for a group of people or individuals often excluded from the category of the Human. Sentientize⁹ also decenters the human species and argues for the inclusion of more-than-humans when discussing topics related to institutional oppression. The second thing that reflections on the pandemic and my life does is to theorize from emotions and sensations and to make meaning from the feel of memories rather than solely the discernible sequence of events or observations that can be archived.

⁶ Flowers, “Refusal to Forgive.”

⁷ hooks, “Killing Rage.”

⁸ King, “ERRANT GRAMMARS.”

⁹ I scoured for an alternative to humanize and was unsatisfied with the findings, which I found more problematic. For example www.wordhippo.com suggested “civilizing, enriching, helping forward, ethicizing and bringing civilization to.” When I looked up the word sentientize I came across Reddit.com discussions boards related to the video game Warframe regarding some of the creatures in the game which are not human.

This dissertation is especially aligned with the scholarship of Critical Latinx studies spearheaded by scholars like Maylei Blackwell, Luis Urrieta Jr. (P'urhépecha), María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo, and Gabriela Spears-Rico (Pirinda and P'urhépecha).¹⁰ As Maylei Black argues in “Scales of Resistance, Indigenous Women’s Transborder Activism,” Indigenous migrant women’s autonomy can be scaled down to the body, home, and communities.¹¹ *Insurgent Kinship* focuses on the body, home, and communities as sites of possible queer P'urhépecha autonomy in the present and future by making kinship.

I attribute the understanding of Atecucario de la Constitución, my birthplace and important site in this project, as a P'urhépecha heritage pueblo to Luis Urrieta Jr.’s work from “Familia and Comunidad-Based Saberes.”¹² María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo’s argument that the United States and Mexico have been “produced, materially and representationally, through historical, social, and racial relation with indigenous subjects”¹³ guided decisions regarding the historical events incorporated in this project. Lastly, my work deeply aligns with Gabriela Spears-Rico’s conceptualizations of Pirinda/P'urhépecha and Xicanista motherwork,¹⁴ savage feminism¹⁵ her style of poetic/narrative writing and inclusion of gender and sexuality to P'urhépecha studies. I expand on Spears-Rico’s theory that violence has shaped the identities of Indigenous Mexican women to discuss how this is also the case for queer P'urhépechas. Spears-Rico’s motherwork praxis has influenced insurgent kinship praxis.

¹⁰ Maylei Blackwell, Luis Urrieta Jr., María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo, and Gabriela Spears-Rico were crucial to the construction of this project, as was the contributions of many Critical Latinx studies scholars that will be cited throughout this dissertation.

¹¹ Blackwell, *Scales of Resistance*.

¹² Urrieta Jr., “Familia and Comunidad-Based Saberes.”

¹³ Saldaña-Portillo, *Indian Given*, 6.

¹⁴ Spears-Rico, “REPLANTING YOU AS WINYAN, UARHITI, KWE.”

¹⁵ Caballero et al., *The Chicana Motherwork Anthology*.

I am deeply concerned with the unarchivable such as the repertoire of belonging and unbelonging in colonial heteropatriarchal settler states such as Mexico and the United States. As my mentor Gabriela Spear-Rico tells me, Autoethnography is critical in complimenting and addressing the silences of queer narratives in the archive. Gayatri Gopinath writes in her book *Unruly Visions: The Aesthetic Practices of Queer Diaspora* that autoethnography offers counter-archives that make “apparent the everyday intimacies of bodies and landscapes, histories and temporalities.”¹⁶ These counter-archives are created by documenting the “everyday, the personal, and the discarded that typically fall outside the purview of official archives.”¹⁷ I do this by incorporating prose and storytelling within the essays and poetry at the end of each chapter. This, in turn, sentientizes the queer P’urhépecha experiences since I am theorizing from my senses, intuition, feelings, and intimacies.

Pandemic Fatigue and Settler Atmospheric

Two weeks before the official Washington lockdown, I was to present my work and poetry at an out-of-state event and gathering of Indigenous queer artists and scholars. I was torn about going because of the growing apprehension about Covid-19, yet I took the risk to be with other Indigequeer creatives, including some that I considered insurgent kin because it was one of the few spaces where I felt alive. Colonial heteropatriarchy is suffocating¹⁸ and strangles Indigequeer life and creativity. The term colonial heteropatriarchy argues that settler concepts of gender and sexuality are central to the eliminating, exclusionary, and dispossessing apparatuses

¹⁶ Gopinath, *Unruly Visions*, 7.

¹⁷ Gopinath, 16.

¹⁸ Apata, “I Can’t Breathe.”

of settler colonialism, white supremacy, and capitalism. I will be using colonial heteropatriarchy and white supremacist settler colonialism interchangeably, as well the singular white supremacy, settler colonialism when appropriate throughout this dissertation.

This trip was the liminal space between *before the pandemic, before empty streets, before social distancing, before lockdowns*, and the after, the now and altered future. A shift was coming, and my instinct was to absorb every moment. On the first morning of this trip, I went to a café a short distance from the hotel where I was staying. It was a warm March morning, and the streets were lined with young trees that moved with the woosh of traffic coming and going. I almost walked past the café. The exterior and interior were void of color except for the natural wood that distracted me from noticing the uncomfortable hard chairs and benches. This wasn't a Starbucks that could get away with the leather couches and chairs; this was a neoliberal aesthetic-coffee shop modeled to discourage long meetings and stays. But still, capitalism gets some of us comfortable with being uncomfortable, and I could tell by the slouch and the focus on the laptop that some coffee drinkers had; they had been there a while. Small groups were congregating at various tables in the café. There was a hum of indie pop music and conversations. No one around me looked worried or concerned about being in a small café with unmasked strangers.

I sat near the open door and opened the draft of my talk, based on a proposed chapter of my dissertation, on my laptop. Until then, I had made progress with my dissertation, a co-written, co-researched, collaborative theorizing project with queer Indigenous creatives I was close to. I had agreements set with my collaborators about the nature of their participation and how I was to compensate them for their labor. I had recorded conversations that focused on Indigenous creating- performing art, medicine, poetry, relations, etc., with anti-colonial goals and values.

The project was meant to be about joy and creating as queer Indigenous people, something I felt was needed as the United States edged nearer to fascism with emboldened white supremacist violence encouraged by the then-president.

Before I could revisit the draft, my phone dinged, returning me to the liminal world. My newsfeed was flooded with updates on the growing number of possible infections in Washington state. I felt tightness in my chest as I thought about how Black and Indigenous people are more vulnerable to Covid-19 because white supremacist settler colonialism creates toxic stress environments for Black and Indigenous people, creating illness.¹⁹ I thought about the countless times I had worked while sick when I was employed in the service sector. This is the norm for many low-wage workers who depend on every hour of their pay. As I watched coffee drinkers come and go, I wondered how the looming pandemic and the suffocating structures²⁰ of colonial heteropatriarchy would affect everyone in this space. Who would lose a loved one? Multiple loved ones? Who would lose their life?

One week after arriving home, social distancing and stay-at-home orders were mandated in Washington. For many, the world transformed. For some, it shrunk, yet for others, it opened as more people turned to social media and video meetings for work, socializing, and intimacy. The pandemic affected much of the population, whether infected with the virus or not. It declined the health of people with mental illness, elderly, disabled, and homebound people²¹ and increased the prevalence of anxiety and depression by 25% globally.²² Anxiety causes symptoms such as “feeling of shortness of breath or smothering sensations.”²³ For those on the exploitative end of

¹⁹ Churchwell et al., “Call to Action.”

²⁰ Apata, “‘I Can’t Breathe.’”

²¹ Weber, “Pandemic Medical Innovations Leave Behind People With Disabilities.”

²² World Health Organization, “COVID-19 Pandemic Triggers 25% Increase in Prevalence of Anxiety and Depression Worldwide.”

²³ “What Are Anxiety Disorders?”

capitalism and settler colonial white supremacy, the lockdown may have heightened the sensation of being smothered.

By June 2020, I was teaching on Zoom and left the house only to go to the grocery store or take walks. Some people thrived under lockdown because they could try new hobbies with extra time from working at home, but I, like many, struggled. I had to create and propose a different dissertation project. The Indigenous creatives I had worked with were deeply affected by the loss because of Covid-19 that touched our Indigenous, Black, and migrant worker communities. My relationships with my collaborators mattered more than my project. It wasn't possible to move forward when they needed to focus their energy on getting through the pandemic, which for a few meant working through immeasurable, life-altering loss. Rather than succumb to the demands of capitalist productivity by developing a dissertation project to graduate within my goal timeframe, I focused on helping people make it through the pandemic. Covid-19 exasperated inequities and structural violence that affected many people in my life.

When I talked to my colleagues and insurgent kin in academia, very few had progressed in their projects. Many of us felt pandemic fatigue, the “natural response to prolonged, all-encompassing stress that demands our emotional, cognitive, physical, and spiritual energy.”²⁴ I was confronted with reports about preventable deaths, illness, injustice, and struggles every time I turned to the twenty-four-hour news cycle to stay up to date with infection rates and the progress of the Covid-19 vaccine. Grocery, convenience, pet supply, store workers, pharmacy, and healthcare workers did not have the option to work from home. They were put in a position of risking their lives while being underpaid in undervalued work. Even while the state designated these workers as “essential workers,” and some were temporarily offered up to \$25,000 in

²⁴ Cary, “Pandemic Fatigue Is Real, and You’re Not Alone.”

“hazard pay”²⁵ to compensate for the heightened risk, it was clear that these workers were treated as disposable. Indigenous and Black, especially women and LGBTQ workers, have historically been overrepresented in the low-wage “essential” jobs and became overrepresented in Covid-19 infections and death.²⁶ The rapid infection rate of Covid-19 aided the eliminating mechanisms of colonial heteropatriarchy.

There was a pressure cooker effect from the cumulative events of the pandemic. Anti-Asian American violence, especially toward Asian-American women,²⁷ the heightened precarity for migrant workers that were excluded from hazard pay for the majority of lockdown,²⁸ the deprioritization of disabled, elderly, and homebound people during the peaks of infections,²⁹ the increase in deaths of transgender women,³⁰ and Native Americans dying at a higher rate than other racial groups³¹ raised questions about white supremacy and settler colonialism in the mainstream and increased interest in anti-racism and abolition work.

There was also increased resistance toward white supremacist settler colonialism. Low-wage workers organized workplaces to demand better working conditions; the Cheyenne River Sioux and Oglala Sioux people restricted entry into their reservations; and poor, disabled, migrant, Black, queer people of color, transgender, and Native/Indigenous people organized mutual aid networks to provide basic goods and financial support for their local communities. On May 25, 2020, four Minneapolis police officers arrested then killed George Floyd. Rage over extinguishing George Floyd’s life catalyzed a global Black Lives Matter movement joined by

²⁵ Du, “The COVID-19 Hazard Continues, but the Hazard Pay Does Not.”

²⁶ “Black, Hispanic Americans Are Overrepresented in Essential Jobs | School of Public Health | University of Illinois Chicago.”

²⁷ Cohen, “Anti-Asian Violence Is Consistently Directed at Women.”

²⁸ “How Covid-19 Has Made Life More Dangerous for Migrant Workers.”

²⁹ Weber, “Pandemic Medical Innovations Leave Behind People With Disabilities.”

³⁰ Nast, “44 Trans People Killed in 2020, Marking Worst Year on Record for Transphobic Violence.”

³¹ “Native American Deaths from COVID-19 Highest Among Racial Groups.”

millions in the United States. His multiple utterances of “I can’t breathe,” which were heard on recorded footage, echoed Eric Garner’s 2014 death by the New York City Police and the countless deaths of Black women, transgender people, and men due to police violence or vigilantism.

“I can’t breathe” became analogous with denouncing institutionalized Black murder in the collective consciousness. I heard it as a chant in Seattle. It was uncomfortable to hear it from white people’s mouths who showed up in unprecedented numbers.³² I wonder if chanting, “I can’t breathe,” mitigated white settler liberal anxiety about their privilege by focusing on biological similarity. We all breathe the same. However, this assumption, too, should be interrogated. Gabriel O. Apata, Kristen Simmons, a Moapa Band of Southern Paiutes citizen, and Peter Sloterdijk argue that the atmosphere in our environment can be manipulated to create unequally distributed air qualities.³³ Simmons calls the unequal distribution of air qualities and weaponization of air settler atmospherics. For instance, environmental racism and the overrepresentation of Superfund sites, mining, and extractive industries on Native American reservations.³⁴ Apata writes, “Air not only represents freedom but is also the embodiment of freedom – not freedom from something but freedom to be, to live: freedom as life itself, while its negation is suffocation.”³⁵

As I write this, I think about the many times I saw an airplane airdrop pesticide in an orchard as a child of Indigenous migrant workers and a former migrant worker. The chemical dust collected on our flesh, clothes, and vehicles and spun circles in our poorly circulated rooms on hot summer days in migrant housing. The dust got on children who accompanied their parents

³² Harmon and Tavernise, “One Big Difference About George Floyd Protests.”

³³ Simmons, “Settler Atmospherics.”

³⁴ Hansen, “Kill the Land, Kill the People.”

³⁵ Apata, “I Can’t Breathe.” 243

to the fields due to lack of childcare. The dust drops correlated with fevers during a fruit picking season. Chemical dust from pesticides has cancer-causing agents and has been linked to respiratory illness, complications for pregnant people, and birth defects.³⁶ Indigenous Mexicans have long been the target of North America for exploitable labor. While this continues, little has improved for migrant workers since I worked with my family in the fields in the late 1990s. Although Indigenous Mexicans, including migrant farm workers from Indigenous origins in Mexican states such as Oaxaca and Michoacan, were hailed as heroes during the pandemic, U.S. made naturalization was made more difficult by passing a rule refusing residency to people who sought public assistance in 2020³⁷ and did little to improve their working conditions or wages.³⁸ Living under such conditions creates “atmospheres of apprehension”³⁹ where migrant workers, especially undocumented ones, are also suffocated by white supremacist settler colonialism.

I contend that another example of settler atmospherics is the ventilator shortages that were revealed during peaks of Covid-19 infection. In the first few months of the lockdown, hospitals were inadequately equipped to handle the severity of Covid-19 and were forced to ration ventilators. The decision model adopted by many hospitals revolved around who would benefit the most from receiving them.⁴⁰ They decided who deserved a chance to live based on factors that favored white middle-class people, such as age, life expectancy, and underlying health factors. This colorblind approach served white supremacist settler colonialism.

Infection rates disproportionately impacted Black and Indigenous people, and this was by design. White supremacist settler colonialism institutions cause illness and reduce life

³⁶ Arcury et al., “Lifetime and Current Pesticide Exposure among Latino Farmworkers in Comparison to Other Latino Immigrants.”

³⁷ Simmons, “Settler Atmospherics.”

³⁸ Bobadilla, “During the Covid-19 Pandemic, Immigrant Farmworkers Are Heroes - The Washington Post.”

³⁹ Simmons, “Settler Atmospherics.”

⁴⁰ “Opinion | The Way We Ration Ventilators Is Biased - The New York Times.”

expectancies of Black and Indigenous people, especially for LGBTQ and transgender Black and Indigenous people who must also contend with gender and sexuality-based violence. Gender is also a factor in Covid-19 related deaths. Black women died of Covid-19 at a higher rate than Black men,⁴¹ and Native American women were found to be “at a disproportionately higher risk of critical COVID-19 illness” in a study of 672 covid patients in New Mexico.⁴²

Using “I can’t breathe” as a handle exposed that white supremacy suffocates Black and Indigenous lives.⁴³ The “normative and necessary violences found in settlement” that constrict Indigenous and Black life are part of the settler atmospherics, Simmons argues.⁴⁴ And this is made even more possible because the introduction of industrialized foods compromised the development of human skulls and airways. It is difficult to breath because of white supremacist settler colonialism. Dental researchers and archeologists have found that industrialized foods, an extension of settler colonialism, changed the shape of our skulls, which increased respiratory illness and made breathing more difficult for all but worse for some. Dental researchers and archeologists studied skulls, the majority from the Morton Collection,⁴⁵ before industrialization, and found they had “enormous forward-facing jaws” and “expansive sinus cavities and broad mouths.”⁴⁶ This resulted from laboring on thick roots, raw foods, meats, and roughage that

⁴¹ Chen and Danielsen, “Sex Disparities in COVID-19 Deaths Hide High Toll on Black Women.”

⁴² Quiner et al., “672 Native American Gravidas Are More Likely to Develop Severe COVID-19 Illness than Non-Native American Women.”

⁴³ Apata, “‘I Can’t Breathe.’”

⁴⁴ Simmons, “Settler Atmospherics.”

⁴⁵ The Morton Collection is named after the eugenicist and white supremacist from the 1830s, Samuel Morton, who made his fame by trying to prove the superiority of the white race by studying the skulls of peoples whom he deemed inferior such as Brazilian, Arab, Persian, Seminole (Native American), Mexican soldiers and slaves. Eager to collect his skulls, which grew to 1,225, he took to dubious means of acquiring these human specimens. He traveled and had connections worldwide who paid for cadavers. Grave robbing became a profitable white supremacist trade, as it was taboo to desecrate white graves.

⁴⁶ Nestor, *Breath*, 29.

comprised much of the world's diet. After industrialization, food was packaged and softened and required less chewing.

Lessened chewing reduced the use of jaw muscles, and mouths shrunk over a generation. This caused a few problems. Whereas our ancient ancestors had straight teeth, those born after industrialization showed “misaligned jaws, overbites, underbites,” and crooked teeth.⁴⁷

Underdeveloped skull bones also resulted in shrunken sinuses and airways. Narrower airways made breathing more difficult and mouth breathing more prevalent. Our nose is designed to warm and filter air, and our airways' size correlates with how much air we can inhale. Mouth breathing results in inhaling cold, unfiltered air and allergens and compromising the control of our diaphragm. For some, this means shallow breathing. For some people, this phrase has a different interpretation. Mouth breathers have more respiratory problems. The development of jaws and airways depends on eating quality whole foods. Today food deserts are prevalent in Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities, which limits access to whole foods. Therefore Black, Brown, and Indigenous people are more susceptible to developing a respiratory illness because of food deserts, which are exasperated by pollutants, toxins, and deliberate weaponization of air. I argue that settler atmospherics doesn't just work through “unequally distributed” quality of air but also through compromised underdeveloped airways from low-quality food.

⁴⁷ Nestor, *Breath*. 30

Black Lives Matter: *Living* During the Lockdown

One day after footage of George Floyd's last minutes was made public, protests erupted in Minneapolis-Saint Paul on May 26, 2020. During the Minneapolis-Saint Paul uprisings, protestors defended themselves with industrial-grade masks and bandanas against hand-held pepper spray and tear gas. Years prior, protectors at Standing Rock were doused in pepper spray through water cannons in freezing weather which caused over three hundred injuries. Pepper spray and tear gas are considered "chemical irritants" that "cause sensations of burning, pain, and inflammation of the airways,"⁴⁸ yet they were used during the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic. Although obvious, it is important to remember that Covid-19 kills by restricting airways, so weaponizing the air was especially cruel. Police forces around the United States have normalized the use of disorienting chemical agents banned for international warfare from the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention on Black and Indigenous protectors and protestors.⁴⁹

By May 27, one day after the footage was released, there were protests across various U.S. cities, including Los Angeles, Chicago, and Memphis. The National Guard was activated in Minnesota to squash the movement. Yet, the protestors, understanding the risks to their airways and lifeways, continued demonstrating. The protests were successful in charging Floyd's murderers for their actions. Derek Chauvin, the cop who knelt on Floyd's neck for over nine minutes, was charged with third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter on May 29, 2020. As George Floyd's family grieved, two autopsies done on Floyd's body were ruled homicide, and protests continued. On June 3, more of the cops present during Floyd's arrest were

⁴⁸ "Police Weapons Used in George Floyd Protests."

⁴⁹ Simmons, "Settler Atmospherics."

charged with aiding and abetting the murder.⁵⁰ On June 6, the protests reached the Pacific Northwest.



Figure A: June 6, 2020, *Health Workers for Black Lives Matter March* in downtown Seattle. Photo by author.

As I marched, I prayed for a different world to manifest. I felt and recited the same thoughts: *A different world is calling us. This is the opening. Let this hell we raise for Black lives lead to structural change that we are just beginning to imagine. Raise hell! Raise hell! Cry! Rage! Rage!* Around me, it seemed others heard me and were chanting my thoughts and demands with me.

⁵⁰ Taylor, “George Floyd Protests.”

The next day, June 7, 2020, my partner and I drove to South Seattle to join the *We Want to Live Rally* organized by Black and Brown high school students.



Figure a Cellphone photo taken on June 7, 2020, at the We Want to Live rally in south Seattle.

Photo by author.

Again, I prayed: *From this, another world will emerge. From this, we will build a world where all Black people will be cared for and valued. From this, we will create a world where trans women will be cared for and valued. From this, we will build a world that is already in us. From we will free ourselves more.*

It was inspiring to live through the Black Lives Matter movement. As I marched, I felt a collective rage for the death of George Floyd and countless Black men, women, and queer, transgender people at the hands of the state. I felt a kinship, a shared struggle against white supremacist settler colonialism and the legacy of conquest. In 2015, BLM organizers defaced a symbol of settler colonialism to insert Black people in the conversation of conquest.⁵¹ They poured red paint and tagged the Christopher Columbus statue in Boston. Days after the rallies in Seattle, the same statue would be beheaded on June 10, 2020.⁵² These acts bluntly pointed to the lesser-known history of Columbus as an enslaver and, as Tiffany Lethabo King argues, mark conquest as central to the construction of the Human in the image of the colonizer, disavowing Indigenous and Black life.⁵³ At the rallies, protest signs calling for Black queer and transgender liberation brought attention to how settler gender and settler sexuality were constructed and are reaffirmed by targeted violence towards gender-nonconforming, trans and LGBTQ Indigenous and Black people. When I was at the BLM rallies, I was there fully as a non-Black person outraged by anti-Black structures and institutions of violence⁵⁴ including anti-Blackness in Indigenous communities,⁵⁵ and as a queer Indigenous person who is deeply committed to anti-colonialist liberations, which center queer and transgender Black and Indigenous people.

Sefanit Habtom and Megan Scribe argue in “To Breathe Together Co-conspirators for Decolonial Futures,” that “our [Black, Indigenous, and Black-Indigenous] interests and our survival tie us together.”⁵⁶ I share their belief that solidarity and coalition fall short of naming the

⁵¹ King, “ERRANT GRAMMARS.”

⁵² Buell, “Someone Beheaded the Christopher Columbus Statue in Boston...Again.”

⁵³ King, “ERRANT GRAMMARS.”

⁵⁴ Deer et al., “Rage, Indigenous Feminisms, and the Politics of Survival.”

⁵⁵ Deer et al., “Rage...” Sarah Deer says “As Indigenous feminists, we must define and control the gendered contours of our shared rage in this moment in history. We must be willing to confront anti-Blackness in our tribal communities. We must be willing to call out sexist and homophobic oppression perpetrated by powerful men in tribal leadership.”

⁵⁶ Habtom and Scribe, “To Breathe Together,” 2.

specific relations that bond Black and Indigenous people together. They propose the term co-conspirator, from the word conspire, which Kristen Simmons points out means “to breathe together.”⁵⁷ Co-breathing challenges the conditions of settler atmospherics and lessens the suffocation from settler colonialism, colonial heteropatriarchy, white supremacy, and capitalism.

Whereas the lockdown had smothered my creativity and capacity for joy, the Black Lives Matter protests revived my desires by reinvigorating my imagination for Indigiqueer and Black queer futures. White supremacist settler colonialism cannot be dismantled if colonial heteropatriarchy is upheld in Indigenous and Black futures. By being a co-conspirator at Black Lives Matter, an act of good relations, I felt a resurgence of grounded normativity,⁵⁸ land-based practices, and knowledges. Glen Coulthard and Mississauga Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson argue that grounded normativity “houses and reproduces the practices and procedures, based on deep reciprocity, that are inherently informed by an intimate relationship to place”⁵⁹ as well as “how to live our lives in relation to other people and nonhuman life forms in a profoundly nonauthoritarian, nondominating, nonexploitive manner.”⁶⁰

As an urban queer P’urhépecha in the diaspora, grounded normativity includes providing material support for groups affected by white supremacist settler colonialism. In this case, my participation in BLM protests meant I was sharing lifeways with Black relatives. I was reanimated as I reconnected to my ancestors, my spiritual kin, and spoke more regularly with my close friends and mother. I sought more opportunities of feeling connected to life rather than

⁵⁷ Habtom and Scribe, 2.

⁵⁸ Coulthard and Simpson, “Grounded Normativity / Place-Based Solidarity.”

⁵⁹ Coulthard and Simpson, 253.

⁶⁰ Coulthard and Simpson, “Grounded Normativity / Place-Based Solidarity.” 254.

smothered by colonial heteropatriarchy, and my partner and I adopted our pup, Suki. I realized these relationships made life more viable,⁶¹ inspiring me to write.

Ultimately, the concept of co-breathing, the BLM protests, the events, challenges, struggles, movements, and organizing around mutual aid and collective during the lockdown resurged a desire to write about Indigene queer kinship that conventional language failed to capture. Specifically, a term to name the anti-colonial relationships that made life more viable and that connected to me my P'urhépecha cultural practices and knowledges. Kinship that enlivened me rather than smothered me. I decided to pick up a project I had started in childhood when I learned to write, documenting my family's story by focusing on oral history, memory, poetry, and felt knowledge. I could use this project to uncover and validate history about my family and P'urhépecha heritage otherwise obscured or withheld. While writing a description of my project for a grant proposal, I used the term insurgent kinship, and it felt right.

Insurgent Kinship and Resurgence

My dissertation prioritizes Indigenous formations and knowledges about kinship, still, I found connections to a queer theory about kinship. Tyler Bradway and Elizabeth Freeman write that kinship is a fungible term used by the colonial heteropatriarchal nation as “a technique for exclusion and inclusion, and a set of conceptual building blocks for forms of relationality that obviate and lay bare its biopolitical work.”⁶² For this reason, queer, feminist and critical race scholars contest “structuralist accounts of kinship” that “naturalize the mutual imbrications of

⁶¹ Clarke and Haraway, “Making Kin Not Population.”

⁶² Tyler Bradway and Elizabeth Freeman, *Queer Kinship*, 21.

heteronormativity, patriarchy, white supremacy, and Western imperialism.”⁶³ Settler kinship struggles, and theories must be interrogated so that they do not reproduce white supremacist settler colonial values. Another concept from Queer Studies that I align with is that LGBTQIA folks of color make chosen families. Scholars such as Norma Alarcón,⁶⁴ Jose Javier Torres Fernandez,⁶⁵ and Kai M. Green⁶⁶ have explored how white supremacy, culture, and heteropatriarchy impact Black and LGBTQI and women of color. Yet, my work is framed from queer and Indigenous experiences of abandonment from community and unique Indigenous isolation from loss or disconnection of heritage or traditions due to colonial heteropatriarchy and settler colonialism. Also, queer kinship critique and chosen family theories fall short when it comes to more-than-humans.

But I didn’t write this dissertation to critique queer, feminist, or critical race scholars. Instead, I wrote this to understand kinship that makes the present more livable as a queer P’urhépecha in the diaspora. To do this, I needed to understand the family, social, religious, and legal structures that contribute to precarious and conditional belonging for queer P’urhépecha. I also needed to learn the history of Michoacán from the point of contact with the P’urhépecha to the post-Mexican Revolution to understand how these settler structures were constructed. I explore this further in “Chapter 1: Matrilineal Migrations” by writing about my place of birth, Atecucario de la Constitución, a previously Indigenous pueblo located in the P’urhépecha Meseta.

Melissa K. Nelson, Anishinaabe/Métis/Norwegian, argues that Indigenous women’s “resurgence is profoundly tied to making new relatives” with more-than-humans and “the core

⁶³ Tyler Bradway and Elizabeth Freeman, *Queer Kinship*, 1.

⁶⁴ Alarcón, “Making Familia from Scratch.”

⁶⁵ Fernández, “CHOSEN FAMILIES AND FEMINIST MOTHERING IN THE BALLROOM COMMUNITY.”

⁶⁶ Green, “In the Life.”

elements of water, air, soil, and fire” so that we can renew “our ability to care and live in reciprocal relations with the relatives that give us life.”⁶⁷ Restoring pre-contact matriarchal kinship structures can “transform the very structures of knowledge that undergird”⁶⁸ white supremacist settler colonialism. I write about how dog Suki resurged P’urhépecha knowledge and praxis regarding sacred kinship with dogs in “Chapter 4: Dogs are Insurgent Kin.”

My mentor, Gabriela Spears-Rico, informed me that queer P’urhépecha held important roles before contact. Insurgent kinship argues that for queer P’urhépecha making and resurging matriarchal and queer P’urhépecha kinship structures with humans and more-than-humans are important to anti-colonial liberation and decolonization. “Chapter 3: Specters that Speak: Indigqueer and Intergenerational Artist Collaboration” explores intertribal and intergenerational insurgent kinship's role in dreaming of queer Indigenous futures. I specify matriarchal and queer kinship structures to recognize how colonial heteropatriarchy has infiltrated and reshaped P’urhépecha family structures into patriarchal homophobic and transphobic ones, especially those from Atecucario, a previously Indigenous agrarian pueblo in Michoacán.

Conquest in the Americas used heteropatriarchy “as an organizing structure of colonial power” to target gender variant and sexually diverse people for genocide.⁶⁹ Genocide of what would now be considered queer people was necessary to reorganize P’urhépecha kinship structures from matriarchal to heteropatriarchal so that colonizers could establish governance and law. As Spanish settlers established more power, they normalized gender violence and criminalized Indigenous men-with-men sexuality⁷⁰ while excusing the normalized sex between

⁶⁷ Nelson, “Wrestling with Fire,” 74.

⁶⁸ Burdette, *Revealing Rebellion in Abiyala*. 5

⁶⁹ King, “ERRANT GRAMMARS.” 57

⁷⁰ Tortorici, “Heran Todos Putos.”

European men.⁷¹ Colonial heteropatriarchy was established as a racialized power structure and continues to operate through the institutions of family, church, and the state in what is now Michoacán. Mexico is deadly for transgender women and LGBTQ people.⁷² Although murders based on sexuality are not disaggregated in Michoacán from the overall estimated violent deaths, it is not a stretch to assume that LGBTQ and transgender women make up a disproportionate portion of the over 34,000 deaths reported in 2021.⁷³ I outline this further in “Chapter 2: Land as kin: Queer P’urhépecha in the Diaspora” and explain how the colonial heteropatriarchy of Mexico travels with migrants and in the diaspora is stratified with the colonial heteropatriarchy that structures the United States immigration process and US nationalism.

Today, queer P’urhépecha are born into precarious belonging that requires suppression of queer desire to survive in colonial heteropatriarchal family structures, Catholic society, and nation-state. These structures continue to use violence to enforce settler gender and settler sexuality. Further relationships with more-than-humans in colonial heteropatriarchal family structures, Catholic society, and nation-states are organized around anthropocentric values that ridicule and discourage such matriarchal P’urhépecha kinship structures. Severed, tense and conditional relationships with biological family and more-than-humans (land, water, air, fire, nonhuman animals, spirits, and ancestors), as well as P’urhépecha cultural practices, create ruptures. These ruptures can have violent consequences, especially when biological families become a source of trauma rather than belonging.

Michelle Morado Peters argues that because of these ruptures, grief exists “without that name” and motivates a search for ancestral kin and genealogy.⁷⁴ I add that it motivates a drive

⁷¹ Nesvig, *Promiscuous Power*.

⁷² Lopez, “Mexico Sees Deadliest Year for LGBT+ People in Five Years.”

⁷³ Pandit, “Homicides in Mexico - Statistics | Mexico Peace Index.”

⁷⁴ Morado-Peters, Text message conversation with Michelle Morado-Peters.

for more-than-human kinship and a resurgence of matrilineal P'urhépecha cultural practices. For these reasons, I argue that queer P'urhépecha must make insurgent kin with “daily actions that transform partial relations into deeper ones” and “crafted through the exchange of sharing activities and other practices”⁷⁵ with humans and more-than-humans to create “viable presents and futures”⁷⁶ for queer P'urhépecha, with humans, more than human species and land. In Chapter 1: Matrilineal Migrations, I write about the insurgent kinship I made with my grandmother, mother, and my long-passed great-grandmother, Catalina. Queer P'urhépecha must make kinship with biological family-members that reject colonial heteronormativity, because hostility, rejection, and violence towards LGBTQ people are deeply entrenched within settler family structures.

Whereas relationships with more-than-humans compared to humans are made differently, they both require daily actions of mutual reciprocity. Insurgent kinship is grounded relations, life-long relationships based on land-based practices, acting as a good relative with more than humans with care, interdependence, and mutual responsibility, that value life over profit. Grounded relations is a term in conversation with Glen Coulthard and Leanne Simpson's intellectual labor and their ideas on grounded normativity as land-based and decolonial relationships to land and knowledge systems.⁷⁷

If an insurgency is defined as “a revolt against established authority,”⁷⁸ insurgent kinship, or kinship made that resurges pre-contact matriarchal P'urhépecha kinship structures with humans and more-than-humans, is necessary to remake a world without colonial heteropatriarchal structures. As I pointed out earlier, queer P'urhépecha held important roles

⁷⁵ Clarke and Haraway, “Making Kin Not Population.” 32-33

⁷⁶ Clarke and Haraway. 32-33

⁷⁷ Coulthard and Simpson, “Grounded Normativity / Place-Based Solidarity.”

