

Desde abajo

How Day Workers and Domestic Workers Re-value Labor Power at Casa Latina

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Abstract

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This dissertation examines the rise of jornaleros and jornaleras in the Pacific Northwest at a community center in Seattle Washington called Casa Latina and critiques the contemporary interpretations of the jornalero/a experience, both regionally and nationally. The objective of the study is to understand how day laborers organize to negotiate their own labor value in urban centers and the impact of the current political milieu on the ability of those workers to self-organize. The principal research question of the proposed study addresses issues related to the political nature of the concepts of skill, labor value, and working-class agency. This research project raises the following questions: Are day laborers really the deskilled cheap labor depicted by most popular and scholarly accounts, or have they organized to redefine their value as skilled craft workers? What are the political and organizational dynamics that transform “cheap unskilled labor” into “well-paid highly-skilled craft work”? The analysis of the day

laborer experience incorporates a diversity of interpretations including the application of the epistemology of Chicana/o anthropology, critical anthropology, and alterNative epistemologies. Moreover, this dissertation challenges mainstream economic interpretations of capitalism and proposes an autonomist perspective of workers and questions the centrality of the “informal labor market.” Through the application of a collaborative ethnographic and participant observation research with mostly Mexican-origin and Latina/o day laborers at a community center, the study concluded with a critical perspective of the day laborer experience. Based on in depth interviews, the research project unveiled the weaknesses of previous analysis on the jornalero/a experience: it rejected the common assumptions of day laborer studies grounded on theories of “globalization” and the centrality of the “informal labor market.” It explored and expended an ignored aspect of the day labor experience: the important role of women in the jornalero experience, thus placing women as important actors in the history of the working class in the region and the national level. Women set their own rules and participated in their own “asamblea”, exposing the politicization of women activists in decision making, political campaigns and political power. Most significant, the analysis of the day labor experience through the lens of an “autonomista” perspective unveiled how workers in Casa Latina self-governed themselves through the “asamblea.” It examined how workers organized and governed themselves: “los trabajadores en control (the value of worker agency). More specifically, it examined the self-valorization of the day workers in Casa Latina by observing how they set wages and refuse work. In this context, the day laborers demonstrate agency and re-value the labor power with the refusal to work.

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Glossary of Spanish words and Organizations

“Autonomista”: This term refers to the Marxist autonomist tradition in the Italian labor movement in the 1960s from “workerism” or “operaismo”.

Alianza Nacional de Trabajadoras del Hogar: Spanish Translation of National Domestic Worker Alliance

Comisiones honorificas: Patriotic or Cultural Mexican organizations established by immigrants in the early 1900s and connected to the Mexican embassies in the United States

“el declino”: it translates to “decline” or in autonomist terms the “refusal” to work.

Fuerza Laboral Feminil: Feminine Labor Force

“Garifuna”: Mixed raced descendants of African slaves exiled by the British after revolts and live mostly in Central American countries of Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua.

“la asamblea”: the assembly: this is in reference to the meetings of day labor workers.

“la parada”: the space where day laborers literally stop in search of employment.

La resistencia”: It refers to a term utilized by a group of day laborers involved in a struggle against Casa Latina (2008-2011), literally, the resistance.

“la revuelta”: It refers to a term utilized by a group of day laborers involved in a struggle against Casa Latina (2008-2011), literally, the revolt.

“las chambitas”: This term refers to minor employment chores used by household workers, literally, small jobs.

Los Jornaleros del Norte: This is the name of a musical group involved in the organization of jornaleros. It translates to the Northern Day Laborers

“los Piqueteros”: this term refers to unemployed workers in Argentina, very similar to the jornalero experience.

“mexicanismos”: The term refers to vocabulary or usage of the Spanish language in Mexico.

Mujeres sin Fronteras: This is the name of the organization in Casa Latina involved in the political direction of the women day laborers: Women without Borders

PCUN: This is the name of the farm workers union in the state of Oregon: Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste -Northwest Tree Planters and Farmworkers United.

NDWA: National Domestic Worker Alliance

NAFTA: North American Free Trade Agreement

“Machete”: This term refers to the database used in the distribution of jobs in Casa Latina. Translates to the “hatchet” or the “axe”.

NDLON: This is the acronym for National Day Laborer Organizing Network, a national organization for day laborers and has grown to 36 member organizations.

UCAPAWA: This is the name of the United Cannery, Agricultural , Packing, and Allied Workers of America, a union formed in 1937, and incorporated a racially diverse group of food processing workers.

“volantear”: It is the term used by the jornaleros/as in the publicity of services by day labor centers, literally, it translates to the act of “leafleting” or the distribution of leaflets.

Introduction

This work involves collaborative ethnographic and participant observation research with mostly Mexican-origin and Latina/o day laborers at a community center in Seattle Washington called Casa Latina. The objective of the study is to understand how day laborers organize to negotiate their own labor value in urban centers and the impact of the current political milieu on the ability of those workers to self-organize. The principal research question of the proposed study addresses issues related to the political nature of the concepts of skill, labor value, and working-class agency. Are day laborers really the deskilled cheap labor depicted by most popular and scholarly accounts, or have they organized to redefine their value as skilled craft workers? What are the political and organizational dynamics that transform “cheap unskilled labor” into “well-paid highly-skilled craft work”? The study will have significance for those interested in the class and race politics of flexible workers and transnational labor migrations.

Research Procedures

The research procedures of this study will include both quantitative and qualitative methods in the gathering of data on the day laborer experience in the Pacific Northwest. The first step in the process will be to outline the scholarly literature on Chicana/os in the urban sector of the state of Washington. A comprehensive and critical review of case studies of Latina/o communities in Washington is necessary to understand how Casa Latina fits in the overall development of these communities. A similar critical analysis of social scientific research on day laborers in the United States will be undertaken in part to engage in a discourse analysis of stereotypes and misrepresentations of this growing sector of the Mexican-origin and Latina/o working class.

A secondary source of data will be incorporated from two bodies of information on the day laborer. First, an analysis of existing public policy discourses including newspaper and governmental accounts of issues related to migration, occupations, and labor markets. Secondly, Census data on Latina/o populations in the state of Washington are used to understand demographic change. Applying the data gathered from the literature review, the census data will demonstrate where major demographic change is occurring. These quantitative methods constitute an important part of the research project, but it is secondary to the central objective of the study of day laborers in the Pacific Northwest.

To counteract, the historical utilization of scientific studies, which take away working class agency, this study will apply the insights found in the literature on critical ethnic, feminist, and Marxist epistemologies. Such epistemologies emphasize reciprocity, collaboration, participation and advocacy in the creation of an emancipatory body of knowledge, which addresses the inequalities of race, class, sexuality, and gender. Consequently, my study draws from alterNative ethnographic methods such as participatory action research, collaborative ethnography and life histories. More specifically, the use in-depth ethnographic interviews for life histories that include experiences of migration and work and participant observation of the daily activities at the community center and especially the interaction of workers and staff members.

Scholars who have dealt with Latina/o laborers never define their positionality. The analysis and research presented by mainstream or conventional anthropologists are deeply embedded within the status quo. Their research is never explained as an actual political project. Their mainstream methodologies do not allow for such a position. This

is reflected in the extant contemporary scholarship where “laborers” are reduced to a number on a large-scale survey, rather than a human being with agency for change. Thus, a methodology and pedagogy rooted in AlterNative perspective allows for a much deeply rooted connection and responsibility to a community and a project that challenges injustice.

While anthropology has long used these tools to “exoticize” the Other, a critical view of ethnographic methodologies, combined with an autonomista theoretical framework, will allow for a more holistic and transformative view of inequality, exploitation, and resistance. The literature on critical ethnography provides a guideline in the gathering of data with a clear understanding of the relationship of the researcher and informants. Madison succinctly identifies the basic components of the methodology, “Critical ethnography begins with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular lived domain.” (2005, p. 5) Madison’s contribution to critical ethnography provides the researcher with a set of theoretical and methodological themes: 1) positionality, 2) dialogue/otherness and 3) theory/method. According to Madison, positionality makes us responsible for “our research paradigms, our authority, and our moral responsibility relative to representation and interpretation. While the dialogue/otherness concept “keeps the meanings between and the conversations with the researcher and the Other open and ongoing.” It avoids keeping the Other “fixed in time and forever stagnant (2005, p.14).” While theory/method in “critical ethnography becomes the “doing” or the “performance” of a critical theory (Madison 2005, p. 11).

With a clear understanding of the role of the researcher, the alterNative methods enrich our body of knowledge from the perspective of the community, in my case, the day laborer. Whereas the scientific methods tend to present the day laborer as just another victim of capitalism, the alterNative methodology provides knowledge that is transformative and emancipatory.

This dissertation utilizes life histories, participatory action research, and collaborative ethnography. Definitions of the life histories method include the following points: 1) the teller and listener of the stories produce accounts in an interlocutory mode 2) life histories accounts result from the responses to a question from the interviewer in an interactional framework, 3) from the perspective of the methodology, the interactional process of life histories/stories help us understand how they are situated and subject to revision. An important insight on the role of life histories is the consideration that they are more than just text, since the actor constructs them. Moreover, they are situated and affected by social forces, gender and class contents. For an application of this method, my research project will draw from the insights of Ruth Behar 's application of life histories in the experience Mexican marketing women (1990). In my own project, the insights from the feminist epistemology represented in the work of Behar and others add an important tool in the analysis of the participation of women in the worker centers. Most studies on day laborers fail to address the life histories and participation of women in the work centers across the United States.

This project addresses the important role of the collaborative ethnography method in gathering data on the day labor in the Pacific Northwest. The significance of this method is the clear definition of the positionality of the investigator in the research

process. In collaborative ethnography, the ethnographer and the informant are deeply involved with the project and are in constant dialogue throughout the project. In the end, the outcome is a multi-voice report where the narratives are at the center of the ethnography. Moreover, the results of the research are accessible to the members of the community. Collaborative ethnography practitioners recognize the potential problem that the results of the research will be dismissed as biased and unscientific. Thus, this form of research is not recommended or applicable to all projects (Lassiter, 2005).

Insider/Outsider Problematic

Research on the Chicana/o community by practitioners of the same nationality or ethnicity reveals problems and challenges emerging from the insider/outsider dichotomy. The problem is stated clearly in the work of Chicana anthropologist Zavella, who faced this dilemma in two research projects: First researching a group of women workers in 1977-78 and later in a study on the effects of industrialization in the sunbelt on working-class families, comparing Mexican Americans and whites in 1982-83. This research sheds insights on both the problems scholars face in dealing with issues of identity affected by race, class and gender. In reference to the role of Chicana and by extension Chicano anthropologists, Zavella presents the following distinction of two views on the insider/outsider dilemma. One view argues that being an insider carries several advantages: the person is more likely to be cognizant and accepting of complexity and internal variation, better able to understand the nuances of language use, aware of informants attempts to create performances for their own purposes and to dupe the researcher, less apt to be distrusted by those studied. Also, ethnic insiders are more readily accepted by the community and are more sensitive in the creation of questions

attuned to the cultural sensibilities of the community.

The other view notes that the insider's position carries particular problems and poses personal and ethical dilemmas for social scientists on the basis of their race, ethnicity, gender, political sympathies or even personal foibles. For example, some women researchers found themselves negotiating their status when conducting ethnographic research with Mexican Americans due to the community under study's doubts of the researcher's intent, skills, and personal characteristics. Insider researchers will be more accountable to the community.

Thus, with the advantage of cooperation as an insider comes responsibility to create analyses sympathetic to ethnic interests and the sharing of any knowledge with them. Zavella reported that in both projects the self-defined interests of the research subjects were elsewhere. The researchers defined the problem to study, asked questions about work, family and ethnic identity and the analysis probably had little impact in their lives. The research was guided for an academic audience and in the end benefited the researcher. Zavella concluded on the results of her observations "As we go through the process of talking with people like ourselves who are called "other", hopefully we can understand our own feminism and political struggles. Chicana feminist ethnography, then, would present more nuanced fully contextualized, pluralist self-identified identities of women, both as informants and researchers (72)."

The applications of these insights in my research project are clear and important. In the case of the day labor project, as a person of Mexican origin, I acknowledge myself as an insider within this community; however, my class position may be a hindrance in the research process. My class position will early on set barriers in gaining their trust,

given the vulnerable condition of the population. Most studies on day laborers argue that there is a large number of undocumented workers, thus, I must be conscious and aware of the ethical implications in gathering data on the informants. Many are of indigenous background or come from different countries in Latin America. It is important in my assessment to understand that indigenous people will have a different perspective on what a “laborer” is and the rights they seek. It is also important to understand that people from other countries come from different cultural and social political and historical backgrounds. Where the conditions and rights of workers are perceived differently. Zavella’s feminist insights are helpful in developing awareness in the implementation of the project when interacting with Mexicana/Latina workers in the center. My project will contribute to informing and transforming the condition of women workers who are left out from studies on day laborers.

Other insights come from community based participatory research such as Leek, who discusses the pros and cons, of establishing ties with a community by looking at the positionality of the researcher, or “scientist”. For example, Leeks sets up a grid of four types of researcher and their effectiveness in establishing ties, “Resident Insider, Non-Resident Insider, Resident Outsider, and non-Resident outsider. These four statues are crucial in how to gain acceptance within a community ((Leeks, 1997, p. 7). A resident insider that comes from the community project would have a much easier time forming ties. The resident insider has advantage of knowing the problems of the community before hand and may already have established connection to community leaders. A non-resident insider takes more time to garner trust. A researcher who comes from a similar cultural background has a slight advantage from any type of outsider. However, one

must not assume that because of a similar cultural background that they understand how a particular community works. The non-resident, resident outsiders have the most difficulties in establishing ties and trust. The outsider will have the most difficult time in gaining trust, from marginalized communities. It is in their best interest to find a facilitator from the community, which can help the researcher gain trust in the community.

For example, outsiders, with no understanding of the cultural norms, must make an extra effort to connect with the community. This is not to assume that insiders have a privilege in understanding cultural norms of the community. However, insiders do have an underlying connection as to how a community understands their environment. Their observations of the environment are based on a common history and culture and lived experience. On the other hand, outsiders who are assessing a community need to exhibit culturally sensitive behavior. For example, the food that the communities eat must be treated with respect. An outsider must not pass on the opportunity to eat culturally specific cuisine, because they think it is gross. If spirituality is a large part of their community, it must be included within a project. Engaging with spiritual and religious connections, what they believe in and how it is part of their daily life must be included in the project. Outsiders must understand that in order to gain trust, they must participate in all activities.

Chicana and Chicano anthropologists of yesterday and today face the same conventional methods and theories of the discipline. Culture, the defining characteristic of the field continues to attract interest and controversy. In spite of the advances in the field over the past twenty years, the newly anointed Chicana/o and other practitioners of

color must confront the continued legacies of positivism, either in the form of objectivism or scientism. Other contested anthropological issues include the centrality of ethnographic interpretation, the politics of representation, the issue of the subject, and the importance of fieldwork in the production of scholarship. Anthropology has a troubled history; ethnography became a tool used for the extraction of knowledge of the “other” to be sold as an exotic commodity under the guise of scholarly work. It is not until the 1960s that the “observed” began to talk back and challenge truth claims created and analyzed by anthropologists. AlterNative anthropologists not only challenged ethnocentric truth claims, but also took charge in supporting those workers and organizations actively engaged in struggles to change the material conditions of communities plagued by injustice.

The new anthropologists are connected to social movements that create an “anti-colonialist discourse” in academia. The purpose of this critical position is to “question the epistemologies of Western science that are used to validate knowledge about indigenous peoples” (Denzin, 2003, p. 6). It is this set of “subaltern” perspectives that calls for an alternative pedagogy and methodology that participates and collaborates with the community. Peña defines this AlterNative perspective as follows:

The concept of ‘alterNative’ is presented here to indicate several qualities: The Native part of this self-evident. We are referring to indigenous knowledge systems, an epistemology that is place-based, that arises from the ontology of being in place. But dislocations alter this place-based being, rupturing generations of attachment to homeland commons. So the Native is “altered.” But it does not end there—that is the anti-thesis; the synthesis, or rupture, is in the ability and strategy of the altered Native to alter the circumstances of the dislocation. Our *alterity* means that we have had to change our perspective to that of the Other, the cosmopolitan city dwelling other. But this also means we alter these new spaces to re inhabit

place to relocate our being in place. In the process we also have reinvented our “nativeness” (2010, p.156).

The primary focus of this section is to respond to the methodological challenges in the implementation of a research project on the experience of day laborers in the Pacific Northwest. First, the problem of the research project is set in the context of the epistemology of Chicana/a anthropology. Second, the study examines the important role of alterNative methodologies compatible with the Chicana/o anthropological project: participatory action research, collaborative ethnography and life histories. Both the scholarly legacy of Chicana/o anthropology and the alterNative methodologies complement and legitimate the autonomista theoretical framework and its central concepts: the *self-valorization* of the worker, *working class subjectivity*, and the resulting effect of *worker agency* in the transformation of society. Finally, I will conclude with the discussion of the challenges facing me in the implementation of a case study of workers and their self-organization at a day worker center in the Pacific Northwest.