⁷⁸ Comtassel and Gaudry, “Insurgent Education And Indigenous- Centred Research.” 168

before contact, so their participation in P'urhépecha society will resurge cultural knowledge. If revolution occurs in Michoacán, colonial heteropatriarchal and, in turn, white supremacist settler colonial structures will be reproduced if queer P'urhépecha continue to be excluded from the community. Complete resurgence is not possible if queer P'urhépecha cultural knowledge is not restored. Insurgent kinship is a politicized queer Indigenous resurgence that rejects external directives⁷⁹ from white supremacist settler colonialism and colonial heteropatriarchal structures and embraces anti-colonial relations and praxis. By making insurgent kinship and resurging matriarchal P'urhépecha praxis, the present is made more viable and Indigenous queer futures more possible for queer P'urhépecha.

Making Viable Presents

A question remains: what do I consider viable presents, and how does a queer P'urhépecha breathe/live in white supremacist settler colonial societies that operate through literal and figurative smothering? I turn to Ruth Wilson Gilmore's definition of racism as "the state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death"⁸⁰ to unpack this question. I contend that premature death is felt knowledge⁸¹ of white supremacist settler colonialism. I still contend that white supremacist settler colonialism works to suffocate Black and Indigenous life via settler atmospherics. To create viable presents, one must believe that white supremacy and settler colonialism are *real*. By real, I mean a consciousness that white supremacy and settler colonialism are institutional structures that affect

⁷⁹ Lorde, *Sister Outsider*.

⁸⁰ Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag*, 28.

⁸¹ Million, "Felt Theory."

everyday life for Black and Indigenous people rather than events to be forgiven⁸² and left in the past. Rage and grief play a role in making them real. I argue that the resurgence of Indigenous land-based cultural practices is accessing our internal exotic,⁸³ our inner power. This moves queer Indigenous people from half-death to viable presents and living.

To explain how institutional power can be made real, I will reflect on my experience as a young activist and some feminists of color anti-oppression practices in conversation with feminist Indigenous decolonization discourses. Although I do refer to the process as an awakening, I refrain from this terminology because it mired in Christian and Catholic undertones. This dissertation is written with the desire and vision of the “repatriation of Indigenous land and life,”⁸⁴ a world where prisons are not necessary because all basic needs will be met,⁸⁵ and free of all internalizations and manifestations of colonial heteropatriarchy. Yet I write this for the not-yet, the time before the transformation. I am concerned with a viable present, and for this dissertation, queer P’urhépecha aliveness in the everyday.

During the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests, the fervent desire for a better future for Black people wasn’t stagnated in North America’s hardest-hit pandemic cities; it reached across places, differences, and time. It reached Abiyala, Indigenous América. The desire from rage moved through fleshy memory, acknowledged the colonial violence of stardust bodies-made ash, made dirt, made slave, made campesino, made Indio, made poor, made migrant, made exploitable, made disposable. These conditions of oppression can also be internalized and embodied. Tricia McGuire-Adams, Bingwi Neyaashi Anishinaabek, argues that “Settler

⁸² Flowers, “Refusal to Forgive.”

⁸³ Lorde, *Sister Outsider*.

⁸⁴ Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor.” 1

⁸⁵ Gilmore, *Abolition Geography*.

colonialism becomes and is an internal embodied experience”⁸⁶ where Indigenous people internalize erasure.

What characteristics are associated with fully living? Living is constituted and characterized by the consciousness of intergenerational trauma and oppression while growing capacity for “joy, wholeness, and aliveness,”⁸⁷ which I argue is the full embrace of our erotic knowledge.⁸⁸ Fully living is rejecting white supremacist settler colonial directives.

The first time I felt that white supremacist settler colonialism external directives ran my life, I was in my early twenties at an anti-oppression training. This was sometime in 2006-2007. The facilitator, a Psychology Professor, Leticia Nieto, took us through an anti-oppression skill-building model. The workshop's goal was for participants to transform their relationship with institutions of oppression. Looking around the room, we were seated in an oval facing Nieto, who moved within the space between us. We were a cross-armed, slumped bunch with a sprinkling of scribblers, brow raisers, and leg tappers. Yet, next to me sat a wide-eyed woman of color, nodding as Nieto demonstrated complex relationships with the institutions of power, some offering us opportunities, ease, power, and validation. In contrast, others limited opportunities, created obstacles, or created conditions of violence and death.

She discussed heteropatriarchy, white supremacy, ableism, and other institutionalized oppressions. Nieto is a skilled drama therapist that can act out her ideas, enact scenes, and perform her experiences. Walking in place, she acted as if on eggshells, emphasizing the discomfort by placing her weight solely on her toes. She asked us to envision her as a person that benefits from a violent institution yet distances themselves from their institutional relationship. It

⁸⁶ McGuire-Adams, “‘This Is What I Heard at Naicatchewenin’: Disrupting Embodied Settler Colonialism.” 66

⁸⁷ brown, Rodriguez, and Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Pleasure Activism*. 1

⁸⁸ Lorde, *Sister Outsider*.

could be a white person denying that they benefit from white supremacy. Nieto's point was that although this may be considered a passive approach to white supremacy, it was an active way of perpetuating white supremacy. She explained that the eggshells were the people whose oppression one benefits from. By the end of the workshop, I felt simultaneously like a wounded fawn and a forest fire, and it felt as if I would be extinguished as I struggled to hide my deepest feelings.

My mind goes to James Baldwin's quote, "I imagine one of the reasons people cling to their hates so stubbornly is because they sense, once hate is gone, they will be forced to deal with pain."⁸⁹ But instead of hate, I had denial and repression. The reality that white supremacist external directives ran my life became real once I felt grief (wounded fawn) and rage (forest fire). Awareness is a painful, sensuous process. It evokes memory and self-narratives. It raises grief and rage. It makes colonial heteropatriarchy, white supremacy, and settler colonialism real. Yet consciousness, grief, and rage don't transform internalized oppression or loosen the grip of these institutions. Action is required.

According to Nieto, moving from survival, the first skill for a target of oppression, to re-centering, the last skillset acquired, takes internal work. One must transform their desire to resist white supremacy rather than be amenable. Nieto's model aims to move easily through the skill sets: survival, confusion, empowerment, strategy, and re-centering. Re-centering is a skill of inner peace, where one understands their relationship to institutional systems of oppression while connecting to their sense of inner power. Nieto considers this skill as "having a life"⁹⁰ because the inner world is not being run by white supremacy. To get to this skill, one needs to transform

⁸⁹ Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son*, 86.

⁹⁰ Nieto, "Beyond Inclusion, beyond Empowerment." 175.

their consciousness, build meaningful relationships with people who share the same struggles and understanding of the world, and be consistently strategic when confronted with bigotry.

Although I find this model helpful in understanding consciousness building, I differ in opinion from Nieto in a few ways. First, I do not believe that “socially ascribed memberships,”⁹¹ such as race, can be separated from other socially ascribed memberships. Secondly, whereas Nieto’s model argues that people with institutional privilege have the responsibility to change, say, racism if they are white, I do not take a reformist approach to end hierarchies, nor do I believe that people would relinquish their power and privilege without transformation led by Black and Indigenous people. Lastly, Nieto lacked a settler colonial analysis that individualized a collective process of liberation. So, while I owe her so much credit for transforming my relationship to white supremacy. I owe credit to my Elder, Norma-Alicia Pino, Comcaac and P’urhépecha, and my insurgent kin, Alé Abreu, Afro-Indigenous Salvi-Lenca, for transforming my relationship to settler colonialism and colonial heteropatriarchy.

I met Alé in late 2007 or early 2008 at a community organizing meeting to plan a migrant studies conference at Evergreen State College. A performance was proposed for opening night, and Alé, a few Latinx artists, and I volunteered for this task. A group of varying members met weekly for six months, including Alé, Norma-Alicia, and me. We wrote together, talked about sexuality, gender, family history, and our heritage, and built an insurgent kinship. I write more thoroughly about our relationship and work together in Chapter 3: Specters that Speak: Indigeequeer and Intergenerational Artist Collaboration. My relationships with Alé and Norma-Alicia resurged relationships to my ancestors, P’urhépecha cultural practices, Indigeequeer embodied knowledge, and grief/rage towards settler colonialism and colonial heteropatriarchy

⁹¹ Nieto. 27.

rather than myself. From this grief/rage, colonial heteropatriarchy became real structures that affect my everyday life rather than events to be forgiven⁹² and left in the past. I also learned that white supremacy, settler colonialism, and colonial heteropatriarchy are connected, as I argue in this dissertation.

In “Refusing to Forgive: Indigenous Women’s Love and Rage,” Rachel Flowers, Leeyq’sun, argues that Indigenous women should reclaim space for their rage. Gender resentment, she contends is righteous anger toward colonial heteropatriarchy that should not be relinquished by forgiving singular events, forgiveness does not end the structures that cause harm.⁹³ Rage and refusing to forgive settler colonial and colonial heteropatriarchal violences inform “an anticolonial approach to disrupting forms of violence and domination that reify settler colonialism.”⁹⁴ Rage is a call to action,⁹⁵ but Byrd cautions against falling into traps of capitalist productivity. Instead, rage should be unleashed toward the “structures that adjudicate and mete out injustice, brutality, and death to Black, Indigenous, and Brown people.”⁹⁶ Judith Butler writes that “Open grieving is bound up with outrage, and outrage in the face of injustice or indeed of unbearable loss has enormous political potential.”⁹⁷ So, while attending Nieto’s workshops helped me live momentarily in queer people of color spaces, Indigenous kinship led me to anti-colonial queer P’urhépecha resurgence.

As I mentioned earlier, Melissa K. Nelson, Anishinaabe/Métis/Norwegian, argues that Indigenous women’s “resurgence is profoundly tied to making new relatives” with more-than-humans so that we can renew “our ability to care and live in reciprocal relations with the

⁹² Flowers, “Refusal to Forgive.”

⁹³ Flowers.

⁹⁴ Flowers. 33

⁹⁵ Lorde, *Sister Outsider*.

⁹⁶ Deer et al., “Rage, Indigenous Feminisms, and the Politics of Survival.” 1059

⁹⁷ “Judith Butler.”

relatives that give us life.”⁹⁸ Merriam-Webster defines resurgence as “a rising again into life.”⁹⁹

Resurgence, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, Mississauga Nishnaabeg, argues, is

“Biiskabiyang—the process of returning to ourselves, a reengagement with the things we have

left behind, a reemergence.”¹⁰⁰ Qwo Li Driskill, Cherokee, argues that resurgence for queer

Cherokee should include “rebeautification,” a process of recovering two spirit histories to heal

relationships ruptured among the Cherokee people during colonization.¹⁰¹ Being in good

relations, making, and maintaining kin with more-than-humans, and Indigenous queer embodied knowledge is central to my resurgence.

To Simpson, Indigenous resurgence is an “inner freedom” and “flight out of the structure of settler colonialism and into the processes and relationships of freedom.”¹⁰² Nelson explains

that resurgence fills her “with a fierce compassion and surge of positive energy to continue

through the struggle.”¹⁰³ Living is acceptance of “our full, complex selves” and “our needs as

living, sensual beings.”¹⁰⁴ Christina Sharpe writes that living for Black people means “spaces

where we were never meant to survive, or have been punished for surviving and for daring to

claim or make spaces of something like freedom, we yet reimagine and transform spaces for and

practices of an ethics of care (as in repair, maintenance, attention), an ethics of seeing, and of

being in the wake as consciousness.”¹⁰⁵

Erotic knowledge is the internal knowledge that scrutinizes and rejects “external directives” from white supremacy, settler colonialism, and capitalism. As I pointed out earlier,

⁹⁸ Nelson, “Wrestling with Fire,” 74.

⁹⁹ The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines resurgence as: a rising again into life, activity, or prominence. a resurgence of interest.

¹⁰⁰ Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, 17.

¹⁰¹ Driskill, *Asegi Stories*. 137

¹⁰² Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, 17.

¹⁰³ Nelson, “Wrestling with Fire,” 71.

¹⁰⁴ brown, Rodriguez, and Piepza-Samarasinha, *Pleasure Activism*. 3

¹⁰⁵ Sharpe, “*In the Wake : On Blackness and Being -University of Washington*,” 131.

re-centering, the last skill set for targets of oppression in Leticia Nieto's anti-oppression model, is also about rejecting external directives and "having a life."¹⁰⁶ Yet, I also pointed out some shortcomings of this model.¹⁰⁷ Still, "living" for Nieto, Nelson, Simpson, Lorde, Sharpe, and Flowers includes caring, reciprocal relationships, acknowledging grief and anger, being present rather than distracted or avoidant, and internally resisting external directives. They all call for active resistance of white supremacy, settler colonialism, or colonial heteropatriarchy through inner transformation and external actions.

Audre Lorde argues that erotic knowledge comes from the non-rational, our deepest feelings. Because she argues that once we can acknowledge our deepest feelings, "we begin to give up, of necessity, being satisfied with suffering and self-negation and with the numbness which so often seems like their only alternative in our society." Only then can "Our acts against oppression become integral with self, motivated, and empowered from within."¹⁰⁸ An inner erotic asserts a "lifeforce for women."¹⁰⁹ I argue that this lifeforce also found in resurgence for queer Indigenous people grows a "capacity for joy, wholeness, and aliveness (and less room for oppression, repression, self-denial, and unnecessary suffering)."¹¹⁰ I argue that politicized queer Indigenous resurgence is erotic knowledge that rejects external directives and embraces anti-colonial relations and praxis. Further, queer Indigenous resurgence is gained by making new relatives with more-than-humans and making and repairing existing ones with people. By resurging matriarchal P'urhépecha kinship structures, our capacity for joy grows, making the present viable, Indigenous queer futures more possible- and thus *live*.

¹⁰⁶ Nieto, "Beyond Inclusion, beyond Empowerment." 175.

¹⁰⁷ Nieto.

¹⁰⁸ Lorde, *Sister Outsider*, 53.

¹⁰⁹ Lorde, 50.

¹¹⁰ brown, Rodriguez, and Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Pleasure Activism*, 1.

My ideas on living fully as a queer P'urhépecha in Michoacán and the diaspora are deeply intertwined with Indigenous feminist conversations on rematriation. In the process of writing this dissertation, my mentor Gabriela Spears-Rico explained that rematriation is about “material reparations or reclaiming the lives of the more than human relatives.” She writes that “P'urhépecha/xicanista maternalista feminism is also decolonial and is unapologetically rooted in who we are as Indigenous women, while savagely working to undo the damage of colonialism and stop neocolonialism from harming the earth and our children.”¹¹¹ Robin R.R. Gray, Ts'msyen from Lax Kw'alaams, B.C. and Mikisew Cree from Fort Chipewyan, A.B., argues that rematriation “not only signifies what we are refusing--such as dispossession, colonialism, heteropatriarchy, white supremacy, anthropocentrism, and lateral violence—but,” also the production of alternative thought and practices.¹¹² It is clear to me that Indigenous feminists that align with rematriation have more potential to refuse and resist colonial heteropatriarchy in their everyday lives so that LGBTQI, two spirit Indigenous people can live fully in their presence.

Chapter Outlines

This dissertation addresses distinct categories of insurgent kinship, biological family, and ancestors in the first chapter is biological and ancestral kin, Coast Salish land as an Indigenous settler in the second, intertribal and intergenerational Indigenous in the third, and the more-than-human sacred bond with dogs in the final, fourth chapter. The research emerges from

¹¹¹ Caballero et al., *The Chicana Motherwork Anthology*, 251.

¹¹² Gray, “Rematriation.” 5.

autoethnographic observations, oral histories, memories, online genealogical archive research, and P'urhépecha land-based knowledge and practices.

The first chapter, “Matrilineal Migrations,” is an autoethnographic critical family history¹¹³ incorporating oral history, memory, prose, and poetry. I weave critical family history frameworks with P'urhépecha storytelling methods. Additionally, I incorporate Roberto Lovato's concept of “unforgetting,” the process in which one can “reconstitute the fragments” of memories and stories to write about what is “resilient and powerful.”¹¹⁴ “Matrilineal Migrations” uses sources already mentioned in this introduction, such as oral histories from conversations with my mother, the Mexico Baptisms, 1560-1950 Index to selected Catholic Church baptismal records from various localities in Mexico accessible through FamilySearch.com, operated by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and scholars such as respected Mexican historian Jose Corona Nuñez, feminist scholar Angélica Jimena Afanador-Pujol, and Michoacán scholars Alvaro Ochoa, and Álvaro Ochoa Serrano in the book *Los Agraristas de Atacheo*.

The premise of the chapter “Matrilineal Migrations” is that insurgent kinship with matriarchs makes the present more livable as a queer P'urhépecha in the diaspora. To make this case, I write about the institutions of family, social, religious, and nation-state roles in making precarious and conditional belonging for queer P'urhépecha. I provide a re-read of the history of Michoacán from the point of contact with the P'urhépecha to the post-Mexican Revolution, including my family and the history of Atecucario de la Constitución and Zamora Municipality, the region that I was born in, to understand how colonial heteropatriarchy was constructed. The historical context I focus on is relevant to understanding the Zamora regional identity with the

¹¹³ Sleeter, “Critical Family History.” Critical family history is a “conceptual framework that situates one's family and its history within a wider analysis of social power relationships and culture.”

¹¹⁴ Lovato, “Unforgetting.” xxiv

Mexican Revolution and how this contributed to refusing P'urhépecha identity in place of a racialized colonial heteropatriarchal mestizo one.

Throughout this historical rereading, I weave my family history to understand the norms and expectations that Atecucarionos will embark in cyclical migration as temporary migrant workers in the United States. I research three generations of my matrilineal line, a history kept from me by the overrepresentation of my patriarchal history, to learn about the municipalities in Michoacán that we come from and discover more about my P'urhépecha heritage. Also, I write about the insurgent kinship I made with my grandmother, mother, and my long-passed great-grandmother, Catalina. Queer P'urhépecha must make kinship with biological family that reject colonial heteropatriarchy because hostility, rejection, and violence towards LGBTQ people are deeply entrenched within settler family structures. My grandmother, Nina, became insurgent kin because she rejected colonial heteropatriarchal parenting norms and accepted that I was a weird queer kid. My mother became insurgent kin once she let go of her colonial heteropatriarchal desires for my life, and she tried to teach me to cook (spoiler: it didn't stick). I also document my spiritual insurgent kinship with my bisabuela, great-grandmother Catalina Morales, whose name I discover in my research.

In the second chapter, "Land as Kin: Queer P'urhépecha in the Diaspora," I unpack the question: "how can Indigequeer people in the diaspora build relationships with land on which they are uninvited guests/settlers? I begin where chapter one ends when my older sister and I move to the United States to live with my mother and father, who are working as migrant workers, and my American-born little brother on Wenatchi land. It is 1992, and the Reagan Era Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 has made my family's migration and U.S. residency possible at the cost of increasing police presence at the border, which will only worsen

from then. My family's decision to stay in the United States breaks multiple generations, starting with my great grandfather's tenure in the Bracero Program of 1942- 1965 of cyclical migration to work as temporary agricultural laborers. Chapter two outlines the history and feminist Indigenous analysis of the Bracero Program as a white supremacist settler colonial project and migration after the Reagan Era. I research several archives of migrant workers, such as *Undocumented Lives* by Ana Minian, *Queer Central American Migrants Imagining Livable Lives* by Isadora Bennet, and my mother's oral history. I juxtapose this with my own story as the counter-archive of P'urhépecha queerness. I put these resources in conversation with my autoethnographic observations, memory, and queer analysis by Chandan Reddy and Lionel Cantú to discuss the colonial heteropatriarchy of the immigration process and its effect on queer Indigenous migrant workers.

The chapter "Land as Kin: Queer P'urhépecha in the Diaspora," then returns to Wenatchi to discuss how settler colonialism has transformed land. Where there once were diverse ecosystems are now apple orchards. The Yakama people, neighbors of the Wenatchi, were the first to contact colonizers.¹¹⁵ The swift and calculated land theft and broken treaties set the stage for the construction of the state of Washington and its economy, which depended on the construction of the railroad that cut through the land promised to the Wenatchi people. This transitions the chapter into a conversation about how Indigeequeer people in the diaspora can build relationships with the land on which they are settlers. I outline throughout the chapter that Indigenous Mexicans become entangled with settler colonial structures in the United States through the immigration process. For instance, the result of Zapotec migrant recognition by the city of Los Angeles invisibilized Native Californians, specifically the Tongva, Chumash, and

¹¹⁵ Jacob, *Yakama Rising*.

Tataviam people.¹¹⁶ I close this chapter by discussing how I built relationship to Coast Salish land and my thoughts on anti-colonial liberation.

The third chapter, "Specters that Speak: Indigeneer and Intergenerational Artist Collaboration," discusses Indigenous and Indigeneer artist collaboration. My role was as a co-performative witness because I participated in the creation and performance of the play as much as I organized our collaborative theorizing into this chapter.¹¹⁷ This chapter is an autoethnographic, ethnographic, and collaborative theorizing experiment in anti-colonial research with Hijx [EE-Hex] de su Madre artist collective members Norma Alicia Pino (Comcaac and P'urhépecha), Alé Abreu (Afro-Indigenous Salvi-Lenca).

This third chapter is split into two parts, one about the political activity that brought Pino, Abreu, and me together in 2007. Hijx de su Madre is an art collective named after a popular curse phrase in Mexico, *hija de tu madre*, meaning son/daughter/child of a bitch, by collectively writing an experimental play called *Las Mamalogues*, stories of matrilineal migration. I discuss my early activist years and problematize the settler normative social relations, relations prioritizing colonial heteropatriarchal leadership and tactics.

In the second part, I explain the role of queer Indigenous art collectives in imagining Indigenous futures by focusing on the Indigenous artist groups Hijx de Su Madre. Hijx collective members Norma Alicia Pino (Comcaac and P'urhépecha), Alé Abreu (Afro-Indigenous Salvi-Lenca). Pino, Abreu, and I collectively analyze our creative work and performances for the three-day showing of "Mutaciones: Cruzadas, Desvios, Relajos, Desmadres, Metamorphosis y Time Travel Along Las Fronteras del Ser (Borderlands)," that took place on the dates March 9-11, 2018, at Gay City: Seattle's LGBTQ Center. Using conversations from the planning meetings

¹¹⁶ Nájera and Maldonado, "Transnational Settler Colonial Formations and Global Capital."

¹¹⁷ Madison, "CO-PERFORMATIVE WITNESSING."

and the poetry and stories created for this experimental play, we theorize the stage as a demonic ground¹¹⁸ and our performances as hauntings of ongoing settler colonialism.¹¹⁹ This chapter concludes by explaining how intertribal Indigequer relations can become insurgent kinship.

The fourth and final chapter, "Dogs Are Insurgent Kin, " argues that dogs are sacred. I grew up with a story about dogs taking people to the afterlife in Mexico, yet I did not see dogs treated well in Atecucario de la Constitución, the pueblo I was born in. This dissonance returned once my partner and I adopted Suki, an 11lb anxious puppy that grew into a fearful 80lb pit bull mix during the Covid-19 lockdown. Suki showed reactive behavior towards strangers, especially people with patriarchal posturing. This prompted unsolicited advice from strangers who advised different things: more obedience training, exercise, asserting more control towards Suki, and using aversive tools such as shock collars to suppress behavior.

I argue that outdated dog training techniques such as asserting dominance and using aversive tools are rooted in settler colonial violence because dogs, like every more-than-human being, are colonial subjects too.¹²⁰ This chapter argues that fear and maltreatment of dogs in Atecucario are legacies, intergenerational trauma from Spanish colonization. Conquistadores weaponized dogs in genocide, especially for gender and sexually variant people.¹²¹ This, along with Christianization, destroyed the sacred connection between P'urhépecha and their dogs. I study this sacred connection by incorporating Mexican anthropologist Eva Maria Garrido Izaguirre's research in Ocumicho, Michoacán, a P'urhépecha pueblo known for their dog

¹¹⁸ McKittrick, "Demonic Grounds."

¹¹⁹ Arvin, "Indigenous Feminist Notes on Embodying Alliance against Settler Colonialism."

¹²⁰ Belcourt, "Animal Bodies, Colonial Subjects."

¹²¹ Morgensen, "Spaces between Us"; Nesvig, *Promiscuous Power*.

polychrome sculptures. She found that dogs in Purhépecha knowledge play a significant spiritual role in guiding people on land and in the underworld.¹²²

I include the work of Dr. Michael Yellowbird, a member of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nations, on rez dogs in the Midwest.¹²³ He finds that Indigenous people in North America lived with dogs for 8,000. This is also found in Mexico through archeological findings.¹²⁴ This chapter explains that dogs are colonial subjects¹²⁵ and that eliminating pit bulls through mass euthanization, criminalization, and bans is another way white supremacist settler colonialism operates today. I conclude that, as Dr. Michael Yellowbird shares, the treatment of dogs is a telltale of how well a community is doing and that by understanding decolonial sacred dog relations, we can understand why dogs are insurgent kin.

Contributions and Interventions

The initial intent of this dissertation was to contribute to Michoacán and P'urhépecha studies from my position as a queer P'urhépecha born in Atecucario de la Constitución, Michoacán. This is significant for several reasons. Until recently, scholarship on P'urhépecha people was done predominantly by external white and Chicano scholars. *Insurgent Kinship* is among the current resurgence of creative and intellectual work about P'urhépecha people by queer P'urhépecha scholars such as Gabriela Spears-Rico, and Mario Gomez-Zamora. My research turns the gaze on the importation of colonial gender and sexuality to Michoacán by

¹²² Garrido Izaguirre, Eva Maria, “‘Con Las Lagañas De Un Perro Puedes Ver a Los Muertos’. Representaciones Plásticas Y Verbales De Los Perros En La Comunidad Purépecha De Ocumicho.”

¹²³ Yellow Bird, Michael, “Rez Dogs.”

¹²⁴ Carot, Patricia and Hers, Marie-Areti, “De Perros Pelones, Buzos y Spondylus . Una Historia Continental.”

¹²⁵ Belcourt, “Animal Bodies, Colonial Subjects.”

examining the church, family, and state's role in creating and enforcing a dominant and violent colonial heteropatriarchy.

Whereas non-P'urhépecha scholars have relied on the P'urhépecha historical archive to theorize on the colonial roots of queer indigeneity, *Insurgent Kinship* intervenes by reclaiming and re-reading the P'urhépecha archive through an intentionally queer P'urhépecha lens. My research can discuss this archive in a way non-P'urhépecha scholars cannot, an essential contribution to queer studies. My dissertation examines the imposition of colonial heteropatriarchy by looking closely at the history of the P'urhépecha people and pueblos in the P'urhépecha Plateau by focusing on Atecucario de la Constitución and the Zamora de Hidalgo municipality.

Atecucario de la Constitución is largely absent from contemporary research in Michoacán or the Tierra Caliente region. I found one anthropological project that focused on Atecucario about traditional medicine and informal matriarchal systems of community care in the paper “Recursos bióticos en la atención de la enfermedad” by Salvador Pérez Ramírez.¹²⁶ Atecucario is incorporated in agricultural research of the Zamora region and is mentioned in *Los Agraristas de Atacheo* by Alvaro Ochoa, and Álvaro Ochoa Serrano, a book about the revolutionary history of Atacheo, a pueblo that neighbors Atecucario. I am the first scholar to look more closely into the pueblo. Further, since Atecucario is my place of birth, I am uniquely positioned to write about it and provide counter-narratives to what little exists about the pueblo. My dissertation also expands the conversation about the Mexican Revolution to include the contributions from Atacheo and Atecucario.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Pérez Ramírez, “Recursos bióticos en la atención de la enfermedad.”

¹²⁷ Ochoa and Serrano, “Los Agraristas de Atacheo.”

Insurgent Kinship focuses on the P'urhépecha migrant diaspora, a largely ignored academic topic and an important intervention in migrant studies. In the second chapter, "Land as Kin: Queer P'urhépecha in the Diaspora" contributes a queer P'urhépecha migrant perspective of grounded normativity, land-based knowledges and practices,¹²⁸ in the urban landscape. Grounded normativity is an important conversation in Native American and Indigenous studies. The third chapter, "Specters that Speak: Indigeneity and Intergenerational Artist Collaboration," contributes to Native American and Indigenous studies as well, by providing an example of collective theorizing through art collaboration. Chapter 4, "Dogs are Insurgent Kin" makes important contributions to critical animal studies by arguing that dogs are colonial subjects,¹²⁹ inserting P'urhépecha worldviews and connecting dominance theories and bully breed specific regulations are legacies of settler colonialism. Lastly, as stated throughout this introduction, this dissertation is a counter-archive of P'urhépecha sexuality and gender using autoethnography, prose, memory, oral history, and poetry. This is important to migrant studies, Indigenous studies, feminist studies, Michoacán and P'urhépecha studies.

¹²⁸ Coulthard and Simpson, "Grounded Normativity / Place-Based Solidarity."

¹²⁹ Belcourt, "Animal Bodies, Colonial Subjects."

Chapter 1. Matrilineal Migrations

Originally, my dissertation sought to map the intergenerational migrant trail of my family and pueblo by examining genealogical archives in Washington state. As I progressed in the research, I realized the difficulty of accomplishing this when so many of my relatives and ancestors, unable to read or write, relied on clerical workers to fill out government documents. I used FamilySearch.com, operated by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, to access selected Catholic Church baptismal records from the Mexico Baptisms 1560-1950 Index. This created inconsistencies in the spelling of names and, at times, missing surnames. Instead, I let what I could find guide my research. This project became about mapping three generations of my matrilineal line, learning about the municipalities in Michoacán that we come from, and discovering more about my P'urhépecha heritage. Ultimately, understanding the history of the region we come from could lead to understanding why most of my extended family, considered campesinos and peasant farmers who migrated to the United States, chose, or were forced to migrate to the United States to work as migrant workers.

This project juxtaposes a critical family history and autoethnography with historical and analytical understandings of colonialism and colonial neoliberal power structures.¹³⁰ Critical family history, coined by Christine Sleeter, is a “conceptual framework that situates one’s family and its history within a wider analysis of social power relationships and culture.”¹³¹ Sleeter intended this framework to be used by white people to interrogate relationships with white supremacist histories and power structures. I utilize critical family history frameworks in

¹³⁰Colonial neoliberal power structures argues that neoliberal processes continue the colonial project. I use Shannon Speed’s definition from the introduction to *Rights at the Intersection*: “shrinking state functions and giving priority to ensuring stability and the free market” to point out the continued encroachment on Indigenous land and rights.

¹³¹ Sleeter, “Critical Family History.”

conjunction with P'urhépecha storytelling methods and incorporate Roberto Lovato's concept of "unforgetting."¹³² Lovato uses the term "unforgetting" to describe the process in which one can "reconstitute the fragments" of memories and stories, "stir the memory and imagination of that part of themselves that's resilient and powerful."¹³³

As my mentor, Gabriela Spear-Rico, tells me, autoethnography compliments and addresses the silences of queer narratives in the archive. Rather than talk back to the archives in this project, autoethnography offers a counter archive or counter-narrative. Gayatri Gopinath writes in her book *Unruly Visions: The Aesthetic Practices of Queer Diaspora*, that counter-narratives "read dominant archives through the minor, and for their gaps, slippages, and erasures; to do so is to engage in the practice of emplacing ourselves and others in those narratives of the past that are occluded within dominant nationalist or even diasporic ideologies."¹³⁴ These counternarratives are created by documenting the "everyday, the personal, and the discarded that typically fall outside the purview of official archives."¹³⁵ The autoethnography that I provide in this project does this to "unsettle normative temporalities by pointing to alternative pathways and routes through the past and to the future that bypass the familiar touchstones of hetero-and homonormative life histories."¹³⁶ I do this by writing about memory, from memory, and incorporating felt knowledge.

The fragments of memory and history that are interwoven in this project were selected to *ground* the theories of heteropatriarchal regimes of elimination and insurgent kinship in critical family history and autoethnography. The history chosen is meant to give context to the

¹³² Lovato, "Unforgetting." xxiv

¹³³ Lovato. xxiv

¹³⁴ Gopinath, *Unruly Visions*, 16.

¹³⁵ Gopinath, 16.

¹³⁶ Gopinath, 16.

precarious conditions that queer, LGBTQ P'urhépecha people are born into and the need for them to make insurgent kin. For instance, the history of conquest and the construction of hacendado capitalism illustrate the destruction of matriarchal P'urhépecha kinship structures. Secondly, the history of the post-Mexican Revolution is pivotal in understanding the church and state-funded schools' role in reinforcing colonial heteropatriarchy through Mexican nationalist messages.

The term insurgent kinship argues for queer P'urhépecha futures by resisting colonial heteropatriarchy. For this reason, I define insurgent kinship as kinship made with humans and more-than-humans that resurges pre-contact matriarchal and queer P'urhépecha kinship structures. I argue that insurgent kinship is necessary to remake a world without white supremacist settler colonialism and colonial heteropatriarchal structures.¹³⁷ Insurgent kin is kin made through, as Adele E. Clarke explains in *Making Kin not Population*, “daily actions that transform partial relations into deeper ones” and “crafted through the exchange of sharing activities and other practices”¹³⁸ with humans and more than humans that create “viable presents and futures”¹³⁹ for queer P'urhépecha, with humans, more than human species and land. Indigequer P'urhépecha people in Michoacán face precarious presents and futures where their role within a nuclear family, belonging to society, and safety are conditional and based on their cooperation with racialized colonial heteropatriarchal norms. To be clear, kinship for queer P'urhépecha is not a given; thus, kin is made with people, more than human kin and land that provide environments and moments of a viable present.

¹³⁷ Comtassel and Gaudry, “Insurgent Education And Indigenous- Centred Research.”

¹³⁸ Clarke and Haraway, “Making Kin Not Population,” 32–33.

¹³⁹ Clarke and Haraway, 33.

I begin this with an Indigenous feminist retelling of the conquest of P'urhépecha people to give context to the construction of heteropatriarchal regimes of elimination and the making of precarious kinship connections and belonging for queer and gender non-conforming people. It is imperative to understand that P'urhépecha kinship structures before contact included people from diverse sexualities and genders that were severed by Spanish rule and colonialism. Kinship was further destroyed by privatizing land, severing the familial kinship with land, that excluded Indigenous people and women from ownership, and constructing heteropatriarchal regimes of elimination by utilizing religion to normalize colonial heteropatriarchal dominance over women, land, and more than human kin.

From Mountains to Municipalities

To walk onto the ancestral P'urhépecha land is to commune with mountains and Yakata pyramids, giant ancestors that tower as overseers and keepers of knowledge. Abundant with geographical diversity, rich natural resources, and access to various rivers and the sea,¹⁴⁰ this land is ripe with a history that echoes across the peaks. What is now Atecucario de la Constitución and the Zamora municipality was once part of the P'urhépecha empire that stretched from the Lerma-Santiago River, the Northwest point of what is now Michoacan today, to the pacific coast where the Balsas River ends. Located in what is now Central Mexico, Northwest Michoacan de Ocampo contains the Sierra Madre del Sur, Trans-Mexican Volcanic Belt, and inter-mountain regions. Michoacan is home to P'urhépecha, Otomí, Mazahuas, Pirindas, Colima-Nahua, Xilotlancinca, and Piñol peoples. This project will focus on the P'urhépecha people.

¹⁴⁰ América I Zamora-Torres and Estefanía Riveros-Figueroa, "Study of the Michoacan Province of Zamora as a Pole of International Competitiveness in Agriculture."

According to respected Mexican historian Jose Corona Nuñez, *pre-Tarascan* people, the anthropological term for P'urhépecha, migrated from what is now South America around 1200. He speculates that Purhépecha people are closely linked to Inca people based on similarities in language and tombs.¹⁴¹ They grew to become a militaristic society¹⁴² that, after battles, would accept the defeated peoples as well as small tribes who volunteered to become part of the empire, because of this the P'urhépecha empire were the first to fend off the mighty Aztec shortly before the Spanish arrived.

P'urhépecha origin stories offer a different perspective, often reduced to myth and lore but are actual accounts of what is known that happened as told through generations. P'urhépechas come from Kurhika K'eri, the great fire. There are various versions of the origin story, I will be using the colloquial version included in *La Relación de Michoacán*, the paleographic version from fray Jerónimo de Alcalá, the P'urhépecha cosomonogy as told in the “Etnología de Los Indígenas P'urhépecha: Una Guía Para El Análisis de La Apropiación de La Naturaleza” by Alarcón-Cháires and the oral version told to me by Professor Gabriela Spears-Rico.

Initially, Kurhika K'eri (the great fire), and Tukup-Achá who “governed the fate of the universe, with infinite wisdom” and generated harmony, only existed.¹⁴³ Kurhika K'eri grew from a small light in darkness and nothingness that existed in the universe for a long time. This light grew as it cycled through the void into a great fire that would create Juriata, the sun. Kurhika K'eri created Kutsi, the moon. At the same time, the four cardinal points grew to

¹⁴¹ Corona Nuñez, José, “Historia de Los Antiguos Habitantes de Michoacán: Desde Su Origen Hasta La Conquista Española.”

¹⁴² Spears-Rico, “Consuming the Native Other.”

¹⁴³ Alarcón-Cháires, “Etnología de Los Indígenas P'urhépecha: Una Guía Para El Análisis de La Apropiación de La Naturaleza.” 28.

become the sacred North, South, East, and West. Juriata and Kutsi formed a union that some people consider a marriage. Three concentric circles were created from this union, where Kuerajperi, mother nature, was born. It is important to note that these three concentric circles also represent the Sun (masculine) which has been interpreted as a dual God and, I believe to be comprised of dual genders, “fuego y aire son masculinos; tierra y agua, femeninos.”¹⁴⁴

Kuerajperi, according to Dr. Gabriela Spear-Rico, has been interpreted as a genderless force that created all that exists in the natural world, such as the rivers, trees, flowers, animals, and P’urhépecha man, woman, and tumbkitkiri¹⁴⁵ (P’urhépecha contemporary word for two-spirit or queer people). Men and women were created with ash from Kurhika K’ire, each given four balls of fire. Those who embodied female and male characteristics were given eight balls of fire, a sign of their heightened ability to connect with all aspects of P’urhépecha teachings. Tumktikiri were people with a high value to the community.¹⁴⁶

P’urhépecha society was unified by Tariacuri, a descendent of holy people, into three señoríos, “political, administrative centers with a designated territorial land-base, governed by an appointed member of the nobility.”¹⁴⁷ Tariacuri placed his relatives as the leaders of the P’urhépecha state. When the Spanish arrived, they became aware of the “strategically organized society, with a strict division of labor and responsibilities, and a rapidly expanding indigenous polity.”¹⁴⁸ P’urhépecha society was organized with the caltzontzin (leader or King) at the top, priests, nobles, and commoners at the bottom. Commoners lived among the barrios/wards surrounding the Purhépecha empire, barrios were matrilineal, and women held political and

¹⁴⁴ Alarcón-Cháires. 30.

¹⁴⁵ Huerta, P’urhépecha Nivel 1.

¹⁴⁶ Spears-Rico, “Consuming the Native Other.”

¹⁴⁷ Gutierrez, “Juchari Uinapekua!,” 13.

¹⁴⁸ Gutierrez, 13.

spiritual roles.¹⁴⁹ The Spanish interpreted the balanced gender structure as a sign that P'urhépecha men were weak and inferior for not exerting more force over women. This was a justification for colonization; any society with a balanced gender structure that accepted gender and sexual diversity in conquistadores' mentality was not a civilized society and not worthy of life.¹⁵⁰

Scholars often refer to the *Relación de Michoacan*, an illustrated manuscript commissioned by the Viceroy Mendoza in 1539, to understand pre-contact Purhépecha politics. James Krippner-Martinez suggests that the various illustrations of violence towards women, such as the woman depicted as an adulterer, prove that P'urhépecha culture was already patriarchal before colonization; therefore, conquest did not change this aspect of society.¹⁵¹ Various scholars have contested this interpretation for P'urhépecha and Meso-American Indigenous people because before contact, P'urhépecha and Indigenous Meso-American women and gender-diverse people in Mesoamerica held different powerful spiritual, public, and household positions and enjoyed abundant freedom.¹⁵²

P'urhépecha women could attend outside ceremonies without their husbands and balance a work-life inside and outside of the home; they provided economic support for the family by making and selling homemade goods.¹⁵³ Matriarchal structures have survived and still recognized in P'urhépecha pueblos today. For instance, the autonomy of the Cherán pueblos was decided and organized by the Nana K'eris (grandmothers) who delegated the men to execute the

¹⁴⁹ Spears-Rico, "Consuming the Native Other."

¹⁵⁰ Morgensen, "Spaces between Us."

¹⁵¹ Krippner-Martinez, "Rereading the Conquest."

¹⁵² P'urhepecha: Perlstein Pollard "Tariacuri's Legacy: The Prehispanic Tarascan State" and Verástique. "Michoacán and Eden: Vasco de Quiroga and the Evangelization of Western Mexico." Meso-American: McCafferty and McCafferty, "Powerful Women and the Myth of Male Dominance in Aztec Society."

¹⁵³ Santana, "Indigenous Masculinities and the Tarascan Borderlands in Sixteenth-Century Michoacán."

militarized protection of the pueblo and Cherán forest.¹⁵⁴ Scholar Angélica Jimena Afanador-Pujol writes that the creators of the *Relación de Michoacan* were informants to the conquerors and represented a hypermasculine sect of the P'urhépecha city-state that once held significant power. They understood that this document would influence the Spanish's perception of them, thus providing examples that appealed to their audience.¹⁵⁵ Rather than patriarchy, a society where women and men hold decision-making powers have been referred to as a gender-based communal system of responsibilities.¹⁵⁶

History books say that Hernan Cortés and his men, who accompanied him with the expectation of great riches and luxurious life, landed in Central Mexico in 1519. What is not often told is how they used European weapons, horses, and indiscriminate cruelty, to topple the mighty Aztec empire. To justify Spain's widespread genocide and rape, conquistadores claimed that Mesoamerican Indigenous people were daily cannibals, including children and women, men were sodomites¹⁵⁷ and queer expressions of sexuality and gender were a sign of primitiveness that had to be eradicated.¹⁵⁸ Accounts of intentional public torture and annihilation of men who had sex with men and Indigenous people of diverse genders by the Spanish in Michoacán have recently gained interest in queer, Indigenous, and gender studies.¹⁵⁹ In place of annihilation, the persecution of P'urhépecha queer expressions in the colonial period embedded a violent heteronormativity and homophobia in P'urhépecha communities and the Mexican national identity that became law and family tradition, one I will touch on later in this chapter.

¹⁵⁴ Cherán.

¹⁵⁵ Afanador-Pujol and Afanador Pujol, *The Relación de Michoacán (1539-1541) and the Politics of Representation in Colonial Mexico*.

¹⁵⁶ Sneider, "Complementary Relationships," *Indigenous Men and Masculinities*.

¹⁵⁷ Pittenger, "'What Good Can There Be in This Kind of Human?' Spanish Justification for the Conquest of the Americas."

¹⁵⁸ Morgensen, "Spaces between Us."

¹⁵⁹ Morgensen, "SETTLER HOMONATIONALISM."

After the topple of one of the most powerful societies the Spanish felt confident that they would do the same as they moved West. Cortés set eyes on the equally powerful P'urhépecha empire, west of Tenochtitlán, ancient Aztec territory. He sent Spanish colonizers north in 1521 to enforce royal rule as part of King Phillip's "grand plan" for Spanish globalization.¹⁶⁰ Surrounded by abundant natural resources, twenty families enacted genocide to build encomiendas, large estates, established by land theft followed by a coerced agreement with the original people to become laborers in return for resources, protection, and religious instruction.¹⁶¹ That is what Western Researchers surmise from the archives created by the conquistadores and Spanish colonizers. What cannot be found in these archives are the acts of resistance. Who took fought back? Who decided to send their children across mountaintops and rivers to seek safety? Who sacrificed themselves to save others?

Martin Nesvig, the author of *Promiscuous Power: An Unorthodox History of New Spain*, writes that Michoacán was touted as "nothing short of paradise—spoils, physical pleasure, easy sex, and endless liquor."¹⁶² He finds that the oversight and against the wishes of the Spanish Crown, who wanted to abolish the encomienda system to control New Spain better, the colonizers instead enslaved Indigenous men, women, and children who survived,¹⁶³ as well as kidnapped Africans¹⁶⁴ that came with them. As Nesvig tells it, the Spanish colonizers failed to follow through on religious instruction and, apart from enforcing hierarchies and heteropatriarchy, failed to enact Spanish Law.¹⁶⁵ Nesvig writes to understand the motives and intentions of the colonizers, and he is not interested in understanding or documenting the

¹⁶⁰ Nesvig, *Promiscuous Power*. 177.

¹⁶¹ Seaman, "Encomenderos."

¹⁶² Nesvig, *Promiscuous Power*, 37.

¹⁶³ Seaman, "Encomenderos."

¹⁶⁴ Sosa et al., *Revolutionary Women of Texas and Mexico*.

¹⁶⁵ Nesvig, *Promiscuous Power*.

motives and actions of the P'urhépecha. As an Indigenous feminist scholar, I will ask questions about what is missing from Western renditions of the history of colonization, as you will see throughout this chapter.

Following along with Nesvig's renditions, in the following few years, two conquistadores, Cristóbal de Olid and Nuño de Guzman, arrive in Michoacán. Although it is often retold that their arrival resulted in detrimental injury and destruction of the P'urhépecha empire, what Western scholars leave out is that this did not destroy the P'urhépecha people. De Olid and his men captured a relative of Tzintzíncha Tangaxoan, Don Pedro Cuinerángari, who would later betray him and intentionally destroy cultural/spiritual monuments and tombs, an act of epistemicide.¹⁶⁶ Guzman and his army escalated the city-state's power instability with brutal violence in 1530, imprisoning P'urhépecha nobles and later ordering the execution of the last caltzontzin, Tzintzíncha Tangaxoan.¹⁶⁷ Encomenderos took advantage of a politically unstable period for their gain by more land theft and enslavement of commoners. P'urhépecha men and women of all ranks participated in the resistance against these power shifts yet were outnumbered. Some converted to Catholicism adopting the concepts of the Devil and Hell, saints, and angels into their cosmologies rather than replacing their entire belief systems,¹⁶⁸ some allied with Franciscan friars, and some moved deep into the mountains to survive.

Nesvig notes that encomenderos urged the Spanish Crown to charge Tzintzíncha Tangaxoan with treason, human sacrifice, sodomy, and idolatry, among other accusations. In a trial, Don Pedro and several powerful encomenderos testified against the caltzontzin, and he was

¹⁶⁶ Nesvig.

¹⁶⁷ Afanador-Pujol and Afanador Pujol, *The Relación de Michoacán (1539-1541) and the Politics of Representation in Colonial Mexico*.

¹⁶⁸ Alarcón-Cháires, "Etnología de Los Indígenas P'urhépecha: Una Guía Para El Análisis de La Apropiación de La Naturaleza."

ultimately found guilty of idolatry and other crimes. On February 14, 1530, Tzintzincha Tangaxoan was ordered to die by emulation yet was eventually executed by strangulation utilizing a garrote, a torture device with a ligament that was slowly tightened.¹⁶⁹ The trial and murder set precedence and created a racialized heteropatriarchal biopolitics,¹⁷⁰ sodomy became a capital offense, and Indigenous men accused would be executed, at times without trial. Yet records show that Spanish men engaged in homosexual sex regularly in this period.¹⁷¹ This verdict further bolstered colonial heteropatriarchy.¹⁷²

Not long after the caltzontzin's death, Antonio de Mendoza, the first viceroy of Spain, set his eyes on a Northwest region of the P'urhépecha empire. He sent his army to fight Indigenous resisters and to steal land for his encomienda. He killed all rebels, including children and women, by firing cannons, feeding them to dogs, and stabbing survivors.¹⁷³ This place born of genocide would, in a few centuries, become the municipality of Zamora.¹⁷⁴

By the mid-sixteenth, most of Michoacán had been pillaged and stolen, mines had been repleted, and the Indigenous population had been significantly reduced.¹⁷⁵ To maintain wealth, encomenderos built alliances among families, built latifundios and large estates, and gained local political power as caciques (political bosses). The laborers were campesinos, peasant farmers, and agricultural laborers.¹⁷⁶ Small plots of land owned by Europeans were ranchos, ranches with

¹⁶⁹ Nesvig, *Promiscuous Power*.

¹⁷⁰ Morgensen, "Spaces between Us."

¹⁷¹ Nesvig, *Promiscuous Power*. Pg 34

¹⁷² Sosa et al., *Revolutionary Women of Texas and Mexico*, 8.

¹⁷³ Comas, "Historical Reality and the Detractors."

¹⁷⁴ Ochoa, "El Distrito de Zamora En 1877."

¹⁷⁵ Seaman, "Encomenderos."

¹⁷⁶ Seaman, 72.

Campesino laborers. According to records, in 1689, three Spanish ranchers formed the pueblo of Atecucario.¹⁷⁷

In the 1800s, Indigenous landowners in the Zamora region were met with hostility. Courts would, without evidence, believe European's claims that the Indigenous population, and by extension, Indigenous landholders, had no legitimacy to land. Land, then, was seized and, at times, transferred to the Europeans. By this time, according to Mexican scholars Alvaro Ochoa, and Álvaro Ochoa Serrano in the book *Los Agraristas de Atacheo*, the racial hierarchy implemented by settler colonialism normalized and enforced the ownership of large haciendas by Europeans peninsulares and criollos and of smaller ranchos by mestizos. Privatizing property meant that non-landowners who were typically Indigenous people in hacienda-based pueblos, could no longer engage in communal life and had to participate in capitalism by taking up occupations that did not require lands, such as handicrafts and agricultural work.¹⁷⁸

Ochoa & Ochoa write found that there were land disputes across the Zamora region. For instance, in Atacheo, neighboring Atecucario to the north (where my grandfather is from), a majority Indigenous pueblo Indigenous community member, Francisco Espinosa's land was revoked for lack of Spanish legal standing. These disputes carried on in Atecucario as well among hacienda owners and rancheros. In 1851 to quell land disputes and armed battles between P'urhépecha forest protectors and illegal loggers, Michoacan passed a provision which distributed land to Indigenous people across Zamora and P'urhépecha plateau.¹⁷⁹

In 1877 governmental provisions again aimed at removing Indigenous people from their land, yet they underestimated Indigenous people's resistance to their territory that stretched from

¹⁷⁷ Ochoa and Serrano, "Los Agraristas de Atacheo." Pg 28 Atecucario was known for "calves, foals, males, corn, cheese, wool" plus many other animals.

¹⁷⁸ Ochoa and Serrano. Pg 43

¹⁷⁹ Ochoa, "El Distrito de Zamora En 1877."

Atacheo through Atecucario and forty kilometers southwest to Los Nogales. Jesús Loera, an Indigenous man representing a communal land in el El Sauz de Atacheo (neighboring Atecucario), gathered 25 Indigenous residents. They traveled to Zamora, the urban center, to find a lawyer to represent them. Years of legal battles later, with legal representation from lawyer Manuel Trujillo, they were able to keep 400 hectares of communal land. Although Trujillo won in 1882 by arguing that his representatives "are extremely poor and barely earn enough to live on," to appeal to the court's sympathy, he fought like hell for them to match their fighting spirits.¹⁸⁰ This was neither the first nor the last to utilize Spanish law against European colonizers.

Although mestizo and Western scholars represent P'urhépecha as passive actors in their demise, I hope here I conveyed that they were active in resisting and strategizing for future generations. One strategy was embracing the Virgen de Guadalupe because she represented the Indigenous woman as powerful, all-loving, and close to the divine.

Kinship in Atecucario: La Virgen de Guadalupe and Stories of the Mexican Revolution

I wish to historicize the manifestation and worship of Guadalupe within the context of the Spanish Conquest of the Mexica people to elaborate on her significance to all Mexican Indigenous people and the matriarchs in my family. According to Mexican historians, when Hernan Cortés arrived in 1519, he arrived with several hundred men. He sets up a meeting with Moctezuma II, intending to dominate. Communicating with the Mexica people would not have been possible without the help of Malintzin, known popularly as La Malinche, one young girl

¹⁸⁰ Ochoa and Serrano, "Los Agraristas de Atacheo." 49

among several offered as a gift to the Spanish.¹⁸¹ She was an interpreter that played a significant role in the 1521 conquest of Tenochtitlan, the capital of the Aztec empire. Soon after, the Spanish colonizers sent Franciscans to Tenochtitlan to evangelize the Aztecs and surrounding Indigenous people. By 1531, the Indigenous landscape and people were amidst an apocalypse, during which their lifeways were destroyed. Juan Diego, a common Aztec peasant, sees the apparition of the Virgen de Guadalupe, an Indigenous woman sent from the heavens surrounded by lush greenery in the desert who urges Juan to build a place of worship for her so she can reach others like him. The Virgin, understood as the mother of God appears to Juan Diego at El Tepeyac, where the Mexica people worshipped their Earth Mother, Tonantzin.

The Franciscans embrace the emergence of this Catholic-like figure because they claim her as the new Tonantzin; this is opportune since, as Emma Pérez argues in “The Decolonial Virgin in a Colonial Site,” Indigenous and mestizos reject Spain’s white Mary. Once the Catholic Church accepted the apparitions of La Virgen de Guadalupe by Juan Diego, they sent personal letters to their followers claiming that La Virgen had the redeemed spirit of La Malinche.¹⁸² Malinche, as I mentioned earlier, was Cortés’ translator, a child between the ages eight to twelve; she was interpreted as a whore for her dual role as a translator and the mother of the first mestizo and considered by some as a traitor to the Indigenous people. The colonizers’ message was that La Malinche, the first mother of the Black, Native, and European mestizo race,¹⁸³ became a redeemed woman, pure and chaste¹⁸⁴ in her transformation to the Virgen de

¹⁸¹ Gaspar de Alba, López, and Lopez, *Our Lady of Controversy*.

¹⁸² Emma Pérez, “The Decolonial Virgin in a Colonial Site.”

¹⁸³ Sosa et al., *Revolutionary Women of Texas and Mexico*, 81.

¹⁸⁴ Becker, “Setting the Virgin on Fire,” 16.

Guadalupe. The church utilized and recreated her to preach about woman's subservient position in society with sermons on obedience.¹⁸⁵

The Virgen became a profitable symbol for the state, increasing donations to the church by new followers.¹⁸⁶ The Virgin is depicted as a demure, passive Indigenous woman and the perfect promoter of hetero-patriarchal values for the Catholic Church. Preaching obedience for women enveloped a greater message that anyone unwilling to obey gender norms was in peril and deserving of social exclusion, violence, and even death. Her image provided a possible escape from colonial violence and death since the killing and brutality against Indigenous people and the public torture of Indigenous men who had sex with men was a fresh memory or a current occurrence at this time.

For Indigenous people and mestizo peasants, Guadalupe represents someone like them, a brown woman who struggled, faced, yet resisted oppression¹⁸⁷ and is now a sign of hope and liberation in a time of great suffering and a holy figure arriving to "console a suffering people."¹⁸⁸ Jeannette Rodríguez and Ted Fortier write in the book *Cultural Memory: Resistance, Faith, and Identity*, that the Guadalupe "resurrected the Nahuatl cultural memory at a time when everything in the world of the Nahuatl people had been destroyed" they add that "activating their cultural memory"¹⁸⁹ the Virgen de Guadalupe, "empowered and renewed the life of"¹⁹⁰ Mexican people. The image of an Indigenous holy figure was received similarly across Indigenous Central and South America. As the version of the Catholic Virgen became whiter and more demure throughout the centuries, she has continued to be revered as a mixed-race dark-skinned

¹⁸⁵ Becker, "Setting the Virgin on Fire."

¹⁸⁶ "Mitos y Realidades Sobre El Origen Del Culto a La Virgen de Guadalupe."

¹⁸⁷ Sosa et al., *Revolutionary Women of Texas and Mexico*.

¹⁸⁸ Rodríguez and Fortier, "The Power of Image." 17.

¹⁸⁹ Rodríguez and Fortier, 24.

¹⁹⁰ Rodríguez and Fortier, 24.

brown woman by some, and her comforting image grew to mean different things to different people.

Guadalupe was much more than a religious figure by the time I was born. She became a more-than-body relative for some and, co-presence, spiritual kin for me.¹⁹¹ The worship of la Virgen was different across my matriarchs. She soothed the most personal wound and embraced the most vulnerable, allowing me to disidentify la Virgen from Catholicism and make spiritual kin with her. In my insurgent spiritual kinship¹⁹² with her, made with prayer and devotion to her as a connector to my ancestors, I could pray for the dreams and future that did not feel possible then. She made my present viable and my future possible.

It is el Día de La Virgen de Guadalupe in Atecucario. Most of the pueblo is outside, standing alongside the narrow dirt roads, cheering, and clapping as a procession of cars drives slowly in between, their cars decorated in honor of the Virgen. One truck has a giant-sized papier mache statue of la Virgen, along with glowing light that emanates from her. I am leaning on my mother, holding her skirt as my gaze stays on this truck from one side of the road to the other. Once the procession ended, the people would follow the caravan, and the celebrations would continue into the night. During Dias de fiesta, the uncles and men would drink over a large fire tended to predominantly by women. This P'urhépecha tradition was now part of mestizo consciousness in once-Indigenous pueblos. Men would tell stories about the Mexican Revolution.

I grew up relating Atecucario, my place of birth, to the Mexican Revolution. The plaza held a life-size Emiliano Zapata statue surrounded by plants, brushes, and concrete pathways.

¹⁹¹ Clarke and Haraway, "Making Kin Not Population."

¹⁹² Clarke and Haraway.

There were stories about the pueblo's role in hiding weapons and rebels and stealing from trains to support the revolutionaries. My father swore that if we went into the mountains, we would find bounties of hidden pesos now valueless to the state but meaningful to the residents of Atecucario. And there were the rumored yet never confirmed mass graves where revolutionaries would kill enemies by fire squads. My uncles would proclaim that "*somos hijos de la revolución,*" *we are children of the revolution*. I heard so many stories that my dreams would be flooded with images of war, many where I was abandoned and left crying until a glowing and warm set of arms would hold me.

Like the co-presence, a spiritual and I add insurgent kinship, that I built with la Virgen as a connection to ancestors, I too built a co-presence and insurgent kinship with my revolutionary ancestors. I made kinship with my revolutionary ancestors by asking to hear more about the revolution from my relatives and reading as much as possible. No information I read mentioned Michoacan or the role of women and gender-diverse people, but I still held onto the stories and prayed to my ancestors from the revolution. In my prayers, I prayed for the possible women and invisibilized participants. They helped me dream of more revolutions, more liberation that could one day destroy colonial heteropatriarchal regimes of elimination and create a more viable present and future.

Before the 1910-1920 Mexican revolution, a settler anxiety¹⁹³ rose, specifically a "pastoral panic"¹⁹⁴ about Campesinos allying with the Indigenous to change exploitive capitalist practices upheld by hacienda/ranchero. Colonial capitalism is a social structure. Hacendados incentivized individualism and punished collectivism for maintaining hierarchal order. Campesinos were given hope that if they were individualists by turning in other Campesinos

¹⁹³ Goeman, "Introduction to Indigenous Performances."

¹⁹⁴ Becker, "Setting the Virgin on Fire," 14.

who broke the rules, they may one day become the hacendado. Still, under these circumstances, there were defiant Campesinos who chose to build community and maintain decolonial relationships.¹⁹⁵ The colonial anxiety went beyond the hacienda, and the Virgen de Guadalupe was recreated to impress obedience to authority, the Church, and the nation-state.¹⁹⁶ The Virgen became a fungible¹⁹⁷ figure, interchangeable with any messaging that benefits the state. To lessen tensions of historical fights and struggles with land, especially in the P'urhépecha region, sermons were created to squash out nonconformity impressing purity to women, and a promise that abiding by the church is the way to get into heaven.¹⁹⁸ Reinforcing colonial heteropatriarchy through religion proved to be the way of ensuring state power.

The Mexican revolution, 1910-1920, was a battle against dictator Porfirio Díaz and his policies, capitalist structural inequality, and land redistribution for the poorest Mexicans. The fighting erupted in the northern state of Chihuahua, led by Pascual Orozco and Francisco “Pancho” Villa. Villa, often portrayed as a hero, showed patriarchal resistance. Pancho Villa fought for poor men; he saw nothing wrong with extreme machoism and colonial patriarchy. He encouraged sexual violence against women as they traveled south by participating in it. Ironically, the colonial heteropatriarchal structures he reinforced had created the inequitable conditions they were fighting to change.

Emiliano Zapata led the movement in central Mexico with the image of the Virgen de Guadalupe, recreated to represent all poor and Indigenous people. His slogan was “land and liberty and law,”¹⁹⁹ often remembered as “land and liberty,” the lesser known “law” stood as

¹⁹⁵ Becker, 21.

¹⁹⁶ Becker, 14.

¹⁹⁷ Snorton, *Black on Both Sides*.

¹⁹⁸ Becker, “Setting the Virgin on Fire,” 17.

¹⁹⁹ Samaniego López, “Significados diferentes de Tierra y Libertad,” 237.

upholding the concept of private property.²⁰⁰ Zapata was not macho, although he kept colonial heteropatriarchal company, including his allyship with Villa. He was known to dress in cashmere pants and expensive shirts and hats, and held company with Ignacio de la Torre y Mier, Porfirio Díaz's son-in-law, who had a reputation as a homosexual man. He was accepting of Amélio Robles, a transgender Zapatista colonel. He was an attendee at an infamous ball where men, some dressed in women's clothes, were raided, and 41 were arrested for dancing together. Yet during the war, he incarcerated de la Torre y Mier,²⁰¹ and ousted a close confidante by the threat of execution once his homosexuality made news from his immediate circle and movement. The political leaders of the Mexican Revolution upheld colonial heteropatriarchy with their actions, one that excludes homosexuality and erases women, and casts it as the authentic Mexican identity.²⁰²

The war presented possibilities for defying long normalized concepts of colonial gender and sexuality for women in its chaos and violence.²⁰³ Some northern women joined Villa's cause willingly, taking a role as cooks and nurses, while others joined after being kidnapped and raped by his men as their pueblos were pillaged and villagers massacred. Having nothing to return to, they embraced the role of a soldadera, a woman soldier, and took part in transforming the country.²⁰⁴ To avoid being raped during the war, some women dressed as men.²⁰⁵ Instances of genderbending and expressing queer sexuality by Campesinos, who in pre-revolution were

²⁰⁰ Samaniego López, "Significados diferentes de Tierra y Libertad." 237. Because Zapata believed that at the beginning of a campaign on private property, he was heavily critiqued by European and American anarchists, Zapata changed his mind in the later part of the revolution after various conversations with international and local radical thinkers.

²⁰¹ "¡Viva the Queer Zapata! The Sexual Politics of Defining Mexican Identity and Icons in Fabián Cháirez's 'La Revolución.'"

²⁰² "¡Viva the Queer Zapata! The Sexual Politics of Defining Mexican Identity and Icons in Fabián Cháirez's 'La Revolución.'"

²⁰³ Cano, "Amelio Robles."

²⁰⁴ Sosa et al., *Revolutionary Women of Texas and Mexico*.

²⁰⁵ Cano, "Amelio Robles."

considered Indigenous, in a colonial heteropatriarchal society is. Knowing their history is a form of survivance.²⁰⁶

Although Michoacán is disregarded as a player in the Mexican Revolution,²⁰⁷ that is untrue, In1 912, under the leadership of Miguel Regalado, sent by Emiliano Zapata and Zapatista, Zapata supported Eutimio Figueroa, that operated out of Jalisco and Michoacán, gathered 200 day-laborers, blacksmiths, pastors, hunters, and businesspeople, and armed them. These (mostly) men, Zapata was known to accept women into his troops; 56 were gathered from regions with agrarian-Indigenous populations, Atacheo, Atecucario, Las Gallinas, Urepitiro, y Acuitzeramo. They traveled through the Chilchota Gorge and the P'urepecha Plateau. They fought in the Tanganceicuaro and Purépero battles which advanced Zapatista support.²⁰⁸ Sources do not specify what Indigenous populations are yet based on the proximity to the P'urhépecha forest; it is not a stretch to say these are P'urhépecha pueblos.

Illegal logging did not slow down during the revolution. Zapatistas from Atacheo and nearby regions took part in armed battles against loggers in the Cherán forest. Mexican soldiers captured some of the guerilla troops, some escaped capture and fled to nearby pueblos or fled to the United States to escape persecution. The “brotherhood from Atacheo,”²⁰⁹ as they were referred to by the rich, attacked wealthy landowners to end centuries of exploitive labor and to reclaim the land. In return, the rich utilized state power by arresting the resisters, often Campesinos and Indigenous men from Atecucario, Las Gallinas, Ario y Acuitzeramo.²¹⁰

²⁰⁶ Vizenor, *Manifest Manners*.

²⁰⁷ Purnell, *Popular Movements and State Formation in Revolutionary Mexico*.

²⁰⁸ Ochoa and Serrano, “Los Agraristas de Atacheo.”

²⁰⁹ Ochoa and Serrano. 50. The “brotherhood of Atacheo” is my translation from “el congregación de Atacheo.”

²¹⁰ Ochoa and Serrano.

Atecucario, now predominantly comprised of one latifundia owned by Arnulfo Verduza, a member of Spanish nobility, was one of the haciendas attacked by the brotherhood. They breached the hacienda and shot Verduza multiple times. In 1923, the Verduzco Hacienda in Atecucario fell and was partially taken back by the Campesinos that used to work the land. It is unclear what happened to Verduza, but his name is not mentioned in archives after.

Life in Atecucario moved forward with renowned hope. Campesinos reopened a school and built a cooperative agricultural system as Priest Galván, a Zapatista priest and union leader, suggested. He hid from the Mexican nation in Atecucario, where about 400 Campesinos worked in teams. By 1927, the primarily P'urhépecha pueblo had taken back most of the land of Atecucario, allowing two previous hacendados with the surname, Vegas, to keep two small parcels of their once large hacienda. The government parceled two ejidos, community land owned by the government for agricultural work, out of Atecucario, Cerrito de Ortiz, and El Sauz de Abajo. It was still federally recognized as of 1990; it is unclear if it was informally parceled out to individual families as the community decides how to use the land best.²¹¹

Insurgent kinships with la Virgen de Guadalupe and my revolutionary ancestors became the ground I could reach when my childhood life was unstable and uncertain. I could live in the stories, the prayers, and the dreams I built. A place where I was safe and protected against the colonial heteropatriarchy that threatened my present and future in Atecucario, Michoacan.