Epistemology of Chicana/o Anthropology

As a Chicano anthropologist, I trace my lineage to early scholars in Chicana/o anthropology, a body of knowledge that challenged and transformed the traditional boundaries of the discipline. These early precursors built a foundation for the emergence of an alterNative epistemology, which gives us our voice and our “nativeness” back. From Romano to the new generation of anthropologists, this section examines the rich epistemological roots of Chicana/o anthropology.

An analysis of the major intellectual movements in Chicana/o anthropology appears in two contemporary studies. In 1985, Rosaldo presented a review of the

contribution of Chicana/o anthropologists beginning with the work of Octavio Romano and Americo Paredes. Romano's work in Chicana/o anthropology reflected the critique of conventional anthropological studies of the 1940s and 1950s (see his classic critique of the social sciences, (1969; 1968). Rosaldo sums it up briefly: The Romano-Vaca critique "affirmed that social scientific notions about Chicanos... reflected institutional racism and forms of domination prevailing in the society at large" (1985, p. 407). This early response of Chicano scholars is an example of the "natives talking back" to traditional anthropologists. Romano challenged the ethnographic authority in classical studies enmeshed in a scientific model and method. Professional fieldworkers trained under a general theory and empirical bent produced ethnographic cultural studies. These early studies established "the special authority of the ethnographer-anthropologists."

Several years later, Americo Paredes contributed to the debate and the development of Chicana/o anthropology. In "With the Pistol in his hand" A Border Ballad and its Hero", Paredes initiated a critique of anthropology through the presentation of Gregorio Cortez and the experience of Mexican and Mexican Americans in Texas (1958). Rosaldo views it as more moderate but just as powerful as a critique of traditional anthropology. Paredes argued that anthropologists "erred less in overt prejudice than in the more subtle (and therefore more pernicious) unconscious perpetuation of stereotypes" (1985, p. 408). For Rosaldo, Paredes's work both dismantles older paradigms while at the same time it constructs new alternatives for the study of the Chicana/o community. Paredes's work explores some of the same issues found in conventional scholarship in the field of language and anthropology but presents a model of a distinctly Chicana/o anthropology (1978; 1995). Rosaldo concludes that Paredes's work suggests "that culture

can both shape and reflect the larger political economy. In Paredes's analysis culture neither determines all human behavior nor dissolves into the economic base" (410).

By 1989, Rosaldo's analysis of the precursors of Chicana/o anthropology, and more specifically the role of Americo Paredes, redefined the canon of the emerging field of Chicano Studies; he chronicles the evolution and transformation of Chicana/o anthropology. In the analysis of the masculine representation of Chicano culture, Rosaldo signals the end of the "warrior hero" in the work of Americo Paredes and the rise to preeminence of Chicana feminism as exemplified by the work of Sandra Cisneros. Referencing the new phase of Chicano Studies and its transformation into Chicana/o Studies, he states:

Cisneros opens fresh vistas in what Americo Paredes saw as the inextricably intertwined realms of culture and politics. In her narrative analysis, the concept of culture undergoes a metamorphosis. The warrior hero has seen better days. No longer can he serve as the 'unified subject' around which Chicano sagas of masculine heroics revolve. What the concept of culture loses in purity and authenticity, it gains in range and engagement (1989, p. 165).

Whereas Rosaldo recorded the demise of the warrior hero in anthropology, Davalos, a representative of the new generation of Chicana anthropologists rejoices in the ascendancy of women in her article, "Chicana/o Studies and Anthropology: The Dialogue That Never Was" (1998). Davalos expands and builds on the early evaluation of Renato Rosaldo on Chicano/a Studies and anthropology. From the perspective of a Chicana, the author examines the conversation or dialogue between the first generation of Chicano scholars in 1967 and traces the development of the dialogue until the beginning of the postmodern era. According to Davalos, the first group of scholars, more specifically, the work of Octavio Romano, an anthropologist by training, began a critique of the

discipline's project, and challenged the central notion of "culture", objectivity, representation, subject, fieldwork, ethnographic interpretation, authority and power. Chicanos talked back to mainstream anthropologists; the new scholarship questioned the ideological rhetoric of anthropological texts, challenged the concept of culture, identified the connections between ethnography, authority and power as well as developed the dialogue on power and representation. The new anthropology offered a new Chicano subject and an alternative ethnography to the colonizing project of anthropology (Davalos, 1998, pp. 15-25).

The natives talked back, but the "anthros" remained silent. In 1975, in a manner symptomatic of the liberal politics of the era, the American Anthropological Association rejected a panel of Chicano anthropologists titled "A Chicano Perspective on Decolonizing Anthropology." Through a performance of rebellion, nevertheless, the Chicano anthropologists held the panel following the close of the Annual Meeting (Davalos, 1998, p. 18). If traditional anthropologists ignored the voices of Romano and Paredes, women accepted the challenge. Following this first wave of Chicano scholarship, the emergence of a core of Chicana scholars moved the discussion and dialogue in several different directions when Chicana feminist scholars questioned the normalized gender roles in the community and the construction of a dominant masculine and heterosexual subject; instead, the women proposed a Chicana subjectivity, Chicana feminist ethnography, and a shifting and simultaneity method (Davalos, 1998, pp. 25-32). Patricia Zavella represents the new generation of Chicana feminist anthropologists and through her work challenged gender roles in the community, the diversity of Chicanas,

and the problems of class, gender, and race bias in presumably objective anthropological methods (1987; 1991; 1993).

Davalos identifies a third stage, which engages Chicana and Chicano anthropologists in the *decolonization* of anthropology, a movement beyond the re-invention of the Chicana/o. This group of scholars promoted the redirection and redistribution of power, questioned the authority of ethnography, and redefined the scholarship from just being additive to transformative. In this stage, the anthropological project proposed community based or applied research, combined theory and practice, and built a bridge between the academy and the community. Chicana and Chicano scholars established a new discipline and promoted a multi-site methodology. According to Davalos, Renato Rosaldo, a prominent Chicano anthropologist, represents a new generation of scholars, who utilizes ethnographic descriptions, cultural critique, autobiography, literary analysis, Chicana/o Studies and anthropology (1998, pp. 32-37).

Even though, Davalos argues that the “decolonization of anthropology” generation separates itself from the postmodernist tendencies in academia, José Limón (1994) a key figure in the discipline (disciple of Paredes) articulates a post-modernist discourse. Limón’s article *Carne, Carnales, and the Carnavalesque* is both useful and problematic in my future dissertation project. First, Limón continues the tradition of critiquing western anthropological notions of the Chicana/o experience, which is one of the foundations of Chicana/o anthropology and studies. In the study, Limón utilizes the *carne asada* (a barbeque) as a means of examining the Chicano experience in the United States. For Limon, the carne asada becomes a space of resistance through degradation (making fun of each other and the environment around them), by using Bakhtin’s concept

of the *Carnavalesque*. The discursive analysis presented in the *carne asada* in practice does not illustrate class struggle or resistance to capitalist oppression. It is only imagined change through the discourse of the participants. In this regard, the use of Bakhtin's concept of the Carnavalesque and the analysis presented in the case study represents the contemporary post-modern turn of Chicano Studies (123-140). This post-modern turn in Chicana/o anthropology walks a thin line between discursive narratives and applied research, Peña the autonomista scholar so poignantly stated, "How many times do we deconstruct text and performances before we can state that this is more an exercise in intellectual navel-gazing than a socially and politically useful way to produce knowledge---knowledge that advances the struggles of predominantly working-class and indigenous diaspora communities that are often the "subjects" of popular cultural studies (2010, pp. 150). This overview of the epistemology of Chicana/o anthropology exposes the existence of an intellectual tradition capable of more discoveries with the experimentation of new theories and methodologies. Moreover, the different stages of Chicana/o anthropological research reflected the struggle against positivist tendencies in the mainstream and traditional scholarship in anthropology and the social sciences. To conclude, my project is grounded in the rich legacy of Chicana and Chicano anthropology and complemented by the insights of critical ethnographic research methods and the Marxist autonomista framework.

Perhaps one of the most difficult stages in the completion of this research project is the successful application of the methodological approaches. There are many challenges in the successful application of the methodological approaches, which range from the definition, gathering, and the interpretation of data to the implications of gender,

race, class, ethnicity/race, and nationality as a transformative and emancipatory project. The following section provides the basic background and purpose of the research project, and an explanation of the research procedures, which will present the sources and types of data in the project.

Challenges in the Interpretation of Data

Other potential issues in the implementation of the research project include challenges related to gender, language, level of participant observation, race, and power relations. Given the importance of these issues, there must be clear awareness of the significance of distinguishing the notions of data from their relationship to people. For example, the quantitative data from Census and government sources versus the qualitative data from life histories and ethnographies plays a secondary and complementary role in the research project. In my preliminary work at the day labor center, I have observed occurrences where I must be prepared to successfully complete the project. For example, one of the glaring issues absent in the day labor research is the participation of women. This posed a challenge in reaching out to the women at the center. First of all, certain meetings are restricted to women only. As a male researcher, this was a hindrance to documenting the experiences of women at the center. On the issue of language, although I self-identify as a native speaker of Spanish, this is both a strength and potential challenge. Latinx informants come from different parts of Latin America, with vernacular linguistic differences that may become an obstacle to effective communication and understanding. My preliminary experience at the center made me aware of how much language plays an important role in interacting with the workers in the center. There were many instances when my Mexican version of the Spanish

language (*mexicanismos*) helped me avert potential conflicts between the members of the center. In some parts of Latin America, a word may have a different meaning for a Mexican or a Central American worker. Americo Paredes' research reminds me and informs me on the role of language in the interpretation of the activities at the center (1978). Another issue is the assumption that anybody from Latin America speaks the Spanish language, however, there is a large indigenous population in the region who are not or may not be Spanish speakers. At the work center, I recognized the diversity of the Latina/o population, where I encounter many indigenous native speakers. In the gathering of data for the case study, the ethical implications may arise, when I must decide to be a participant observer. The opportunity to join the workers is an interesting prospect in gathering information, which I cannot see at the work center.

Chapter Outlines

This dissertation is set into three parts that answers the question; how do day workers re value their labor power. The first part sets the foundation by outlining steps. The first chapter focuses on a critical literature review of academic and governmental research on Latina/o day workers. The chapter defines day workers and describes the setting of this study. Day worker studies completed around the country and a critique of research on the so-called "informal labor market" and other predominant theories (social capital, labor market segmentation).

In Chapter 2, using Marx and more specifically an autonomist perspective, the chapter sets the theoretical framework, which I will use to analyze the daily lives of day workers at Casa Latina. It examines Marx and Theory of Value and critical ethnographic methods. In Chapter 3, the dissertation explores the history of

working-class political re-composition in the Pacific Northwest from 1900 to 1968. It examines the political (re/de)-composition of the working class and cycles of struggle, the history of changing class composition of Mexican origin working class communities in the Pacific Northwest during the following periods: 1) Pre Bracero Program Era, 1900-1942: Incipient Formation of Migrant Worker Communities, 2) First Bracero Program Era, 1942-1947: Emergent Mass Worker Organizations, 3) Late Bracero Era, 1948-1968: Height of Mass Worker Struggle.

Chapter 4 examines the rise and development of Casa Latina, a worker center in the state of Washington. At the beginning of the early 1990's the Latina/o community in Washington State records a demographic shift from the rural to the urban areas. This chapter examines this shift, and identifies the factors that lead to the formation of Casa Latina. This chapter focuses on the early historical formation of Casa Latina in Seattle based on in depth interviews from the founder and former executive director Hilary Stern. This phase is described as urban flexible and transnational labor, 1994-2014, with an emphasis on the demographic shift from the East to the West region in Washington, an analysis of the occupational shifts in an urban area, and the foundations of Casa Latina.

Chapter 5 analyzes the role of women in Casa Latina. This chapter explores how predominantly women led and participated in groups within Casa Latina, such as Household Helpers (HHH) and Mujeres sin fronteras. First it describes their role and their relationship to Casa Latina. HHH are domestic workers of Casa Latina who set their own rules and participate in their own "asamblea". Mujeres sin Fronteras is a group dedicated to the discussion of women issues, family, health,

immigration, and work. Also, Mujeres sin Fronteras are involved in such campaigns as the “not 1 more “, \$15 Now”, “Crossing Generations”, and “Hundred Women, Hundred Miles”. In general, the chapter focuses on organizational decision making in HHH, Mujeres sin Fronteras: the women at Casa Latina, and political campaigns and political power. Finally, Chapter 6 focuses on the political life of the jornaleros with special attention to how workers self-governed themselves through the “asamblea”. The “asamblea” is an organizational structure created by the workers, who demanded a space to discuss issues and problems affecting the day laborer workers. The “asamblea” makes important decision on employment sanctions, dispatch rules, mutual aid insurance and wages. It examines how workers organize and govern themselves, membership and participation, decision-making and rules of the “asamblea”, and ownership of the space: “los trabajadores en control (the value of worker agency). This chapter also explores the topic of wages and how the working-class re-values itself. More specifically, it examines the self-valorization of the day workers in Casa Latina by observing how they set wages and refuse work. The self-valorization of the workers is examined in two distinct economic periods; first, during the crisis, prices stay steady, and second, while during the post crisis, rates go up. In this context, the day laborers demonstrate agency and re-value the labor power with the refusal to work. The topics or themes covered in the chapter include autonomist perspective on wages and self-valorization of workers, wages and decision-making, examining crisis and post crisis periods of Casa Latina.

Conclusion

Chicana/o Studies and anthropology today continues to face the same challenges of previous generations in the production of research. Just like the Chicana and Chicano scholars from the late 1960s, in the present, the production of research confronts the struggle between the proponents of an objective and positivist interpretation of culture and those who propose an interpretation based on the tenets of critical ethnography and alterNative methodologies. For the researcher committed to the development of a body of knowledge that is transformative and grounded in a personal responsibility to the community, it is not a simple choice. The same holds true and it is exacerbated, when the researcher is a member of a marginalized community. In my case, this dissertation is not just an exercise of a scientific enterprise for the completion of an academic degree, but it is rooted in the long history of the Chicana/o experience in the United States. The participatory ethnographic approach, melded with the theory of class composition, will provide one angle from which to present worker-centered narratives in a manner that advances and legitimizes the perspectives of the oppressed.

Chapter 1| Day Work: The Literature of Day Labor Studies

A critical survey of American history will reveal how xenophobia, fear, and racist attacks against immigrant workers intensify during times of economic crisis. As a community and “restricted” category of workers, Latina/os, and in particular those of Mexican descent, long have experienced what Negri (1979) calls “the continuity of discontinuity”: Alternately courted and rebuked, Latina/o immigrants have faced episodes of intense recruitment followed by waves of mass deportation. The “structural marginality” of Latina/o immigrant workers within the labor markets of the USA economy follows from these cycles of integration and exclusion. This is not a new idea. More than three decades ago, Ernesto Galarza in *Merchants of Labor* (1964) characterized this history by alluding to the concept of *administered labor migration*. He also recognized the cyclical nature of this policy that welcomed Mexican workers in times of economic expansion and rejected and deported them in times of economic contraction. In either case, Galarza also recognized that Mexicans were at best welcomed as temporary labor migrants but seldom considered potential naturalized citizens.

From well before the Great Depression to the contemporary militarization of the border that started in 1980 with the Reagan administration, a great deal of the public and even some substantial portion of the scholarly discourse (especially the type inspired by Samuel Huntington) has tended to depict Latina/o immigrant workers either as “cheap” but productive labor or as a scourge menacing the nation’s economic, social, cultural, and political stability. You can read this discourse as obsessed with what is ultimately seen as a threat to white privilege. In the first dominant narrative, cheap labor [sic] is seen as

fulfilling important demands for unskilled [sic] workers and essential to more smoothly functioning and competitive capitalist production in key sectors like agriculture and construction; even in the most benign form of this discourse the laborer is usually not seen as “citizen worthy” or “skilled” (cf. Aldama, 2001).

The second dominant narrative typecasts “cheap” Mexican labor as a scourge that causes economic crises and socio-political conflicts. However, I propose to not take this for granted and instead seek the means toward an alternative critical analysis that allows me to focus on the political dimensions of the wage relation or the *politics of the valuation of labor* in general. I am inspired in part by the work of Professor Peña in *The Terror of the Machine* (1997) but also a more recent quote from a book, *Mexican Brick Culture in the Building of Texas, 1800-1980s*, in which the author, Scott Cook argues: “Anglos’ imposition of a cheap labor identity upon Mexicans in southwestern states like Texas inevitably resulted in the blanket devaluation of an entire people and culture” (1998, p. 239). Not only was their labor devalued, Mexican and other Latina/o immigrant workers are repeatedly blamed for every conceivable economic and social malady from high unemployment and displacement of native workers to higher crime and delinquency to public health threats among a much longer list of presumed negative impacts. These impacts have very little basis in the more credible and rigorous social scientific research literature (see, for e.g., Durand and Massey, 2004; Chomsky, 2007; Guskin and Wilson, 2007; Chacón and Davis, 2006; Bacon, 2008).

Yet they persist and today such unfounded racist sentiments are being re-articulated as systematic ideologies setting the repressive political agenda that started with Tea Party-GOP (Bacon, 2008), and continues with the so-called alt-right. These

ideologies act to rationalize systematic anti-immigrant and anti-worker policies. Today, such attacks appear to be an all-time high as Latina/o immigrant and their broader constituent communities are again being targeted for exclusion and repression (cf. García, 1980; Aldama, 2001; Cornelius, 2001; Mize and Leedham, 2000; Nevins, 2002; Chacón and Davis, 2006; Bacon, 2008). This leads me to conclude, as I will show more clearly below, that there is often an overlooked connection between the “economic” and the “political” in the social science study of day labor as a phenomenon related to the globalization of neoliberal capitalism. We need to understand now these racist ideologies impinge on the experiences of workers in the transition from formal to informal markets where they are more likely to face *precarious* conditions induced by neoliberal doctrine and policy.

This chapter analyzes a select body of research on day laborers that focuses on the experience of workers in Los Angeles, Southern California, Chicago, New York City, and other cities in the United States. This critical review examines selected social science scholarship on day labor with special attention focused on the contributions and limitations of the research. The chapter closes with a modest proposal for an alternative approach and interpretation that emphasizes the perspectives of the working class or what is known as *autonomy* or *autonomist Marxism*. It is important to recall, that autonomist Marxism “designates that tradition of Marxism which places at its centre the *self-activity* of the working class – a tradition with deep historical roots and international diffusion” (Dyer-Witthford 2004:5; emphasis added). In the context of the study of day labor I take this to mean that the self-activity of the workers organized in day labor centers represents an opportunity to study, through previously untapped ethnographic means, the

organizational forms, terrains of struggle, and cycles of political recomposition and decomposition as represented by the experiences of workers affiliated with a day labor center in the Pacific Northwest.

In many ways my critique of this literature stems from a sense of widespread disconnect between the *political* and the *economic* analysis of day labor. I believe *we need to include an analysis of the state* and that the strictly economic study of informal labor markets for day workers, *jornaleros*, can erroneously lead us to ignore this important dimension. For e.g., it is the state that promotes policies that transform workers into day laborers and an important part of the informal labor market – of course, the ability to escape regulation in informal labor markets is very neoliberal. Policies on immigration and workplace regulations further illustrate the significance of the role of the state. The state is not “autonomous” and so we also need to understand how state policies are complicated by the context of the globalization of labor markets and the politics of citizenship and skill in trans-border labor markets. Any study that fails to account for the role of the state and its juridical order and surrounding ideological climate will have an incomplete view of the context within which we can survey the full range of workplace experiences and organizing struggles of day laborers.

Finally, my critique is also grounded in the autonomist Marxist *theory of skill*. The concept of “cheap labor” is used very widely and uncritically in most strains of the social scientific discourse on day labor. Autonomist Marxists emphasize the idea that the “price” of labor (the wage) is a *political calculation* and is not neutrally grounded in objective technical criteria. Capital seeks to “deskill” labor for political reasons – in order to undermine the power of “skilled” workers. Labor is rendered “cheap” because the

presumption of reduced skill means they are easier to substitute with other workers. This is what Peña (1997) and Cleaver (1979; 2000) call the “substitutability of labor” and this is a basic concept outlined by Marx in Volume 1 of *Capital* and especially the chapters on the transition from “simple cooperation” to large-scale industry.

However, my critique develops the idea that the construction of Mexican labor as “cheap labor” is actually not a “neutral given” but rather a highly conflicted political process. It is also part of the *self-activity* of the workers in the day labor movement to challenge the simple argument that wages are somehow magically set through the operation of the objective forces of the market that are innocently seeking to maximize efficiency. Skill is one of the ways that capital seeks to de-mobilize the working class since the idea of “cheap unskilled” labor ultimately justifies a lower wage regime. Nor is “human capital” such a simple reflection of actual skill sets because of the politicization of the systematic definition of skill and knowledge in most labor markets today. There are many skill sets and forms of knowledge that are not readily recognized by capitalists or economic analysts of formal and informal labor markets. These skills are not considered part of the day laborer’s “human capital”. These skills nevertheless constitute a given socially determined capacity of labor agency that requires knowledge and analytical abilities. These skills derive from a combination of tacit, experiential, and experimental knowledge bases and are often transmitted by workers from one generation to the next (Peña, 1997, pp.183-91).

My focus on the struggle over the *re-valuing of labor power* in the so-called informal labor market and through the activities of community-based organizations (i.e., day labor centers) is a significant shift away from existing trends in the day laborer

research literature since this involves *rethinking skill*: Instead of being defined as a deficit in “human capital” or a quality of neutral labor market efficiencies, I propose that the concept of skill become more of a worker-defined idea. This opens a window to the ethnographic study of the social practice of the *self-valorization of skill* and the possibility of evaluating its effectiveness in the labor markets and beyond in the circuits of workers’ reproduction. This I hope will show how autonomist Marxist theory can help transform the anthropology of work and the economics of labor by moving us away from a reliance on concepts that privilege the epistemology and language of the market (e.g., labor market, human capital, etc.) as an *a priori* framework.

LITERATURE REVIEW; STUDIES OF THE DAY LABOR EXPERIENCE

My examination of the literature on Latina/o day laborers revealed a multitude of theoretical and methodological approaches cutting across economic, social-cultural, and activist perspectives. Economic interpretations predominate in this literature and through a well-established tradition dedicated to the study of the “informal labor market” and day laborers. However, in recent years a new body of literature has appeared that focuses more on the social, cultural, and political dynamics of day labor in the context of studies of community and integration. An even smaller body of scholarship is starting to focus on day laborers and new social movements, activism, and participatory research. This section addresses the following questions: what do we know about the conditions and qualities of day labor? What are the different research approaches and corresponding topical gaps in this field? What are some of the unresolved matters of interpretation? This is followed by a discussion of the limitations and implications of scholarship vis-à-vis my

own alternative autonomist Marxist interpretation of day laborers in the United States and the Pacific Northwest.

“Political Economy” of Day Labor, or: The Labor Economics of Informality

Through a review of selected literature, I uncovered an emphasis on a wide variety of topics including demography, socioeconomic status, work history, and integration with community. There are studies based on original survey data and others that rely on secondary analysis of government data, some combined both approaches. There are studies of the economics of labor focused on formality and informality in the labor markets. In this school of thought there is shared “trinity of concepts” that characterizes much of research on day labor studies: *globalization*, *informality*, and *immigration*. One notable scholar in this vein is Abel Valenzuela. His team did the early work that laid the foundation for subsequent studies of day laborers. Valenzuela and his team presented the first systematic Day Labor Survey. This survey provided demographic, social, and labor market characteristics of the “informal market” based on 481 randomly surveyed immigrant day workers at 87 hiring sites throughout Southern California. According to Valenzuela, the day workers in his sample were largely Latino immigrants (at least 25 percent had been in the US ten years or longer), mostly of Mexican origin, and included many workers who had been in the labor market for less than a year. This sample constituted a mostly male and young work force with low educational attainment (Valenzuela, 2000). Valenzuela examined the historical development of day labor and located this in an effort to explain patterns in hiring, wage negotiation activities, and social organization in the “informal” and “formal” labor markets. For Valenzuela the informal markets for day labor include negotiating hiring and wages on street corners or

in Home Depot parking lots and other businesses. The formal sector of the day labor market is principally located in temporary work agencies. This early research provided insights on the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of day workers and the organization and structure of day labor markets in Southern California.

In this early work, Valenzuela sought to explain day labor work within the “contemporary labor market” by utilizing two theoretical frameworks: (1) labor disadvantage theory and (2) informality. According to Valenzuela, “Labor market disadvantage theory explains the unequal participation [of Latina/os] in entrepreneurship or self-employment” (Valenzuela, 2000, p. 3; brackets added). During downturns in economic cycles, when high unemployment and underemployment occur, labor seeks alternate income sources. The disadvantage to [unskilled] labor occurs when women and other ethnic members of the labor force receive “unequal capital return”. In other words, income inequality limits a return to the human capital of day laborers. Undocumented Latino male day laborers fit the description of a disadvantaged labor group seeking alternate sources of income through reliance on informal labor markets. This leads Valenzuela to assert that the disadvantage is associated with the role of informality in the “labor market.” Informality refers to conditions operating in labor markets that are “unregulated” and in which employment is hazardous, erratic, and somewhat casual. I would argue that “precarious” is a better descriptor. Because informal labor markets are unregulated by the state, workers are vulnerable as a result of a disproportionate exposure to unsafe workplace environments and undervalued wages (Valenzuela, 2000). The segregation of Latina/o immigrants into the informal labor market is thus seen to reinforce the recursive pattern of low income and inequitable return on human capital.

However, Valenzuela does not analyze the “undervalued wages” any further than this observation of “fact” and he fails to consider how state policies affect the conditions of the emergence of informal labor markets or how workplace hazards might further diminish the “human capital” of the workers.

More recent work has turned toward new uses of survey data to address other dimensions of the day labor experience. For example, one recent survey offers an overview of the current status of day labor centers. This survey shifts the focus from the SES and demographic characteristics of workers to the organization and effectiveness of day labor centers. Fine (2005) identified, evaluated and highlighted the strengths and limitations of the centers through qualitative and quantitative analysis. The survey covered areas related to advocacy and organizing, economic action and public policy organizing and advocacy, service provision, leadership development and popular education, and the unique role of the worker center as seen through the lens of their “internal life”, membership, staff, budgets and fundraising, and networks and organizational connections. While day labor centers face significant challenges, according to Fine they are also uniquely posed to meet the challenges facing today’s low-waged workforce. Fine’s (2005) study suggests that day labor centers can reduce conflict, stabilize employment and income, and help integrate workers into the community. However, once again the “low-waged” status of day laborers is left unexamined.

In more recent work, Valenzuela has explored new directions by developing a special focus on the search for a more exact theoretical definition of day labor and a renewed emphasis on the intersections of formal and informal day labor markets. He began to emphasize the need for a historical overview of day labor from its origins to

contemporary developments (Valenzuela, 2003). In the article “Day Labor Work,” Valenzuela identifies three macro-level factors that provide a framework for his interpretation of the large-scale formation of contemporary day labor markets: These are the oft-cited concepts of *globalization*, *informality*, and *immigration*.

According to Valenzuela, the demand for day labor results because of “globalization.” This leads to the “re-structuring of...regional economies, and the growth of informality, coupled with massive immigration.” These changes have resulted “in unique labor markets where demand for part time, low skill [sic], and flexible work...proliferates.” In other words, the phenomenon of day workers results from the interaction of the “macro-processes” that create unique labor market structures for different categories of workers including those deemed “unskilled” without further analysis or reflection. While providing important insights on the negative impact of the neoliberal economic re-structuring of regional economies and the workers’ disadvantaged positions, Valenzuela’s theoretical foundation relies on the concept of supply and demand reminiscent of the neoclassical economic writers (Valenzuela, 2003, p. 329). Moreover, he does not analyze what the concept of “unskilled” labor means in this context or how neoliberal globalization might affect and constrain the politics of the *wage relation* in transnational informal labor markets.

Expanding beyond the limits of this first line of research, Valenzuela turned toward the comparative analysis of regional day worker experiences in the United States and Japan. In “Seeking Work Daily,” Valenzuela et al (2002) compare and contrast the experience of day workers in Los Angeles, California, and Tokyo, Japan. The rationale behind this analysis is guided by the need to explain the globalization of the economy

(the macro view) and its impact on regional economies (the micro or meso view). This study presents a historical overview of day labor in Tokyo and Los Angeles, a demographic comparison of two separate day labor “markets,” and an expansion of the theoretical foundation of the research based on the supply, demand, and *spatialization* of day labor. Valenzuela and his collaborators developed a typology of three types of work sites: connected, unconnected, and regulated. The first type is linked to a specific industry (directly or indirectly), through a specialized store in the industry as well as the strategic location of these sites near business lots for the hiring of the laborers. The second type, the “unconnected,” is not associated with a specific industry but rather occupies a definite established space for other reasons such as high visibility and police cooperation. In this type, workers are hired for a variety of tasks by a wider range of employers. The third type, called the regulated work site, involves sites that are officially designated and administered by local governments or local organizations to provide a set of services for and regulation of the hiring of workers. According to Valenzuela, the workers daily routines promote “a definite spatial order in the market”. He states that: “regardless of their status as informal laborers, their work lives closely resemble that of a formal employee” (Valenzuela, 2002, p. 209). Valenzuela argues that the work conditions found in the Los Angeles study are very similar to the early days of the San’ya market, when the “economy was booming and day labor was at a historical apex” (Valenzuela, 2002, p. 210). In the case of Japan, “the day labor market in San’ya is much more concentrated and secluded from the public eye” (Valenzuela, 2002, p. 211). Moreover, the differences are also related to the organizational qualities of the sites. In San’ya, the site is located on a particular street and other side streets of the neighborhoods where workers gather to

search for work. San'ya work sites are not connected to a specific industry. Besides the main street, there are a few "unofficial" sites in the area and the remaining hiring sites are regulated by government agencies, operating like welfare offices.

Valenzuela finds differences in the spatial organization of the day labor market: In Los Angeles, the market reflects a strong "entrepreneurial character" of the day labor in the region. While in the Japanese market, "the organization of day labor in San'ya is increasingly taking on the countenance of an "underground" or "invisible economy." Moreover, he adds: "...the graying of the [Japanese] workers and continued economic decline, may portend its eventual disappearance" (Valenzuela, 2002, p. 211). The application of the same typology in a different market presented similar results on the nature of work sites in the United States. In "La Esquina (the Corner)", the researchers present a survey conducted in New York on the connected, un-connected, and unregulated work sites, and the examination of socio-economic demographic characteristics such as nativity, occupations, wages, and earnings from day laborer. The study posits the need to examine the working conditions and violations of labor standards as well as the positive evaluation of day work centers in New York. An aspect of this study is the analysis of the impact of the neoliberal re-structuring of the economy in the New York area. Again, this study by Valenzuela continues to rely on the notion of supply and demand leading to the growth of day work labor markets. The tenet that neoliberalism seeks "flexible" labor seems to be the unstated assumption underlying much of this strand in the scholarly discourse of the growth of day labor. When the research reflects a social concern for the day laborer, it is presented within the narrow confines of liberal juridical policies (e.g., Theodore et al, 2006). Oddly, none of these

studies considered the possibility that some workers themselves may actually prefer to engage in intermittent wage labor and this is the appeal of the day labor market; their preference for casual part-time work may be a by-product of a grounding in cultures characterized by the norm that “We work to live, we do not live to work.” A rejection of work is more widespread than is commonly assumed and not everyone wants to be trapped in formal labor markets with an 8-to-5 workday and a six-day work week. Some autonomist Marxists have documented that a community’s resilience is often indicated by how a high number of people have come to live off a minimal engagement with waged work as the case of Tepito studied by Cleaver (2005) illustrates.

Social-Cultural Perspectives: Immigration, Masculinity, and the Meaning of Work

Anthropologists and sociologists responded to the limitations of previous research based on quantitative survey data by implementing ethnographic methodologies to better assess the complete range of day labor experiences. Walter et al (2002) initiated a study with a primary focus on the occupational risks of undocumented immigrants in the street corner labor markets of San Francisco’s Mission District, a homeless shelter, and a day labor “hiring hall.” Utilizing semi-structured in-depth interviews and qualitative ethnographic fieldwork, the study explores how injuries impact the emotional and social context of undocumented day laborers, where injuries are seen as a personal failure that questions their masculinity and their position as the patriarch in the family. At another level, the study reveals the impact of immigration status, language barriers, and economic pressure as a factor in the reluctance of day laborers’ willingness to use health services. According to the study, the determinants of occupational health for undocumented day laborer are ultimately political (Walter et al, 2002).

In a follow-up study entitled “Masculinity and undocumented labor migration: injured Latino day laborers in San Francisco,” Walter and his team continued to draw on the results of ethnographic fieldwork and clinical practice to examine the social and cultural dimensions of the day laborers’ life experiences. While focusing on the undocumented Latino day laborers experience with injury, illness and disability, the study applies concepts from critical medical anthropology and gender studies. Critical of previous studies on day laborers for their emphasis on the economic aspects, this study examines the cultural and intimate aspects of the life experience of day laborers: “the engendered experience of personal and familial crisis, involving love, respect, betrayal, and patriarchal failure” (Walter, Bourgeois, and Loinaz, 2004).