Atecucario de la Constitución and the Racialization of Rural Michoacán

The streets in my pueblo in Michoacán are narrow and uneven; the names marked in writing on the corners of houses are half eaten by the sun. Atecucario de la Constitución is a

²¹¹ Kelly et al., “Indigenous Territoriality at the End of the Social Property Era in Mexico.”

Spanish-speaking pueblo in the Northwest region of the state of Michoacan de Ocampo, the Zamora Municipality, which is a mestizo, a mixed-race region. Atecucario means “place of ants,”²¹² as in hardworking collective ants in the P’urhépecha language. With a population of over 3,000, Atecucario is considered one of the largest pueblos of Zamora. Concrete homes are built sharing walls and are distinguished by different bright exterior paint; the shared walls become a metaphor for the value of a pueblo- rely on each other.

The Indigenous categorization of pueblo changed throughout time, large in part to match the national project of homogenization via the elevation of the mestizo identity, a problematic *raza cosmica*. José Vasconcelos coined la raza cosmica as his vision of a superior race, in which European and Indigenous people would mix to form, what scholar Francesca Contreas argues is “a far superior spiritual eugenics ‘of aesthetic taste,’”²¹³ that would in time absorb Black, Chinese and races mixed with Black, which he deemed undesirable. This identity required adopting the Western culture, rejecting Indigenous language, and completing heteropatriarchal colonial assimilation.²¹⁴ This identity served to distinguish mestizos as politically different from Indigenous people to maintain the status quo. The status quo had no tolerance for matriarchal women or queers. The status quo required all Mexican citizens to obey to colonial gender-norms and those who did not had no value to family or society, no need to exist at all. Communal living which put more value on women and could use all, including queer residents, was equated with communism and Indigenous people as anarchists.²¹⁵ Mestizaje served to cover the class-based tensions that led to revolts, yet it did nothing to change the power dynamics or structures.

²¹² *Con Cariño Para Atecucario*.

²¹³ Contreas, “Post-Revolutionary Mexican Identity Formation.”

²¹⁴ Spears-Rico, “Consuming the Native Other.”

²¹⁵ Samaniego López, “Significados diferentes de Tierra y Libertad.”

Atecucario, among other Campesino pueblos, was racialized after the revolution, although Mexico undertook a homogenizing nationalism identity project soon after. No such project can erase over five hundred years of colonization. For instance, Atecucario, like much of the Zamora municipality, was a part of the P'urhépecha territory, Indigenous before and during the revolution, and borders the P'urhépecha Plateau. Another distinction between mestizo and Indigenous pueblos is that ejidos are large plots of communally owned land that are inalienable, nontransferable, and on contract with the Mexican state.²¹⁶ Indigenous pueblos are ejido-based, whereas mestizo Campesino agrarian pueblos may comprise ejidos yet are associated with property owners and landowners. Mestizo Campesino agrarian pueblos could be comprised of inheritances from selling ejidos when the government allowed it in the mid-nineteenth century or because of neoliberal constitutional changes in the 1990s that allowed the community to divide communal lands for individual use or even going further and allowing for a concept called *domino pleno*, full personal ownership of parcels.²¹⁷

Mestizaje led to a decline of P'urhépecha speakers, anti-Indigenous propaganda resulting in anti-Indigenous sentiment, and internalized oppression for pueblo residents in the northeast side of the Zamora Municipality. Post-revolution anti-capitalist struggles left unresolved from the Mexican Revolution, such as the normalized hacienda structure that still prevailed because no other employment opportunities were created in Michoacán, led to statewide projects that at times utilized clergy and education to bolster nationalism and obedience by the right,²¹⁸ and education to modernize mestizo and Indigenous people by the left, such as the socialist Cardenistas in the 1920s.

²¹⁶ Kelly et al., "Indigenous Territoriality at the End of the Social Property Era in Mexico."

²¹⁷ Kelly et al.

²¹⁸ Urrieta, "Indigenous Reflections on Identity, Trauma, and Healing."

Cardenistas were followers of radical politician Lázaro Cárdenas, born in a poor pueblo who ascended to become a celebrated former general under the Constitutionalist Army that defeated Pancho Villa. They were college-educated socialists. Chosen by the President of the time, Plutarco Elías Calles as a candidate for the future presidency, Cárdenas sent followers to Michoacán into various rural areas, including the Zamora and P'urhépecha region, to educate and build political alliances with Campesinos and Indigenous people as the nation was on the verge of another revolt when Calles enacted “La Ley de tolerancia de culto,”²¹⁹ better known as “Ley Calles” in June 1926, a policy to separate religion and state. Revolts began when he ordered churches and clerical offices to close.²²⁰

Since the eighteenth century, priests had regularly preached obedience to [colonial heteropatriarchal] authority while government schools in pueblos built after the revolution taught, and still teach, a homogenizing nationalist mestizo identity based on an Indigenous past.²²¹ Some took the closing of churches as an attack on nationalism and Catholic beliefs, which collectivized hacendados, the elite, some Indigenous, and Campesinos across Mexico. Their political action began peacefully then escalated into violence by arming themselves and occupying churches, exchanging fire with federal troops, and executing Calle sympathizers, the catalyst to rebellion in Jalisco and Michoacán; they became known as the Cristeros, invoking Cristo Rey or Christ the King.²²²

Cardenistas idolized and simultaneously infantilized Indigenous people. They believed that religious fanaticism among Indigenous and Campesinos was a barrier to their political engagement. They did not understand that Catholicism was experienced by rural Mexicans in

²¹⁹ Rivera, *Anales mexicanos*, 206.

²²⁰ Pumell, *Popular Movements and State Formation in Revolutionary Mexico*.

²²¹ Becker, “Setting the Virgin on Fire.”

²²² Pumell, *Popular Movements and State Formation in Revolutionary Mexico*, 4.

complex ways, including as a form of survivance, a way of surviving pre-contact beliefs, and building a home separate from the agenda of the church. Although the revolution had taken place about a decade prior, there was amnesia about the role of Campesinos and Indigenous people's participation and engagement with the movement. Cardenistas' goals were to modernize Indigenous people to advance their position in society and to help Campesinos return to pre-contact communalism, which they saw as the replacement for the hacienda economy and exploitative colonial capitalism. Their beliefs and essentialist gaze isolated the Cardenista men from the pueblo.²²³ Cardenista female teachers worked to understand the community's needs and often acted as liaisons between them and hacendados and the state. This built trust, and soon teachers kept residents current with political changes and revolts.²²⁴

Campesinos and Indigenous communities have long participated in social change. The Cardenistas could offer a re-engagement with the state's policies that the church was intentionally shielding them from in remote areas. Once reconnected to the radical spirit that survived in Indigenous people and descendants of Indigenous people, another political identity was formed, the agrarista, a radical peasant farmer willing to bear arms to protect their people, land, values, and the future. Agraristas opposed Cristeros ideologically, yet the former did not negate or change their Catholic beliefs. Agraristas battled the Cristeros as they engaged in rebellion throughout central Mexico yet could not defeat them until the state moved in and overpowered the rebels. The agrarista spirit and identity live on, as does the decolonial spirit among the P'urhépecha and Mexican Indigenous people.

²²³ Becker, "Setting the Virgin on Fire."

²²⁴ Christopher R Boyer, "Old Loves, New Loyalties."

Internal Migration and the Conditions That Create Mass International Migration

Internal migration and international migration are strategies of surviving colonial heteropatriarchal regimes of elimination that have long histories in Michoacán since contact. Forced migration was frequent for Indigenous people fleeing genocide and violence as the Spanish established their powers by land theft in the mid-1600's and has become the norm since. Today internal and international migration is discussed in economic terms silencing the violence of poverty and hacendado capitalism that keeps poor peasants poor and vulnerable to exploitation from federal and outside entities. This narrative also hides migration from pueblos, often sites of precarious belonging and rejection, to LGBTQ-accepting places such as Mexico City or the United States for queer, gender non-conforming people. The following is autoethnographic observations about the normality of migration for those born in Atecucario, Michoacán.

Heat bounces off the concrete houses as I make way to the tiendita, a small corner store out of a Señora's house, an old woman whom we called Doña, a term used for women with power. This was one of two tienditas in Atecucario that mi Abuela would send me on errands, but the closest one to mis Abuelos's home. The uneven dirt roads guide me, and the different colored houses act as my landmarks. As I reach a long metal gate followed by a Señora sweeping her front steps, I turn and know I have arrived. Stray dogs roam nearby, sniffing for any dropped food. I have recited the errand list over and over in my head. When I reach the storefront, I say it aloud in a sing-songy voice, “pan, leche, canela y un dulce, po’ favor Doña,” *“bread, milk, cinnamon, and one candy, please storefront owner.”* The narrow entrance is stacked bags of dog food, an irony as hungry stray dogs are abundant on these streets. The

Señora recognizes me and grabs the white bread that mi Abuela likes, the half-gallon of milk and a small bag of cinnamon sticks, then she points to the candies that I can afford with the change that is left over. I pick the stickiest one, a white spoon with a spoonful of tamarind candy paste wrapped in plastic. As I prepare to leave, she asks me to greet a series of women that live along my way to my grandmothers, including mi Abuela.

Summertime in Atecucario comprises women, children under fourteen, and old men between fourteen and sixty. Some mothers and their children are somewhere across the northern border picking fruit or working in agriculture on temporary work visas. The high circulatory migration that was a norm in mi pueblo was how I learned to understand time. With so few men in the village, my grandmother felt safe letting me run errands alone, although I am only a small child. Many memories of Atecucario are of the women who stayed behind, and the streets empty except for children and the vendedores, sellers, who came through Atecucario by car, burro, and on foot selling fruit, meat, tacos, and bread. I knew at a young age that it would one day be my turn to cross with my mother, whom I longed for when she left too, and possibly live somewhere that was nothing like this.

Pueblo temporality ran on the timeline of settler colonial demands on Indigenous and poor mestizo peasant bodies, heteropatriarchal demands on feminized labor but also days of celebration, holy days, births, deaths, meals, and the momentary flights out of colonial heteropatriarchy. Those breaks are what made life more livable and when it would become clear to me who I, a young queer P'urhépecha child, could make kin with.

This is important to note because at this time, in the late 80s and nineties, queer people existed as rumors in Atecucario, if any were mentioned at all. There was a silence, that to a large extent still is, about the sexuality of women or sexuality out of heteronormativity that it was easy

to believe that both did not exist. Like the P'urhépecha people that once made what is now Atecucario home no longer existed in mestizo consciousness, so was the same for diverse sexualities and genders. My desire was peeking through as a child through my gender-nonconforming play, preferred attire, and personality. Although this made me a target of judgment and criticism that extended to my mother and my abuelas raising me, the migration of most of the pueblo took much of the surveilling and concerned relatives and neighbors. Yet it also foreshadowed that leaving Atecucario would not mean leaving behind the colonial heteronormative norms and their harmful materializations.

In Atecucario, children of migrant workers were expected to do one day the same. It was so expected that by listening to my returning relatives, I memorized the names of cities where my family had formed relationships with employers and that I may one day know. Maps and relationships with employers differed among the families in Atecucario; these paths had been followed for over a decade as relationships were forged with specific orchard owners.²²⁵ For instance, some families chose to start work in Stockton, California, before moving north to Mosier, Oregon. My family had established relationships in Oxnard, California, and Wenatchee, Washington.²²⁶ So by the time I was seven years old, I knew these names well but pronounced Osnar and Wanachi.

Although there were patterns of migration from Michoacan to the United States from 1917 on, my family's mass temporary migration may be attributed to the Bracero Program. The Bracero Program took place in the years 1942-1964, an agreement between Mexico and the United States, to give men temporary visas for seasonal farm work.²²⁷ Mexican officials saw this

²²⁵ Jennifer Torres, "Under the Orchard."

²²⁶ Ortiz, *Conversations with my mother*, Maria de la Luz Ortiz.

²²⁷ García, "Regulating Bracero Migration."

program as a way of modernizing poor and Indigenous pueblos with the earnings and acquired knowledge from such an opportunity. The program initially recruited men from Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacan, in pueblos, that Mexican officials perceived were most needed for modernization with populations whose absence would not damage the Mexican economy.²²⁸ These regions comprised 52% of the braceros, whereas nationally, these states only comprised 19% of the population. Men with ejidos were barred from participation, approving men without land. My grandfathers had participated in this program which initiated a familial tradition.

Mexico still operates with a hacienda economy, large land-owner employers, and foreign companies paying low wages, creating an unbreakable cycle of poverty and little education. Such an economy requires children's agricultural labor for some rural Mexican families to survive. This reproduction of the colonial economy also reproduced social colonial heteropatriarchal values. Post-revolution land distribution yet did not change the hacienda economy. Michoacanos who acquired the land could not compete with haciendas due to their equipment and industrialized agricultural practices. Land distribution often divided large plots into insufficient land to make a living off their crops; on top of that, at times, the collective or individual land acquisition came with debt bondage to the state.²²⁹ The power of the hacendados, now the elite, maintained their powerful position with the industrialization of agriculture. Campesinos continued to be hired to harvest strawberries, including my family, the main export from Zamora.²³⁰

In the eighties, families in Atecucario relied on remittances to get by. Unable to find data that specifically mentions Atecucario, I will use the pueblo Peribán as an example of the reliance

²²⁸ García.

²²⁹ Randall, *Reforming Mexico's Agrarian Reform*.

²³⁰ América I Zamora-Torres and Estefanía Riveros-Figueroa, "Study of the Michoacan Province of Zamora as a Pole of International Competitiveness in Agriculture."

on remittances in rural pueblos. In the early 2000s, Campesinos working in the avocado fields in Peribán “earn about \$18 a week,” and “those working in the avocado-packing plants will earn about \$94 a week”²³¹. In contrast, a migrant worker picking avocados in the United States earned two and a half times the packing income in Michoacán. The average remittance was a monthly 187 dollars sent home by about 20-30% of Peribáneros.²³² From my and my mother’s memory, about 1/3 of the Atecucario residents participated in cyclical migration to work in seasonal agricultural labor in the United States.²³³

The economy in Atecucario was limited; it is unclear to me if the two ejidos that comprise the pueblo were divided into individual parcels or dominio pleno, personal ownership. I know that it was insufficient land to make a living, that Campesinos that toiled the land were forced to lease more from the state to do that, and that many individuals in the pueblo owned their homes with a small territory. Mi Nen, my grandfather on my mother’s side, had inherited a one-acre plot, enough to build a house and have some chickens. Mi Tia Elva married Roberto, who had a small plot of land yet leased more and employed several local Campesinos to harvest strawberries. Pa Fai, my grandfather on my father’s side, won a small territory apart from his home as a prize from the National Lottery, yet it was not enough to provide a living for the family.

With few jobs in Atecucario, residents were forced to find work elsewhere in the municipality, a barrier to the three quarter of residents without cars²³⁴ or migrating to the United States. Residents who worked locally and were not Campesinos in the local ejido farms were rare. My grandmother on my father’s side sold calabaza candy, and pumpkin candy, among other

²³¹ Rose and Shaw, “The Gamble.” Pg 83

²³² Rose and Shaw. Pg 84, Rose and Shaw cite (Leco 2003)

²³³ Ortiz, Conversations with my mother, Maria de la Luz Ortiz.

²³⁴ “Atecucario De La Constitución (Atecucario) (Michoacán de Ocampo) Zamora.”

homemade sweets, out of the dining room window of her purple house. In Atecucario, there was a town butcher, baker, a packaged goods store owner, midwife, doctor, Priest, bus driver, and unofficial taxi driver that picked up people from the airport, a paletero, ice cream and popsicle maker, and emerging demand for workers in growing drug cartels.

In the 1970s, the demand for marijuana in the United States created criminal entities that intimidated or forced ejido owners, primarily within Indigenous pueblos, into using their land. Criminal entities rely on hypermasculine militarized forms of intimidation and violence. Cartels' power grew as they expanded their drug exports to cocaine and methamphetamine in the eighties.²³⁵ Soon, some cartels formed from vigilante groups, such as La Familia Michoacána, who wanted to stop invaders from robbing or committing violence, yet as they gained power, the public services in the form of spree giveaways became a way of tempering dissatisfaction with cartel rule. Cartel interference in governmental processes became widespread in Michoacán, and local politicians turned a blind eye to cartel violence.²³⁶

Rumors stirred in Atecucario in my childhood about families with new cars, the discovery of corpses close to the pueblo, and residents' involvement in cartels.²³⁷ Violence and murder data in Michoacán is not disaggregated to know how many LGBTQ deaths were per year or if they increased along with cartel presence. Yet, I claim it likely did, which is attributed to the lack of LGBTQ presence in my pueblo. Fear is a strong discipline. A legacy of queer persecution in Michoacán since the Spanish first arrived has queerness marked by death.

When I am in Atecucario, I breathe the same air as my ancestors, persecuted, criminalized, tortured, and murdered because of their gender. Colonial rule was established by

²³⁵ Malkin, "Narcotrafficking, Migration, and Modernity in Rural Mexico."

²³⁶ Flanigan, "Motivations and Implications of Community Service Provision by La Familia Michoacána / Knights Templar and Other Mexican Drug Cartels."

²³⁷ Ortiz, Conversations with my mother, Maria de la Luz Ortiz.

“constant condemnation of gender and sexual transgression,”²³⁸ such as public massacres of what they thought of as men dressed in women’s clothing, followed by regulations with deadly consequences once Spanish law was established in the Americas. On P’urhépecha land, the Spanish took to using sodomy laws to incriminate men, some who were publicly tortured and burned, on allegations that they were the lovers of the last P’urhépecha king, Tzintzíncha Tangaxoan,²³⁹ Cuyne, and Quini, the P’urhépecha men caught having sex in the temescal⁴ who were tried and committed of crimes in the 1800s. Tzintzíncha was killed publicly, and Quini was saved by death by incriminating men who participated in a “sodomite” subculture who experienced a similar fate as the P’urhépecha king.²⁴⁰ When thinking about the contemporary silences about gender and sexuality in P’urhépecha communities and mestizo communities from P’urhépecha heritage pueblos, the connection to the violent imposition of colonial heteronormativity by religion, massacre, torture, and law are undeniable. Maintaining a culture of silence, as Paolo Freire refers to silence that reproduces the “economic, social, and political domination” of the “dispossessed” of Brazil, provides a good foundation to understand how silence works in Atecucario, Michoacan. The silence around sexuality and gender reproduces the domination, albeit violent domination, of the LGBTQI P’urhépecha to the day that I write this.

Paracho, Michoacan’s first Pride Parade, an event in 2022 in one of the original P’urhépecha pueblos, occurred in response to the high rate of discrimination that LGBT+ P’urhépecha residents registered in a State Council to Prevent and Eliminate Discrimination and Violence survey.²⁴¹ The goal of such an event was to break the silence and reduce discrimination

²³⁸ Morgensen, “Spaces between Us.” 40.

²³⁹ Nesvig, Martin Austin. *Promiscuous power: an unorthodox history of New Spain*. University of Texas Press, 2018. ⁴ Tortorici, Zeb. ““Heran Todos Putos”: Sodomitical Subcultures and Disordered Desire in Early Colonial Mexico.” *Ethnohistory* 54, no. 1 (2007): 35-67.

²⁴⁰ Tortorici, “Heran Todos Putos.” 41.

²⁴¹ Morelia, “Paracho tendrá su primera Marcha de la Diversidad Sexual purépecha.”

against people of diverse genders and sexualities. Yet the event was met with resistance from community members who wanted to uphold the “machismo” in the pueblo as described in the news article about the first LGBTQ+ pride march in the P’urhépecha Plateau.

In 2018 Michoacán was considered one of the most violent states in Mexico, with over a thousand deaths per year ²⁴² no data is disaggregated to know how many of them are queer, trans, gay, lesbian, or gender non-conforming. Michoacán is the fourth Mexican state with the largest LGBTQI population.²⁴³ Between 2015 and 2019, about 441 LGBTQ+ deaths were recorded in Mexico. “More than half the victims were transgender women, while nearly a third were gay men.”²⁴⁴ The precarious belonging that LGBTQ+ face in their own pueblos increases their vulnerability for violence and elimination and this continues with silence.

It is likely that a significant portion of the deaths in Michoacan was of LGBTQI people. Although there is heightened visibility in the state, such as the first LGBTQI Pride march in Paracho, a P’urhépecha pueblo, that occurred in June 2022, celebrating the awareness of the diversity in the sexuality of Native peoples.²⁴⁵ Alejandro Brito, Letra S director, an independent news source in Mexico, says that violence “is specifically directed at LGBT people”²⁴⁶ because as visibility grows, macho sects of the Mexican population “reject this public presence of gays, lesbians, and trans people.” ²⁴⁷ It is estimated that escalated violence from cartels has displaced about 35,000 people in Michoacán.²⁴⁸

As mentioned earlier, a survival strategy for Indigenous and campesinos is to migrate and escape violence. Yet for LGBTQ Indigenous and campesinos strategies of survival require

²⁴² Davies, “Homicides down, but AMLO’s Term Likely to Be Deadliest in Decades.”

²⁴³ Morelia, “Inician Actividades Del Pride Michoacán 2022 Con Izamiento de Bandera LGBTQI.”

²⁴⁴ Lopez, “Mexico Sees Deadliest Year for LGBTQ+ People in Five Years.”

²⁴⁵ Morelia, “Inician Actividades Del Pride Michoacán 2022 Con Izamiento de Bandera LGBTQI.”

²⁴⁶ Lopez, “Mexico Sees Deadliest Year for LGBTQ+ People in Five Years.”

²⁴⁷ Lopez.

²⁴⁸ News, “In Western Mexico, Cartel Violence Leaves 35,000 Displaced.”

further innovation and risk of further social abandonment. They must make kinship with the living, ancestors and reclaim relationships to land and more than human kin. Adele E. Clarke writes that making kinship can mean creating a new relationship or the “daily actions that transform partial relations into deeper ones, kinship crafted through the exchange of things, sharing activities, and other practices.”²⁴⁹ She notes that deepening relationships take time and make clear that because kinship can be severed, it too can be repaired. As I have argued throughout this paper, colonial heteropatriarchal regimes of elimination create precarious belonging for LGBTQ people in P’urhépecha and previous P’urhépecha pueblos. This precarity means that queer P’urhépecha people must make kinship strategically with people, more than human kin, to create a viable present and futures. When the kinship made is strong and lessens harm towards Indigequeer P’urhépecha, it becomes insurgent kinship. Insurgent kinship is a survival strategy within social and institutional colonial heteropatriarchal regimes of elimination.

Matrilineal Migrations

One of the harms of being raised in a colonial heteropatriarchal family and society is that the patriarchal history of my family, my pueblo, and my ancestors is easily accessible and often the only history that Atecucarianos know. For instance, being told that I am a child of the revolution. Once I became curious about my matrilineal history, I hit roadblocks. For instance, until recently, my mother insisted that she doesn’t know anything about mi Abuela or Bisabuela’s history. This told me two things. First that the culture of silence towards queerness also included matriarchal history. Secondly, when my mother told me that she didn’t know

²⁴⁹ Clarke and Haraway, “Making Kin Not Population,” 32–33.

much, it told me that the culture of silence works by the internalization of colonial hetero-patriarchal logic for those raised in Atecucario, Michoacán.

Before I had answers about mi Nina, mi Abuela, and later my great-grandmother, I had memories of the times I stayed with mi Nina when my mother was working as a migrant worker in the United States.

I can close my eyes and go back to a breezy hot day. A staticky radio play pirekuas (traditional P'urhépecha music waltzy songs about love and P'urhépecha perspective of the world²⁵⁰) and Mexican oldies. Mi Nina, as her grandchildren call her, is watering her roses. I could usually be found playing in the rose garden or by the lemon tree with the chickens, playing with my knockoff barbie, and building a stick home for her. She was playful when she was in the garden, and although she rarely spoke, her laughter communicated so much about how she was doing that day. My cousins played house often where I was supposed to play a wife, but after I asked to be the husband, I was not invited again. Rather than punish me for defying gender roles, she encouraged my imagination.

I was young when mi Nina took care of me while my mother worked in the United States, and I was decades away from understanding my precarity, so she became insurgent kinship after death. Still, the daily practices I had with her when she was on Earth were actions that I consider part of the making of insurgent kinship.

One daily practice was the care of the various Virgen de Guadalupe sculptures and framed prints. I learned from an early age to leave the statues alone and dust with care around them, with a slight graze to remove grime when necessary. Mi Nina attended mass multiple times a week, cooked every meal and rarely spoke. From the outside perspective, she represented

²⁵⁰ Spears-Rico, "Consuming the Native Other," 22.

the ideal Catholic woman in Atecucario. Although she did not defy gender norms, she did not police my gender. I played in dirt and wore boy hand-me-down. While other relatives expressed concern for my boyishness and my queerness, she did not see it as a problem. I don't know if she was aware of ongoing eliminatory structures created by colonialism²⁵¹. Still, she went against many Catholic sermons and social norms to mother me to make my childhood more viable.

It was through curiosity about mi Abuela and turning to my mother often to know more about her that I built insurgent kinship with her. I don't want to romanticize this, though, it took time, and it wasn't easy because I asked her to break possibly a century or so of silences. This could only happen after repairing our relationship once she made peace with my sexuality and gender following six years of tension and silence between us. Although my relationship with her was precarious before being open about my sexuality and gender, this made our connection as fragile as a cracked glass window holding back a storm. The precarity that queer P'urhépecha experience is a materialization of colonial heteropatriarchal regimes of elimination.

I knew I could make kinship with her again one day when she called me. It had been months since we last spoke. I prepared myself for the worst, but instead, she opened the conversation by saying *mi'ja, vi en Univision que una lesbiana que fue al banco de esperm para embarazarse, daughter I saw in Univision (Spanish language television channel) that a lesbian went to the sperm bank to get pregnant*. There was a long pause. I responded, was it a good story? From there, it was clear that making kin with her was possible. I asked her to teach me to cook, and although most of it did not stick, we spent time together, and I heard about how she had come up with or learned recipes. She showed me old photographs that were new to me that

²⁵¹ Kauanui, "'A Structure, Not an Event.'" In note 7 of her paper, she notes that although Patrick Wolfe is heavily cited, that he is the one to that coined the term settler colonialism giving credit to US-based Palestinian academic Faye Sayegh his 1965 work, *Zionist Colonialism in Palestine*, French Marxist scholar Maxime Rodinson, Japanese American scholar J. Sakai, Kanaka Maoli scholar and activist Haunani-Kay Trask (1992) among others.

she had taken or acquired from relatives. She asked me for help again, and I showed up when I could. She became insurgent kin, making every day more viable when she stopped listening to the aunties about how I should be set up with men until I found the right one. Instead, she cut off relationships with people who were unwavering in their cissexism and homophobia, and she started to celebrate my accomplishments with me.

I learned from my mother that mi Nina, then Enedina Aviña Morales, was a young girl born in either municipality of Moreno, as my mother remembers, or in the village of Acuitzio, as records of her sister's baptism show. Both municipalities are Spanish-speaking, mestizo regions that border the P'urhépecha plateau, specifically the city of Morelia. She was a child when she met my grandfather. There are several versions of the "love" story between mi Nen (my grandfather's Ruben nickname) and Mi Nina that I have gathered from my mother and by listening to my Tias (aunts) talk. I know that Ruben went to Enedina's family and offered cash for her hand in marriage, and the family accepted. Either way, she was young, likely a teenager, when she married and moved Northeast, 200 kilometers to Atecucario, where mi Nen had inherited a small home.

The house that mi Nen inherited was a two-tone one-story concrete home with a red tile roof, uniform with the colorful neighborhood. Unlike the other places on the block, a garden and a large metal gate separated them from their neighbors. The territory extended back an acre or so. Once the metal gate opened, Mi Nina's garden captivated with rose bushes and succulents that grew from the entrance to the front door. I had walked between them many times when they towered over me, my feet warm from the desert rocks that separated them. Beyond the front door, often left with steps leading to an open floor, was the open-air kitchen, a concrete structure.

My mother told me that mi Nina's back was crooked from giving birth to thirteen babies, raising eleven children starting when she was a child, and surviving physical abuse from my grandfather and some of her eldest sons. Alcoholism, domestic and sexual abuse, and my family cycle are ongoing colonial violence. Mi Nina died in old age after a prolonged illness, losing mobility and memory.²⁵² Her age is unclear, a common scenario in some rural pueblos in Michoacán where peasants must travel to a clerical office to obtain legal documents.²⁵³

Mi Nen, my grandmother, took his colonial heteropatriarchal role seriously. Mi Nen used force and punishment to maintain a heteronormative patriarchal order. He prohibited my grandmother from speaking P'urhépecha and mocked her when she taught her grandchildren. Still mi Nina quietly represented herself as *indigena*, never voicing her identity in public, choosing to continue to wear a well-worn sabalina, long colorful skirt, apron, and floral embroidered blouses. She endured anti-Indigenous slurs and insults about her superstitious beliefs, for practicing Indigenous healing practices, she was unapologetic at times, and others hurled insults back. On the other hand, Mi mama tells me *no se nada de eso*; I don't know anything about that when I ask about our Indigenous roots.²⁵⁴ I question how much this is influenced by being raised by mi Nen in a hostile Indigenous environment and as one of the families without an ejido, a government allotted land, in Atecucario. I can speculate that mi Nina feared that her children would face more violence if she taught her children and that with age she realized that she wanted a different path for her grandchildren. Mi Nina taught me some of the

²⁵² Ortiz, Conversations with my mother, Maria de la Luz Ortiz. There is only one doctor in Atecucario, and he was known to administer drugs and help with symptoms but rarely offered diagnosis in a manner that lay campesinos, rural Mexicans could make sense of. I do not know what my grandmother's illnesses are and my mother isn't clear either.

²⁵³ Ortiz.

²⁵⁴ Urrieta, "Indigenous Reflections on Identity, Trauma, and Healing." Urrieta writes that *indigena* identity is "complex, multiyared, multivocal, painful, cacophonous, contradicting and healing, as are Indigenous identities in general" and cites Cadena and Orin, 2007 and Martínez Novo 2006. Similarly, Indigenous identity shifts over time and according to the political climate

P'urhépecha plant medicine, maintained communal values and told me to feed my ancestors when we prayed for guidance. Teaching her grandchildren may have been a form of survivance, renunciation of “dominance, tragedy, and victimry,”²⁵⁵ from colonialism.

When I found out that mi Nina was from another pueblo, I felt a multitude of emotions; I had always been told that we, Ortiz-Romero's, ARE from Atecucario. I grew up with the patriarch's story. The matriarch's story was winding and transformative. Yet the transformation was slow because archival research is full of barriers. The names I knew did not match the records, and finding any information took months. I scrolled through various spellings of Enedina Aviña and Enedina Ortiz and found nothing. I talked with my mother repeatedly about my project, sharing updates when I had them. Piecing together fragments of stories and remembering became healing.

My mother revealed what she knew about mi Nina's family; she had two sisters, Josephina and Dolores, and a brother Maximiliano. She told me my Bisabuela's, great-grandmother's name, Catalina. I took this information to Familysearch.org, a free genealogical search site provided by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I scrolled through pages of possible connections in baptismal records from Michoacán. Weeks passed until I clicked on a record Catalina Morales was listed as an attendee at a family christening, she was also listed as the Godmother to María Magdalena Galindo Ríos in 1915 at a church in Uruapan.²⁵⁶ Uruapan is a pueblo originario, an original pueblo to the P'urhépecha. She was the missing link in my history, why mi Nina was quietly yet unapologetically Indigenous. The only record with mi bisabuela's name, As I mapped the pueblos from my research I found more of my story. I called

²⁵⁵ Vizenor, *Manifest Manners*. vii

²⁵⁶ Mexico, Michoacán, Catholic Church Records, 1555-1996, “Christening Record for María Magdalena Galindo Ríos 1915-.”

my mother and asked, “*má, es costumbre ser madrina en el pueblo en onde uno vive?*” *Is it customary to be a godmother in your pueblo?*

Sí.

I asked a clarifying question about traveling for baptisms, read through genealogical research forums for people looking for their Mexican ancestors using baptismal records and it was understood that the location of the baptism was understood the same as the residence of the people on the record. There were multiple factors for this conclusion but mainly that car ownership was rare for peasants and other forms of travel were expensive or not available.

I looked at the archive again; the christening where mi Bisabuela is mentioned took place in 1915 when travel was more difficult. I told my mother, “*tenemos familia de Uruapan,*” *we family from Uruapan.*

Our P’urhepecha history could no longer be denied or shrouded in a cloud of silence. This broke a colonial heteropatriarchal norm in my family that separated me from my matriarchs, potential insurgent kin.

I think back to the relationship mi Nina had with la Virgen de Guadalupe, a spiritual kinship that she used to honor her heritage. From her, I learned co-presence with my P’urhépecha ancestors, “spiritual practices of ancestral communication”²⁵⁷ by taking care of the garden and more than humans that we relied on for food, companionship, kin, and medicine. From this practice, I make insurgent kinship with my great-grandmother, Catalina. It is a daily practice where I care for her by practicing P’urhépecha land-based practices. I care for her by protecting more than human kin and building my circle of P’urhépecha kin.

²⁵⁷ Benjamin and Haraway, “Black AfterLives Matter: Cultivating Kinfulness as Reproductive Justice.” 51.