Another recent approach involves a study of “*A la parada*” emphasizing the day labor lived experiences on the corners of New York City by focusing on immigration, identity, and space-making. Pinedo-Turnovsky (2006) applies Low’s concept of “spatialized culture” that refers to the use and practice of spaces as way of forming a common identity. The street corner or *la parada* (“the stop” literally) represents a multifaceted identity for the men who look for work. From the outside the space is seen only as a place to find employment within the informal labor sector. However, a closer examination found instances where *la parada* became a way for workers to organize and find camaraderie with recent migrants in the area (Pinedo-Turnvosky, 2006). This approach is more promising because it focuses on the self-activity of the day laborers and considers them in a context that does not reduce them to their status as temporary wage labor. In *Daily Labors: Marketing Identity and Bodies on a New York City Street Corner*, Pinedo-Turnovsky expanded on the analysis of the experience of day laborers in New

York. While the study examined the experience of Latino day workers, the author incorporated comparisons with European and African Americans seeking work in the corner. The analysis focused on the interaction of citizens and immigrants and concluded that illegality accorded value and power to the workers, but only in the short run. Given the fact, the day laborers were man, the study examined the nature of masculinity and its impact on the notions of “being good worker” and “good man”. A contribution of the study centered on the analysis of the notion of “community” of the participants in the corner, and provided insights on the character of the space and its participants. Workers in the corner created a sense of membership in a community’s economic and social life for themselves. The corner was not just a place to search for work, but their participation transformed the space to fulfill the economic and social needs of the day laborer. It created a system of support and punishment for the participants. This study focused on identity construction and labor experiences and the impact of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, immigration, and legality. The study concludes that the research must go beyond reporting on the conditions of the workers, but to support and share experiences, and goals with the participants. Research should play a role in the resolution of conflict with employers and engaging in the negotiation and interaction with legal mechanisms in the eventual creation of valued community members. Thus, the strength of the study highlights new insights on the significance of the space or the corner for day laborers, which creates a community beyond just a space for the fulfillment of economic needs. Second, the study articulates the need for a scholarship that will advance the interests of the day laborers, rather than some objective study of the conditions of the workers.

Third and just as important in the scholarship of day workers, the study separates itself from previous studies on jornaleros: this is stated clearly in the study.

“Factors such as race, gender and migration status, to name a few influenced their perceptions and opposing identities caused conceptual and practical problems, illustrating that people are not passive, powerless, neutral objects but actors who can bring about change, create knowledge, and contribute to shaping their social world.” (Pinedo-Turnovsky, 2019, p. 164)

However, while it contains interesting and promising observations of day laborers, it is affected by two central problems of the studies on day laborers. This study on day laborers continues to be defined by the application of the informal labor market and the centrality of “globalization” theory in the interpretation of contemporary capitalism. Despite the reference of the participants as workers, the examination of an identity constructed around race, gender, ethnicity, nationality, immigration, and legality obscured the class dimension of the experience of the day workers.

In a similar vein, Purser (2009) examines social aspects of workers in a street corner day labor market and a regulated day labor center. Based on interviews and ethnographic fieldwork, Purser compares the discourses of Latino worker’s struggle in their quest for work and dignity via strategies of social differentiation and distinction. The study argues that gender’s transformative power through these moral boundaries can be a negative factor in the formation of a collective identity. While most studies on day laborers focus on the labor market, this study examines the cultural meanings the workers assign to their work and how this influence where and how they seek work (2009). This too is a promising perspective because it illustrates the limits and contradictions involved

in the construction of the cultural meaning of work among day laborers. However, while the issue of collective identity is addressed, the author does not consider the idea that all of these workers are part of networks and communities that extend and transcend the limits of the particular work sites. Part of what is lost in this approach is one of the strengths of earlier work with its focus on the integration of workers into the community (e.g., Fine, 2006).

Day Labor and Agency: Social Movements and Activism

Perhaps one of the weakest links in the body of scholarship on day labor is the area focused on social movements and activism. This is an enigma given the concerns over the social and economic conditions affecting the day laborer community and the commonly accepted view of them as a marginalized and exploited population. Theodore and Martin's study of neighborhood social struggles provides insights on an important topic for future research in day labor studies. They examine the impact of immigrant populations on community neighborhoods in Chicago and connect these to the rise of political movements on behalf of the population. Focusing on two social movements, Theodore and Martin report on the issues, strategies, and results of the anti-gentrification movement and the worker's rights movement in support of day laborers. Their study documents the significance of community-based organizations in the incorporation of immigrants and the importance of political mobilization and civic engagement to the improvement of conditions in the community (Theodore and Martin, 2007). The main concept they use is "migrant civil society" and they invoke this argument that it allows them to examine the "internal coherence" of the concept and the "linking of organizations based on a set of shared attributes." They seek to better understand this "migrant civil

society” through a survey of community-based organizations in Chicago. They basically asked the organizations to rank the principal challenges confronting immigrant populations. Theodore and Martin present a set of “case studies” based in the Albany Park neighborhood to illustrate how migrants participated in the anti-gentrification and workers’ rights movements. However, their study lacks ethnographic grounding and offers limited insights related to the experiences of participation of day laborers themselves as active agents shaping these political and community-making processes. It would have been interesting, for example, if the authors had provided ethnographic descriptions of the practices and knowledge bases involved in the campaigns of civil disobedience that the workers organized to resist political attacks on the Albany Park Workers’ Center (APWC). Studies of mass mobilization will advance research by combining the current use of case studies of organizations based on opinion and attitudinal surveys with the “thicker” description of ethnographic inquiries related to workers’ actual experiences of participation in such social movements.

Finally, another study of day labor that is situated within a social movements framework is Calderón et al (2005). This brings us back to southern California as this study focuses on “Organizing immigrant workers: action research and strategies in the Pomona Day Labor Center”. The research is basically another case study; in this instance of a partnership between the community and the university in the establishment of a day labor center. The study chronicles the evolution of the center and its transformation from a top-down model of organizing to a participatory and worker-led center. Emphasizing the need for day labor centers guided by a participatory model of organizing and leadership, the study demonstrates the possibility of building bridges between workers

and universities (Calderón et al, 2005). The authors do not provide any ethnographic details and focus again on the processes of mobilization, participation, and organization of the day labor center. We do not learn very much about the workers' own experiences, knowledge, and activities in these organizational processes.

In Gleeson's *Precarious Claims: The Promise and Failure of Workplace Protections in the US* (2016), the study focuses on the worker's experience in the San Francisco Bay Area and Silicon Valley, a region that is both affluent, and home to low-wageworkers. This study is based on three sources of data; first, the result of surveys of workers participating in worker rights clinics in the San Francisco Bay Area and the Central Coast region. A second set of data included injured workers involved in the process of filing claims as well as a third source from observations as a volunteer for a small legal aid clinic in a farmworker community on the Central Coast. This was supplemented with information from interviews of staff, attorneys and clinic volunteers in the area as well as participation in the client's settlement conferences and hearings. In contrast to the early studies on workers, this study acknowledges that it is guided by the view of the workers themselves in a wide area of interests rather than the view of the bureaucrats. The author applies the concept of precarity, which defines a social class, representative of informality and insecurity. However, the workers are agents for their rights rather than helpless individuals in the hands of the bureaucracy. Despite the positive attributes of the approach in the study, it is weakened by the same theoretical approach of studies on day laborers: the author's acceptance of the globalization theory popular among day labor specialists in the interpretation of capitalism. Moreover, the application of Weberian concepts in the analysis of governmental and bureaucratic

structures obscures the relationship of the workers and the system.

Global Economic Theory, Imperialism, or Autonomy?

My overview of the literature on day labor identified several tendencies in the theoretical foundation of the studies by Valenzuela, Theodore, and others who clearly embrace the concepts and theories borrowed from the classical and neoclassical political economy tradition. Such an approach is problematic because it limits more critical analysis of the material conditions and political experiences of the day laborers. This dominant model erases the workers' agency in the United States. The reliance of the school of thought on traditional neoclassical interpretations of the capitalist economy renders this an ineffective vantage point from which to launch a better understanding of social movements and workers' agency. These forces can transform the labor markets; indeed, they are the only social forces that ever really have effected changes in workplace organization and labor conditions. Throughout the various studies, the authors continue to examine the nature day labor by assuming that the only regime that matters is capitalism: This is a result of a focus on "labor markets" rather than the historically and spatially located analysis of relations of power between workers and capital (Fine, 2007). By focusing on the labor markets and embracing the use of the "supply" and "demand" models of the need for day workers, these studies obscure and mystify the exploitative relationship between day workers and capital. The analysis of such studies is an example of scholarship that defines the workers and their experiences solely from the point of view of capital. Social scientists studying the present phenomenon of day workers conclude the emergence of informal labor markets is a natural outcome of capitalist development. In this view, the day labor market is simply seen as supporting the

equilibrium and competitiveness of the capitalist system (see for example, Valenzuela et al, 2002; Valenzuela, 2003). While exposing the conditions of work and the breakdown of labor standards, the criticism is limited to reforms rather than a radical transformation of the conditions of work, which is often an expressed goal of the workers' rights movements that day labor scholars have studied (e.g., Theodore and Martin, 2007). Other problems associated with this analysis include the uncritical use of concepts such as "unskilled," "unorganized," and "uneducated" in reference to the capacities of the day workers. This analysis contributes to the devaluation of labor and skill and removes any agency workers might exercise through their labor power. It also presents them as vulnerable and passive victims of capital. Yet, the approach provides not accounting of a theory of exploitation and worker resistance. For example, Theodore makes the following argument in his study of day laborers and wages, "First, with regard to the industrial relations system, day labor agencies have been associated with patterns of de-unionization, increases in individualized contract bargaining and reductions in the social wage" (Theodore, 2003, pp. 18-23). Such an observation of the day laborer agencies blames the organizations and institutions for the promotion of anti-union behavior and the return to worker-boss relations in contract bargaining. It oddly places blame on the sectors of the working class that seek these day center services for actions that are the result of top-down neoliberal doctrines and managerial imperatives. While de-unionization and reduction of the social wage are important aspects of neoliberal economic doctrine, this study fails to consider the workers' own efforts to challenge this in the British or European context.

Another aspect of the dominant theoretical interpretation in the studies by Valenzuela, Theodore et al, and others involves the examination of changes in the world economy under the rubric of “globalization” and the neoliberal re-structuring of the economy. In this regard, while it is important to recognize the changes of the advanced capitalist economy, the literature on “globalization” distorts and rejects the radical interpretations of the changes in the world economy (as stages of imperialist domination). “Globalization” studies present the nature of contemporary capitalism as a natural set of processes, which creates equilibrium, stability, and cooperation between workers and capitalists and interdependence between the “advanced” and “less developed” nations. Of course, the current economic crisis of global capitalism, largely unleashed by the deregulated speculation in “derivatives” that was related to the real estate bubble and the subprime mortgage attack on working-class people of color, reveals the bankruptcy and corruption of both neoliberal and neoclassical economics. Yet another aspect of the limits of previous research, is that the comparisons made between the day workers in Japan and the predominantly Mexican immigrant origin and Latina/o day workers in California fails to recognize the uniqueness of day workers’ experiences in the United States where an anti-immigrant political climate and an antagonistic state provide a markedly different context. The literature on imperialism and the nature of labor across borders allows the researcher to recognize changes in the world economy (aspects described by the “globalization” theorists) without obscuring the conflictive and antagonistic tendencies of capital (Wallerstein, 1994; Boron, 2005).

Saskia Sassen is one of the eminent scholars of the “globalization” school of thought and is often cited by the “political economists” of day labor studies. According to

Fiss and Hirsch, Sassen fits into a discourse of globalization, which “conceives globalization as a matter of degree, a process long underway, but accelerated by the diffusion of new technology, information, practices, free capital, and transnational organizations” (2005, p. 32). In this regard, my interpretation of immigration and the immigrant day laborer experience in the United States locates the problematic in the context of the structural and process-oriented interpretation presented in the work of Marxist scholars. My interpretation builds on the early work of anthropologists such as June Nash, who was an early pioneer of the anthropology of work. Nash’s (1981) early work derived from the use of world systems theory as applied to labor movements in Latin America.

The dominant perspectives on immigration and day labor derive from the following schools of thought: First is the “push-pull” theory approach and the “new economics of labor migration” (Portes, 1985; Massey, 2001; Portes & Haller, 2005)). This conventional approach basically described the dynamics that lead to informal labor markets for immigrants in terms of top-down macro-structural processes commanded by corporations and sovereign states. On the re-structuring of the economy, Marxists agree on the impact of informal labor markets in the reordering of the US capitalist economy with its neoliberal preference for flexible labor. However, the *autonomista* interprets this differently. This process is described clearly in a study of undocumented workers in the Midwest. Dionicio Valdéz argues that the re-structuring of the economy affected workers because capital decomposes the power of workers by “reducing wages, speeding-up the production line, reducing safety precautions, and making the work more dangerous and less remunerative. In the process, they have weakened established unions and the ability

for workers to protect themselves...creating various incentives for longer established employees to depart” (Valdez, 2005, p. 30). This analysis emphasizes how labor markets operate as structures in the relation of capitalist domination and exploitation rather than as spaces that workers seek to occupy to fill in the demand that capital has for specific types of labor.

An additional problem in the literature on day laborers is the tendency to dismiss the role of the state, which is understandable, since the literature on “globalization” minimizes the participation of nation-states and emphasizes the role of free markets. Although the scholarship on day laborers argues that their position in the “informal” market places them outside the regulations or juridical domain of the government (state), upon closer examination this is not the case. The worker participants in day labor centers may sometimes utilize the legal and juridical institutions of the state. For example, in Washington state undocumented workers are actually authorized (by not being specifically excluded) to bring complaints related to workplace injuries and wage disputes before the Department of Labor and Industries. Day laborers are also directly affected by state policies such as city ordinances prohibiting workers soliciting employment on street corners and other repressive measures against undocumented workers. The emphasis on informality can occlude the dynamics involved when workers, by exercising their rights to social (if not political) citizenship, engage with the state to seek these benefits and address the devaluation of their labor. It is these *self-valorizing* activities of the day laborers that conventional economic models tend to overlook. And yet, even within the context of the theory of human capital, one could argue that workers seek to re-value their return to capital through these engagements with the state.

This dissertation therefore considers it crucial that we pay attention to the important role of the state in the analysis of the day laborer with the application of contemporary theories on the state. In *Paradigm Lost: State Theory Reconsidered* (2002), Aronowitz and Bratsis plead for the return to a discussion on the importance of the study of the capitalist state. Aronowitz and Bratsis argue that in reference to theories of state and class, the Marxist state theory has been “buried by a conservative shift inside and outside of the academy.” Furthermore, among leftist intellectuals, the shift moved “away from the study of “political power” to a more disaggregated vision of power as a dispersed and undifferentiated phenomenon (Aronowitz and Bratsis, 2002).

In reference to the study of the state, the work of Poulantzas (2000; 2008) sheds some light on the need to incorporate the central role of the capitalist state that seems missing in the work of autonomists like Negri and Cleaver. Poulantzas did not see the state as an objectified instrument of power held by the dominant class, nor as a subjective entity whose power is equal to that of which it takes (social class). Poulantzas described the state as a “strategic site of organization of the dominant class in its relationship to dominated classes. It is *site* and a *centre* of the exercise of power, but it possesses no power of its own” (Poulantzas, 2000, p. 148). Marxist attention on the state is an important concept, since they reject the arguments of the “neoliberal globalizers” on the insignificance of the state as an actor on behalf of capital (Jessop, 2002; Aronowitz, 2002).

Conclusion

Anthropology as a field, with its method of deep ethnography and thick description, has the potential to provide the field of day labor studies with a

unique set of perspectives missing in most of the research scholarship I have reviewed above. A critical focus of the proposed research includes the use of collaborative ethnographic methodologies to highlight the multiple and shifting positionalities of the day workers. Mainstream studies tend to objectify workers as inputs to labor markets of various types; my approach presents the Latina/o laborer, not just as a vulnerable victim or factor of production, but as a multifaceted being. The *autonomista* perspective allows workers to be presented as more than just laborers or exploitable units of labor time. It allows us to explore how workers are also mothers and fathers, poets and singers, *futbolistas* and philosophers; each engaged in social praxis and concerted projects for political and economic change through autonomous self-organizing and self-valorization. Recent scholarship on day labor reveals the strength of the ethnographic approach in illuminating the type of social and cultural relations of day workers. Such studies highlight the cultural and intimate aspects of the life experience of day laborers, and personal relations beyond the economic core of their daily experiences (Turnvosky, 2006; Walter et al, 2004; Purser, 2009). A shortcoming of current research is the omission and neglect of the role of women as active participants in work centers.

To conclude, my research on *jornalera/os* aims to expand, and critique the current body of day labor scholarship through the application of an autonomista and alterNative framework. While the quantitative data on the characteristics of day workers, the different types of work sites, and legal and policy issues

affecting day laborers is important and useful, a critical and alternative framework provides new insights on the day laborer experience.

In other words, the perspective found in the literature presents narratives of workers' experiences from the vantage point of capital. Traditional political economy approaches are problematic since the analysis reinforces the neoliberal public policy tendency to support the needs of capital rather than workers. Thus, it is essential to review and critique the work of traditional interpretations of day labor scholars. As a counter position, I also argue that a theoretical framework derived from an *autonomista* critical Marxist perspective, combined with an alternative ethnographic methodology, will allow for a more complex and holistic understanding to the daily-lived experiences of day laborers.

The new direction must not only include critical analysis, but it must be connected to praxis, which leads to social change and justice. In other words, the validity of the theoretical and philosophical foundations of the research is in how it informs workers' self-activity through direct change-oriented organizing actions. This dissertation contributes to the small body of literature on day laborers and social movements and extends this emerging body of research through an examination of the cycles and terrains of struggle and how these are reflected in new organizational forms like the work-led day labor center as a *gremio* or craft guild. Such an approach builds on several interconnected themes: The revaluation of skill in the negotiation of labor contracts and wage relations; the reproduction of the workers' social and cultural relations with community and place; and the wider implications these processes have for the emergence of a

broader social movement seeking to challenge capitalism and neoliberal orthodoxy.

I seek to be mindful of an overlooked connection between the “economic” and the “political” in the social science study of day labor as a phenomenon related to the globalization of neoliberal capitalism. We need to understand the experiences of workers in the transition from formal to informal markets and see this as a political project that places workers between their own freedom and autonomy and a continuation of the *precarious* conditions induced by neoliberal doctrine and policy.

I also think that my proposed focus represents a significant departure from previous research on day labor. By focusing on the struggle over the *re-valuing of labor power* in the so-called informal labor market and through the activities of community-based organizations (i.e., day labor centers) I hope to move us in the direction of a more critical discourse that focuses on *rethinking skill* itself. Instead of defining day laborers as suffering from a deficit in “human capital” since they are “unskilled” I plan to document how these workers constantly defend their skilled status and assert this through their wage negotiations and work hours. This will demonstrate that the wage relation is not just the function of the quality of neutral labor market efficiencies. This opens a window to the ethnographic study of the social and political practice of the *self-valorization of skill* and the possibility of evaluating its effectiveness in the labor markets and beyond in the circuits of workers’ reproduction. I hope this will allow me to show how autonomist Marxist theory can help transform the anthropology of work and the economics of labor by moving us away from a reliance on concepts that privilege the epistemology and language of the market and toward worker-centered perspectives of day labor.

Chapter Two | Methodologies and Epistemologies: Marxist Epistemology and Chicana/o Anthropology in the Study of Day Laborers

Indisputably, the act of work, here understood as the material transformation of the natural conditions of production, maintains and reproduces human society.

Anthropologists have long documented the functions of work within society, usually by charting their understanding of different forms of work from so-called hunter-gatherer to more industrialized social formations. The anthropological study of work was for a long time primarily constructed through the lens of “rationalist” explanations or a somewhat abstract and rigid use of Marxist economic models that focused on the cultural properties and underlying social laws governing different “modes of production”. These frameworks later became the foundation for the study of work from an anthropological perspective (Nash, 1980).

More recently, literature from the “autonomist Marxist” tradition presents a different interpretation of the anthropology of work that invites us to offer alternative perspectives in the study of the politics of the “labor process” in late capitalist formations. Here, I undertake a brief outline of the origins of the autonomist Marxist school of thought and its impact on labor process studies. This resides in the idea that *autonomía* presents new insights on the importance of the application of theory as a political strategy for the working class rather than as mere academic philosophy or economic theorizing. In this chapter, I highlight the central work of Harry Cleaver and Antonio (Toni) Negri and especially their re-reading of Marx’s *Capital* and the *Grundrisse*. It concludes with references to contemporary challenges to Negri’s theoretical directions as reflected in his collaboration with the postmodern social critic, Michael Hardt. I hope this illustrates the continuing value and relevance of the Marxist

alternative to contemporary articulations of liberalism and neoliberalism under the rubric of the broad umbrella represented by rational choice theorists. This requires a brief examination of the basic tenets of RCT and a response informed by the type of strategic analysis that emerges from re-readings of Marx as grounded in Cleaver and Negri.

Rational Choice Theory and Closure of the Critique of Capitalism

Rational choice theory in the social sciences originates from the extrapolation of the early work of Weber and its presence in deeply rooted ideological tenets of liberalism that emphasize the centrality of the individual and individual rights. Weber's foray into history examines the origins of the modern form of capitalism and the important role of that rationalism played in this epoch-changing emergence of the rule of law under the sign of the commodity form. The utilitarianism of ascetic rationalism invoked by Weber can be defined as the process through which individuals within Protestantism rationalized the creation of capitalism. Weber's *The Protestant Ethic* is a critical source for an understanding of the rise of capitalism: The ability to devote all of one's labor to God was a core idea associated with the rise of modern capitalism. More specifically, Weber identified the importance of "*the calling*" in Puritan ideas and the importance of ascetic conduct in the development of capitalism (Weber, 2005, p. 111). For Weber, capitalism appeared in various regions of the world, but the modern form of capitalism emerged in the West due to the peculiar role of the "*calling*." While Weber fails to articulate openly his conception of power in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, he proposes the basic foundation of this in his later writings on power and ideology.¹

What interests me now is how this early articulation of the classical ideas of Weber on individualism and rationalism and its connection to a theory of the rise of capitalism, became the foundational ideas for much of contemporary rational choice theory (RCT) in anthropology and

related social science fields. While there is a diversity of interpretations of the genealogy and principles of RCT, I take the following assumptions as central tenets of this theoretical discourse: individualism, optimality, and self-interest. In contrast to Marxist epistemology, RCT proposes that individuals ultimately take action and that the actions of these individuals become the ultimate source of larger social outcomes. There is to be no making of history under circumstances that are not freely chosen by individuals according to this worldview. Optimality refers to the principle that the combined actions of the multitude of individuals, who have chosen independent pathways to the realization of their own interests, will result in optimum good for an optimum number of individuals, given idiosyncratic differences in individual preferences and the opportunities or barriers facing particular individuals. The notion of individualism and optimality complements the notion of self-interest: The actions of the individual revolve around his or her own welfare and search for “maximum fitness”, to borrow a term from evolutionary anthropologists. For example, Garrett Hardin’s “Tragedy of the Commons” illustrates the role of individualistic rationality in which people shamelessly over-exploit the resources of the commons.² This behavior is rationalized because it promotes the interests of the individual. By juxtaposing the rationality of self-interest, RCT proposes that the economy be subject to privatization for the benefit of some individuals instead of mutual destruction under the weight of the common’s rabble [sic]. In essence, rational choice theory becomes an ideological foundation that “naturalizes” capitalism. In fact, the popularity of rational choice theory has become institutionalized throughout scholarship in the social sciences and not just in economics and political science as one might expect.

While RCT has a long history within anthropological studies, it continues to inform contemporary efforts to study human evolutionary responses and adaptations and especially

those related to social and economic transformations associated with globalization and the application of neoliberal “shock” doctrines (see Klein, 2007). The few anthropologists participating in the human terrain teams of the Pentagon include RCT thinkers who are deeply influenced by the work of influential and leading-edge practitioner-theorists like Bruno Bueno de Mesquita (2009). Without a doubt, the proponents of RCT in the anthropology of work remain active and engaged. Of particular interest here is the sustained debate over the “norm of reciprocity” and its role in determining the course of human action. This has led to efforts to develop a more nuanced theory of the “multilateral” construction of rational choice behavior (see Taylor, 2006 for a current critique).

While most RCT theorists currently accept the principle that cooperation is as important a feature as competition in human adaptation, they conclude the wrong things about this. They continue to operate within the dominant framework of game theory and do not yet have a way to account for *alterNative* rationalities that are not based in or are derivative of the assumptions that anthropologists take for granted about the role of “Western” values in the universal articulation and construction of human nature. As Taylor eloquently explains:

Rational Choice theory denies its subjects capacities and dispositions that are an important part of what makes us human. It denies them also – and in many cases...denies much else besides – to real human beings when it is put into practice: when it advocates and legitimates public policies and projects that are predicated on the premise that humans are moved only by their wants, and especially when the further assumptions of the normative part of neoclassical economics (“welfare economics”) are added, assumptions that together imply that the value of anything to anybody is fully replaceable, so that anyone can be compensated for the loss of everything (Taylor, 2006, p. xii).

In other words, what makes us human is our connection to others. This is an *alterNative* view of human nature. In the context of the anthropology of work, this means that RCT advocates must

rethink their commitment to individual rational actor models of human agency that ultimately serve only to “rationalize” and legitimize the worker-capital relation as an *a priori* construct. They would do well to embark on an exploration of alternative paradigms of social action that derive from more collective forms of human consciousness, communication, and collaboration and are clearly based on mutual reliance interests and reciprocity norms. Such an approach is possible if we adopt and modify the work of autonomist Marxists as I hope the next section illustrates.

Autonomist Marxist Tradition

According to Cleaver, the central tenet of the “autonomist Marxist” tradition emphasizes an evaluation of the class struggle from a working-class perspective: “the self-activity of the class that makes it more than a victimized cog in the machinery of capital and more than a fragmented mass requiring instructions in its class interests” (Cleaver, 2000, p. 58). To understand the emergence of the “workerist” model in Italy and the developments of the “Zerowork” model in North America, it is important to first examine the Johnson-Forest Tendency and *Socialisme au Barbarie* as forerunners in the analysis of the class struggle from the perspectives of the working class. First, the rise of these two precursor groups occurred because of their dissatisfaction with orthodox Trotskyite analysis of the Soviet Union and the United States. Particularly important in the Johnson-Forest Tendency was the recognition of the autonomy of the working class from capital as well as from its official organizations (including those invented in Leninist and Stalinist formations). Focusing on the nature of class struggle in the 1940s and 1950s, their studies of the nature of the Soviet Union and Western capitalism concluded that the rise of Taylorism and Fordism represented new technologies of domination. However, their analysis went a step further from previous critiques: It documented the opposition of working-class power

to these new forms of domination. In the Soviet Union, state-capitalism ruled, and it was just a variation in the present phase of capitalist development: unpaid labor, piecework and the Taylor system defined the organization of labor in the USSR. In spite of the success of Stalinism, it was only temporary and workers would proceed to develop new forms of organization against the Communist parties that were seen as new agents of capital (Clever, 2000, pp. 59-62).

In France, the rise of Socialisme au Barbarie took place as a faction in the Fourth International and their dissatisfaction with Trotsky's analysis of the Soviet Union and the role of the Party. Both groups shared common views on the nature of Soviet society, the bureaucracy, but more specifically, the idea of working-class autonomy. Just as important, both groups in the US and France moved beyond the study of the factory and into the community. The Johnson-Forrest Tendency, especially C L. R. James, studied Black struggles in the United States, while in France Socialisme au Barbarie studied youth and women (Clever, 2000, pp. 63-64).

These precursor movements influenced the rise of the Italian New Left in the 1960s that found itself in the middle of a crisis with the Communist Party and the Communist trade unions. In Italy, the conflict led to the formation of new organizations of *extra-parliamentary* groups and the application of new theories on the nature of class struggle published in various journals from the 1960s to the 1970s. Among the first publications, the intellectuals and activists associated with the Italian New Left moved their analysis beyond the Frankfurt's school emphasis on capitalist planning. These New Left thinkers, including Negri among them, argued for an autonomous working class struggle free of the Communist parties and unions. Such analysis incorporated the notion of working-class autonomy into the theory of capitalist development and presented a new way of interpreting the class struggle and the capitalist division of labor.

In this regard, Tronti's insights on the nature of the class struggle emphasized the affirmation of the working class as an independent class-for –itself through struggles “which rupture capital's self-reproduction (Cleaver, 2000, p. 66). This type of analysis led others such as Sergio Bologna to study class composition and working-class organization in the case of the factory soviets and the German workers' councils form of organization in factories with a concentration of “skilled” workers and in the IWW, whose organization reflected the highly mobile and “unskilled” qualities of the working class in the American West. Similarly, Tronti applied the concept of class composition in the examination of the period of German social democracy and American trade unionism as well as “the interaction between workers' struggle and capitalist planning” (Cleaver, 2000, p.67).

Social Factory

The study of working-class struggle in the factory, led these early autonomist thinkers to consider the implications of non-factory struggles and their role in the struggle against capital. They proposed the concept of the “social factory” and the circulation of struggle between the workplace and the community. This allowed for the activists to see the linkages between the factory struggles and community conflicts (housing, food and utility prices). This framework became a useful theoretical tool and unifying concept in the analysis of heterogenous social groups. Thus, it affirmed that regardless of the multiplicity of social groups around identity, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, or status, in the end are forced to sell their labor power, which generates capital. In other words, this conceptualization on any social order refers to the generalization of factory relations to the larger society.

Consequently, this particular addition to the study of working class struggles beyond the factory opened the door for a discussion of the role of women in the class struggle. Dalla Costa's

contribution in the development of this subject reflected the previous observation of the Johnson-Forrest Tendency on the nature of Black worker's struggles in the United States. This observation led to the creation of new organization forms and new theoretical concerns on the role of women as part of the unwaged sectors in the hierarchical division of labor. Moving beyond previous analysis, Dalla Costa examined the role of "the wage in hiding not only the unpaid part of the working day in the factory, but also, unpaid work outside of it." Moreover, this analysis allowed them to see the impact of the wage in the hierarchical division of labor between waged (factory) and unwaged (housewives, students, peasants) labor, thus, presenting them as outside the working class (Cleaver, 2000, pp. 71-72). Dalla Costa's contribution can be stated differently, the interpretation of the social factory, introduced the centrality of the housewife, thus, questioning the supremacy of the factory workers, or the "mass worker." Moreover, the inclusion of the housewife in the social factory corroborated the process of "production and reproduction within the circulation of capital accumulation (Palazzo, 2014, pp. 357-361).

Papers in the "Zerowork" school follow similar lines of inquiry as the Italian New Left on the nature of the struggle of workers. Cleaver identifies several important documents of the Zerowork school. For example, Marazzi's studies examine the international monetary system in the global class conflict. Focusing on the restructuring of monetary relations, he concludes that the objective is to "undermine local wage struggles and head off a generalized confrontation over social wealth (1976)." In another study, Demac and Mattera provide an analysis of the fiscal crisis and its relationship to the struggles of New York workers (waged and unwaged), against the state. According to them, it is a response to the workers' wage struggles and their undermining of the "business climate (1977)." The lessons offered here seem especially relevant

in the wake of the 2008 Derivatives Depression, as Professor Peña names the current economic meltdown that most pundits refer to as the “Great Recession”

The following section presents a more detailed discussion of two important intellectuals among the major contributors to the “autonomist Marxist” tradition: Harry Cleaver and Antonio Negri. Both authors contributed through a radical re-reading of Marx’s *Capital* and *Grundrisse*, with a specific focus on their application as a method or political strategy of the working class.

Harry Cleaver and Antonio Negri: A Re-reading of *Capital* and the *Grundrisse*

The day laborer experience can be framed from the perspective of the worker through a critical application of the early work of Antonio Negri and Harry Cleaver, exponents of the Marxist autonomous movement (*autonomía*). Negri examines ideas rediscovered in the *Grundrisse* and important for understanding *working class subjectivity*; Cleaver explores and examines a political reading of *Capital* focused on Chapter One of Volume One of Marx’s *magnum opus*. For Negri, rethinking Marxist theory starts with an analysis of the *Grundrisse*. In the “Introduction” to the *Grundrisse*, there are three themes that are repeated throughout the notebooks. Karl Marx clearly presents a political project or a political position against capitalism. Perhaps just as important, Marx presents in the *Grundrisse* both a theoretical and methodological approach for praxis-oriented study of capitalism. The political project or position against capitalism begins with a critique of classical political economists and utopian socialists. In the critique, Marx uncovers the mystification of money and work and the need for a political strategy for the working class. The “Introduction” contains the basic theoretical and methodological tools of Karl Marx: historical materialism and the dialectical method. Throughout the text, Marx

continuously refers to the importance of historical materialism in the study of production, consumption, distribution and exchange. For example, in the study of production and consumption, classical political economists presented the categories as dichotomous. Marx presents a critique of what he calls a Hegelian interpretation and examines the totality and interwoven quality of the two categories. In the analysis, Marx applies a dialectical approach and illustrates the inter-connections of production, consumption, distribution and exchange. “Production, then, is also immediately consumption, consumption is also immediately production. Each is immediately its opposite. But at the same time a mediating movement takes place between the two.” (Marx, 1993, p.91) This totality presented in Marx is simply a holistic interpretation that moves away from the simplistic views presented by both classical political economists and utopian socialists.

The *Grundrisse* is the foundation for Negri’s concept of working-class subjectivity. Negri’s first point is to emphasize the movement “*from the form of money to the form of value.*” This concept relates how value comes from money in a mystified form. Negri’s second point focuses on “*the definition of work.*” According to Negri, “work appears as immediately abstract labor” (Negri, 1991, p. 10). Abstract labor is the socially-necessary labor time required for the production of the commodity. Moreover, for Marx, work was waged-labor: Marx never meant to liberate work but to end the imposition of work as the fundamental basis for capitalist domination of workers. The third point clearly states, “Marxism is an anti-economic theory”: the *Grundrisse* is more than just economic terms, but a theory applied towards revolutionary struggle and freedom. *It is a political text.* The fourth point concerns the notion of the *crisis* and the

“emergence of revolutionary subjectivity.” Negri challenges the reduction of “subjectivity to exploitation” and replaces this idea with “subversion and transition.” In *Marx beyond Marx*, Negri presents the method of the antagonistic tendency as an explanation of working-class subjectivity. It is through this method that the *Grundrisse* helps illustrate how working-class subjectivity is antagonistic to capital. The concept of the working-class subjectivity as an antagonism towards capital re-appears in Negri’s concept of class composition of the working class. The concept of class composition refers to the changing characteristics of the working class under contemporary forms of capitalism. This includes both the technical and the political composition of workers. On the one hand, the technical composition refers to machinery, the skills of workers, and disciplinary practices in the workplace, everything that enters into how the spaces and times of work are distributed. On the other, the political composition includes the organizational structures as well as the tactics or practices that worker make use in conflicts in and against work: absenteeism, strikes of various types, mutual aid, marches, demonstrations (Negri, 2005, p. xxxii).