Matrilineal Migrations

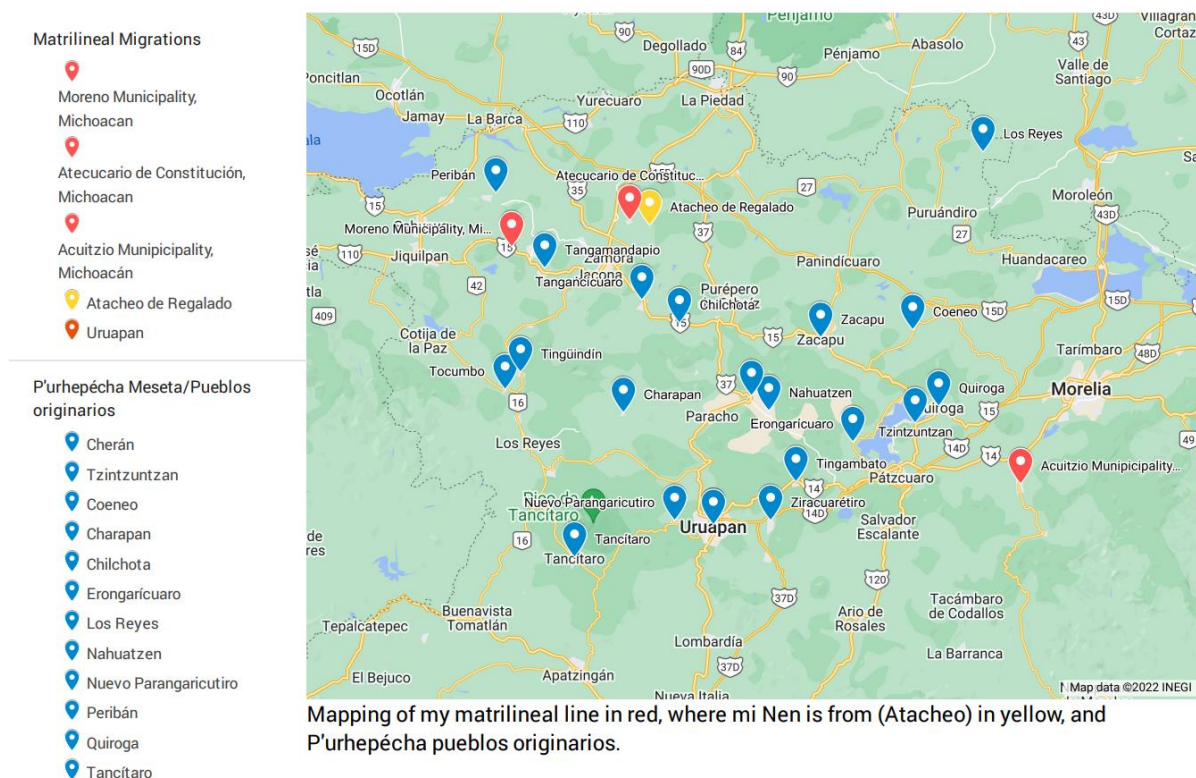


Figure b. Map of matrilineal migrations. Map data ©2022 Google

The kinship that I had with mi Nina grew stronger after death. Because of this relationship, I had a viable childhood as a unique gender-bending. Mi Nina continues to be insurgent kin. Her laugh still lives in me, flies me out of the most challenging moments into what ifs and what is possible.²⁵⁸ Once I made kinship with my mother and mi Bisabuela Catalina in adulthood, and they became insurgent kin, we broke a cycle of heteropatriarchal anti-queer violence and rejection.

²⁵⁸ Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*. Pg 17 I think with Simpson idea of “flight out of settler colonialism” as “a collective process of decolonization and resurgence.” In this case I believe that to create spaces for children to dream of different worlds is a form of resurgence.

Conclusion

When the conquistadores pulverized Indigenous monuments, enacted theft, genocide, epistemicide²⁵⁹ and attempted to eliminate all diversity in gender and sexuality, they did not envision that stories about them would carry on, reviving them in every generation, the Zamora municipality holds many of these stories through the blowing breeze that pushes through towering churches, the rich and poor that pass each other in the mercados of Zamora de Hidalgo (the city of the Zamora Municipality), the pueblos that bustle with movement and prayer, the Yácatas, pyramids, and existing pre-colonization tombs like artificial hills²⁶⁰ that tell of P'urhépecha people that made this place.

Over five hundred years of colonial rule, capitalism/neoliberalism, and heteropatriarchal socialization turned to land in Ateucario into a source of conflict that, at times, turned violent rather than a point of union. 35,000 Michoacáños are displaced due to violence, and the conditions of poverty are heightened in times of political strife. Over five hundred years of colonial heteropatriarchal regimes of elimination have created a tradition of cyclical or permanent migration for Indigenous, poor campesinos, and LGBTQ people to the United States. Through all this, there has been resistance against colonial capitalism and land theft. Today, autonomous pueblos are forming to push out neoliberal criminal entities such as the illegal loggers in the Cherán forest. For matriarchs and Indigequer, or LGBTQ Indigenous people, making insurgent kinship has become a form of resistance to colonial heteropatriarchy and a way of imagining queer Indigenous futures.

²⁵⁹ Grosfoguel, "The Structure of Knowledge in Westernized Universities." He ordered the destruction of monuments, enforced patriarchy to destroy kinship structures prior to contact

²⁶⁰ Ochoa, "El Distrito de Zamora En 1877.," 129.

Poem: birth story 1

on the evening before the snow came
you trembled out the last winters from your temples
came flat-footed into the nighttime
carrying molten and frozen
to try to find the star that created us

your mother told you that you were an easy birth
although big, you birthed out of her in a 5-hour story

she swore to the moon
that she was meant to mother you
although your father didn't want you
even though your father wanted your brother
although your father wanted your sister
you were the easiest
and that made you the lucky one
getting to live when you were more than
half
unwanted

you are becoming lucky you tell yourself
one who gets to say that you exist against many odds
like the winter that threatened to take you
like the border that threatened to take you
like the father that threatened to unlove you more

yet the nighttime
spoke up and down
saying that you were born to break cycles
on both sides of your family
the cycle of unlove on your fathers
and the cycle of too much giving to keep anything for yourself
on your mother's side

you were meant to weave the threads that connect them
through landscapes
and time
and breaks
you were meant to leave one lost pueblo for another

meant to know Purepecha land
while being on Duwamish land
meant to speak to different land stewards
who break through the settler traffic to say

that this winter you are to learn
to collect wet snow on your back without letting your limbs pierce homes
because you weren't born for winters but you were born

Poem: community (birth story 2)

it snowed the year I was born
in mexico
the collection of smog
and hurt country condensation rose
to the top of the city buildings

and fell over it

1984

I was born while the church bell rang three times
my mother tells me that the light of the window hit the ground
in a triangle

born a June baby
while the bell of the community heart
rang three times

una vez pa' mi mama
segunda vez pa' me Nina
y la ultima pa' mi
my head out of the body of my 21-year-old mother
a few hundred feet from mi casa
the grey house that housed my first words
a community center
the neighborhood-nino-running-through-center
at two I crawled on the cement floor
still marked by my fathers own hands
handbuilt marks on the cement cracks
history falling from the sky in dust
traveling from the music
exhaling

hear los sonidos de la plaza
mi gente dancing
their feet sending bits of history down
to the cracks of my floor

June baby
en mi tierra of June weather that echoes my presence
on the ground mi presencia echoes at me
my shadow
that followed me from one community center to another

mama community leader

abuela	community leader
familia	community center
iglesia	community center
amor	community teacher
lengua	community teacher
cuentos	community
Skin	reminder of my community
Skin	my collections of warm days
in my	community

Poem: To Catalina Morales

when sage dries, it leaves a dust
a print from the world of prayers
the place where desert and forest meet
where the spirits rest and wait their turn

she had long braids that circled the cacti
and roses
every time i asked for her name, the sun
would swallow the sound
but she waiting for my prayer

after my grandmother on my father's side died
she waiting for me behind the smoke
she fed me pumpkin candy
and caressed my face
while her tears merged with the Cupatitzio River

i asked my mother if the dead
might still work to undo their wrongs
and if she knew who else came to my prayers
with braids that guard the Chéran forest
and stories found among the plant medicine

my mother spilled names
versions of ourselves that fell like leaves at my feet
surnames fresh from memory but unknown to me

i spent weeks searching baptism and marriage records
losing sleep over cursive and old Spanish names
all while mulling the various versions of my great grandmother
on paper and tongue

turns out that patriarchy eats names too
leaves them in pieces or parts or none at all
but the record kept her intact for that moment
Catalina Morales
a found piece of me
a truth to my nostalgic memory

Poem: Translations

crusadas marks those for who belonging will be the longing
 that they'll seek in the eyes of my future lovers
 so the marks might mean that at 9 years old
 obedience lives in silence that grows limbs inside throats

when you grow into a world that needs translation
 do you grow to become the translator?
 do you become the translation?
 do you get lost in the translations?
 do you become the secondary language?
 i don't know

if you are to speak the right spanish to the right person could you become the right one? if i am
 to speak the right english to the right person could i become the right one?
 to be a queer kid is to master language
 in order to master the right translation
 in order to become the right kid
 in order to become decent
 in order to become good
 in order to receive enough projections
 that could be pieced together for the right moment
 so that when you no longer obey gender or sexuality
 you can still be something even if it's just in memory

some of us have no bigger aspiration than to become good
 at all costs
 at the cost of spirit
 at the cost of desire
 at every cost

Chapter 2. Land as Kin: Queer P'urhépecha in the Diaspora

Prologue

Migration from Michoacán, Mexico, to the United States has, until recently, excluded P'urhépecha people, Indigenous Mexicans from the northwestern region of Michoacán. Migration is a gendered process whereby more men migrate, and more research focuses on men.²⁶¹ Often, research on migration from Michoacán renders sexuality invisible. The few studies regarding this topic focus on gay men and trans-women. This work is important, yet it reveals the limits and violence of the heterosexual archive. I argue that Western archives fail to understand and recognize sexuality and gender diversity in Indigenous Mexican and contemporary Mexican contexts. This paper seeks to offer a queer gender nonbinary P'urhépecha migration counter-archive.²⁶² This counter-archive will document the unarchiveable by using autoethnography, storytelling, narrative writing, prose and poetry.

This chapter is about the manifestations of white supremacist settler colonial entanglements for P'urhépecha migrants that settle on Wenatchi and Coast Salish lands in Washington state. Additionally, this chapter argues that making insurgent kinship with urban spaces, which are Indigenous land, requires embracing anti-colonial liberatory practices. Lastly, this chapter refuses that the city is a place Indigenous cultural destruction for queer Indigenous people, rather the city can provide opportunities for queer Indigenous people to resurge cultural practices more safely with other Indigequeer people. I articulate the manifestations of white supremacist settler colonial entanglements by focusing on my family's history as multi-generational P'urhépecha migrant workers that settled in the Pacific Northwest. I use my

²⁶¹ Donato, Hamilton, and Bernard-Sasges, "Gender and Health in Mexico."

²⁶² Gopinath, *Unruly Visions*.

experience as a queer nonbinary P'urhépecha person to unpack insurgent kinship with Seattle and Lynnwood, Washington, Coast Salish lands and the opportunities that urban space offer Indigequeer people.

Insurgent kinship argues for queer P'urhépecha futures by resisting colonial heteropatriarchy. For this reason, I define insurgent kinship as kinship made with humans and more-than-humans that resurges pre-contact matriarchal and queer P'urhépecha kinship structures. I argue that insurgent kinship is necessary to remake a world without white supremacist settler colonialism and colonial heteropatriarchal structures.²⁶³ The term insurgent kin refers to kin *made* through, as Adele E. Clarke explains in *Making Kin not Population*, “daily actions that transform partial relations into deeper ones” and “crafted through the exchange of sharing activities and other practices”²⁶⁴ with humans and more than humans that create “viable presents and futures”²⁶⁵ for queer P'urhépecha, more than human species and land. Queer P'urhépecha in Michoacán face precarious presents and futures where their role within a nuclear family, belonging to society, and safety are conditional and based on their cooperation with racialized colonial heteropatriarchal norms.

I argue that hacendado colonial capitalism and the Catholic Church constructed contemporary racialized colonial heteropatriarchal kinship structures based on landownership in campesino, farming, and Indigenous pueblos in Michoacán. For clarity and ease, I will use the phrase hacendado colonial capitalism to mean a social order created by intersecting social relations, systems, and institutions, such as patrilineal marriage, the Catholic Church, and the Spanish colonial system of hacendado agriculture.²⁶⁶ Hacendado colonial capitalism is an

²⁶³ Cornassel and Gaudry, “Insurgent Education And Indigenous- Centred Research.”

²⁶⁴ Clarke and Haraway, “Making Kin Not Population,” 32–33.

²⁶⁵ Clarke and Haraway, “Making Kin Not Population.” 33

²⁶⁶ Reddy, “New Version/Definition of Insurgent Kin,” November 24, 2022.

economic and social structure whereby peasants work as cheap laborers for large landowners. The inequity of hacendado colonial capitalism is enforced and justified by racialized colonial hetero-patriarchal social and institutional hierarchies, and liberal ideas of meritocracy.

During migration, hacendado colonial capitalism, and the United States, as Chandan Reddy argues, “liberal isomorphism of family, society, and state”²⁶⁷ converge. Queer P’urhépecha must again cooperate with the racialized and gendered, heteronormative colonial norms of the United States nation-state or face the “condition of possibility”²⁶⁸ of being “seen as a nonindividuated, non–rights bearing subject, whose conditions of existence confound” the assemblances of family, society, and state in el Norte.²⁶⁹

Questions driving this paper are: How do settler colonial entanglements manifest for P’urhépecha migrants? How does a queer P’urhépecha in the diaspora engage with relationship building of urban Indigenous land? What does grounded normativity look like in urban spaces as a P’urhépecha person in the diaspora? I will unpack these questions by recounting specific familial and personal memories and stories and corroborating them with historical and political context when needed.

The First Story: Migration and Temporary Migrant Housing

When the cherry trees were mostly barren at the orchard where my family worked as temporary migrant workers, it was a sign to prepare us for our return to Mexico. Yet, this year, 1992, would be different, as we would instead move west to a two-bedroom apartment in Lynnwood, Washington, that my father had acquired for us. This was the year he became a

²⁶⁷ Reddy, 161.

²⁶⁸ Reddy, “Rights-Based Freedom with Violence,” 149.

²⁶⁹ Reddy, 161.

citizen, made possible by the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. This Reagan-era policy allowed undocumented workers that had entered the United States before 1982 a pathway to legalization. My father lauded and revered Reagan for this policy yet did not mention, possibly intentionally and possibly not, that this supposed “amnesty” policy also included an increase in policing along the border and more penalties for undocumented people that crossed after 1982.

To the state, the bill was a failure.²⁷⁰ The critics would point to the ineffectiveness of border surveillance and policing concealing the United States' dependence on cheap labor and the need for migrants, “legal” or not. Even with more penalties and uncertainty, migrants risked their lives to have a chance as exploited laborers who made more in the cruel conditions of the United States than in Mexico. What was unintelligible at the time, when I was seven years, was that my Indigenous migrant family struggled to find belonging through settler colonial recognitions of legal residency and citizenship, which did little to make our tiny apartment feel like a home. We were entangled in ongoing settler colonial structures and logic that continued to unhouse Snohomish and Coast Salish people on their lands.

This felt like a monumental time to settle in the United States for my family, which had a multi-generational tradition of circular migration. My great-grandparents on both sides of my family had worked as migrant workers in the 40s through the Bracero Program, which will be explained in further detail in the coming paragraphs. They began the tradition of circular migration and developing a cartography of relationships along the migrant trail for the Romero and Ortiz from Atecucario, Michoacán, families. Atecucario de la Constitución is part of the

²⁷⁰ “Congress Tried to Fix Immigration Back in 1986. Why Did It Fail?”

Zamora Municipality, which is geographically a part of the P'urhépecha Plateau²⁷¹ yet comprised of predominantly mestizo-identifying pueblos and residents. It is twelve kilometers Northwest of the city of Zamora de Hidalgo and borders the Ixtlán and Ecuandureo Municipalities. Atecucario is my place of birth. Atecucario is a pueblo with a rich history. It was once part of the P'urhépecha empire. After contact, it became a region comprised of two haciendas. During the Mexican Revolution, it was considered an Indigenous pueblo that toppled and killed the largest landowner and reclaimed the land. After the Revolution, Atecucario became a village comprised of peasants who continued work within the hacendado economy, laborers for large landowners, or laborers who rented land from the government.

Although neoliberal politics had long been responsible for growing inequity in Michoacán and Mexico, the 1992 signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) deal by Canada, the United States, and Mexico marked a line in history where inequity in Mexico would rise and crossing the border was more dangerous with the increased policing, incarcerating, and deporting of undocumented border crossers.²⁷²

The Bracero Accord, an agreement between the United States and Mexico, took effect from 1942-1965. *Bracero*, Spanish for a strong worker, benefitted the United States with already precarious exploitable migrant laborers. The Mexican nation-state approved the Bracero program to “modernize” the “indio” and mestizo peasant and to maintain heteropatriarchal norms where the patriarch maintains the family unit.²⁷³ Mexico targeted Indigenous and previously Indigenous pueblos, including those from the P'urhépecha Meseta. The program's purpose was to expose Indigenous and mestizo peasant men to modern agricultural practices so that they would

²⁷¹ Zona Turística, “The Purepecha Plateau, One of the Best Things to Do in Zamora, Michoacán | Experts in Mexico.”

²⁷² Fernandez-Kelly and Massey, “Borders for Whom?”

²⁷³ Loza, *Defiant Braceros*. 29.

transform the primitive and uneducated countryside with their newfound knowledge and bolster the rural economy with remittances to their families.²⁷⁴

Women were discouraged from participating in the program or migrating north because they were expected to stay home, raise their children, and utilize remittance money to get by. This would later change when men in El Norte chose to explore their newfound sexual and economic freedom. Some abandoned their commitments to their families, forcing mothers to move north to the Mexico-U.S. border towns to seek help finding their husbands from the braceros who visited often. In these border towns, few economic opportunities existed for women outside of sex work, raising moral concerns to the Catholic Church, which backed the program because it was designed to maintain heteronormative family structures. Ana Raquel Minian's book, *Undocumented Lives* said that women's acceptance as migrant workers in the Bracero program by the Church and Mexican Nation resulted from the growing sex industry and the little that Mexico did to Braceros who had not fulfilled their commitments to send remittances to their families or pueblos. I surmise that the Church believed allowing women into el Norte would resume heteropatriarchal roles. The goal was that women would continue to be chaste mothers obligated to the household and the children.²⁷⁵

LGBTQ people make up fragments in the Bracero archive. I suspect that refusing to disclose sexual desire and gender nonconformity on government and immigration documents at the time might have been a form of survival, fortifying safety against the violent consequences of disclosing one's sexual preference or gender nonconformity. Yet, there are still some accounts of gay men. Minian argues that gay men were disincentivized from temporary agricultural work because of the dangers at the border. She also argues that they benefited from patriarchy by

²⁷⁴ Loza.

²⁷⁵ Loza.

acquiring well-paid positions in the service industry within small Catholic towns where women were expected to stay home and care for children. Minian suggests that they did not need to leave for economic reasons. This line of reasoning is lacking, and I believe that some gay men and people of diverse gender and sexuality were too indecipherable to the archive.

The life that Minian paints for gay men in rural pueblos is inaccurate. There is a long history within Mexico of the public persecution of people of diverse sexualities and genders, beginning with the Spanish conquistadores at the point of contact with the Mayans in the 16th century. Archives show that they weaponized dogs to kill Indigenous people who were sexually and gender diverse.²⁷⁶ Contemporary persecution of LGBTQ people in Mexico continues with the Catholic Church's rejection of gay, lesbian, and trans people and the public violence enacted on trans-women. Mexico is second to Brazil as the most perilous country for transgender women and among the most dangerous for LGBTQ people.²⁷⁷

Violence directed at LGBTQ people in Mexico is heightened at the border by an environment of crisis and urgency that "coyotes" or scalpers, pandillas/gangs, military, and police take advantage of. When humans are commodities, and sources of profit, as is the case with hopeful migrants and asylum seekers at the Mexican-United States border,²⁷⁸ then hacendado colonial capitalism emboldens macho individual exploiters to heighten competition based on racialized colonial heteropatriarchal hierarchies. In effect, queer migrants, Indigequeer people, women, and Indigenous people become more vulnerable, especially those fleeing extreme violence and desperate economic conditions.

²⁷⁶ Miranda, "EXTERMINATION OF THE JOYAS."

²⁷⁷ "Latin America."

²⁷⁸ Bennet and Lundström, "Queer Central American Migrants Imagining Livable Lives."

It does not help that the United States Immigration Law has historically been used to prohibit entry based on sexuality. That and the twentieth-century militarization of the border by the United States exacerbates deaths and violence at the border, especially for queer migrants from Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and non-Spanish-speaking Indigenous people. From the 1887 Page Law that limited migration of women from China on the basis that Asian women were sex workers to the McCarren-Walter Act, which prohibited “the immigration of lesbians and gays”²⁷⁹ because, in 1952, it was believed that they had “psychopathic personalities” and changed in 1965 to deny entry to lesbians and gays on the basis that they were “sexual deviants.”²⁸⁰

Although asylum is an option for some LGBTQ people, the process is described as a fundamentally “violent process”²⁸¹ by an informant in *Queer Central American Migrants Imagining Livable Lives* by Isadora Bennet. The informant and Guatemalan Scholar, Sasha, describes the process as one that operates “to deport the highest number of persons”²⁸² possible and does so by requiring hard-to-attain proof of persecution and ill-treatment based on sexuality. The application also requires that asylum seekers revictimize themselves by recounting their most violent experiences. Still, strong cases with significant evidence can be denied. Asylum seekers may be denied entry, deported, or incarcerated.

Multiple points of contact exist between the Bracero program, LGBTQ violence in Mexico and at the border, the United States Immigration Law, and settler colonialism in Mexico and the United States. The Bracero Program was constructed to “modernize” Indigenous and mestizo pueblos comprised of racialized peasants who did not identify as Indigenous.

²⁷⁹ Bennet and Lundström, 16.

²⁸⁰ Bennet and Lundström, 16.

²⁸¹ Bennet and Lundström, 45.

²⁸² Bennet and Lundström, 45.

Immigration policies and the decision power regarding who is eligible for citizenship are nation-state-affirming practices that, as Lenape scholar Joanne Barker says, disavow “the active presence of Indigenous people as polities.”²⁸³ Monisha de Gupta argues that “settler colonialism and its convergence with immigration enforcement at the borders and in U.S. domestic space are projects that differentially manage normative and nonnormative genders and sexualities.”²⁸⁴ Maylei Blackwell, Cherokee, argues that Indigenous migrants experience multiple colonialities in the United States diaspora.²⁸⁵

Context is necessary to understand that, as Lionel Cantú argues, “sexuality shapes and organizes the social relations of migration.”²⁸⁶ In turn, migration shapes sexuality based on the gendered, sexualized, and racialized hierarchal colonial and historic contexts of the country of entry.

Transnational Support in the Diaspora

In Eastern Washington, Wenatchi lands, my mother, two siblings, and I lived among other paisanos, people from our own country, more importantly, from Atecucario, the pueblo I was born in. By the time we moved there, settler colonialism had invisibilized the Wenatchi peoples history from the town. The Wenatchi people also refer to themselves by the name of their language, the P'Squosa band.²⁸⁷ Wenatchi means “water rushing forth.”²⁸⁸ Before contact, their territory extended from Icicle Creek to the Wenatchee River, where they fished salmon freely. Yakama scholar Michelle Jacob recounts that in 1805, Lewis and Clarke encountered the

²⁸³ Leece et al., “Imperialism, Settler Colonialism, and Indigeneity,” 227.

²⁸⁴ Leece et al., 228.

²⁸⁵ Blackwell, “Geographies of Indigeneity.”

²⁸⁶ Cantú, *The Sexuality of Migration*. 1.

²⁸⁷ Big Bull-Lewis, “P'Squosa Tribe.”

²⁸⁸ “False Promises.”

Yakama people, a neighboring tribe that set-in motion decades of colonizer encroachments, surveillance, land theft, and genocide, all in preparation for the founding of the Washington Territory of 1853.

The Wenatchi survived a multi-method genocide inflicted by the U.S. settler state that killed approximately 60% of their people. Twice the U.S. signed treaties with the Wenatchi to grant them land and exclusive hunting rights, and twice they were broken, once in 1855 and another time in 1894. P'Squosa people were forced to migrate to the Yakama and Colville Reservations, where they would fight for their promised land and successfully for their fishing rights until 2008.

Let me return to the mid-nineteenth century to when Chiefs Red Wolf and Timothy (Ta-Moots-Tsoo) of the Alpowai Nez Perce band that lived east of the Yakama region converted to Christianity and were gifted apple seeds from a missionary. The apples were large and sweet in contrast to the crabapples native to the region, which were small and tart. Natives planted the first documented successful orchard, noticed by encroaching settlers but not by historians. In 1877, the U.S. stole the land three years after the Nez Perce War.²⁸⁹ The newly built railroad made shipping goods to Seattle more possible, and the prospect of profiting from apples meant that diverse ecosystems were flattened to plant rows of apple trees in the Yakama Valley. With more land theft came more orchards, with settlers living in Wenatchee putting up signs in the 1940s claiming it as the Apple Center of the World.

Let's shift back to the 1990s. My family had an intergenerational relationship with the owners of an orchard in Wenatchee, Washington. The owner Eric was the son of the man who had hired my grandfather. As a child, my family referred to the owner as Eddie, a Spanglish

²⁸⁹ Rose, "How Native Farmers Shaped the Apple Industry, Part 2."

colloquial version of the name. In a humble and neglected ranch-style house on the property, we were temporarily housed with other families, our close and distant relatives. Various temporary inhabitants had converted a once three-bedroom ranch-style house into four separate family quarters, one family of four to six in each room, and all shared one common bathroom.

Yet, as a child, I did not feel deprived or lacking because everywhere in this orchard were people who knew me, and we picked fruit, a familiarity that connected me back to my homelands. I come from fruit pickers, campesinos, farm workers, and P'urhépecha land protectors. The orchard and the people who resided and worked on it became a world apart from Wenatchee's unfamiliarity and precarity, yet it was also confining. To avoid highly surveilled streets or parts of town for fear of deportation or incarceration, names of safe places were shared along with the maps to get there.²⁹⁰ Some migrants rarely left the orchard, and grocery shopping became an exciting outing.

Another paisana and scholar, María Guillen Valdovinos, who is from Guerrero and Michoacán and is P'urhépecha writes about a similar experience in “Travels of a Diaspora: Community From La Sierra Madre y Tierra Caliente to the Pacific Northwest”:

We arrived in Eastern Washington and lived with other farmworkers and diaspora familias and communities that also traveled far from the Tierra Caliente y Costa Chica/Grande zones of México. To survive, our web of connections and acquaintances back in our homelands allowed us all to find each other and create a community and familia in a predominantly conservative small town.²⁹¹

²⁹⁰ Minian, *Undocumented Lives*.

²⁹¹ MARÍA GUILLEN VALDOVINOS, “Travels of a Diaspora Community.” 174

In Wenatchee, we built transnational support networks by sending collective remittances back home when a medical or infrastructural need arose in one of our pueblos. Similarly, when someone was injured in the campo or pueblo, there was a collective response, financially and with care labor. We maintained P'urhépecha heritage and practices that had been integrated into mestizo peasant consciousness from living in what was once a P'urhépecha pueblo, such as collective care, although now solely women's work, food sovereignty with a community garden and hunting trips, and traditional medicinal practices.

Yet it is important to say that these migrant living spaces were not free of the social hacendado colonial capitalist hierarchies that some fled. It was common to hear anti-Indigenous terms used casually. Women were expected to wake at three am to make food for everyone and work at five am alongside the men. While in migrant housing, I heard of several instances of domestic violence, a colonial legacy of the imposition of heteropatriarchy, which encourages control and violence against women. Although one man was kicked out of the shared house, most women and children were expected to keep quiet and pretend it did not occur. And it was an open secret that gay people and queer sexualities were shameful and unwelcome in heteronormative migrant spaces. It was only when a cousin, alleged to be queer, experienced what I now believe to be a gay bashing that the topic was ever discussed. It was not discussed in terms of concern but rather gossip about why it happened, who did it, and differing opinions about whether he deserved it. I learned to hide my queerness well.

I share my experience of homophobia in migrant housing. Still, I want to make clear that this occurred while in the United States and, as Chandan Reddy puts it, not because of my country of origin and I add or because of my P'urhépecha heritage. Increased homophobia is “produced at the intersection of the state's immigration policies and its fixation of the hetero-

patriarchal family unit.”²⁹² Homophobia and violence against trans and queer Indigenous people are as American as apple pie. Heteropatriarchy is part of every colonial institution and social structure.

It is not an excuse, but Mexican migrants, especially those from Indigenous and peasant pueblos, must contend with being unwanted as a people but wanted for labor. This breeds colonial capitalist competition. There is an understanding that the U.S. has more compassion and acceptance of migrants within hardworking heteronormative family units working towards assimilation. Queer people in the family threaten this goal.

My father had the goal of making his children the best Americans. He set out to separate my mother and siblings from paisanos and to transform our identity from Indigenous Mexicans/Atecucarianos/de Michoacán to grateful Americans with a benevolent role as beneficiaries of the genocide, land theft, and forced migration of the Indigenous people of the land that we settled on. He wanted his kids to be Americans with no hyphen and no past in Lynnwood, Washington.

Indigenous and Settler

John Dick the great-grandson of Wenatchi Chief Harmlet lives in the Colville Reservation, Nespelem land. In the 2008 documentary “False Promises: The Lost Land of the Wenatchi,” he shares that he feels he does not belong and is a “foreigner like none-Indians”²⁹³ on Nespelem lands. He adds, “this is Nespelem land, this is where their ancestors died, where they’re buried, and where they lived... I want to go back to Wenatchi, I wanna stay there, I want

²⁹² Reddy, “Rights-Based Freedom with Violence,” 160.

²⁹³ “False Promises.”

to die there. I want to go home.”²⁹⁴ Dick continues saying he could go back to live on Wenatchi lands, but if he does, he must live there “like the white man does.”²⁹⁵

I cannot compare my experience to that of John Dick and the forced migration of the Wenatchi people. But when John Dick says that living on Nespelem land makes him feel that he is living as a “white man does,”²⁹⁶ it makes me consider my family’s migration and settlement in Lynnwood, Washington. Although my family fled the economic and racial violence that hacendado colonial capitalism created and navigated racial, colonial institutions and white supremacy in the United States, it does not exempt us from perpetuating contemporary settler logics.²⁹⁷ Brenda Nicolas, Zapotec from San Jerónimo Zochina, conceptualized transborder comunalidad, atheoretical framework argues that “Indigenous diasporas from Mexico transborderly and communally contest their erasure in the United States, while maintaining an awareness of their unique position as guests on the land of other Native peoples.”²⁹⁸ This framework is helpful in thinking about the relationship with settler colonialism that P’urhépecha migrants become entangled with when they migrate. Still, I will refer to myself as a settler of color on ancestral Coast Salish lands.

This chapter contributes to Critical Latinx Indigeneities literature by Indigenous and mestiza/o scholars who are pushing the boundaries of Latinx Studies with contemporary research that includes experiences of Indigenous communities and articulating Indigeneity from Indigenous perspectives. I have discussed Brenda Nicolas above and include María

²⁹⁴ “False Promises.”

²⁹⁵ “False Promises.”

²⁹⁶ “False Promises.”

²⁹⁷ Nájera and Maldonado, “Transnational Settler Colonial Formations and Global Capital.”

²⁹⁸ Nicolas, ““Soy de Zochina,”” 49.

Josefina Saldaña-Portillo's call to incorporate settler colonial frameworks to discuss the migrant experience in "Critical Latinx Indigeneities: A paradigm drift."²⁹⁹

The concept of settlers of color, as termed by Haunani-Kay Trask in the year 2000, explains the roles that Asian settlers in Hawaii play politically in opposing or averting Native Hawaiian sovereignty while growing their political power. Since then, scholarship concerning settlers of color has largely been located within Hawaii. Yet Latinx, Chicanx, and Indigenous scholars have called attention to the tension and potential solidarities³⁰⁰ that Indigenous Mexicans, Latin-American migrants and Chicanx have with stewards of the land they settle on.

For instance, Maylei Blackwell, Floridalma Boj Lopez & Luis Urrieta Jr. argue that a "co-constitutive relationship of multiple contexts of power and multiple colonialities"³⁰¹ exists for Latinx migrants in the United States that make Indigenous migrant settlers. Whereas Laura Pulido contends that "deep anxieties"³⁰² regarding the "precarious nature of Chicana/o indigeneity"³⁰³ have resulted in Chicanx scholars dancing around the Chicanx/Native American tension and failing to acknowledge complicity in settler colonialism. Lourdes Gutiérrez Nájera and Korinta Maldonado argue that "Indigenous Mexicans simultaneously perpetuate Native dispossession in the United States as they lay roots and reconstruct transnational forms of indigeneity."³⁰⁴ While I agree with these scholars on the points above, I want to make clear that unlike settlers of color in Hawaii that Indigenous migrants do not all "have the political capacity to colonize Northern Native nations."³⁰⁵

²⁹⁹ Saldaña-Portillo, "Critical Latinx Indigeneities."

³⁰⁰ Blackwell, Boj Lopez, and Urrieta, "Special Issue."

³⁰¹ Blackwell, Boj Lopez, and Urrieta, 126.

³⁰² Pulido, "Geographies of Race and Ethnicity III," 4.

³⁰³ Pulido, 1.

³⁰⁴ Nájera and Maldonado, "Transnational Settler Colonial Formations and Global Capital," 814.

³⁰⁵ Blackwell, Boj Lopez, and Urrieta, "Special Issue," 127.

To unpack further the potential of Indigenous Mexican migrants perpetuating settler colonial logic, I provide an example of Zapotecs in Los Angeles from the article “Transnational Settler Colonial Formations and Global Capital: A Consideration of Indigenous Mexican Migrants” by Gutiérrez Nájera and Maldonado. They explain that Los Angeles is touted as having the most Indigenous population in the country, with over 50,000 self-identifying, yet Native Californians “remain invisible in the Angeleno imaginary.”³⁰⁶ This is possible, they argue because Los Angeles’ has a “multicultural agenda”³⁰⁷ that uses Zapotec presence to bolster its multicultural image. Nicolas argues that “the unique position of Indigenous Latin American diasporas as ‘guests’” drives the Zochina Zapotec community to “consider the responsibilities and respect for the lands they come to, to settle and practice their own communal practices” yet acknowledges that this is complicated by settler colonialism.³⁰⁸

Zapotec presence has been celebrated by Los Angeles in various capacities. In 2014 the Los Angeles Public Library hosted an event to celebrate the multiple generations of Zapotecs in Los Angeles that led to the recognition of Oaxacalifornia, a part of the city with a high population of Oaxaqueños. Part of the celebration included the involvement of Oaxaqueño mural artists tasked with portraying their claims of “transcommunal belonging.”³⁰⁹ This belonging is based on their active participation in transforming Los Angeles creates a symbolic relationship between the city and Oaxaca. While the Zapotec murals depicted contemporary Indigenous people, murals of Native Californians, Tongva, Chumash, and Tataviam people situate them in the past and in subservient roles to colonizers. Inadvertently, while Zapotec migrants are celebrated, they are thrust into a complicit role that invisibilizes Native Californians.

³⁰⁶ Nájera and Maldonado, “Transnational Settler Colonial Formations and Global Capital,” 815.

³⁰⁷ Nájera and Maldonado, 815.

³⁰⁸ Nicolas, “‘Soy de Zochina,’” 53.

³⁰⁹ Nájera and Maldonado, “Transnational Settler Colonial Formations and Global Capital,” 815.

This brings me back to one of my research questions: How do settler colonial entanglements manifest for P'urhépecha migrants? As I have laid out in this talk, Indigenous migrants become entangled with U.S. settler colonialism and the colonial and heteronormative structures socially and institutionally in crossing the border, or as Maylei Blackwell contends, are thrust into multiple colonialities.³¹⁰ Further, it is imperative to distinguish the mestiza/o migrant experience from Indigenous migrants. In “Studying in Relation: Critical Latinx Indigeneities and Education,” Luis Urrieta Jr., P'urhépecha, and Dolores Calderon contend that Indigenous migrants experience prejudice and discrimination from peers of their own countries and attribute this to state-sanctioned ignorance of Indigenous peoples in Central America.³¹¹ I present the case of Ireta P'urhépecha, a collective comprised of members of the P'urhépecha community from Michoacán, Mexico, that reside on Coast Salish lands in the Tacoma/Seattle area because it presents an intriguing study.

Please note that my observations for this study are autoethnographic and that my perspective is limited since I have participated in Ireta P'urhépecha events as a community member, not a collective member. Homophobic experiences in migrant housing and family hindered my participation with the collective. I feared being rejected, a shared fear among some of my Indigeneer insurgent kinships, and it was through these kinships, I felt safe to go. I first attended Kurhíkuaeri K'uínchekua, P'urhépecha New Year, organized by the Ireta Collective in 2017 in Olympia, Washington, with another fellow P'urhépecha queer. The event took place in an elementary school. Upon arrival, I was greeted by Ireta Collective members and Coast Salish land hosts. From my perspective, Ireta members had built kin with the Squaxin Island Tribe and

³¹⁰ Blackwell, “Geographies of Indigeneity.”

³¹¹ Calderón and Urrieta, “Studying in Relation.”

planned the ceremony with them. It was a healing event, and I was met with an example of kinship made with land in the diaspora.

Ireta P'urhepecha is a politically aware and active group. Currently, they are collaborating with Red Tepeni, a cooperative of artisan P'urhépecha women in Michoacán by promoting their artisanal textiles, which provides financial resources for them and their community. They are a transnational community that financially and socially supports Indigenous pueblos back home.³¹² In the Seattle area, they have organized park clean-ups with the Puyallup tribe and have been instrumental in introducing new migrants to the Coast Salish Nations and Tribes that comprise the Seattle area.

It may be that the P'urhépecha residing in Seattle have not garnered the kind of attention from the city that would lead them toward a path of multicultural recognition in line with participating in settler colonial erasure. I mean that the settler state's colonial social and institutional apparatuses do not always garner choice in our engagement with oppressive systems. Much like it is impossible to rid oneself of privilege, it is not possible to rid oneself of our entanglements with settler colonialist structures. But we work to be anti-colonial and to ride ourselves of settler logic, including the heteropatriarchal logic that acts as a barrier of connection between Indigenous pueblo, Nation, Tribe, Reservation, or community, and Indigeneer people.

The Indigenous City

According to Laura M. Furlan, Native American literature about the city has revolved around the “homing plot,”³¹³ a term attributed to William Bevis. In the homing plot, a city is a

³¹² “Ireta P'urhépecha.”

³¹³ Furlan, *Indigenous Cities*, 72.

corruptible place for the Indigenous protagonist, who returns home to heal and reconnect with their culture. The city was not that for me.

Atecucario de la Constitución, my birthplace, was a Mexican nationalism project. Since it is a pueblo situated on the edge of the P'urhépecha Meseta, this small agrarian village became a focus of re-education efforts by the Catholic Church and nationalist school agendas aimed to stoke further division with the P'urhépecha people in the Meseta. Our alliance could lead to more revolutions. Top of the re-education list was patriarchal dominance, and Mexico was the father. The Virgin Mary was reinvented every decade to appeal to a transforming peasant population. After the Mexican Revolution, pueblos were incentivized by more federal support to claim mestizaje, which meant assimilation into the greater colonial hetero-patriarchal social hierarchies. The insistence on heteronormative gender and sexuality as a requirement to be acceptable mestizos meant that queer desire and queer genders in children were surveilled, and violence was seen as an allowable “correction” for deviant sexuality and gender expression and presentation. This made returning “home” complicated for me. Atecucario is a part of me that I miss and love and is also a site of ongoing heteropatriarchal colonial violence.

The social systems from Michoacán converged with U.S. heteropatriarchy and, as I recounted earlier, created a tense and precarious environment for queer migrants in migrant housing. Urban spaces are convergences of international and local migrations that introduced me to many expressions that empowered me to express my queer gender and sexuality. It was through my queer gender and sexuality expression that I felt connected to my inner homeland, my Indigequeer body knowledge, and my P'urhépechidad.

In her analysis of the novel, *The Jailing of Cecilia Capture* by Janet Campbell Hale, Furlan writes that the migration to the city of the protagonist, Cecilia, was an “escape from the

domestic space and, relatedly, the reservation space is necessary for an Indigenous ‘awakening’ to occur.”³¹⁴ Reservations in North America, Furlan explains, have been constructed from settler colonialism and, in effect, may feel like a place of captivity for women and queer people. I do not juxtapose these examples to claim an understanding of life as a Native woman on the reservation but rather to connect the experience of heteropatriarchal oppression across borders and the complex relationship that a Native woman or Indigeequeer may have with the city.

The internalization of settler colonial logic has cast or rejected Indigenous people of diverse sexualities and genders from their homes. It is against old knowledge from when multiple genders and sexualities were recognized before contact.³¹⁵ They are now being reclaimed in urban spaces with intertribal kinship with other Indigeequeer people. I argue that the presence of Indigeequeer people in cities signifies Indigeneity.

Urban spaces cannot hide ongoing settler colonialism and embodied dispossession. In Seattle, where one percent of the population is Native yet makes up fifteen percent of the homeless population, it is no wonder that there is a normalization to look away from people who live on the street. Homelessness in Snohomish country, which includes Lynnwood, has increased as Seattle's cost of living leads to houselessness and migration to nearby suburbs and cities with more affordable housing. It is not uncommon to see people at every stop light in Lynnwood asking for help, and drivers turn away from the disparity. Much like discussions about colonization are unsavory, so are the materializations from it.

Through the inequality and signs of capitalistic colonial decay, such as the garbage that lines the streets, the broken-down cars, the abandoned homes, and the new construction sites, the veil that covers the city's opaque Indigenous history is made thin. Through the shadows and the

³¹⁴ Furlan, 47.

³¹⁵ Manuela L Picq and Tikuna, “Indigenous Sexualities.”

silhouettes, you can see the contact between a settler colonial project and the Native present. In transformation and “modernization,” the abhorrent, undesirable, and the possible are made visible.

Grounded Normativity in Urban Spaces

Conversations about collective anti-colonial liberation and grounded normativity, land-based knowledges, and practices are interrelated in urban places. Yellowknives Dene scholar Glen Coulthard and Mississauga Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson write that grounded normativity “houses and reproduces the practices and procedures, based on deep reciprocity, that are inherently informed by an intimate relationship to place”³¹⁶ as well as “how to live our lives in relation to other people and nonhuman life forms in a profoundly nonauthoritarian, nondominating, nonexploitive manner.”³¹⁷ Grounded normativity is also about “respectful diplomatic relationships with other Indigenous and non-Indigenous nations with whom we might share territorial responsibilities or common political or economic interests.”³¹⁸ As I argued earlier, the U.S. is a settler state constructed and operates with social and institutionalized racialized colonial heteropatriarchal norms. From this, the nation-state creates the conditions for violence based on environmental destruction, white supremacy, heteropatriarchal domination, and capitalism.

The city is a site for these violences to converge, creating a need to practice of kindness and resource sharing with populations affected by racialized colonial heteropatriarchal norms.

³¹⁶ Coulthard and Simpson, “Grounded Normativity / Place-Based Solidarity,” 254.

³¹⁷ Coulthard and Simpson, 254.

³¹⁸ Coulthard and Simpson, 254.

Yet it is important, as Leece Lee-Oliver argues, to be cautious of fighting for “liberation that becomes the traps of coloniality.”³¹⁹ Anti-colonial liberation is possible by uncovering hidden histories obfuscated by white supremacist settler colonialism to free our imagination of it. Once we free our imagination, we can practice anti-colonial relations with the humans, more-than-humans, and land in our urban ecosystem and engage in acts of change, kindness, and resource sharing. Relationships built based on a shared goal of collective liberation can become insurgent kin because they foster viable presents and futures for Queer P’urhépecha in the diaspora.

Anti-colonial liberation requires dreaming of futures free of the colonial hierarchies that create inequality and shorten racialized migrants, people of color, queer and trans people of color, poor, Black, Indigenous, and all invisibilized and marginalized lives. The Indigenous poet plays a part in decolonial liberation by writing from their relational way of knowing³²⁰ to help others imagine the world beyond colonial narratives and assert life-affirming alternatives.

Insurgent kinship refigures what we might understand as a coming out narrative as a project of coming into an awareness of the lands and her/their capacities for many belongings. It helps us critique anti-queer violence to destroy the forms of belonging that the lands offer. Embracing Coulthard and Simpson's grounded normativity is advocating for belonging and refiguring politics of sexuality within the values of land-based social lives. Indigeneer people are rematerializing, making manifest, making visible, and feeling Indigeneity in urban spaces.

³¹⁹ Leece et al., “Imperialism, Settler Colonialism, and Indigeneity,” 246.

³²⁰ Million, “Intense Dreaming.”

Poem: hiking in Michoacán

we walk the into caves with shoes that pinch toes
and smell the screaming scent

bats stir

i imagine what it must have been like when
the air smelled like this everywhere
when you could look and not see where the trees stopped
i want to imagine so it can become

on the way back, i hear the parting creatures
making trail of wilderness,
moving trees closer to my feet

i was told once that we are never alone
that even in stillness there is will from the elements around us
that can hold us or reject us into action
and i want to believe so i can become

once we reach the trail that takes us home
we see the peak of the empire
a white cross piercing the sky in ecstasy
the sexuality of the church has always been known
a denied yet violent desire

a chain that sinches the skin and makes stigmata
a mark of the witch burrowing into the back of your neck hidden by a ribboned braid
you fall to the ground to wish for a different world to become

Poem: The Wall

and when you build that wall i hope you see yourself climbing i hope you see yourself running
15 miles without food, without water, at the mercy of the heat and the hunger and i hope you see
yourself facing mirrors of yourself as you run as you are chased down by yourself

racial capitalism teaches us to only think of ourselves and so i hope you look at yourself every
single day with the memory and fear and knowing of being hunted for wanting to survive. and i
hope you see yourself crawling and you see yourself calling for your children and you see
yourself wishing that that wall wasn't built and you just see yourself over and over again

Poem: sweaters in summer

your mother noticed you put on weight
 you cover yourself in sweaters
 in 90-degree weather

truth is that it isn't body image that is the biggest burden
 no, you don't know the reason why it might matter
 for a Mexican mother to have a thin daughter
 is that things are already tough in the world for Native Mexicans
 so why make them tougher?

no excuses
 but you don't know this until years later
 when you listen to your tias chastise the prima
 the one with the chubby cheeks
 and you realize they don't know
 how to communicate worry
 for having more stacks against her than she already inherited
 you get it, you are still mad, but you drop some of that mad when you see how your tias use their
 bodies to the brink of breaking
 it is hard to make it in this country
 when you don't speak the language
 when you don't have degree
 so you need every bit of your body to be acceptable
 because maybe then you can work longer in the cherry season
 and make the big bucks then

the same goes for your sexuality that a sweater can't hide but you learn to not talk about
 and learn to play off by having a boyfriend that your parents hate but tolerate because at least
 you have a boyfriend

sweaters can't cover up the look you get when you are stooping outside your tio's house in East
 Wenatchee and that butch chola walks by and you turn red, so red that your prima asks if you are
 alright and you say, maybe it's time to stop wearing sweaters in the middle of summer?

Poem: future dispossessed

sometimes winters take nationalities
 while the cold cold transform bodies into fleshed
 into material into dispossessed

we cross ready to work ourselves into dust
 make ritual out of 4 am mornings while singing in the kitchen
 as pots stir and we are the ones we came here for

and sometimes winters take children
 and transform them into disappeared

they take their tongues and take their mothers and take their nationality over
 and over

settler colonialism knows to mark
 the future dispossessed
 it knows to become racial capitalism
 it knows to transform the land so we can be tricked into believing
 that it is not here

truth is we, the disappeared the separated
 the dispossessed have always known
 that when it comes to power there is no good settler
 that if given the opportunity to take again
 they use institution and family and policy and language to make us into fleshed into
 material into dispossessed
 truth is we
 the disappeared the separated the dispossessed
 have always known that when it comes to power there is only the repeating manifest destiny

and we the ones to tame the ones to cage
 we have always known that when it comes to power
 there is only forgetting
 and constructing time as a lense to pity the past
 while imagining that we aren't living the settler fantasy

Chapter 3. Specters that Speak: Indigeneer and Intergenerational Artist Collaboration

This chapter will analyze my observations on participation in political protests and collective art-making practices with Hijx [EE-Hex] de su Madre, an art collective named after a popular curse phrase in Mexico, *hija de tu madre*. *Hija de tu madre* translates to a sentiment like *son/daughter/child of a bitch*. In this chapter, I recollect the political activity I participated in before meeting Hijx collective members Norma Alicia Pino (Comcaac and P'urhépecha) and Alé Abreu (Afro-Indigenous Salvi-Lenca). I also explain how my relationships with Norma-Alicia and Alé inspired theorizing the insurgent kinship concept. Insurgent kinship argues for queer P'urhépecha futures by resisting colonial heteropatriarchy. For this reason, I define insurgent kinship as kinship made with humans and more-than-humans that resurges pre-contact matriarchal and queer P'urhépecha kinship structures. I argue that insurgent kinship is necessary to remake a world without white supremacist settler colonialism and colonial heteropatriarchal structures.³²¹ The bond between Norma-Alicia, Alé and me, our shared commitment to being in good relations with people and more-than-humans, and our shared vision has made viable presents and Indigeneer futures more possible.

This chapter is autoethnographic and ethnographic. I argue that political participation and art collaboration are spaces of anti-colonial/decolonial possibilities. These spaces can transform settler normative concepts of friendship into insurgent kinship for queer P'urhépecha, Indigenous Mexicans from what is now Michoacan, in the diaspora. Two distinct events will be unpacked for this chapter. The first is my remembrance of participating in the Women's Caucus of Port Militarization Resistance human blockade action at an anti-Iraq war protest in November 2007.

³²¹ Comtassel and Gaudry, "Insurgent Education And Indigenous-Centred Research."

This section will include observations and characteristics of settler normative relationalities and queer P'urhépecha relationalities and how they manifest within women and activist spaces. I argue that settler normative relationalities are exclusionary, fleeting, extractive, and self-serving. Queer P'urhépecha relationalities are insurgent kinship praxis. Insurgent kinship is grounded relations, life-term relationships based on queer-centered P'urhépecha land-based practices. These practices include acting as a good relative with more than humans with care, interdependence, and mutual responsibility, that value life over profit, and resisting all manifestations of white supremacist settler colonialism and colonial heteropatriarchy. Insurgent kinship as a grounded relations is in conversation with Glen Coulthard and Leanne Simpson's intellectual labor and their ideas on grounded normativity as land-based and decolonial relationships to land and knowledge systems.³²²

Insurgent kin are made through, as Adele E. Clarke writes, “daily actions that transform partial relations into deeper ones” and “crafted through the exchange of sharing activities and other practices”³²³ with humans and more-than-humans. By making insurgent kinship and resurging matriarchal and queer P'urhépecha kinship structures, the present makes Indigenous queer futures more viable for queer P'urhépecha.³²⁴ This chapter will focus on the importance of being in good relations with political comrades and art collaborators to create anti-colonial futures and haunting anti-colonial art that inspires rebellion.

The second section is a collaborative theorizing experiment in anti-colonial research with Hijx de su Madre artist collective members Norma Alicia Pino (Comcaac and P'urhépecha), Alé Abreu (Afro-Indigenous Salvi-Lenca). We analyze the culmination of our performances of the

³²² Coulthard and Simpson, “Grounded Normativity / Place-Based Solidarity.”

³²³ Clarke and Haraway, “Making Kin Not Population,” 32–33.

³²⁴ Clarke and Haraway, “Making Kin Not Population.” 33

show “Mutaciones: Cruzadas, Desvios, Relajos, Desmadres, Metamorphosis y Time Travel Along Las Fronteras del Ser (Borderlands),” that took place on the dates March 9-11, 2018, at Gay City: Seattle’s LGBTQ Center. By using conversations from the planning meetings and the poetry and stories created for this experimental play, we theorize the stage as a demonic ground, and our performances as hauntings of ongoing settler colonialism.³²⁵ My role was as a co-performative witness which means I took part in the creation and performance of the play as much as I organized our collaborative theorizing into this chapter.³²⁶

Settler Normative Relations

A voice from the microphone bounced from tree to glass and brick building to concrete. I was among hundreds on the streets of Olympia, WA, Squaxin lands, gathered to protest the Iraq war and block convoys from unloading at the Port of Olympia.³²⁷ It is nightfall on November 13, 2007. The environment was overwhelmed by random, focused flashes of bright lights, chanting and yelling. The scene was simultaneously chaotic and grounding. I was on the front line of the protest, a part of the Women's Caucus of Port Militarization Resistance human blockade. My arms were locked with thirty to forty predominantly white women, and nonbinary people.

The Olympia Port Militarization Resistance (PMR) “is a group that was formed in 2006 by community peace activists.”³²⁸ Their goal was to “end their participation in the illegal occupation of Iraq by stopping the military use of the Port of Olympia.”³²⁹ PMR had been demonstrating from the first shipment that arrived at the Port of Olympia on November 5, 2007.

³²⁵ Arvin, “Indigenous Feminist Notes on Embodying Alliance against Settler Colonialism.”

³²⁶ Madison, “CO-PERFORMATIVE WITNESSING.”

³²⁷ DeJamminen, “Dozens Arrested in Brutal Police Crackdown on PMR at Port of Olympia.”

³²⁸ Goodman and Nguyen, “66 Arrested in Washington State Blocking War Shipments at Port of Olympia.”

³²⁹ Goodman and Nguyen.

At the Women's Caucus of Port Militarization Resistance meetings, we were informed that police would arrest people for this action. Everyone involved knew the risk. We would be arrested or face violence from the police with “batons, bean bag rounds, pepper spray, pepper ball rounds, tear gas, concussion grenades, and stinger balls”³³⁰ like in previous protests.

We stood, knelt, and sat in the same spot for hours to prevent the Stryker convoy from unloading and proceeding to the Fort Lewis Military Base, about 20 miles away. I was uncomfortable but also full of decolonial love and belonging. I was in the Women's Caucus of Port Militarization Resistance human blockade, a collective acting as good relatives to Iraqi people and the occupation and destruction of their lifeways and land. I was in my early twenties and lived in the United States for about fifteen years. In all those years in the U.S., I had not experienced belonging like this. In those hours, the police would announce a countdown to the women's human blockade arrests. This also meant the countdown to use violent tactics against any remaining protestors at the Port of Olympia. When the countdown reached zero, everyone in the blockade was arrested as onlookers cheered and chanted, “*the sisters will not be divided!*”³³¹

In total, sixty-six people were arrested and shipped to the women's jail overnight. My experience in the jail was humiliating. We were hauled in large numbers into processing rooms where we undressed, were searched, and placed in overcrowded nine-by-ten-foot cells. We called the cells iceboxes because of how cold they were. The police arrested without judgment, including bystanders.³³² Unable to sleep due to the cold and overcrowded conditions, several people tried to uplift spirits in the jail by singing and reminding each other of the significance of

³³⁰ Goodman and Nguyen.

³³¹ *Olympia PMR “Ladies Night in Olympia.”*

³³² Pawloski, “Convoys Slip Past Protestors at Olympia Port; Dozens Arrested.”

Women's Caucus of Port Militarization Resistance human blockade. The Stryker convoys were blocked for seventeen hours.³³³

Once we were released from jail, we went our separate ways. That sense of belonging I felt while on the November 13, 2007, protest faded. I was beginning to understand that the feeling of belonging in activist spaces as a queer, non-binary Indigenous person was fleeting and relegated to collective actions. I mean that radical activist spaces and actions don't automatically deploy radical relationalities. Relationalities were bound in colonial heteronormative norms, fraught with exclusionary kin structures that PMR Women's Caucus spaces and activist circles critiqued yet reproduced. This became clear when almost a year after the PMR women's action, the city of Olympia decided to press charges against thirteen of the sixty-six arrested that night. Although I was one of a handful of people of color arrested on November 13, 2007, I was one of thirteen charged with trumped-up gross-misdemeanor charges.

The charges were dropped almost a year later, yet I faced challenging consequences. For instance, I could not afford legal representation and had to represent myself. I did get legal assistance from Phan Nguyen, who worked in I.T. but had experience with the legal system because of his activist background.³³⁴ Another challenge was that I was targeted by white supremacists and received death threats based on assumptions about my criminal record and documented status. I lost housing because the court-related time demands interfered with my service job and ability to pay for rent. But the most devastating were the friendships that ended with other women from that action because they were revealed to be invested in settler normative relationalities.

³³³ Goodman and Nguyen, "66 Arrested in Washington State Blocking War Shipments at Port of Olympia."

³³⁴ Goodman and Nguyen.

For instance, friends there for me before the arrest were unavailable because racialized and queer experiences were perceived as excessive. Another instance was that my refusal to participate in a lawsuit against the police and the city of Olympia was perceived as unsupportive.³³⁵ This occurred although I explained the violence I experienced by having my name on public records and reporting. I also observed the objectification of racialized people, single issue-focused activism, anthropocentrism, and the afterthought of more-than-humans, envy, possessiveness, individualism, exclusivity, and one-sided relationships. Lastly, relationships dissolved as the interest in PMR, and the activists arrested in the actions dwindled. I wondered if the liberal motivations of freedom imagined within the human rights frameworks, such as reform and inclusion in settler colonial empires of the Americas, materialized through settler normative relational practices.

Exhausted yet inspired, I continued to take part in political actions. I felt potential for insurgent kinship, spiritual or fleshy, in these spaces. I also felt a potential of making anti-colonial futures or, at the very least, a more viable present. Yet the question always remained, a future and viable present for whom? And these questions kept me searching for connections with people with whom I could build insurgent kinships. I remember a Facebook post was shared with me about an upcoming Bridges Not Walls meeting, a meeting with an immigrant rights group based in Olympia, Washington. I heard that this organization was predominantly led by immigrants of color, so I went.

At the meeting, there was conversation about planning a political action at the then-new for-profit prison for undocumented immigrants, the Tacoma Detention Center. The organizers were partnering with the Evergreen State College asked for a committee to form and organize an

³³⁵ French, "OPD Lawsuit Exposes Political Profiling - Works in Progress."

event for the opening night of The Immigration and Border Dialogues Conference. This migrant studies conference took place in May 2008. Alé was there and suggested that the opening night be a performance about Latinx mothers' migration stories and asked for volunteers to work with her. I jumped at the opportunity.

For the next six months, Alé Abreu, a Salvi-Lenca Cuban Indigeequeer in the diaspora, Norma-Alicia Pino, a P'urhépecha Comcaác elder and revolving group of Latinx artists and scholars, and I wrote together. It was much more than that. We shared meals, attended political rallies and vigils, learned from each other, and made space for the rage and sadness that sometimes emerged from our collective work. We worked through challenges and created *Las Mamalogues*, an experimental play about our mother's migrant stories. Our work together made life as a queer P'urhépecha in Olympia, Washington, more viable and helped me move forward on a plan for my future. I applied to Evergreen State College to pursue writing because of their support. I began to believe that I might live to old age and could envision a queer Indigenous future. Daily practices with Alé and Norma-Alicia made them life-long kin, my insurgent kin.

Joseph M. Pierce explains that Cherokee understandings of kinship are a praxis of being in good relations. He writes, "Indigenous forms of relationality are based on reciprocity rather than ownership, respect rather than objectification."³³⁶ He uses the term *kinstillations*, a combination of kin and constellations, adapted from Karyn Recollet's poem "Kinstillatory Gathering" to refer to relationality "not bound by the limits of reason or proportion—and especially not by the anthropological marking of kin on charts, genealogies, or family trees—but expands the scale of possibilities."³³⁷ Those possibilities include looking to the sky to "witness

³³⁶ Pierce, "In Good Relations," 107.

³³⁷ Pierce, 97.

the past”³³⁸ which open up ways of knowing that “invoke an ancestral futurity that is grounded in our ways of relating to the human and the more-than-human across time, space and feeling.”³³⁹ Recollet and Pierce’s work is about healing the rupture that Cherokee and Cree adoptees experience once removed from their homes.

There are points of contact between Pierce’s work and my own, such as colonial heteronormativity creates ruptures for queer P’urhépecha in Michoacan and the diaspora, good relations, and the stars. P’urhépecha also understands the sky and specific constellations as the connectors to knowledge, gods, and ancestors. For instance, the P’urhépecha recognize the Southern Cross constellation as a place occupied by an unknown god with infinite wisdom that maintains “the balance and harmony of the universe.”³⁴⁰ The stars, for me, invoke an ecological relationality tied to nonlinear time, the past informing the present and future. Pierce interprets that Recollet explains this process as “grounded/celestial knowledge”³⁴¹ and a “method of time travel.”³⁴² This is not metaphorical: “When we look at the stars, we witness the past.”³⁴³

Mutaciones: Cruzadas, Desvios, Relajos, Desmadres, Metamorphosis y Time Travel Along Las Fronteras del Ser (Borderlands)

On Sunday, March 4, 2018, Norma Alicia Pino (Comáac and P’urhépecha), Alé Abreu (Afro-Indigenous Salvi-Lenca), and I worked to prepare the stage for us at Gay City: Seattle’s LGBTQ Center. Norma Alicia carefully unrolled fabric, some glimmering in the light, some subdued the space, and some triggered memories-- rebozos and burlap fabric. In gestures and

³³⁸ Pierce, 97.

³³⁹ Pierce, 97.

³⁴⁰ Alarcón-Cháires, “Etnología de Los Indígenas P’urhépecha: Una Guía Para El Análisis de La Apropiación de La Naturaleza.” 33.

³⁴¹ Pierce, “In Good Relations,” 97.

³⁴² Pierce, 97.

³⁴³ Pierce, 97.

nodes, we made decisions about placing props, the altar on the center stage, and the offerings. The well water we brought was meant to honor the life of the space, and the photographs of our ancestors was to bring their spirits into the space. The décor, the sacred altar and offerings was honoring our ecological relational commitments, a shared practice among P’urhépecha, Comcaac and Salvi-Lenca people.

Indigenous knowledge accounts for the will and the spirit of all matter, such as humans, more-than-human, land, water, fire, and air.³⁴⁴ Dian Million (Athasbascan) argues that the cartesian dualities separating matter and spirit, gender binaries, and other binaries are oppositional to the ways that many Indigenous peoples think of the complexity of living things. Vanessa Watts (Mohawk/Anishinaabe) shares that in her peoples knowledge, there is a similar understanding. She writes:

habitats and ecosystems are better understood as societies from an Indigenous point of view, meaning that they have ethical structures, inter-species treaties and agreements, and further their ability to interpret, understand and implement. Non-human beings are active members of society. Not only are they active, they also directly influence how humans organize themselves into that society.³⁴⁵

The Hijx de tu Madre Collective creates performances and art that honor the ecosystems we inhabit as Indigenous Latinx in the diaspora. Creating an altar on stage is central to that goal. Alé, Norma-Alicia, and I have worked together on and off for the last fifteen years. Our first collaborative project in 2008, *Las Mamalogues*, was pivotal in building the trust needed for

³⁴⁴ Million, “Indigenous Matters.”

³⁴⁵ Vanessa Watts, “Indigenous Place-Thought & Agency amongst Humans and Non-Humans (First Woman and Sky Woman Go on a European World Tour!).” 23.

ongoing work and as I argued earlier, transform our shared anti-colonial vision into insurgent kinship. Our relationship to each other is an extension of our matriarchal and queer Indigenous cultural practices.

When I proposed to conduct autoethnographic and ethnographic research that includes their theorizing and contributions with our 2018 project, “Mutaciones: Cruzadas, Desvios, Relajos, Desmadres, Metamorphosis y Time Travel Along Las Fronteras del Ser (Borderlands),” Alé and Norma-Alicia accepted. Because of our rapport and insurgent kinship, asking Alé and Norma-Alicia to participate in my research project was easy. They trust my commitment to anti-colonial methodology.³⁴⁶ We agreed to proceed with a community-led research model addressing the power differentials. To do this, Alé and Norma-Alicia’s role would be as knowledge producers rather than research subjects; we prioritize relationships over research and create desire-based research, work representing Indigenous people’s agency, survivance, and resistance.³⁴⁷

I treated our collaboration in the project as a partnership where Alé and Norma-Alicia’s decisions and ideas steered the project with me. We set ground rules together, and among them was that I was not to share any of the recordings outside the group. Along the way, we checked in about the progress of the project, and with their input, some ideas were clarified, and some changed altogether. Collaborative theorizing is my way of summarizing the process of collective interviews when we took turns reflecting on each other’s work and making collective meaning of the stories and poetry we wrote for the performance. This collaborative theorizing laid the ground for our work to “constantly resurrect the murdered Indian in us as a method of decolonial

³⁴⁶ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*.

³⁴⁷ Tuck, “Suspending Damage.”

resistance”³⁴⁸ as specters that speak. These practices and commitments are about being in good relations, a component of insurgent kinship praxis.

In their essay “Becoming an Anti-Oppressive Researcher,” Karen L. Potts and Leslie Brown argue that research relationships should not be treated as disposable relationships. As anti-oppressive white researchers, they treat relationships with participants as the relationships were for life.³⁴⁹ The focus on relationships in anti-oppressive research is important, yet I want to distinguish this from insurgent kinship praxis. Good relations are reciprocal with all living beings, including the “more-than-human world”³⁵⁰ through “gratitude, through ceremony, through land stewardship, science, art, and in everyday acts of practical reverence.”³⁵¹ I add and through political action because the Americas are shaped and transformed by colonial heteropatriarchal structures of inequity and violence.

Hijx de Madre center queer Indigenous kinships in our work based on our cultural knowledge and shared values. Our poetry and performance art argues that the relationship to place includes the relationships to the manifestations of colonial heteropatriarchy that structure the place. For instance, Alé, Norma-Alicia and I discuss our relationship to our homelands, Michoacán, Mexico, Cuba and El Salvador and biological family in our work. To discuss my relationship to Atecucario de la Constitución, Michoacán, my birthplace I discuss mestizaje. Atecucario is a previously Indigenous pueblo twelve kilometers from the city Zamora de Hidalgo. Although the region that I was born in is considered part of the P’urhépecha Meseta, Atecucario has been the site of focused re-education efforts by the Mexican state to assimilate the pueblo into mestizo Mexican nationals. Mestizaje is a colonial heteropatriarchal project

³⁴⁸ Pierce, “In Good Relations,” 109.