Cleaver: Reading Capital Politically

Negri argues that Karl Marx’s *Capital* contains limitations for the evolving practice of working-class struggle: “The objectification of categories in *Capital* block action by “revolutionary subjectivity” (Negri 1991:8). In this regard, Negri’s assessment of Marx shares a number of flaws and errors. In Negri’s work, there is a certain doubt in the value of *Capital* versus the *Grundrisse* in the development of a strategic theory of capitalism. Perhaps, there is a different path to follow in resolving the apparent conflict and contradiction of the analysis found in the *Grundrisse* and *Capital*? An assessment of

the insights in the *Grundrisse* and *Capital* may provide a closer understanding of capitalism and the tools to overturn it. The above idea is best understood using Marx's concept of the dialectic. If the *Grundrisse* presents the subjectivism (thesis) of workers and *Capital* presents the objectified categories of capital (the anti-thesis), then the final analysis of capitalism (the synthesis) is found in both works as the end result of the dialectical method.

While the above observation sounds simplistic, the solution to this theoretical problem is offered in Harry Cleaver's book, *Reading Capital Politically*. Rather than rejecting or doubting the intrinsic value of *Capital* in the analysis of society and class composition theory, Cleaver presents a fresh insight on the significance of *Capital* for contemporary Chicana/o scholars by focusing on the *theory of value* presented in Chapter One on the commodity form. In a sweeping critique of previous interpretations of Marx, Cleaver challenges the validity of philosophical and political economic readings and in their place proposes an alternative "political reading" of Marx as a source and "methodology" of working-class strategy (Cleaver, 2000, pp. 23-58). A political reading of Marx, and more specifically *Capital*, results in the discovery of a particular strategic analysis that operates 1) through an autonomous working class; 2) defines capital as working class, that is, capital as structural and organizational shifts responding to workers' struggles; 3) emphasizes the changing class composition of the worker; 4) addresses the role of waged and unwaged workers; and 5) focuses on the implications of these aspects for crises within capitalism (Cleaver, 2000, pp. 74-75). The reading of *Capital* politically is clearly defined in the following: "It implies a way of reading *Capital* politically that involves two steps: to show how each category and relationship

relates to and clarifies the nature of the class struggle and to show what that means for the political strategy of the working class” (Clever, 2000, p. 76).

To illustrate the strategic reading of capital and to view the two-sided class perspective of autonomist Marxist concepts, Cleaver focuses on Chapter One of *Capital* and examines how Marx arrived at his concept of the commodity and the commodification of labor power. This necessitates an extensive and sophisticated reading of Marx’s “theory of value.” On the one hand, from the viewpoint of the capitalist, the use-value of labor power on the surface belongs to the capitalist. The use-value of work plays an important role in the capitalist social control of the workers. Also, for the capitalist, the use-value of labor power is mediated by the mystification of exchange value and as the source of surplus value. Surplus value and surplus labor are the aim of capitalist production as well as an index of the social system’s success against the working class. On the other, the use-value of work from the perspective of workers contains different results. The use-value of work is useful labor that produces use-values to satisfy the needs of the worker including the reproduction of life. Also, in the factory, workers meet in joint action and turn against capital *as a class*. The exchange-value of labor power is the money-wage workers receive for the sale of their skills and labor time to capital. From the perspective of workers, the exchange-value is income and economic power, from the perspective of the capitalist; the exchange-value is a cost and deduction from the total value of production. This becomes a threat to surplus value and capital’s power. The contradictions inherent in these two outcomes becomes a struggle over the form the working class will receive the exchange: money wages, wages in kind, social services, welfare, unemployment benefits, pensions, etc. (Clever, 2000, p. 100).

Critique and Summary

Negri's interpretation of the insights in the *Grundrisse*, which emphasizes the concepts of working-class subjectivity, the valorization of the worker, and the political and technical re-composition of the working class are central categories in the new interpretation of workers. This viewpoint is complemented by the insights articulated in Cleaver's *Reading Capital Politically*. To fully understand the experience of day laborers or any aspect of working-class struggles, it is crucial to understand how capital functions, especially in times of crisis, and its subsequent restructuring in response to working class struggles. Thus, rather than rejecting any value in *Capital* as Negri proposes, Cleaver's analysis from the perspective of workers injects a necessary viewpoint of the nature of the capitalist mode of production.

Any study of the exponents of the autonomia movement, especially, the work of Antonio Negri must clearly delineate the differences between his early and later scholarship. Almost thirty years after Antonio Negri's seminal work, *Marx beyond Marx*, which was a political reading of *The Grundrisse*, Negri has become the new iconic hero of the Academic Left. In their critically acclaimed book, *Empire (2000)*, and its sequel, *Multitude (2004)*, Negri and his collaborator Michael Hardt reanalyzed and critiqued contemporary capitalism. It is important to understand the changes in Negri's contemporary analysis, and a retreat from some of the core Marxist concepts evident in his previous work. In his most recent work, *Good-bye Mr. Socialism*, Negri answers numerous questions in a compilation of interviews covering many topics and themes found in his recent writings on the changing character of the new capitalist world order. One of the most important themes focuses on his position of the changing character of the

working class today and the rejection of what he calls the old paradigm in Marxist thought.

To fully understand how far Negri's political perspective has changed, one must examine his views on revolutionary change through continuous sites of struggle, which directly challenge capitalism. Disillusioned that any real change could occur through direct attacks on capital, many intellectuals of the Left shifted their analysis by accepting "skeptical" postmodernist assumptions of the new capitalist world order. Many other intellectual activists continued their struggles against capital. The aptly titled book and first chapter in *Goodbye Mr. Socialism* gives a dialectical perspective of Negri's new political perspective saying *adios* not only to socialist Russia but what he called the old paradigm offered by the Left. With the fall of the Soviet Union, and the neoliberal proclamation of the triumphant victory of capitalism, Negri identifies this particular event as the starting point of a new type of struggle; resistance to capitalist exploitation through the margins, or through what he calls the "multitude." The concept of class struggle, one of Marx's most important theoretical concepts is considered old-fashioned and connected to a failed older and now distant paradigm.

For the "new" Negri, the class struggle is no longer a valid theoretical concept for analyzing contemporary capitalist exploitation and he instead offers a new type of struggle that reflects the political recomposition of capital in the struggles of his "beloved" multitude. The multitude represents what "struggle" has become in this new capitalist world order. Rather than organizing collectively as groups of autonomous workers (proletarians) against capital, the multitude is composed of fragmented "dividuals" located in infinite permutations of the new "nomadic" spaces of resistance;

these spaces of resistance represent the only path to change under the conditions of the new global capitalist Empire. This changed political outlook becomes important, in the analysis of contemporary worker struggles (e.g., *jornalera/os*). Negri and other autonomous Marxists have laid the theoretical foundation that examines autonomous working-class struggle as a direct site of resistance, rather than a space of resistance. *Goodbye Mr. Socialism* provides an insight of Negri's view on the postmodern capitalist system. Negri's recent work includes fascinating and insightful accounts of workers struggles such as the *piqueteros* of Argentina. This case is of particular interest when contrasting it to the *jornalera/os* in the United States. Piqueteros are not day laborers but a group of unemployed workers who organized against the Argentine state during the crisis of the 1990s. Piqueteros organized as a group of autonomous unemployed workers across Argentina and demanded social welfare and employment. Their form of resistance came from organizing as autonomous workers through various barrios and direct-action protests to block important transportation routes. They were successful in getting the Argentinean state to provide the benefits piqueteros demanded.

Negri interpreted the struggles in Argentina as an example of the new "postmodern" struggle. Negri believes that the political and technical recomposition of the modern worker has transformed labor from material labor (traditional factory workers) to immaterial labor (computer programmers, telecommunications). Labor today is no longer interested in the production of material goods, but rather workers are now interested in the production of immaterial content for the new digital world. However, for Negri, the piqueteros "have understood that the epoch of wages is finished and that the struggle has moved from the level of fight between capital and labor regarding the wage,

to a fight between the multitude and the state around the income of citizenship” (Negri, 2008, p. 168).

The goal of working class struggles in the past was to valorize labor time through an increase of wages. In Negri’s new interpretation, under contemporary capitalism, wages become unimportant. Instead, social services provided through the state become a more viable option than an increase of wages. However, upon closer observation, Negri fails to understand the piqueteros’ similarity to autonomous workers struggles of the past. The piqueteros do not organize *solely* as a different fragmented group of the amorphous multitude, but rather as collective members of a community-based network to circulate workers’ struggle carried on in specific contested sites of strategic importance to the self-valorization process. Moreover, the wage remains the primary operative mode for the reproduction of labor power in the capitalist mode of production; the same can be said of social welfare. If capital will not valorize labor through the increase of wages, then for the piqueteros, the state must valorize their “freed” labor time and existence as citizens.

A different view is possible if we follow the earlier work of Negri. The jornaleros and day worker centers share many commonalities with the piqueteros’ autonomous struggle. Like the piqueteros, jornaleros represent a group of unemployed laborers who seek to re-valorize their labor time. As autonomous organizations both organize through a collective of workers without the involvement of outside political parties or organized unions. In fact, Piqueteros and Jornaleros represent a continuous workers struggle against capital, as autonomous workers rather than as members of the multitude organized by and/or for capital (including unions organizing labor for subordination to capitalist demands).

What has become apparent upon reading contemporary analyses of capitalist development is the lack of foresight in the analytics presented by the current decline and destruction of capitalism. Instead, the Academic Left tends to accept the assumptions of postmodernity and the triumph of capital, while disillusioned radicals presumably stopped direct attacks on the state and capital. These new radical tendencies looked for spaces outside capital and declared these spaces as the only option under modern capitalism. In shifting their analysis away from the centrality of class struggle, they failed to predict the contemporary crisis that has affected the advanced capitalist states.

This failure to anticipate the crisis is at the core of Negri's interpretation of the world capitalist system. In other words, Negri should re-read *Marx Beyond Marx* to find possible explanations for the current crisis of capitalism. Slavoj Žižek presents a critique of various responses from the Left to the "hegemony of global capitalism" and "liberal" democracy. The central question emerging from this critique focuses on the general idea of what is to be done politically in a dramatically different world capitalist system from that facing us fifty years ago. According to Žižek, the general view emerging from these responses is that the Left must acknowledge the observations posed by the writers of the postmodern turn: the contemporary form of capitalism requires the rejection of orthodox or traditional Marxist analysis. In Žižek's words, "Those who still insist on fighting state power, let alone directly taking it over, are immediately accused of being stuck in the "old paradigm" (Žižek, 2008, p. 339).

The old paradigm must give way to the new one: the politics of today must be guided not by resistance to state power but by locating resistance sites outside the control of the state (subtracting oneself from it). From the point of view of Žižek, Antonio Negri

best exemplifies this particular position. However, Žižek fails to acknowledge that Negri's current position is a total transformation from previous writings. In other words, the previous work of Negri was clearly within the so-called "old paradigm" school of Marxist thought. Žižek continues the critique of other contemporary leftist scholars who have contributed new interpretations of the changes in contemporary capitalism and liberal democracy. Critchley's political interpretation shares similar concerns, and is limited by similar problems, about the politics of resistance. A central idea found in Critchley's view of the capitalist state is the acceptance of the continuity of the liberal democratic state or as other writers have stated, "the triumphalism of the liberal democratic state." According to Žižek, Critchley rejects the Marxist idea of attaining democracy by abolishing the state. Instead, Critchley proposes a different path toward attainment of democracy through resistance "as the interstitial distance within the state." Žižek agrees that there has been a rise of new social movements that highlight the limitations of liberal democracies (for e.g., NGOs, anti-globalization movements, and indigenous rights movements in Mexico and Australia). However, Critchley's position poses a dilemma: "is it better for emancipatory politics if people are not committed to democratic institutions?" (Žižek, 2008, p. 347). Furthermore, Žižek critiques Critchley at another level by arguing that capitalism creates "multiple dislocations" which open new spaces for the formation of new political subjectivities by dismissing the Marxist notion of the primacy of class or the proletariat. In this regard, Critchley articulates a similar view found in the recent work of Antonio Negri. Žižek's critique of Negri presents a more positive but problematic response from a transformed "Marxist." For example, Negri's position integrates aspects of the postmodern turn of capitalism and the rise of

postindustrial society tenets such as the changing composition of labor from the traditional Marxist notion of labor to immaterial cognitive work. The notion behind this change implies that “one cannot measure value with labor time, so that the Marxist notion of exploitation is no longer operative.”

Expanding on State Theory and Power

Building on the foundational work of Foucault, Giorgio Agamben expands on the insights elaborated on the nature of power and politics. In *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998) Agamben recognizes the contribution of Foucault in the rejection or abandonment of traditional conceptions of power and politics. Instead, he identifies Foucault’s contribution to the study of political techniques and the technologies of the self (1998, p. 5). Agamben’s theoretical position explores the concepts of sovereign power, the state of exception, and the elaboration of biopolitics as the contemporary description of the political reality today. Agamben challenges the theory of sovereignty and uncovers the political agenda behind the rhetoric of modernity. However, for Agamben, while Foucault presented new insights on the nature of the politics of modernity, the analysis remained incomplete. Thus, Agamben argues:

The Foucauldian thesis will then have to be corrected or, at least, completed, in the sense that what characterizes modern politics is not so much the inclusion of *zoe* in the polis—which is, in itself, absolutely ancient—not simply the fact that life as such becomes a principal object of the projections and calculations of State power. Instead the decisive fact is that, together with the process by which the exception everywhere becomes the rule, the realm of bare life—which is originally situated at the margins of the political order—gradually begins to coincide with the political realm, and exclusion and inclusion, outside and inside, *bios* and *zoe*, right and fact, enter into a zone of irreducible indistinction.” (Agamben, 1998, p. 9)

Foucault’s failure to address the “concentration camps” and the Jewish Holocaust exposed weaknesses in his analysis of power and politics in Western culture.

According to Agamben, the history of the state of exception is found in many instances from the state of siege in France to the presidential administration of George Bush. The following is a brief overview of the historical origins of the state of exception. In France, the government proclaimed the state of siege many times to suspend the rule of law for the security of the state conceived as imminent danger to external or internal security. In response to foreign war or armed insurrection, the state of exception was the rule in many European countries. For example, WWI produced states of exception in most of the countries involved in the war. The state of exception extended into the economic realm, for example granting the state power to regulate the production and trade of foodstuffs or to avoid the devaluation of the franc, establishment of exchange control, and the imposition of taxes. The French constitution contains the legal foundation for the state of exception, which responds to the protection of the territory and the execution of its sovereignty. In the case of Germany, the state of exception finds its representation in the Bismarckian constitution granting the state special powers as in a state of war. Such states of exception occurred in the imprisonment of communist militants and the establishment of special tribunals. In the German case, the state of exception conflated politico-military and economic crises. Agamben identifies this experience in the call for a protected democracy with the president as the guardian of the constitution. The state of exception defended the liberal democratic constitution. Switzerland was not exempted from lapses into the state of exception, where the state received unlimited power to guarantee the security, integrity, and neutrality of the country. In other cases, the state of exception can be called in emergencies such as in the case of the earthquake of Messina and Reggio Calabria. In Fascist Italy and Germany, the state of exception was the rule

from its inception until the end of the war. In more recent times, the application of the state of exception occurred with the emergence of terrorism. According to Agamben, the state of exception can be found the case of England under the guise of martial law, which is established in defense of the Commonwealth. An example of this state of exception is found in the Defence of the Realm Act of 1914, which granted the government powers to regulate the war economy as well as limitations on the rights of citizens (e.g., military tribunals over citizens). During the WWI, British law expanded its power over citizens imposing courts of summary jurisdiction.

The United States is not exempt from developments in the emergence of the state of exception; this has occurred since the Civil War until the present regimes under both Democratic and Republican Presidents. The writ of *habeas corpus* can and has been suspended whenever it was necessary in war zone. Lincoln imposed censorship over the mail and authorized the arrest of people disloyal to the nation. In fact, the emancipation of the slaves was an example of the state of exception, which was later extended throughout the territory. The President was the sole agent for the exercise of state power and the imposition of a state of exception. Of special note on the state of exception is the interment of thousands of Japanese in concentration camps during WWII. Citizens and non-citizens were affected by the state of exception in the United States. Finally, the state of exception continues to reappear in various forms since the rise of American Executive branch responses to the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States. George Bush's utilization of the suspension of the rule of law to imprison individuals suspected of terrorism or of being "enemy combatants" illustrates this but so too the more recent attacks on undocumented immigrants (Agamben, 2005, pp. 11-22).

To summarize, the state of exception presented in Agamben's analysis of power presents a series of observations applicable to the contemporary scene of immigrants in the United States. From the case of Arizona and to recent discussions of laws to curtail the immigrant population in the state of Washington, these developments involving the role of the state and the exercise of sovereign powers delegated to the state have potent implications for the organizing work of day labor centers. While the state of Washington recently rejected a proposed new law denying driver's licenses to undocumented workers, there has been an increase in Federal raids of immigrant communities across the state by ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement). SB 1070 in Arizona, the various laws to prohibit the use of driver's license, the implementation of city ordinances to ban the use of public spaces or private parking-lots as the sites for recruitment and employment of undocumented workers, and the issue of restrictive housing ordinances for undocumented workers or other immigrants are some examples of the rise of the state of exception in the United States.