³⁴⁹ Brown and Strega, “Research as Resistance.”

³⁵⁰ Pierce, “In Good Relations,” 107.

³⁵¹ Pierce, 107.

because it mandates assimilation into a homogenous identity and colonial heteropatriarchal gender and sexuality.

In Mexico the early conceptions of mestizaje were salient in the latter half of the 1876-1910 Porfirio Diaz' Dictatorship and after the Mexican Revolution in the 1920s. Scholars Andres Molina Enriquez, Manuel Gamio and José Vasconcelos were central in constructing the mestizo as the Mexican nationality.³⁵² Gamio and Vasconcelos envisioned mestizaje and race mixing to improve the Indigenous population. According to Francesca Contreras, Vasconcelos' conceptualization of *la raza cósmica* envisioned "far superior spiritual eugenics"³⁵³ that would improve the aesthetics of the Mexican race. He believed that in an engineered miscegenation could mean that the Mexican population would gain the best features of each race, superior genes would eliminate the lower genes. For instance, "the Negro race and other undesirable mixes (including Afro-Chinese)"³⁵⁴ would vanish independently to make room for the beautiful races.

Settler formations of sexuality and gender are inseparable from race. In what is now Michoacan, ancestral lands of P'urhépecha, Otomí, Mazahuas, Pirindas, Colima-Nahua, Xilotlancinca, and Piñol peoples, public torture, rape, assassination,³⁵⁵ land ownership and criminalization of sexuality³⁵⁶ and gender were used during conquest to reorganize Indigenous kinship structures into settler family units. Settler formations of gender and sexuality from conquest have lasting impacts in Mexico. In 2020, Mexico made headlines as the deadliest country for LGBTQ people especially transgender women.³⁵⁷ Fleeing similar violence in Central and South America, queer and Indigenous women, gender nonconforming, and transgender

³⁵² Contreas, "Post-Revolutionary Mexican Identity Formation."

³⁵³ Contreas.

³⁵⁴ Contreas.

³⁵⁵ Morgensen, "Spaces between Us."

³⁵⁶ Tortorici, "Heran Todos Putos."

³⁵⁷ Lopez, "Mexico Sees Deadliest Year for LGBTQ+ People in Five Years."

migrants are thrust into colonial heteronormative biopolitics when they cross the American border. The colonial heteronormative biopolitics were “constituted by the imposition of colonial heteropatriarchy and the hegemony of settler sexuality, which sought both the elimination of Indigenous sexuality and its incorporation into settler sexual modernity.”³⁵⁸

According to Dina Gilio-Whitaker (Colville Federated Tribes), “patriarchy... is inseparable from colonialism.”³⁵⁹ She writes that as early white women were forming their ideas of feminism by studying the women within Haudenosaunee Six Nations Confederacy (Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora), Native American women in what is now part of the Northeast United States of America were experiencing the loss of their power and positions outside of the home and made to live under that hetero-patriarchy that white women wanted badly to benefit further from by trying to be equal to white men.³⁶⁰ At the same time, the racialization of Native Americans in the United States cast “‘Indians’ and Others as subordinates who are natural subjects of white, heteropatriarchal overseers.”³⁶¹ Racialized peoples were subjected to laws and social contracts based on colonial architects that “differential human social groups exist and are naturally unequal in character, morality, capacity, and sensibility.”³⁶² Joanne Barker “the result of the presumption that indigeneity is merely another race and ethnicity is that it is racialized as the same, which denies the very important legal, political, and social differences that indigeneity makes.”³⁶³

Racialization of Indigenous people in the Americas serves to maintain a dangerous narrative of settler colonialism that Indigenous people have been absorbed into a non-

³⁵⁸ Morgensen, “Spaces between Us.”

³⁵⁹ Gilio-Whitaker, “The Indigenous Roots of Modern Feminism.”

³⁶⁰ Gilio-Whitaker.

³⁶¹ Leece et al., “Imperialism, Settler Colonialism, and Indigeneity,” 233.

³⁶² Leece et al., 232.

³⁶³ Barker, “Confluence: Water as an Analytic of Indigenous Feminisms - University of Washington.” 13.

autonomous populous. Therefore, authentic Indians solely exist in the past. My work considers these histories. When I discuss my relationship to Coast Salish land, where I have lived most of my life, I acknowledge the “overlapping colonialities”³⁶⁴ of colonial heteropatriarchy, which, as I argued, are materializations of racialization and mestizaje in the United States and Mexico.

How can Indigenous performance art counter settler normative formations of race, sexuality, and gender? *Hijx de su Madre* conjured the queer and rowdy matriarchal, nonbinary, and transgender Indigenous wildings with our poetry and performance art. I borrow from Billy-Ray Belcourt to explain that as performers, Alé, Norma Alicia, and me took the form of queer Indigenous poltergeists on stage.³⁶⁵ Rather than try to summarize what he means, I will quote Belcourt at length:

[Poltergeist] evokes haunting as a metaphor to hint at the ways in which queerness was murderously absorbed into the past and prematurely expected to stay there as an effect of colonialism’s drive to eliminate all traces of sexualities and genders that wandered astray. The poltergeist conceptualizes the work of queer indigeneity in the present insofar as it does not presuppose the mysterious intentions of the ghost—an otherworldly force that is bad, good, and undetectable all at once. Instead, the poltergeist is melancholic in its grief, but also pissed off. It refuses to remain in the spiritual, a space cheapened in relation to the staunch materiality of the real, and one that, though housing our conditions of possibility, cannot contain all of us. We protest forms of cruel nostalgia that tether ghosts to a discarded past within which queer Indigenous life once flourished because we know

³⁶⁴ Blackwell, Boj Lopez, and Urrieta, “Special Issue,” 127.

³⁶⁵ Belcourt, “Feral Feminisms » A POLTERGEIST MANIFESTO.”

that we will never get it back and that most of us likely never experienced it in the first place. We long for that kind of love, but we know it is hard to come by.³⁶⁶

As poltergeists, specters, and ghosts on stage, we could call on the past, the record, and the unarchivable to burn settler concepts into the sacred fire. In P'urhépecha cosmology, all living things come from fire. Fire renews life.³⁶⁷ The poltergeist and specter, to borrow from Sylvia Wynter's theory of Blackness were constructed from violence and appositional to the concept of Human.³⁶⁸ Wynter argues that Black people are marked flesh that speaks. She also argues that Black women are relegated to the same role as Sycorax, Caliban's mother in *The Tempest*, who exists as an invisible presence, erased from recognition but present as a haunting. Katherine McKittrick analyzes Wynter's work and suggests that rather than argue for legitimacy within the category of the Human, Black women as specters can wreak havoc on Humans.³⁶⁹ McKittrick conceives that the demonic ground, or the ground that *The Tempest* takes place, is an island full of spells, ghosts, and spirits that defy bodily expectations. Possibilities lie on the demonic ground. Blackness can free itself from the expectations of gender, sexuality, etc., imposed by masters.³⁷⁰ In short, Wynter exposes the instability of the concept of the Human and gender.

I argue that existing as an invisible presence, a haunting applies to Indigenous people because Indigeneity is also oppositional to the concept of the Human. I want to put this in conversation with shapeshifters. Shapeshifters exist in various Native American Nations/Tribes

³⁶⁶ Belcourt, 26.

³⁶⁷ Alarcón-Cháires, "Etnología de Los Indígenas P'urhépecha: Una Guía Para El Análisis de La Apropiación de La Naturaleza."

³⁶⁸ Wynter, "Afterward 'Beyond Miranda's Meanings: Un/Silencing the "Demonic Ground" of Caliban's "Woman."'"

³⁶⁹ McKittrick, "Demonic Grounds."

³⁷⁰ McKittrick.

and Indigenous Mexican knowledges and stories. Take, for instance, the Nagual, a necromancer, shapeshifting human or a communicator and controller of non-human animals.³⁷¹ I grew up with oral stories of shapeshifters in Atecucario, my place of birth. One story was about a woman that shapeshifted into a bat to wreak revenge on an encroaching landowner. Another story was about two women who lived an isolated life, but when suspicion rose about their involvement in some supernatural occurrences that divided the pueblo, they tried to flee in the shape of cats. In Colima, Michoacán, a P'urhépecha pueblo, residents retell instances when the devil took the shape of a dog, and dogs communicate with the devil to save their humans' life or warn humans of upcoming illness.³⁷² Between 1599 and 1801, Spanish colonizers documented over a dozen criminal and Mexican Inquisition cases regarding what they depicted as instances of witchcraft. One case in San Luis Potosi, a city in central Mexico, documented the execution of an elderly Guachichil woman accused of using her witchcraft to shapeshift into various creatures, including a female coyote, and inciting rebellion among Indigenous people.³⁷³

Combining Belcourt, Wynter, and shapeshifters, I argue that for *Hijx de su Madre*, the stage is the demonic ground. On this demonic ground, Alé, Norma-Alicia, and I become poltergeists, specters of Indigenous genders and sexuality that haunt the white supremacist settler colonial imaginary. On stage, we shapeshift from specter to flesh to peoples outside of the colonial grammars of the Human.³⁷⁴ We create a space of reverence and rebellion for Indigenous women, nonbinary, transgender, and queer people.

³⁷¹ Hagler, "Exhuming the Nahualli."

³⁷² Garrido Izaguirre, Eva Maria, "'Con Las Lagañas De Un Perro Puedes Ver a Los Muertos'. Representaciones Plásticas Y Verbales De Los Perros En La Comunidad Purépecha De Ocumicho."

³⁷³ Hagler, "Exhuming the Nahualli."

³⁷⁴ King, "ERRANT GRAMMARS."

Alé and I shout “Hijx de su Madre!” to open the show, “Mutaciones.” Before taking our place on stage, we set the altar and spread flower petals and sprinkle water lightly around the altar. Lights dim then glows on Alé who further blesses the spaces by singing an original song about grief entitled, “Xichique” acapella.³⁷⁵ Her voice is tremendous. The quiet of the room called attention to the sonic opening that Alé had created. A sonic connection to materializations of conquest creates this deep grief that she sings.

Norma-Alicia, my Elder, a woman with long peppered hair and dressed in all white and a rebozo that draped off her shoulder, makes her way down a flight of stairs that faced the audience. Once she reached the bottom of the stairs, she emerged from the layers of red fabric attached to a twine that ran from one end of the stage. She was rebirthed by the Great Goddess of Teotihuacan on stage. According to Norma-Alicia, the Mexica Goddess of Teotihuacan is the great composter, the one that turns shit into life. Once reborn, Norma-Alicia performed, “Rio Creciendo.” Part of the poem reads: “Memories and wounds from thirst, blisters, beatings, robberies, rapes, complicity, cruelties, death and separations. Parents far from us, grandmothers stolen, grandfathers murdered, a cousin’s severed legs./ We are from this, yes,/ and, we are more.”³⁷⁶ I performed “birth story 1,” a poem about being an invisible presence³⁷⁷ in my family. My queer presence wreaked havoc³⁷⁸ in a family shaped by colonial heteropatriarchy.

I argue that our mere presence as matriarchs (Norma-Alicia) and Indigeequeers (Alé and me) wreaks havoc on all manifestations of colonial heteropatriarchy. Our unruly bodies haunt and help imagine alternative worlds. Once Alé took center stage her Afro-Latinx nonconforming

³⁷⁵ Abreu, Pino, and romero, “hijxsetlistFINAL,” 1.

³⁷⁶ Pino, “Poems for Hijx Performance,” 1.

³⁷⁷ McKittrick, “Demonic Grounds.”

³⁷⁸ McKittrick; Wynter, “Afterward ‘Beyond Miranda’s Meanings: Un/Silencing the “Demonic Ground” of Caliban’s Woman.’”

gender and sized body took up space otherwise forbidden. Alé performed, “last night I made love to a cactus,”³⁷⁹ a poem about Indigenous eco-erotica,³⁸⁰ sensuous relationships with the living matter in our ecosystems. Norma-Alicia, Alé and I performed poetry that haunt colonial heteropatriarchy's historical and contemporary manifestations in our birthplaces and communities.

Alé performed a story about cutting her hair, bringing back to life Indigenous gender and sexualities unknown but alive in her and all Indigequer people in the room. In the story, she wishes to become someone else. Reflecting on her story, Alé says that as a child, she sincerely believed she could shapeshift into anybody. In many ways, that is what Indigenous queers and women and nonbinary and trans people do shapeshift from fleshy to poltergeist, from dead to haunting. To close the show Norma-Alicia performed her poem “Hijx de Su Madre,” and the last lines read,

Hijx de lunas, sonrisas, caderas anchas, plumas y planetas, chicle, trenzas gruesas, tijeras, aguas negras, parábolas y punto de cruz. Hijx calvas y de rebeldía, de ternura, de segundos, minutos, horas, meses y mil años. Hijx del beso y del fuego, de lata y caparazón, adelantares, la tortilla, pitahayas, Raza Cósmica, la concha y el árbol, canoa y volcán. Hijx del cuchillo y la guitarra, de flor y canto. Hijx de cara y corazon. Hijx.³⁸¹

The following is my translation:

Hijx of moons, smiles, wide hips, feathers and planets, chewing gum, thick braids, scissors, black water, parables and cross stitch. Hijx bald and rebellious, of tenderness, of seconds, minutes, hours, months and thousands years. Hijx of the kiss and of the fire, of

³⁷⁹ Abreu, Pino, and romero, “hijxsetlistFINAL,” 2.

³⁸⁰ Nelson, “Getting Dirty.”

³⁸¹ Pino, “Poems for Hijx Performance,” 4.

tin and shell, advancers, of the tortilla, pitahayas, the cosmic race, the shell and the tree, canoe and volcano. Hijx of the knife and the guitar, of flower and song. Hijx of face and heart. Hijx.

Conclusion

Our hauntings traveled time and made contact with our antepasados, ancestors. There were moments of discomfort, and settler anxiety³⁸² about histories and specters unmoored by the performance. Our work asserted a decolonial worldmaking, a fierce rejection of Cartesian binaries of gender, essentializing tropes of a fixed Indigenous authenticity based on settler imaginaries, commodification, and objectification.

In summary, collective actions and creative collaboration can be spaces of decolonial possibility. Yet settler normative relationalities prevent the manifestation of decolonial presents and futures. I have argued that insurgent kinship is a praxis of grounded relations³⁸³ for queer P'urhépecha. Insurgent kinships are made by everyday actions³⁸⁴ that resurge matriarchal and queer P'urhépecha kinship structures. This includes making life-long relationships based on land-based practices, acting as a good relative with more than humans with care, interdependence, and mutual responsibility, that value life over profit. Making insurgent kinship with Alé and Norma-Alicia took time and reflection to understand how settler normative relationalities differ from anti-colonial relations or being in good relations.

I believe that our guiding constellations may take us to different pasts and ancestors, but we were drawn by a similar desire to be in good relations. And this desire motivated our actions

³⁸² Goeman, "Introduction to Indigenous Performances."

³⁸³ Coulthard and Simpson, "Grounded Normativity / Place-Based Solidarity."

³⁸⁴ Clarke and Haraway, "Making Kin Not Population."

and this bond lay the foundation for collectively dreaming of anti-colonial futures. Because of our commitment to each other as insurgent kin we create haunting performances that make material forgotten and forbidden history. We create a space of reverence for matriarchs and Indigequer and people. What follows is “running river,” and “1530” poems that I wrote for “Mutaciones” which wouldn’t be possible had I not this opportunity to work with Alé and Norma-Alicia.

Poem: running river

i once rejected the running river inside of me

it spoke of mango trees	caterpillars,
colored ribbon in long hair	pottery
maiz	nopales flores
anhatapu	enandi eroksa
	ichuskuta parakata

it spoke four languages

the language of those who made me	P'urhépecha
the language of those who we were told	
we were in the process of becoming	Spanish
the language of those who we could become	
if we were bodies rather than marked flesh	English
and embodied knowledge, the language of us all	

here's what it said:

authenticity is a settler imaginary

it was created as a tool for destruction

we can never meet its demands

even if we were raised with the language of our people

even if i kept my hair long and braided

my ancestors are not legible to this Nation

my ancestors are only recognizable to the Mexican nation

if i choose to live in and accept the open-air prisons of poverty
imposed on my powerful people

i now know the theory of my body

that to use "indio" as a pejorative

is to call out the limits of the rights given to "humans"

that "human" was created to mean

what we now understand as white supremacy

human meant not Indigenous, not Black

i now know the theory of my body

that to accept "indio" as a pejorative

is to live a life refusing my indigeneity

while trying to prove that i am human an endless loop of rejection

i once rejected the running river inside of me

it now speaks several languages

the language of those who made me P'urhépecha

the language of those who we were told

we were in the process of becoming Spanish

the language of those who we could become

if we were bodies rather than marked flesh English

pleasure, joy, connection how i break free

Poem: 1530

theirs is a look that lets you know you are marked Indian
it is used to uncover

 the *Relacion de Michoacán*
 made from your freckles
you are given less life to begin with
born with a hueco in your heart
 from the speedier colonization
 after religion took up alliances with
 the spear the fire the dogs the public tortures the
 pummeling of statues

 that left you with an inherited survival that is brimming

you learn not to romanticize
forever is a word for white people who spoke spanish
and made encomiendas out of Purhépecha land
that are now lost pueblos in Michoacán

you learn to treat romance like a crime
hide it like queer desire
let it spill onto warm curled fingers
that ride the insides of your tragic opening
tragic for knowing you are what would be considered
the deviance and crime of your ancestors
you are the criminal waiting to be caught in the temescal that once bled Purhépecha that once
danced pirekuas

you learn to treat lovers as Gods
 raise them into their monarchy throne their burdens excuse their flaws
because this may be the last time you love
 before the empire crashes before you are overthrown by reality
 and this may be the only time you are given an opportunity to be seen free of the history
 that weighs you down into the underground tunnels
 that connected cities before Mexico was a country
you remember wishing to be born elsewhere
to peel back the 500 years of religion find where you knew Xaratanga
to find yourself with her in Tzintzuntzan
and she pets your head and tells you jokes about the ways that Spanish tried and
failed to destroy her

this is the brimming survival
your body as the unknown like what was lost and destroyed when the spanish came
you are brimming

Chapter 4. Dogs are Insurgent Kin

I grew up with a story that dogs accompany the dead to the afterlife, yet dogs were largely neglected in Atecucario de la Constitución, Michoacán, my place of birth. As a child, I was told not to approach street dogs for fear of being bitten or killed by some and that dogs had special spiritual abilities by others in the pueblo. I felt a dissonance about the proper relationship with more-than-humans, especially street dogs. These competing narratives and dissonance are the tension between white supremacist settler colonial social structures and P'urhépecha heritage knowledges, practices, and kinship structures within a previously Indigenous pueblo in the Purhépecha Meseta.

My place of birth, Atecucario is a P'urhépecha heritage pueblo. P'urhépecha scholar Luis Urrieta explains that heritage pueblo is a previously Indigenous pueblo that operates under Purhépecha tradition, knowledge, and values.³⁸⁵ Atecucario was last considered an Indigenous pueblo during the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1917 yet is now considered a mestizo. The pueblo is situated on the northwest limits of the P'urhépecha Meseta. Looking to prevent further revolt among a collective Indigenous populous, the location prompted a series of post-Mexican Revolution re-education efforts through state-funded public education and the Catholic Church in Atecucario.³⁸⁶ Public schools taught Mexican nationalist narratives of mestizaje, a homogenized racial and cultural identity, and churches preached colonial heteropatriarchal, such as the subordination of women and rejection of sexual and gender difference, messages to uphold existing power structures.

³⁸⁵ Urrieta Jr., "Familia and Comunidad-Based Saberes."

³⁸⁶ Becker, "Setting the Virgin on Fire."

Mestizaje is largely attributed to José Vasconcelos' conceptualization of *la raza cósmica* a vision of an engineered miscegenation to pass on desirable features of the races in Mexico in the late 19th century. Indigenous and European were considered superior genes that would eliminate "the Negro race and other undesirable mixes (including Afro-Chinese)." ³⁸⁷ Once mestizaje was adopted as the Mexican nation-state identity during the Mexican Revolution, it had wider implications. It cannot be separated from the materializations of conquest responsible for the inequity that spurred the Mexican Revolution. Materializations include racialization, colonial heteropatriarchy, land theft, anthropocentrism, and hacendado colonial capitalism. These can also be understood as white supremacist settler colonial structures.

Hacendado colonial capitalism is a social order and an economic structure created by intersecting social relations, systems, and institutions, such as patrilineal marriage, the Catholic Church, and the Spanish colonial system of hacendado agriculture.³⁸⁸ Hacendado colonial capitalism is an economic and social structure whereby peasants work as cheap laborers for large landowners. Colonial heteropatriarchy excludes matriarchs, queer and transgender, and more-than-human kinship from the social order to privilege white colonial heteronormative domination.

In this chapter I argue that colonial heteropatriarchal anthropocentrism is an apparatus of white supremacist settler colonialism and a hierarchy of domination and violence towards women, queer and transgender Indigenous people and more-than-humans. Secondly, I argue that colonial social structures such as hacendado colonial capitalism and white supremacist settler colonial structures, coupled with economic materializations of these structures, create the conditions for neglected street dogs in Mexico and rez dogs, or community dogs in reservations

³⁸⁷ Contreas, "Post-Revolutionary Mexican Identity Formation."

³⁸⁸ Reddy, "New Version/Definition of Insurgent Kin," November 24, 2022.

in the United States and reserves in Canada. Lastly, dogs are sacred to P'urhépecha people, and I include them in the category of insurgent kin. I define insurgent kinship as kinship made with humans and more-than-humans that resurges pre-contact matriarchal and queer P'urhépecha kinship structures for queer P'urhépecha in the diaspora. I argue that resurging sacred relationships with dogs is necessary for anti-colonial liberation, including “repatriation of Indigenous land and life”³⁸⁹ and remaking a world without white supremacist settler colonialism and colonial heteropatriarchal structures.

Xoloitzcuintli and Conquest

In Indigenous Mexico, stories about dogs are complex and multifaceted. These complex stories begin with the famous bald black dog, the Xoloitzcuintli, Xolo for short, “one of the most ancient dog breeds of the Americas.”³⁹⁰ Xoloitzcuintli comes from the Mexica language, “Xolotl, the god of lightning and death, and itzcuintli, or dog.”³⁹¹ According to the Mexica beliefs, the dog was created by Xolotl to “guard the living and guide the souls of the dead through the dangers of Mictlán, the Underworld.”³⁹² The Mexica shared their bed with their Xolos and turned to them for information about approaching illness. P'urhépecha share similar beliefs. For instance, an interview by Garrido Izaguirre with an Ocumicho resident explained P'urhépecha relationship with Xolo dogs. What follow is my translation:

"Normal" dogs, especially those with black fur [Xoloitzcuintli], coexist with humans, take care of them, share food and illnesses, warn them of death and help them cross the river of the dead after death. Everything indicates that black dogs have special powers.

³⁸⁹ Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor.” 1

³⁹⁰ Romey, “This Hairless Mexican Dog Has a Storied, Ancient Past.”

³⁹¹ Romey.

³⁹² Romey.

Their senses and understanding are highly developed. They are beings who understand the voice of humans and the devil, who see many things, even death, who swim in difficult waters and inhabit different spaces: the town, the river, and the eye of water. They live here, there, and in the 'between' in the intersections. They are interlocutors and social agents that connect the world of humans with spaces and beings from other worlds.³⁹³

Another resident clarifies the supernatural gifts associated with black dogs. They can understand visions that humans, such as sense when death is coming and become a medium with the devil. Black dogs can bargain with the underworld for the life of their beloved humans. Just as the Mexica believe, if treated well, Xolo dogs would act as a guide to the world below, ensuring the arrival of spirits to their resting place. Yet the relationship with the Xolo almost ceased to exist during conquest.

Kristin Romey, a journalist with National Geographic, argues that conquistadores found the canine meat delicacy and almost ate them into extinction. Yet, I wonder if knowledge of the sacredness of the dog to Indigenous people marked the dog for overexploitation as was the case in 1575 in Peru when Francisco de Toledo ordered the slaughter of millions of Indians and their dogs,³⁹⁴ and the Salish woolly dog of the Pacific Northwest in the late 19th century.³⁹⁵ Records show that the Spanish not only committed genocide of sacred dogs but also used and trained them to kill Indigenous people.

³⁹³ Garrido Izaguirre, Eva Maria, "'Con Las Lagañas De Un Perro Puedes Ver a Los Muertos'. Representaciones Plásticas Y Verbales De Los Perros En La Comunidad Purépecha De Ocumicho."

³⁹⁴ Varner, "Dogs of the Conquest." 135.

³⁹⁵ News , "Whatever Happened to the Salish Woolly Dog?"

In “From hunters to hell hounds: the dogs of Columbus and transformations of the human canine relationship in the early Spanish Caribbean” John J. Ensminger writes about the changing relationship between Spanish colonizers and their dogs. This paper offers insight into the construction of colonial heteropatriarchal anthropocentrism in the Americas. For instance, Bartolomé de las Casas, the famed historian and Spanish Dominican Friar exposed the cruel nature of Columbus’ methods of colonization to King Phillip II in his written account, “Devastation of the Indies: A Brief Account.”

De la Casas recounts the Battle of Vega Real in 1495 in which Columbus’s men allied with Guacanagarix, a Taino cacique to overtake Taino leader Caonabo and his land. The Spanish claimed victory and yet, as Ensminger summarized de la Casas account, “Columbus did not rest on his victory but immediately began attacking the innocent natives, stripping them of their kingdoms and lands, separating husbands, wives, and children, driving them with horses, cutting them in half with swords, allowing dogs to tear them apart and eat them, and burning many alive.”³⁹⁶ Columbus’s techniques emboldened cruelty by future conquistadores such as Nuño Beltrán de Guzmán, who employed and adapted techniques to reign fear in what is now Mexico in the 1500s. Guzmán was known for his particular cruelty that he unleashed indiscriminately towards anyone who stood in his way including Spanish settlers.³⁹⁷

Because of his nobility background and relatives in high Spanish authority, Guzmán was appointed president of the first audiencia of Mexico, “created to rule the province while Cortés’s authority was in dispute.”³⁹⁸ Guzmán’s governance centered on hyper-heteropatriarchal indulgence. During his rule, he institutionalized the rape of Indigenous girls and women by

³⁹⁶ Ensminger, “Full Article: From Hunters to Hell Hounds: The Dogs of Columbus and Transformations of the Human-Canine Relationship in the Early Spanish Caribbean,” 366.

³⁹⁷ Varner, “Dogs of the Conquest,” 89.

³⁹⁸ Varner, 88.

organizing kidnaps of girls from pueblos and convents. He unleashed hungry dogs against Indigenous men that attempted to save Indigenous women from being kidnapped, enslaved, and raped. His cruelty and greed had no bounds. He released hungry dogs on Indigenous people for entertainment. On one instance, he traveled from Pánuco, in what is now Veracruz, to Mexico to demand gold from all neighboring caciques. When the caltzontzin, P'urhépecha king, Tangaxoan, arrived with abundant silver and gold, Guzmán wanted more. Tangaxoan accepted a second invitation to Guzmán's palace to deliver more gold. Guzmán seized this opportunity to capture el caltzontzin. He set his sight on the P'urhépecha Nation and their land.³⁹⁹

By 1530, war dogs, comprised of the ancestors of the contemporary cane corso and greyhound breeds, were commonplace in colonizer settlements. Ensminger argues that by 1500, “three hundred Spaniards could control the Indigenous population with only twenty to thirty horses and with dogs.”⁴⁰⁰ Colonizers would not move beyond the settlement without “carrying a sword, nor without a dog, one of the brave dogs (‘perros de los bravos’), which the Indigenous feared more than devils.”⁴⁰¹ How dogs were weaponized against Indigenous people gave reason to fear them. This was the case for people of deviant genders and sexualities and Indigenous people worshipping sacred figures with deviant genders. Colonizers called for the extermination of all deviants and took extreme measures to accomplish this. One infamous example was internalized in Theodore de Bry's 1594 *Les Grands Voyages*. This engraving depicts “the 1513 massacre of ‘sodomites’ by Spanish conquistador Vasco Nunez de Balboa in Panama.”⁴⁰² Chief Quaraca's brother and forty men dressed as women were encircled and slaughtered by dogs.

³⁹⁹ Varner, “Dogs of the Conquest.”

⁴⁰⁰ Ensminger, “Full Article: From Hunters to Hell Hounds: The Dogs of Columbus and Transformations of the Human-Canine Relationship in the Early Spanish Caribbean,” 367.

⁴⁰¹ Ensminger, 367.

⁴⁰² Cottet and Picq, *Sexuality and Translation in World Politics*, 64.

Whereas dogs were trained for hunting and war when colonizers first arrived to the “New World.” Once colonies were established dogs were bred for and trained solely for aggression for Indigenous. Training included withholding food, teaching commands to bite and attack with a dog handler dressed in a thick leather suit, and creating hostile environments to elicit a desired aggressive response, such as coming at chained dogs with swords and knives.⁴⁰³ Ensminger argues that dogs' aggression was “trained and institutionalized—i.e., expected to be available on command” and that “the Spanish came to want their dogs continually on the edge of aggression towards anyone who could possibly be a threat.”⁴⁰⁴ Environments of apprehension⁴⁰⁵ where threat is always imminent are produced with oppressive conditions. A regular training method was to reward dogs with feasts of the bodies of Indigenous people whether during war or when no other food source was readily available. The Spanish colonizers were known to steal children and kill Indigenous people to feed their dogs.⁴⁰⁶

Although a myth persists that dogs can be racist, studies show “their social cognition or ability to ‘read’ their owners combined with their sensitivity to human social cues when learning means that there is a strong possibility dogs” can “learn biases from their owners.”⁴⁰⁷ Spanish conquistador Jorge Robledo had an infamous dog named Turco, who was thought to sense and only attack and disemboweled “hostile” Indians from “peaceful” ones.⁴⁰⁸ Dogs are perceptive and can pick up on a handler’s “sense of fear or hostility towards another human.”⁴⁰⁹ Animal behaviorists consider this an “emotional contagion” that transfers “from humans to dogs,

⁴⁰³ Ensminger, “Full Article: From Hunters to Hell Hounds: The Dogs of Columbus and Transformations of the Human-Canine Relationship in the Early Spanish Caribbean.”

⁴⁰⁴ Ensminger, 368.

⁴⁰⁵ Simmons, “Settler Atmospheric.”

⁴⁰⁶ Varner, “Dogs of the Conquest.”

⁴⁰⁷ Doble, “Empire, Race and Canine Training.”

⁴⁰⁸ Varner, “Dogs of the Conquest.”

⁴⁰⁹ Ensminger, “Full Article: From Hunters to Hell Hounds: The Dogs of Columbus and Transformations of the Human-Canine Relationship in the Early Spanish Caribbean,” 368.

particularly in situations producing fearfulness or aggressiveness in the human, with measurable stress-hormone synchronization between the two species.”⁴¹⁰

A question remains, what happened to dogs that didn’t meet their aggression requirements? Archives do not provide an answer to this question, but I can surmise that since dogs were rewarded for killing on command, those that didn’t meet their standards were met with death or extreme cruelty. Dogs trained to be cruel using cruel methods in a culture of cruelty against Indigenous people, especially gender and sexually deviant, and women laid the foundation for colonial heteropatriarchal anthropocentrism.

On February 14, 1530, Guzmán ordered Tangaxoan to be publicly tortured in Tzintzuntzan to demonstrate the length he would go to acquire more gold and get a confession from the caltzontzin regarding the litany of charges he was accused of. Before physical torture ensued, Tangaxoan watched as hungry dogs were released on his relatives, along with the threat of crossbows. The caltzontzin remained steadfast, so these tactics were turned on him. He sat tied to a pole as one man pointed a bow at his heart, another held back a heavily chained and greatly feared dog named Amigo while his feet were burned over an open flame.⁴¹¹ Eventually, he died of asphyxiation from a garrote device around his neck at the later part of this long public torture. Sodomy was one of the charges against the caltzontzin.

This unjust trial and murder set precedence. A racialized heteropatriarchal biopolitics⁴¹² was established because sodomy became a capital offense, and Indigenous men accused would face a similar fate to Tangaxoan, sometimes without trial. This is racialized because records show that Spanish men engaged in homosexual sex regularly in this period yet were rarely

⁴¹⁰ Ensminger, 368.

⁴¹¹ Varner, “Dogs of the Conquest.”

⁴¹² Morgensen, “Spaces between Us.”

persecuted for it.⁴¹³ Racialized heteropatriarchal biopolitics is one way that colonial heteropatriarchy is institutionalized. And I have argued that colonial heteropatriarchal anthropocentrism is another because it normalized cruelty and domination towards dogs, and instilled fear toward dogs that threatened sacred Indigenous relationships.

Xoloitzcuintli, a sacred dog to several Indigenous peoples of Mexico, narrowly escaped extinction. The breed was officially recognized in Mexico in 1956,⁴¹⁴ spurring its return. Today the beloved Xolos in contemporary Mexican culture is the dog of the elite, rarely found wandering in pueblos, yet beloved by wealthy Mexicans. A Google search for the cost of owning a purebred Xoloitzcuintli range from \$400 to \$5,000. The absence of these revered dogs in pueblos is just one iteration of colonial heteropatriarchal anthropocentrism and colonial cooptation of Indigenous culture while denigrating Indigenous people. Native and contemporary street dogs are colonial subjects⁴¹⁵ and are subjected to ongoing colonialism.

Yet conquest and its contemporary manifestations has not destroyed sacred relationships with dogs in some P'urhépecha pueblos. Based on accounts from P'urhépecha children in the lake regions of Michoacán and residents of Ocumicho, Michoacán, these spiritual gifts attributed to Xoloitzcuintli have been passed down to all dogs. The following story is included in *Canto, Cuento y Poesía de Las Niñas y los Niños Purhépecha de la Región Lacustre de Michoacán*, a collection of stories told by P'urhépecha children. I have translated the story from Spanish to English. Eleven-year-old Gildardo González Ortega from San Francisco Pichátaro, Michoacán,⁴¹⁶ shares that:

⁴¹³ Nesvig, *Promiscuous Power*. Pg 34

⁴¹⁴ Romey, "This Hairless Mexican Dog Has a Storied, Ancient Past."

⁴¹⁵ Belcourt, "Animal Bodies, Colonial Subjects."

⁴¹⁶ Guzman de la Cruz, *Canto, Cuento y Poesía de Las Niñas y los Niños Purhépecha de la Región Lacustre de Michoacán*.

Once upon a time, there was a dog that howled a lot, he lived with its owner like the others, but its owner wanted to know why it was howling. He decided to talk to the dog. He said: "Why do you howl so much?" The dog answered: "If you want to know, go to sleep and you'll see why I we howl so much. Once night fell the man started seeing ghosts and died. That's why dogs howl."⁴¹⁷

Similar stories can be found from anthropological research conducted in Ocumicho, Michoacán, a P'urhépecha pueblo known for its polychrome clay sculpture dogs across Mexico as los "*diablos de Ocumicho*" or the devils of Ocumicho.⁴¹⁸ Contemporary P'urhépecha cosmology includes the following worlds: "*el cielo*," the heavens; "*la tierra*," the land and all people and creatures on it. "*Lugares de comunicación*," places of communication such as caves and canyons where the devil can be heard; "*La parte de abajo*,"⁴¹⁹ the underworld that includes badlands where unbaptized ancestors exist luminally and are heard singing and the river of blood that leads the dead to their place of rest. Settler colonialism and Catholicism introduced ideas of heaven and hell, merging with Purhépecha cosmology.

For instance, an interview by Garrido Izaguirre with an Ocumicho resident explained P'urhépecha relationship with dogs. I translate what she writes in Spanish into English below:

"Normal" dogs, especially those with black fur [Xoloitzcuintli], coexist with humans, take care of them, share food and illnesses, warn them of death and help them cross the river of the dead after death. Everything indicates that black dogs have special powers. Their senses and understanding are highly developed. They are beings who understand the voice of humans and the devil, who see many things, even death, who swim in

⁴¹⁷ Guzman de la Cruz, 32.

⁴¹⁸ Yellow Bird, Michael, "Rez Dogs."

⁴¹⁹ Garrido Izaguirre, Eva Maria, "'Con Las Lagañas De Un Perro Puedes Ver a Los Muertos'. Representaciones Plásticas Y Verbales De Los Perros En La Comunidad Purépecha De Ocumicho.'" 7.

difficult waters and inhabit different spaces: the town, the river, and the eye of water.

They live here, there, and in the ‘between’ in the intersections. They are interlocutors and social agents that connect the world of humans with spaces and beings from other worlds.⁴²⁰

Conquest, Catholicism, and contemporary P’urhépecha ontology have created complex representations of dogs in the P’urhépecha Meseta especially heritage pueblos like Atecucario, Michoacán. I felt a deep fear and reverence of dogs as a child in Michoacán. This dissonance had no name as a child, yet now informs me of the competing epistemologies in Atecucario, Mexican nationalist and matriarchal and queer P’urhépecha epistemologies. The street dogs searching for scraps while Atecucarionos struggle to eat too was engineered by conquest. In the late 19th century, when the Spanish established haciendas and encomiendas that no longer found war dogs useful, the neglected dogs “returned to nature.”⁴²¹

Spanish relationships with dogs transformed from comrades in war and genocide to overpopulated nuisances that create agricultural and ecological disorder.⁴²² That outlook has persisted as street dogs remain largely a nuisance in Atecucario. Coupled with economic precarity, it is no wonder that dogs are mainly neglected in my place of birth. All lifeways are threatened under ongoing settler colonialism. Rural Michoacán remains dependent on colonial hacendando capitalism and remittances from the United States. Since NAFTA, Atecucario has been further decimated of economic opportunity, allowing criminal entities to compete with the

⁴²⁰ Garrido Izaguirre, Eva Maria, “‘Con Las Lagañas De Un Perro Puedes Ver a Los Muertos’. Representaciones Plásticas Y Verbales De Los Perros En La Comunidad Purépecha De Ocumicho.”

⁴²¹ Ensminger, “Full Article: From Hunters to Hell Hounds: The Dogs of Columbus and Transformations of the Human-Canine Relationship in the Early Spanish Caribbean.” Ensminger quotes Alfred W. Crosby here.

⁴²² Ensminger.

state for dominance. Violence is the norm. Because of this rural and Indigenous Mexicans turn to risky temporary migrant work in the United States. My family was one of them.

Once my family crossed the border, we became entangled in the colonial manifestations of the United States. I argue that colonial heteropatriarchal anthropocentrism exists in the United States but that it is informed and shaped by place-based settler colonial formations. The place-based settler colonial formations in the Seattle area, Coast Salish lands presented kin making challenges. The fear of deportation, incarceration, and separation ruptured relationships before they could blossom. Yet, more economic opportunity created more possibilities of more-than-human kinship. Once I faced the colonial context behind my fear of dogs, I could make insurgent kinship with them and resurges pre-contact matriarchal and queer P'urhépecha kinship structures for queer P'urhépecha in the diaspora.

8,000 Years of Kinship

Dr. Michael Yellow Bird, a member of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nations, researched rez dogs, free-roaming dogs within reservations, and argues that settler colonialism severs our “sacred connection” to dogs. The loss of land, songs, stories, and language is attributed to the loss of human and canine relationships. In place of that loss, anthropocentrism, the superiority of humans to animals, was violently enforced.⁴²³ For 8,000 years before the conquest, there were complex relationships between Indigenous people and dogs. More-than-human animals were viewed as kin in some societies. Archeologists have found the remnants of dogs in graves next to humans from Peru to Mexico, bringing to light the significance of dog companionship to precolonial Indigenous peoples, especially for fishermen.⁴²⁴

⁴²³ Yellow Bird, Michael, “Rez Dogs.”

⁴²⁴ Carot, Patricia and Hers, Marie-Areti, “De Perros Pelones, Buzos y Spondylus. Una Historia Continental.” 10

Before the conquest, Indigenous communities in Michoacán, including the Chimichec, Nahuas, Otomies, Pirindas, and Purhépecha people, interacted with fishermen from as far as Ecuador in search of the sacred spondylus, a bivalve mollusk used in tools and jewelry, and it is speculated through these relationships that the Xoloitzcuintli dogs were introduced to Michoacán.⁴²⁵ Dr. Michael Yellow Bird found that the Arikara Nation extended from what is now North Dakota into Northern Mexico and that to travel, the Arikara people walked on foot with the companionship of dogs for thousands of years.

Dogs acted as companions, guides, and babysitters⁴²⁶. Yellow Bird found that among the Native people surrounding the Missouri River, including the Crow and Lakota People, dogs were exchanged “almost as currency” since they were so valuable to survival. Depending on animals for survival required a valuation of their life. Living quarters in the region were shared with humans and their canine kin. Dogs have been with the Indigenous people of Turtle Island for 8,000 years or more.⁴²⁷ According to Yellow Bird, dogs act as our teachers. They reflect our “shadow side,” and when we are not doing well as a community, it is reflected in their neglect. He goes on to say that there is considerable evidence of the significance of dogs in Native culture by the surnames derived from Plains Indians, such as Dog Skin, Two Dogs, Spotted Dog, Red Dog, and Old Dog, meant to refer to a cultural event, story or teaching. Similarly, some Nations name societies after dogs, such as the Dog Soldiers of the Cheyenne. He states that the “connection between dog and human is even at the micro level.”⁴²⁸ His research includes

⁴²⁵ Carot, Patricia and Hers, Marie-Areti.

⁴²⁶ Yellow Bird, Michael, “Rez Dogs.”

⁴²⁷ Yellow Bird, Michael, “Rez Dogs.”

⁴²⁸ Yellow Bird, Michael, “Rez Dogs.”

evidence of shared microbe communities among dogs and humans, noting that children in these households exhibit reduced allergies.

Sacred relationships with dogs were threatened once colonizers reached the shores of Jamestown, Virginia. Records show that Jamestown colonizers arrived with their own prized European dogs that they sometimes traded with the Powhatan people. Yet recently, archeologists excavated bones thought to belong to native dogs that were hunted and eaten out of existence by the first colonizers, who also resorted to cannibalism out of desperation in the 17th century.⁴²⁹

Ensminger argues that “The New World was a laboratory for the use of canine aggression in enforcing social order.”⁴³⁰ By the 19th century, the use of dogs in warfare, torture, and enforcement of a white supremacist settler colonial social order in the United States was greatly influenced by the practices of the Spanish. The conquest war dog practices normalized in the Caribbean and Central and South America influenced and structured practices in the United States. Bénédicte Boisseron writes in her book, *Afro-Dog*, that the weaponizing of dogs was adopted by slave traders who transported canines on ships through the middle passage. They were kept as watchdogs trained to track and terrorize fugitive slaves.⁴³¹ On top of that, Cuba and the Caribbean supplied the U.S. with war dogs that would be used in the Second Seminole War against Native American and African populations⁴³² and as “slave-hunting dogs in the U.S. South.”⁴³³

⁴²⁹ Price, “Jamestown Colonists May Have Kept, Eaten Indigenous American Dogs.”

⁴³⁰ Ensminger, “Full Article: From Hunters to Hell Hounds: The Dogs of Columbus and Transformations of the Human-Canine Relationship in the Early Spanish Caribbean,” 370.

⁴³¹ Bénédicte Boisseron. “INTRODUCTION.” In *Afro-Dog*, I x.

⁴³² Johnson, ““You Should Give Them Blacks to Eat.”

⁴³³ Ensminger, “Full Article: From Hunters to Hell Hounds: The Dogs of Columbus and Transformations of the Human-Canine Relationship in the Early Spanish Caribbean,” 369.

During conquest, colonizers would mix strategies to dispossess Indigenous people of land. Another strategy was to commit genocide on animals essential to survival. As I have argued, native dogs are colonial subjects⁴³⁴ and were subjected to similar fate as their Indigenous people. In the Pacific Northwest, that meant that Salish wooly dogs whose fur was used for weaving warm clothing by the Sk̓w̓x̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation) were eliminated.⁴³⁵ Salish wooly dogs are now considered extinct. Utilizing dogs as weapons and tools of genocide and annihilating sacred dogs has created a legacy of fear and destruction of sacred connection with canines.

Colonial heteropatriarchal anthropocentrism in what is now the United States was constructed through the annihilation of sacred more-than-human kinships such as the Salish wooly and the use of war dogs and slave-hunting dogs. Colonizers in North America also enforced colonial heteronormative biopolitics “by the imposition of colonial heteropatriarchy and the hegemony of settler sexuality, which sought both the elimination of Indigenous sexuality and its incorporation into settler sexual modernity.”⁴³⁶ Economic materializations of white supremacist settler colonial structures create the conditions for neglected rez dogs in the United States. The assemblages of these structures quell the survival of Indigenous and Black people and rez dogs and dogs associated with them.

The legacy associated with dogs during conquest continues with the normalization of dominance, violence, neglect, and biopolitical breed classifications, such as bully breeds and dogs associated with Black and Brown people, mark bully breeds for death. Boisseron makes this point another way, and she writes, “the 1942 decree banning Jewish ownership of pets, the

⁴³⁴ Belcourt, “Animal Bodies, Colonial Subjects.”

⁴³⁵ “Whatever Happened to The Salish Woolly Dog? Learn More About This Extinct Breed with Virtual History Lessons | CBC News”.

⁴³⁶ Morgensen, “Spaces between Us.”

ban on dog ownership for slaves, and the modern breed-specific legislation banning the ownership of pit bulls— dogs that have been predominantly viewed as urban and black”⁴³⁷ are linked. I argue that pit bull type dogs are subjected to a colonial heteropatriarchal anthropocentrism that is racialized by their association with Black and brown people.

My Insurgent kin, Suki

The classification of dog breeds was constructed by kennel clubs—the American Kennel Club and the American Dog Breeders Association— standards based on “parentage” and “phenotypes.”⁴³⁸ Within these kennel clubs, several bully breeds are recognized, such as American pit bull terriers, American Staffordshire terriers, American bulldogs, and dogs that fit the “look” of the bully breed, “short-haired and somewhat squat, muscular dogs.”⁴³⁹ Yet the classification by “look” has not proven reliable. Still, dogs that appear to be pit-bull types are scrutinized and subjected to profiling under legislation banning the breed.⁴⁴⁰ Black and people of color in heavily policed urban areas have relied on pit bulls to protect their homes, and this association has fueled bully breed ban legislation. Pit bull bans and white supremacy go hand in hand: previous New York Mayor Ed Koch’s reason for the ban was “of who was thought to own them,” and the Denver, CO ban correlates with white flight and when the Latinx population grew.⁴⁴¹

Due to this profiling, the concept of racialization has been applied to pit bulls. I use this terminology by thinking about the way that settler racial capitalism depends on the targeting,

⁴³⁷ Bénédicte Boisseron. "INTRODUCTION." In *Afro-Dog*, ix.

⁴³⁸ Weaver, Harlan. "Pit Bull Promises."

⁴³⁹ Weaver, Harlan. "Pit Bull Promises."

⁴⁴⁰ Weaver, Harlan. "Pit Bull Promises."

⁴⁴¹ Higgons.

exploitation, and elimination of new groups and that animals are not exempt. Still, there exists a tension whereby the racialization of pit bulls is made comparable to the racialization of Black people, a common assertion taken up by animal rights groups. Boisseron warns that this approach posits that dogs are “the new black” based on ideas of post-blackness, that anti-blackness no longer is an issue and, therefore, antiracism is no longer needed.⁴⁴²

In 2021, amidst the isolation of stay-at-home orders during the pandemic, my partner and I began to heal from losing our beloved dog, Cooper and searched for another dog companion. Dog adoption surged during the pandemic.⁴⁴³ Shelters were at times empty, and new dogs were adopted quickly. I searched the internet and found several adoption opportunities by various dog rescue groups, but the most abundant by pit bull rescue organizations. Bullies make up the largest percentage of dogs in shelters in the U.S. and oftentimes face the highest rates of euthanization due to overcrowding.⁴⁴⁴ I took on the role of application filler, applying to several adoption inquiries within the Seattle area. After not hearing back from several rescue organizations, I changed my strategies. I used my partner's non-threatening Japanese American name instead of my male sounding Latinx name as the main contact, and we finally heard back.

There are several issues with rescue groups. First, they enforce white supremacist settler colonial norms. On applications the requirements for adopting any dog, especially a pit bull were to own a home with a yard, provide proof of no bully breed restriction in the rental application,

⁴⁴² Bénédicte Boisseron. “By relying on the legacy of movements that traditionally fought against black oppression and de-personhood, including the abolitionist and civil rights movements, animal rights advocacy has sought to emphasize the overlap between forms of domination. Through this lens, animal rights advocacy has been able to look at chattel slavery and lynching as essentially tied to industrialized farming. But the risk of this approach is to think of the animal as “the new black,” as Che Gossett puts it, which presupposes that we are past blackness in our considerations of de-personhood.”

⁴⁴³ Ho, Jeffery, Sabir Hussain, and Olivier Sparagano. 2021. "Did The COVID-19 Pandemic Spark A Public Interest In Pet Adoption?"

⁴⁴⁴ "Why Are Pit Bulls the Most Euthanized Breed In Shelters?". 2020.

veterinarian information as verification of good pet ownership, etc.⁴⁴⁵ Dr. Yellowbird critiques rescue groups for picking up free-roaming loved dogs in reservations and argues for the acceptance of free-roaming dogs that are cared for by the reservation community.⁴⁴⁶ I argue that rescues rely on carceral and domestic (white supremacist settler colonial) structures of social order, that fail dogs. They reinforce structural issues by removing dogs from under-resourced areas rather than supporting the under-resourced communities.⁴⁴⁷ Relying on carceral and white supremacist settler colonial domestic structures creates an environment of crisis whereby the only solution is the state-sanctioned annihilation of street dogs.

After a few correspondences with a Seattle-based pit bull rescue organization, we were selected to meet a puppy that fit our personality. We drove to a suburb of Seattle, a million-dollar home, and waited in the front yard in cold winter weather, wearing masks and scarves until the volunteer foster brought out an eleven-pound wobbly puppy. She was shy and nervous, yet she fell asleep in my arms, a sign, I assume, to the volunteer that this puppy was right for us. We took her home that weekend and named her Suki, Japanese for beloved.

Suki's timidity and nervousness grew to 80 lbs. at a year and a half old. I became highly aware of the implicit fear that Suki evoked in people; this was especially obvious when we were together. I am a genderqueer Indigenous Mexican and heavily tattooed. Her fear-based bark was misunderstood as aggression that would escalate. So, my partner and I signed her up for the "K9 Good Citizen" course. We felt relieved that she passed, and we had evidence a certificate could be used as proof of "good dog citizen" if a neighbor complained, granting us leverage against claims of her aggression.

⁴⁴⁵ Weaver, Harlan. "Pit Bull Promises."

⁴⁴⁶ Yellow Bird, Michael

⁴⁴⁷ Forday, "Be Aware of Whyte Saviorism in Discussions on Street Dogs/Community Dogs."

Her nervousness, anxiety, and fear of the world make sense in a world that seeks to eliminate her. What was labeled as reactivity or even aggression by some, I came to understand as her attempt to create safety in an unsafe world. My vet even validated this, observing that she had anxiety. Yet we were given unsolicited advice from people who believed that because of her breed, Suki would one day snap. They advised different things: obedience training, puppy play, exercise, asserting more control towards Suki, and using aversive tools such as shock collars to suppress behavior. I was conflicted and couldn't imagine inflicting pain onto my puppy to get her to conform to anthropocentric norms, so my partner and I turned to a certified animal behaviorist and aggressive behavior specialist to help Suki regulate her emotions.

Our force-free trainer, a dog trainer that follows science-based research on dog behavior referred to her reactions to triggers as panic attacks. By reframing my relationship from pet to kin, I began to feel a sacred bond, one where I advocate for her, knowing that we live in a white anthropocentrism settler society that sees her as a commodity rather than sacred kin capable of acting as a spiritual protector and guide to the afterlife.

Dogs are Colonial Subjects

Supporting my assertion about colonial heteropatriarchal anthropocentrism stemming from conquest and heteropatriarchal domination, Billy-Ray Belcourt argues that white supremacist settler colonialism “require the simultaneous exploitation and/or erasure of animal and Indigenous bodies” and that animal rights activism reinforces settler colonial structures. To enact decolonial liberation strategies such as decolonization, domesticated animals such as dogs should be understood as “colonized subjects.”⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁸ Belcourt, “Animal Bodies, Colonial Subjects.” 1

I argue that contemporary dog training methods depend on colonial heteropatriarchal anthropocentrism and that animal behaviorists focus on individual human-canine relationships invisibilizes white supremacist settler colonial norms and structures that normalize violence against more-than-human kin. Grisha Stewart, MA CPDT-KA (Certified Professional Dog Trainer-Knowledge Assessed) argues in her book *Behavior Adjustment Training 2.0*, that “the science of behavior change, called behavior analysis [force-free techniques focused on building a strong relationship and trust with dogs] is decades ahead” of the “pack leader”-dominance-based- techniques that utilize aversive training tools to create discomfort and punish a dog who exhibit undesirable behaviors to humans. She states that aversion-based training works because dogs learn to suppress undesired behaviors rather than change their relationship with the world.⁴⁴⁹

The connection between dominance-based techniques that uses aversive tools and conquest is clear to me. The normalization of violent techniques to train dogs to suppress their behaviors asserts colonial heteropatriarchal anthropocentrism. I argue that contemporary dog training methods which rely on environments of apprehension⁴⁵⁰ where threat is always imminent are produced with oppressive conditions. Using aversive tools such as shock collars, choke collars, dominance, force, forcing a dog to face fears and suppress emotions in any manner creates environments of apprehension. Conquistador methods of training refuse to die because outdated training methods are effective in creating war dogs. For instance, the United States Armed Forces train “dogs to serve as sentries” based on rules established by sixteenth-

⁴⁴⁹ Stewart, Stewart, G. (2016). *Behavior Adjustment Training 2.0*

⁴⁵⁰ Simmons, “Settler Atmospherics.”

century Italian scientist Ulysses Aldrovandus.⁴⁵¹ Aldrovandus' methods of dog training were developed by training war dogs in Italy.

Online searches for reactivity in dogs led me to a shopping list of aversive tools: choke collars, shock collars, bark collars, etc. Finding a trainer online was no different, with various trainers describing their methods in terms such as “pack leader,” “top dog,” or “assertive.” Training methods blogs and Instagram have grown to be battlegrounds between animal behavior specialists, traditional trainers, and those who claim to be balanced, meaning they use some aversive tools but rely on force-free methods. The solutions by science-based trainers to solve these conflicts rely on pushing for legislation, specifically regulating the dog training industry, so that trainers must receive certification to train dogs.

Although I sympathize with science-based trainers, turning to regulation will not change attitudes towards dogs if we live in a white supremacist settler colonial world. Belcourt writes that some of the recommendations by animal liberation proponents apply to decolonization, “rejecting animal experimentation, disrupting the commodification of animal bodies, and abolishing animal agriculture.”⁴⁵² And I agree with some of the recommendations put forth by dog behavior scientists such as focusing on building relationships and utilizing force-free methods.

Today, dogs are rarely imagined in roles beyond commodity, a material reminder of what is lost “as a consequence (‘natural’ or not) of human dominance over the earth,”⁴⁵³ potential settler citizen or biopolitical subject. In Indigenous epistemologies, dogs can be “active agents in

⁴⁵¹ Ensminger, “Full Article: From Hunters to Hell Hounds: The Dogs of Columbus and Transformations of the Human-Canine Relationship in the Early Spanish Caribbean.”

⁴⁵² Belcourt.

⁴⁵³ Chen, Mel Y. *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect*.

Indigenous mythologies” and “occupy sacred ceremonial roles from which the Earth and its occupants are created and are thus not subject to human domination.”⁴⁵⁴ Since dogs are colonial subjects, decolonial strategies must include Indigenous animal ethics, a reconnection with stories about our 8,000-year kinship, including an insurgent kinship and an resurgence of queer and matriarchal P’urhépecha kinship structures for queer P’urhépecha.

Given the contemporary attitude towards pit bulls, I consider them in the same category as street dogs in Michoacan. Suki, my Staffordshire terrier mixed dog, is a medium between worlds, a spirit protector, a link between me and my home in Atecucario, and an agent of connection with the Coast Salish land I live on. On our walks in the cemetery, she engages with the spirits on the grounds as much as the crows that make the trees their home. There have been days when she barks at seemingly nothing, yet I am reminded of the powers that she possesses that I can only try to understand. Recently, when I returned from a trip feeling unwell, she paced around me in the same manner she does when communicating a need- food, potty break, attention. I was perplexed as she had just eaten after a play session and a walk where she peed and pooped. As I tried to understand what she was telling me, my gut pain grew, and I was forced to address my needs- rest and medication. Once I felt better, she relaxed into her spot. She has never been trained to detect my health relapses. Suki is my insurgent kin in that she provides joy, flights out of settler colonialism,⁴⁵⁵ resurgences with P’urhépecha queer lifeways and cultural practices, and helps me imagine other worlds and what Belcourt calls “decolonized animal futurities.”⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵⁴ Belcourt, “Animal Bodies, Colonial Subjects.” 1

⁴⁵⁵ Simpson, Leanne Betasamosake. *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance*.

⁴⁵⁶ Belcourt

Reflecting on my pueblo, I am overwhelmed by loss, disconnection and suffering because of ongoing white supremacist settler colonialism. I have compassion for my people and all rural, agrarian, and Indigenous people of Mexico who do not have the resources, energy, or ability to care for street dogs. I imagine Atecucario would look like if the pueblo was resourced and resurged queer and matriarchal P'urhépecha kinship structures. I imagine this would lessen the dissonance and competing narratives about relationships with dogs. I imagine that less dogs would suffer, and more would thrive. Similarly, that residents would thrive too.

While conducting tribal interviews for his research on rez dogs, Yellow Bird interviewed his sister Bernadine. She shared a story about the deep grief she felt after losing her rez dog. After the interview, Bernadine leaned forward and said to Yellow Bird, “do you know why we have so much strife and hardship among our people?” He shook his head. She continued, “it’s because we have forgotten how to care for our dogs, and Michael, you know well as I do that dogs are significant to our people. How we care for our dogs is indicative of how we care for our people.”⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁷ Yellow Bird, Michael, “Rez Dogs.”

Poem: the dog knows the way

cement monuments lament the barely living
 you know los perdidos
 los que piensan que vida empezo en 1530
 but the dogs know the way

did the dog that took mi abuela to her resting place
 ever eat out of her hand?
 or did it find the spot behind the cement washing basin
 where i used to play as a child when the matriarchs washed
 and rinsed by hand the garments that wrapped me
 like bandages
 like armor
 i used to leave behind crumbs and pieces of mi abuela's pan y dulce

the last time I walked Atecucario
 i glanced at every dog that passed my way
 i wondered if one knew me by name or by smell or by laughter
 as mi Nina's grandchild
 i laugh like her
 con todo el cuerpo

the markings on mi abuela's tombstone have smoothed
 over the years, pointer fingers have traced the symbols
 concrete has been cracked by rain, storm, heat, and tears
 but i still saw the dogs resting underneath the shade of the monuments
 ready to guide the next soul to their resting place
 or to watch as they get lost in the underworld
 just like they did in the living world

Conclusion

I think back to my young years before attending college. Right out of high school, I got a job at a bookstore and café. One day I was tasked with putting back a stack of books from the feminist studies section. It was my introduction to bell hooks, Audre Lorde, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Cherríe Moraga. Their hybrid writing style engaged me as a high school-educated youth with little exposure to feminist of color theory and literature. I wrote this for my younger self as much as for Indigenous queer, Two-spirit, Indigenous transgender feminist academics and activists. I write with the goal of reaching audiences outside of academia, transnational Indigenous readers, including P'urhépecha, and those from the Tierra Caliente who are now in the diaspora.

I know that by sharing stories from my childhood, conflict within my family, Atecucario, stories of homophobia and domestic violence, and claiming my P'urhépecha heritage instead of denying it, I am putting myself in a position to face retaliation. This retaliation could come from family, Michoacáños, or self-appointed P'urhépecha police that will discount my heritage for various reasons but many because of my critique of colonial heteropatriarchy in P'urhépecha communities. But more concerning is that my work may contribute to a negative stereotype of P'urhépechas, or rural Michoacáños, or Mexicans or be interpreted as such by a non-Indigenous scholar. But rather than dwell on the anxieties, I want to close this project with thoughts on the process, surprises, challenges, and possible future projects.

I clearly remember the Summer of 2022 when I researched the first chapter of this dissertation and taught two back-to-back courses. The hours spent leaning over a computer were tedious and disappointing. I had to compensate for months of paused work while recovering from a concussion. One day on a usual digital archive scroll through the Mexican Baptisms,

1560-1950 archives on FamilySearch.com, I came across mi abuela's first name and matched it with some of her sibling's first names in an archive. Before reading through all the information, I called my mom. I was bursting with excitement, and she seemed amused by it, letting me struggle through my Spanish translation to tell her what I had found. Her last name was not Aviña in the archive. I was stunned. I grew up knowing her as Enedina Aviña. I wish I could read my mother's mind because her reaction felt lacking compared to my enthusiasm. But she let out one of the longest uh hums I have heard from her. The discrepancies in the archive from my knowledge or my mother's opened questions and curiosities. I would like to know why significant discrepancies in last names exist. Was there a language barrier? Was it a nickname or reference to another ancestor? I have yet to track my family past the 1850s, but this is a lifetime personal project.

Realizing that the Zamora Municipality is part of the P'urhépecha Meseta greatly impacted me. I was surprised by the comfort I got from knowing this little detail. I grew up thinking that Atecucario de la Constitución, my place of birth and a pueblo within the Zamora Municipality, was far outside of an Indigenous zone. Or at least, it felt that way, given how insular the pueblo was and how little our P'urhépecha heritage practices were acknowledged for what they were. But even as a young child, I picked up on a tension about Indigeneity that resonates through the first chapter, "Matrilineal Migrations." I needed to write about the matriarchs in my family and their places of birth to break generational silences that served settler nationalism and colonial heteropatriarchy. Breaking these silences informed me that identifying as Indigenous in a place like Atecucario is political and continues to be in the diaspora.

Finding the book Alvaro Ochoa and Álvaro Ochoa Serrano in the book *Los Agraristas de Atacheo* was thrilling. Like other Atecucarianos, I identified strongly with the Mexican

Revolution yet didn't fully know the relationship that Atecucario had to the rebellion. I was told that the residents of Atecucario helped smuggle weapons and Zapatista rebels through the mountains. This was confirmed when I read that Priest Galván, a Zapatista rebel, had taken refuge in Atecucario during the Mexican Revolution. As I wrote the section about the revolution, I was transported back to the memories of uncles recounting the stories.

I could smell the scent of the Michoacán pine embers and hear the crack of flames breaking through logs. I could taste the air of Atecucario, a breath-full particular to the Parícutin volcano region, humid and alive. It brought me home to Atecucario de la Constitución. Yet, like many homes shaped by colonial heteropatriarchy, apart from the land and more-than-humans, it's a place of precarious belonging. So, although I refer to Atecucario as my home, it is heavy with colonial heteropatriarchal baggage. Home is made heavier by the cartel and state-sanctioned violence of the Zamora region, which was challenging to write about.

In 2021, Zamora de Hidalgo, a principal city of the Zamora Municipality twelve kilometers from Atecucario, was the most violent city in the world, with over 600 homicides.⁴⁵⁸ Lately, the only time Atecucario makes the news is when a new body is dumped or found in the pueblo, often assassinations from competing drug cartels starting as far back as the 1930s. Since contact, the region has been shaped and reshaped by violence, as outlined in the first and second chapters, but the increased violence since my family left Michoacán in 1992 has made the region a conflict zone.⁴⁵⁹ Although the violence in Michoacán is indisputable, writing about the generational cycles of trauma and violence in the region is loaded with white supremacist settler colonialist baggage.

⁴⁵⁸ Staff, "Zamora, Michoacán, Was World's Most Violent City Last Year."

⁴⁵⁹ Martínez-Rivera, "'No One Would Believe Us' An Autoethnography of Conducting Fieldwork in a Conflict Zone."

I struggled with ethical questions about the content of my project. Mintzi Auanda Martínez-Rivera, P'urhépecha, conducts research in Angahuan, Michoacán, and writes about the ethical challenges of fieldwork that she faced in the Tierra Caliente region, a conflict zone. She weighs her writing against the following questions: “How do we ethically talk about stories that illustrate a particular reality without contributing to negative stereotypes? How do we create a balance so that we can showcase the complexity of human relations, practices, and lived experiences?”⁴⁶⁰ Apart from these posing these questions to my work, I could assess how students processed my research when I taught. I noted what to clarify and how to present information in a manner that left little room for interpretation. I can't say that I succeeded in applying this well to every chapter of my dissertation, but these ethical questions did shape the content of my dissertation.

The most surprising outcome of this project is how invested I have become in critical animal studies. I started to write this dissertation around the time I adopted Suki. As I write in “Dogs are Insurgent Kinship,” my first dog, Cooper, had passed a year prior, and it was a loss like no other. Adopting Suki taught me about the animal rescue industry, breed-based legislation and housing restrictions, and the dog training industry. Since writing this chapter I have engaged in social media conversations with anti-colonial trainers about white supremacist settler colonial norms in the international dog rescue industry. I am committed to learning more and hope to turn Chapter four in a longer collaborative project in the future.

In the first draft of that chapter, I told a story about a time when my siblings and I snuck a stray cat into our apartment when my parents were away on an errand. We quickly realized how out of our depth we were the stray cat freaked out inside the apartment and bolted to my parent's

⁴⁶⁰ Martínez-Rivera, 263.

room. By the time my parents returned, we had thrown their sheets in the dumpster because the cat had pooped on it. My parents weren't pleased, they were surprised I would break any rules. I was the obedient one. Yet once the flurry of bewilderment and frustration passed, my parents opened about parts of their childhood that they hadn't discussed before—relationships with more-than-humans opened avenues and knowledges that felt prohibited. Like joy and stories dismissed as superstition.

My father, a stone-like man with only stories of hardship to share, offered a story about a dog he once cared for as a child. He lit up as he described this scraggly street dog he used to feed along with the pigs and chickens on his parent's land. Unfortunately, his upbringing was violent, and because of family strife and intergenerational cycles of abuse, his pup died young, possibly poisoned by a bitter relative. When he ended his story, his tone, body language, and face returned to stone again. It was a terrifyingly exciting experience that sparked a curiosity about the power of more-than-human relations and the knowledge it would reveal.

I believe that this was the power of this project. To show the potential of resurging matrilineal and queer P'urhépecha kinship structures in the diaspora. The potential to live more fully, to feel more fully, and to love more fully.

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