From an autonomista perspective, the intensity of attacks against immigrants, both legal and undocumented, is an example of the political decomposition of the working class. In response to this political decomposition, rather than submitting to the state of exception, the working class is now recomposing itself politically and participating in new forms and acts of resistance. Regionally, the attacks on immigrants resulted in marches against the imposition of harsh immigration laws and a reaction to the rise of attacks against all immigrant workers. Thus, the laws, which seemed to be directed only towards Latina/o immigrants, impacted other immigrants from Asia, Africa, and other regions from the world. This indicates that the presence of undocumented immigrants is

beginning to affect the direction of new processes of political re-composition of the working class both regionally and nationally.

Conclusion

My theoretical framework is grounded in a Marxist epistemology and informed and modified by the work of several generations of Chicana/o anthropologists advancing the application of critical and participatory ethnographies. Thus, theory and method complement each other in the production of a new body of knowledge, which expands our understanding of issues of power and authority and their implications for the larger society and the circulation and recomposition of workers' own struggles and forms of organization. This is unabashedly a study designed to offer workers useful political materials to resist bare life and bare habitance. Following the tradition in Marxist epistemology that builds on the early work of Chicana and Chicano scholars who saw their work as transformative and not just a reinvention of the Chicana/o "experience" in the United States.

Chapter 3|The Cycles of Struggle and the Changing Class Composition of Latina/o Day Workers in the Pacific Northwest

Anthropology has a long and troubled past documenting the “other” as static and uncivilized. The early founders of the field of anthropology, including such notable scholars as Evans-Prichard, Malinowski, Mead, and Turner and others failed miserably to place their research within a historical context. They also failed to understand the history of colonialism and its effects on communities that were the objects of their research projects. The lack of a historical perspective in their theoretical and methodological approaches hindered their work. Without this perspective they failed to truly understand the material conditions of the communities they set their gaze on. The following chapter examines the role that history can play in remaking the field of anthropological inquiry. The use of history, albeit filled with its own contradictions and ambiguities, allows for a more thorough understanding of the current material conditions of a people situated in time and space. In this particular case, I will focus on the Latina/o working class in the Pacific Northwest (PNW) by chronicling their historical experiences with a eye toward illustrating the interpretive power of the theory of class composition in the formation of Latina/o working-class communities in this region. The Pacific Northwest encompasses a large geographic area but its agricultural roots lie in rural areas and these have strong connections with densely populated urban centers in the states of Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. This chapter presents the basic theoretical framework of the historical cycles of struggle experienced by the Mexicana/o and Latina/o working class in the Pacific Northwest. It follows with the examination of four cycles of struggle, which extend from

1900 to the present, paying close attention to the *changing* political and technical composition of the Latina/o working class.

POLITICAL (RE/DE)-COMPOSITION OF THE WORKING CLASS AND CYCLES OF STRUGGLE

The historical perspective that I propose to use is based on the autonomist theory of *class composition*, a concept rooted in Marx's concept of historical materialism. It is sufficient to note that the definition of *class composition* that I will seek to apply is associated with the *Italian autonomia* movement and its unique use of the term. This theory uses three principal concepts to achieve a given "periodization" of the cycles of struggle: *class composition* (and political re-composition and decomposition); *terrains of struggle*; and *organizational forms*.

The historical analysis proposed in this study encompasses two perspectives that can be interwoven to develop a framework for research on *working class subjectivity* – I seek to understand how historical analysis can aid anthropologists seeking to understand how workers experience and interpret the world and especially their collective relationships to capital. The first perspective involves the use of the concept of *class composition*, a concept that I borrow from Antonio Negri's unique perspective on Marx's theory of historical materialism. The second perspective incorporates Mario Tronti's historical interpretation of workers and capital, which argues for an "interpretation embodying a narrative from the labour [or workers'] viewpoint" (Tronti, 2001). The use of these perspectives in the analysis of class struggle situates Latina/o workers historically and locally in place and coincides with the ability to specify the exact material conditions of the community at specific temporal and spatial junctures.

Negri explains the process of organizational change and class struggle by expanding on Marx's notion of class composition. He does so by proposing two additional characteristics: The *recomposition* and *decomposition* of the political organization of the working class. The use of these autonomous concepts of class composition will help us to situate Latina/o workers historically and spatially and coincides with the specific material conditions facing the Latina/o community during a given time period.

Class composition calls attention to the working class and its ability to structure and re-structure itself under capitalism. "One of the defining elements in Italian workerism was its focus on class composition which is the phenomenological, behavioral and disciplinary organization internal to the working class at a specific historical juncture" (Negri, 2005, p. xxxii). Class composition *changes over time* with two important attributes that assist us in analyzing the restructuring of the longer-term workers' *self-valorizing* project: This is the political and the technical composition of the working class and capital. Political composition refers to the actual self-organization of the workers (and capital), to their specific terrains of struggle, and the tactics used to rupture capitalist command and control by creating new forms of solidarity and action across the constantly shifting divisions of the working class. The technical composition refers to the skills of the workers, their division into different types of labor, as well as the technology and management systems that capital establishes to maintain control in a given workplace organizational form (also see Peña, 1997).

Changes in class composition are determined through the interplay of the technical structure of work, the psychological patterns of class needs and desires, the

institutional environment in which political and social action takes place, and other variables related to the processes through which workers overcome internal divisions that allow them to interrupt capitalist control. In other words, the study of class composition allows us to understand both the organization of the labor process by and for capital and the workers' resistance to that organization, resulting in an incomparable ability to map out the continuous process of restructuring of the workplace and the shifts in the balance of power in the relationship between workers and capital (Cleaver, 2000; Peña, 1997).

Taking this approach means that workers are never viewed as hapless victims of capitalist exploitation and domination, a tendency that characterizes way too much of academic Marxism. Instead, the autonomist approach values and emphasizes a focus on workers' own self-activity and agency and always in terms of their antagonistic relation to capital. Indeed, the autonomist approach posits that the working class *determines* capitalist workplace *organizational forms* insofar as workers' struggles force capitalists to change their technologies, management systems, demographic recomposition, contractual strategies, or willingness to engage in calls for state intervention where sovereign power can be brought to bear down on workers' struggles. An accurate understanding of class composition is thus a necessary precondition for effective worker organization and activism and such an understanding can arise from careful empirical research into the anthropology and sociology of concrete workplaces and sites of struggle and resistance over time and in specific locales. Negri's model of the dynamic evolution of class composition during the 20th Century presents one solid approach to the study of the genesis of the antagonistic relation between workers and capital through various stages and organizational forms corresponding to the cycle of professional (or craft)

workers, mass workers, and finally social [sic] workers.³ The idea is that through the study of the political re-composition of the working class, workers can themselves follow Marx and “read capital strategically” and thus move beyond the capitalist-imposed subjectivity of workers as abstract and substitutable units of labor time when workers embrace “new worlds and new kinds of people” (Cleaver, 2000).

Before a new class composition emerges at a given point in a cycle of struggle, autonomists propose that we must consider how workers and capital are in an *antagonistic* relationship to each other. This antagonism includes conflicts and forces unleashed by capitalist efforts to divide and conquer the working class as a whole by pitting various sectors against each other: The waged against the unwaged; citizen against non-citizen (native-born against immigrant); whites against blacks; blacks against Latina/o; women against men; young against old; and the skilled against deskilled [sic], etc. Of relevance to my research project then are the *divisions imposed on workers on the basis of nativity and citizenship status*. The typical approach here has tended to view the immigrant working class as unorganized “cheap” labor. In a recent post to Professor Peña’s *mexmigration* blog, Rudolfo Acuña shows how liberal scholars and pundits like Thom Hartmann conceptualize this as a *social problem for labor organizing* inasmuch as immigrant status presumably reduces the ability for workers to join unions, seek collective bargaining contracts, and go on strikes. However, the evidence does not support this view and historically undocumented immigrant workers have been at the forefront of wildcat strikes, union-organizing efforts, and exemplary contemporary cases of resistance (e.g., Justice for Janitors, Coalition of Immokalee Workers, the various day labor centers and their network, and the South Central Farmers Feeding Families, etc.).

Instead, Harry Cleaver's analysis of political decomposition allows for an alternative perspective on immigration and class composition:

We can discover many examples of this process during the present crisis. If the new power achieved by immigrant workers during the last cycle of struggles was based on a political re-composition in which they overcame their division from local workers, then the current widespread capitalist attacks on immigrant labour must be seen as a new attempt by capital to decompose that level of power through mass deportations and global restructuring of the pattern of investment (Cleaver, 2000, p. 115).

Instead of viewing immigrant workers as passive and unable to organize, the autonomist approach emphasizes the need for a concrete analysis of workers' actual struggles to overcome internal divisions and recompose their political relationship with other sectors of the working class and capital. Indeed, it may very well be that the current attack on immigrant workers is motivated by a fear of their militancy. This is the historically grounded approach that I will adopt to develop a theory of class composition in the Pacific Northwest.

Negri's definition of the *cycle of struggles* follows: "[It] refers to the successive periods of the class antagonism to capital, in progressively higher, more socialized terrains of struggle." Moreover, by definition, successive cycles occur as a result of changes in the political and technical compositions of the class, the associated relationship to shifting organizational forms, and the rise of "new strategic contents or goals implicit in the struggle itself." (<http://libcom.org/library/working-class-autonomy-crisis>).

For example, for Negri the period of the professional or craft worker was characterized by the rise of craft unions (he overlooks that these were mainly limited to white workers) and that organized workers used their highly skilled labor to articulate struggles to protect and extend their ability to assert greater control over the labor process

at the point of production. However, Negri overlooks the fact that this was a form of *exclusionary craft unionism* that basically focused on protecting white male privilege and so was limited in scope and reach. This did not represent a rupture of capitalist command since it played to the internal divisions imposed by capital and based on race, ethnicity, and national origin. Not surprisingly, capitalists responded to craft worker power by deskilling labor through Taylorism (scientific management) and later by introducing the new technologies and management systems of assembly-line mass production or Fordism that relied on the recruitment and exploitation of unorganized workers that increasingly included Mexican immigrants. According to Negri, workers responded to the cycle of Fordist political decomposition by shifting their organizational forms to mass-based industrial unions instead of relying on the more limited purview of craft (or professional) unions. The more racially diverse mass workers shifted the terrains of struggle from control over labor processes through tactics like “work to rule” toward the use of the sit-down and wildcat strike as a *strategy of refusal* that forced capital to negotiate contracts and make concessions on an industry-wide scale over wages, hours, and benefits. In this manner, we can start charting the changing class composition through distinct phases of organization in the capital-working class relationship.

The concept of *terrains of struggle* refers to the sites of conflict faced by the various types of waged and unwaged workers. Thus, for e.g., skilled craft workers struggled over job control and the seniority system, while the mass workers shifted the terrain of struggle to collective bargaining rights, pensions and benefits, and the overall effort to make wages “sticky downward.” Finally, the concept of *organizational forms* refers to the type of organizations workers create to struggle and articulate their demands

(craft, trade, or industrial unions, factory councils). A given class composition will correspond to a particular organizational form: Hence, professional workers organize themselves into craft unions while the deskilled mass workers focus on rupturing the homology between workers' wages and productivity through mass base industrial unionism. The craft workers focused on organizing to control the labor process and they identified strongly with their mastery of the labor process; they have even been described as having "producer consciousness" (cf. Montgomery, 1980). In contrast, the deskilled assembly-line mass workers sought to reduce their working time while expanding their share of the wealth generated in the form of greater wages and benefits. They ruptured the productivity deals that trapped the craft workers in the wage relation with capital. Obviously, they no longer identified with their jobs as the principal vector of their identity as human beings.

Mario Tronti's *Workers and Capital* examines working class struggle macroscopically within a specific comparative historical study of the changing class composition in Europe and the USA. Tronti argues that analyzing class struggle chronologically misrepresents workers agency and highlights capital as the "victor". Tronti's "periodization" of the types of class struggle provides a framework applicable to the historical analysis of the formation and changing composition of Latina/o working class communities in the Pacific Northwest.

Tronti's exposition focuses on the Progressive Era, the Age of Marshall, and the class struggle in the United States. Tronti's historical analysis of the Progressive Era illustrates the strengths of the narrative of workers' views of capital and their subjectivity of the antagonistic worker-capital relationship. This viewpoint allows the worker to move

beyond the mystification of historical events and to see the relations of power more clearly and strategically. Tronti brilliantly demonstrates the gist of Roosevelt's dealings with workers and capitalists during the Great Depression and the New Deal. In the case of workers early wildcat and sit-down strikes, rather than sending in the troops, Roosevelt utilized arbitration; he combined this with legal action against J. Pierpont Morgan's Northern Security Company to demonstrate the power of state over Wall Street. As Tronti states succinctly: "It is no longer just political progressivism aimed at the conservation of society – something as old as human society itself – but a new form of political management of social relations and of the private ownership of the means of production" (Tronti, 2001).

Focusing on the "Age of Marshall", Tronti examines the influential work of Alfred Marshall, the British economist who established a unique viewpoint on the nature of capital and workers in Great Britain.⁴ For Tronti, Marshall's work is part of a history and analysis conducted from the point of view of capital. Such studies present the workers as lacking autonomy so that "history is always the history of capital". In the end, Marshall's analysis of the worker-capital relation in Great Britain exposes the subordination of the working class and thus the idea that "the working class always plays a secondary role" in history. Tronti adopts a different viewpoint: Instead of Marshall's historical objectivism, the study of working-class history "must be translated to the struggles" and "the most abstract theoretical problem [must come to] have the most concrete class meaning" (Tronti, 2001; brackets added).

Tronti's observations on the nature of class struggles in the United States is more instructive on the nature of American worker's struggles during peace and war time

periods. This historical analysis demystifies the actions of capital and the meaning of the resistance of workers to capital. Tronti's identification of the worker's viewpoint on the various labor struggles captures the historical lessons for workers: "the war was a great occasion for obtaining much, while peace was a great occasion for asking more."

In his analysis of the experience of the United States, while not explicit, Tronti's historical examination *places the state in the major role of the mediation of the antagonism between labor and capital*. For example, on the one hand, the actions of the state in the days of the wartime New Deal favored the owners and helped in the defeat of the worker's demands: "All authority and local military forces, both state and federal, were on the side of the owners. An anti-worker witch-hunt, the isolation of their organization in the public opinion, about 20 deaths, and they were defeated." However, on the other hand, the state actions instead allowed the workers to win "the right to organize, collective bargaining through union representation, union shop and open shop contracts equal pay for women, minimum wages." For Tronti, this is an important historical lesson in the class struggle, since the very victory of workers becomes a form of control. Tronti states: "When in the content of the vindications, in the form of mobilization and in the models of organization, it assumes mass-characters, the labor struggle runs the risk of losing its working-class specificity" (Tronti, 2001).

Chicana/o Response to the European Autonomista Perspectives

A close critical reading of Tronti's *Workers and Capital* exposes the limitations and faults of *autonomista* theory; there is a failure to include women and workers of color within the context of the history of class composition in the Americas. Yet, the historical body of research produced by both Chicana and Chicano labor historians contains a rich

tradition for the analysis of the class struggles in the United States. This historical legacy includes the important work of Ernesto Galarza's *Merchants of Labor: The Mexican Bracero Story* (1962), and the production of scholarship by the Chicana and Chicano generation in the special issues of the journal *Aztlán* on Labor History and Chicanos (1975) and Politics of Work and Family (1991). More recently, scholars of color such as Devon G. Peña (2005) have contributed to the intellectual genealogy of the autonomista tradition. Peña's "ecological Marxism" focuses on the environmental history and political ecology of capitalist transformation of what he calls "Mega-Mexico", which includes "Old Mexico" and the American Southwest. One concern is the adaptation of ancestral survival skills (including traditional environmental knowledge or TEK) in the confrontation with the capitalist system. I draw this interpretation from several sources including *The Terror of the Machine: Technology, Work, Gender, and Ecology on the U.S.-Mexico Border* (1997) and *Mexican Americans and the Environment* (2005).

In *Terror of the Machine*, a case study of the *maquiladora* assembly-line workers on the U.S.-Mexico border, Peña expands the application of class composition theory by focusing on women and workers of color. In the chapter, "From Dark, Satanic Mills to Maquilas," Peña's examination provides the context for an understanding of the *maquiladora* workers through an analysis of the various formations and episodes of capitalist development. Importantly, his analysis challenges the traditional standpoint of industrial sociologists and workplace anthropologists that reduces "human beings to mere labor power." First, *The Terror of the Machine* presents a brief historical overview of capitalism beginning with the importance of the concept of "primitive accumulation" and its relationship to the development of an industrial working class. This is followed by a

deep exposition of Marxist insights on the history of the industrial revolution focusing on the changing technologies, production methods, and organizational forms of capitalist command and control. More specifically, Peña's analysis of the significance of Taylorism (the use of time and motion study) and Fordism (division of labor, accuracy, and continuity) presents the changing character of the labor process, which for some scholars has all disappeared in the new economy. But for Peña, in the post-1960 period, he states, "what we find is the internationalization of the assembly line and not its disappearance" (Peña, 1997, p. 45).

Following the autonomista framework, Peña's analysis moves next to a discussion of the application of the concept of political re-composition in the examination of the maquiladora workers and their circulation of struggle from the factory to the community. Interviews revealed the worker's viewpoint of the labor process and their views on the organization of struggles, militancy, working conditions, and networking activities. Their responses illustrated the changes in levels of resistance and confrontation with the capitalist organization of the labor process and thus, the possibility for the expansion of the terrains of struggle: the worker's community, political parties, unions, and the state (Peña, 1997, p. 127). To sum up, this early application of the autonomista framework is an exemplary template for application of the theory and methods relevant to an autonomist rewriting of the history of Latina/o working class communities in the Pacific Northwest.

Peña's *Mexican Americans and the Environment* (2005) exemplifies another application of the autonomista framework in the study of community struggles of the Mexican American community. In the discussion of terrains of struggle, Peña's

examination of ecological politics from 1980 to 2002 offers insights on the potential application of this framework to the study of Latina/o workers in the Pacific Northwest. Through a detailed identification of different sectors of the working class and their unique organizational forms and specific terrains of struggle, the analysis illustrates the varied and diverse forms of Chicana/o environmental justice struggles. I derive some of insights useful to the study of the Latino/a experience in the Northwest from this approach, including: identification of the specific terrains of struggle of farm workers, factory workers, and urban barrio residents. According to Peña, there are overlapping terrains of struggle in both the farm worker and factory worker sectors of the community; for example, issues related to workplace health and safety hazards, worker control of production to manage environmental risk, worker-owned cooperatives, and access to medical care are relevant to urban and rural workers. However, specific issues for farm workers include the revival of collective bargaining contracts, emerging biotechnologies and environmental risks, farm worker housing, education, and malnutrition, while for factory worker's terrains of struggle include violence against labor organizers, and violence against *maquila* workers. Urban barrio residents engage in community-based public health, community-owned economic development alternatives, reclamation of urban common space, social and environmental effects of industrial parks, housing and urban habitat projects, gentrification and affordable housing, transit racism, recycling, and urban horticulture (Peña, 2005, pp. 153-174).

In the next section I combine the theoretical concepts and work of traditional autonomistas such as Tronti, Negri, and Cleaver with the recent contribution of Peña to

lay the foundation for a critical interpretation of working-class struggles within Latina/o communities in the Pacific Northwest.

HISTORY OF CLASS COMPOSITION OF MEXICAN-ORIGIN WORKING-CLASS COMMUNITIES IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

Historical accounts of the Latina/o communities in the Pacific Northwest begin with the early Spanish exploration of the region in the late 1770s when maritime ship-borne Spanish and Mesoamerican visitors arrived from as far south as Chile to the Oregon coast and the northernmost regions of British Columbia. The entrance of miners and mule packers followed this during the period from the late 1800s through the early 1900s (Gamboa, 1989; 1990). However, the proper history of the Latina/o *working class*, predominantly of Mexican origin, begins in the early 1900s and continues through the contemporary period of the new millennium (Gamboa, 1974, 1980, 1987). For purposes of this chapter I will categorize the historical stages in the development of the Latina/o working class community in the Pacific Northwest into the following time periods:

- 1) Pre-Bracero Program Era, 1900-1942: Incipient Formation of Migrant Worker Communities.
- 2) First Bracero Program Era, 1942-1947: Emergent Mass Worker Organizations.
- 3) Late Bracero Era, 1948-1968: Height of Mass Worker Struggles; and
- 4) Urban Transformation Era, 1968-Present: Rise of Urban Communities and Flexible and Transnational Labor.

These four historical moments are important examples that demonstrate how the working class and capital are constantly reinventing themselves in the context of the history of the PNW. A central consideration in the development of this periodization schema is the

importance it places on the identification of key historical events or benchmarks in the formation of the basic contours of the Latina/o working class and its struggles. Moreover, the changing character of the technical and political composition of the working class in each period defined the specific nature of the relations of power between workers and capital. This chapter will focus on only first three historical moments, with the final phase emphasized in Chapter 4, and its connection to the foundation of Casa Latina.

1) Pre-Bracero Program Era, 1900-1942: Incipient Formation of Migrant Worker Communities

According to historians, the early economic development of the Pacific Northwest region was not very dramatic and lagged compared to other regions until well into the early 1900s. However, the completion of the railroads and the development of massive private and public irrigation projects worked to accelerate the development of the rural areas east of the Cascades including the Yakima Valley and the Columbia River Basin. Fertile soils, specialty crops, high production and an intensive labor economy characterized the agricultural sector during this formative stage. While Mexican workers did not become a major factor in agriculture until WWII, the region saw the entrance of the first workers in Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. The political events impacting the formation of the Mexican/o working class in the region included the dictatorship of Díaz, the subsequent impact of the Mexican Revolution of 1910, and the inability of the Mexican Constitution of 1917 to provide a politically stable system for an agrarian society (Gamboa, 2000, pp. 1-6). The economic needs of the expanding American agricultural sector required the recruitment of new workers to deal with the increase in crop production in the PNW region.

For example, by the early 1920s, the labor-intensive production of sugar beets attracted Mexican workers to the Pacific Northwest. While Mexican workers did not become a major factor until WWII, government sources reported the entrance of workers to the states of Idaho, Oregon, and Washington by the turn of the century. Around 1909, many Mexican workers arrived in Idaho via the Rocky Mountain migration route and by 1918 hundreds of workers migrated from El Paso to the Idaho sugar beet fields. According to Gamboa, by the 1920s, “the federal census estimated a nine-fold increase in Idaho’s Mexican population from 1910” (2000, p. 8). The same process of immigration to the Northwest affected the states of Oregon and Washington. In the case of Oregon, by 1910, the Mexican born population ranked seventh in states outside the Southwest and around a decade later the Gunn Supply Company recruited Mexican workers from Portland. Gamboa reports that railroad companies also recruited Mexican laborers: From 1909 to 1929, the increase of railroad worker in the nine railway systems grew from 17.1 percent to 59.5 percent for the period. Railroad workers became the first of the Mexican immigrants to settle permanently in the Pacific Northwest. (2000, p. 9). Even though, the 1930 US Census reported only 562 Mexicans in Washington, 1568 in Oregon, and 1278 in Idaho, more than likely, it undercounted the number of people of Mexican origin in the region (Maldonado, 1995, p. 7). In spite of the economic impact of the Depression, Mexican migration continued into the Pacific Northwest. Gamboa states, “As before, the region’s agricultural industry needed field workers, Mexicans were sought out because they were available, could be paid cheap wages, and would accept the laborious jobs that others turned down” (2000, p. 20). Gamboa describes the conditions but does to analyze why these workers were paid lower wages and more hazardous working conditions. The

answer is likely rather complex but there is some evidence, from the experiences of beet workers in the Colorado-to-Idaho internal migratory flow, that this period witnessed the incidence of resistance to “welfare capitalism” and in the Pacific Northwest this involved the establishment of struggles organized within the impossible context of militantly anti-union company towns (Victor Nelson Cisneros in communication to the author, October 2010). It is known that Mexican workers in the Pacific Northwest (especially in northern California) were recruited to join anarcho-syndicalist organizations like the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and that these workers likely played a role in strikes among hops harvesters and timber and mine workers (see Jamison, 1976; Raat, 1981; Thompson, 1976).

This early migration period of Mexicans established the first foundation of the Latina/o working class in the region and exposed it to the first campaigns of worker militancy and self-organization. It is also the case that during the period before 1942 the bulk of agricultural production in the Pacific Northwest was still done on family farms and these did not demand high labor inputs. In some ways, “petit-bourgeois” capitalists organized the agriculture system and the era of large-scale agribusinesses had not yet started in full force. The transition to agribusiness would usher the first major processes of political re-composition and decomposition and cycles of struggle among the Mexican-origin working class.

The research materials needed to identify the composition of the Mexican working class in the Pacific Northwest for this first period are scarce. Several sources on this historical juncture provide information useful to the characterization of this period as one of incipient class formation. One case study of Mexicans striking in Idaho offers

insights on aspects of the processes of political re-composition of the workers. Mexican workers entered Idaho in the early 1900's and many arrived through labor contractors used by sugar beet companies in the area. It is noteworthy that sugar beet production was one of the first sectors in Western state agriculture to undergo a shift toward full-scale capitalist agribusiness organization.

By the 1930's activists arising from among the small community of Mexican workers in Idaho began to file complaints against sugar beet companies and requested help from the Mexican consulate. Eventually the failure to resolve the complaints resulted in the Idaho beet workers' strike of 1935 and the confrontation between the workers and forces of capital. The data on the strike revealed the absence of the participation of a labor union and identified a group of "white" and Mexican organizers leading the strike. However, this does not mean, the workers lacked an organizational base for their political activity. In fact, the workers took advantage of the *comisiones honorificas*, an extension of the Mexican consulates in the community of workers to lodge complaints against capital involving disputes over pay, allegations of mistreatment, expensive food, and housing concerns. Although the *comisiones* functions revolved around non-political and non-labor related activities (celebrating Mexican holidays, promoting Mexican culture, organizing fund raising activities for the needy, and other activities), *in the absence of unions*, they became political tools on behalf of workers. This is similar to reports for other regions during this same period as is illustrated in the studies on Texas and California in the special Chicano Labor History issues of *Aztlán*. When the complaints failed to resolve the conflict, the workers filed lawsuits against the

company, and this resulted in the exercise of the strategy of the *refusal of work* through wildcat strikes.

The nature of the crops at the time of harvest provided another tactical advantage for the success of the worker's demands: The decision to strike at a crucial time of the harvest led the possibility of capital's heavy financial losses due to natural forces. Initially, many of these cases were resolved. But, as the effects of the Great Depression heightened, the forces of capital became more antagonistic. In 1935, Mexican workers in Driggs, Idaho went on strike but this time, the state acted on behalf of capital by sending the National Guard. The troops arrested the organizers and loaded them into trucks or their own cars and escorted them to the county line. In this case study, the active participation of the workers in the self-valorization of their work involved the expression of the class needs and desires of Mexican workers and the institutional context of their political and economic resistance to capital. Moreover, while the typical union-led organization of workers was absent, this did not stop the workers from carrying out their own self-mobilization and to press for demands and changes in the terrains of struggle: Disputes over pay, abuse from the company officials and labor contractors, and expensive food (Jones and Hodges, 2005, pp. 41-84).

At this moment, it is imperative to discuss the dominant discourse on the nature of Mexican immigration to the United States, which appears in the scholarship on the Pacific Northwest. A common perspective found in most studies on Mexican and Latina/o immigration emphasizes the impact of political and economic "push-and-pull" factors in the United States labor markets. Some of the common themes of this perspective are found in the historical analysis of this region. The political events

impacting the formation of the Mexicana/o working class in the region included the dictatorship of Díaz, the subsequent impact of the Mexican Revolution of 1910, and the inability of the Mexican Constitution of 1917 to provide for a politically stable system. Moreover, the economic needs of the increasingly capitalistic agricultural sector required workers to deal with the increase in crop production in the area (Gamboa, 2000, pp. 1-6).

However, more recent Chicana/o scholars have challenged the validity of this model of supply and demand as an explanation for the phenomenon of immigration and provide an alternative framework grounded in a Marxist perspective (Gonzalez & Fernandez, 2004; Gonzalez et al, 2004; Gonzalez, 2004). In the book, *Guest Workers or Colonized Labor?* Gilbert G. Gonzalez proposes an interpretation with a special focus on the centrality of imperialism and its social consequences, “the mass uprooting of people from the countryside and the migration of that labor to the heart of the US economy.” An important contribution of this study lies in challenging the alleged similarities of the European immigrant experience in the United States to the contemporary Mexican immigrant experience. Gonzalez finds more similarities and parallels between Mexican, Indian, and Algerian migratory streams, shaped by a form of economic domination closer to colonialism. One of the first parallels includes social transformation, which occurred through domination and produced contradictory conditions: On the one hand, “it satisfied the interests of the foreign power but resulted in severe hardships and deprivation in the dominated region or nation” (Gonzalez 2006, p. 48). Secondly, the impact of the measures of the dominating power transformed the peasant economy and the demographic character of the dominated nation, more specifically, the removal of the peasantry from its communal lands. Thus, the consequences of this displacement through

the effects of internal migration and different work patterns resulted in the *demographic redistribution* of the population. The economic domination of foreign companies and the uprooted surplus population became the source of labor that was eventually recruited to the foreign-owned work sites. In stark contrast to Negri's proposition of the "Empire", as ubiquitous and oblique term at best, critical Chicana/o scholarly researchers remind all social scientists on the significance and continuity of imperialism versus "Empire", and the necessity to examine *concrete* class struggles – like the 1935 Idaho beet workers' strike – rather than some amorphous concept like the "multitude".

Finally, one of the formative processes of this period was the undertaking of initial steps toward the configuration of a racially stratified labor market structure that impinged on the ability for workers to organize and resist. Not surprisingly, the politics of immigration control played a central role. As one study of this period notes:

The passage of tough immigration restriction laws in 1920 and 1924 ended legal immigration from Asian countries, while creating new openings for immigrants from the Philippines and Mexico, whose citizens were exempt from the most severe exclusions. The new laws also helped reshape racial hierarchies for those nonwhites who were already in the country or who would come during the decades between 1924-1965, producing the "illegal alien" as a new legal and political subject. With white superiority justified by immigration laws, immigrant labor would suffer continuing exploitation and workers of color would contend with new forms of exclusion. (Quintana and Castañeda, n.d.).

Clearly, this first period involves macro-level processes through which the state and capital are still configuring the conditions for the integration and exploitation of Mexican labor in the PNW. The creation of new "aliens" (in this period, the Japanese and other Asians) led to an opening for increased demand by growers for Mexican workers to replace the "Other" unwanted "aliens". At any rate, by the early 1920s, all the conditions were in place for a revolutionary transformation of

the capitalist organization of the region's economy and the advent of the *braceros*.

2) Bracero Program Era, 1942-1947: Emergent Mass Worker Organizations

The first period established and situated the *incipient* Mexican working-class community in the Pacific Northwest and also witnessed its first successful efforts at struggle that led capital to restructure its organizational strategies to control workers' resistance including calls for the intervention of the state through the use of the National Guard to suppress strikers and arrest and deport organizers. Two defining historical events impacted the changing composition of the Mexican working class in the second period between 1942-1947.

In the second cycle of struggle, the impact of the war economy affected the nature of labor in the agricultural industry – a demographic shift from the rural areas to the urban areas by people seeking jobs in the shipyards and defense industries. Gamboa states: “The transition from a peacetime to a war economy produced abrupt and profound alterations in the social and economic course of daily life on the northwestern farms.” More specifically, cultivation expanded with the completion of massive irrigation projects under the auspices of the New Deal: In Idaho and Oregon, 2,893,000 acres of dry land were brought under cultivation by 1940. Irrigation projects in Washington affected the expansion of cultivated land a few months before the war (2000, p. 26).

The irrigation infrastructure, combined with government purchases of greater quantities of canned fruit and vegetables from Northwestern farms, increased pressure on growers to hire more workers across the entire region. As native-born people continued to

move from farm jobs into the war-time urban industries, shortages of labor were filled in different ways—first by seeking help from the local population; and for a while by using Japanese American farm workers who worked in the fields (Gamboa, 2000, p. 28). Of the 220,640 laborers who entered the U.S. under PL-45, approximately 21 percent entered the Pacific Northwest. Workers came from the “least developed” rural areas of Mexico. According to Gamboa, this meant that the lower socio-economic classes could not understand the contract conditions (2000, pp. 48-51). This is questionable in general terms and the research by Galarza (*Merchants of Labor and Farm Workers and Agribusiness in California*) illustrates that Mexican migrant workers understood enough to know it was important to save every piece of paper handed them by field supervisors and farm owners.

Perhaps, the most important observation on the changing composition of the working class during this second period is related to the consequences of the role of the state as the manager of labor importation and supplies. The state sought to administer labor migration through the temporary labor importation program. Despite the Bracero Program’s controls over workers, braceros managed to engage in labor strikes in Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. Moreover, many of the workers *settled out* of the migratory schema and this was perhaps the most important form of resistance and the key terrain of struggle during the entire Bracero period. The right to settle permanently in the U.S. was largely exercised in an unauthorized manner and this indicates that the bracero workers were already militantly predisposed to self-activity and self-valorization.

In the context of political decomposition of capital, the Bracero Program as a state initiative represents a new strategy to address worker s’ struggles. Facing this crisis, the

capitalist state intervened on behalf of capital with the enactment of the *Bracero Program*. The *Bracero Program* represented a state-sponsored initiative that recruited labor from Mexico to the United States. Under the agreement workers were obligated to stay in their rural residences, in order to curtail movement to urban centers. Once their contractual agreement ended, they were sent back to Mexico. The program was created in favor of the growers, by creating wage clauses favorable to them. Growers also set low wages to discourage local workers from applying for work. This made for an artificial shortage of native-born labor that enabled growers to request *Braceros* to work for them. *The Bracero Program* was clearly used by capital to curtail the rise of farm worker unions by pitting foreign-born against native-born workers (Barrera, 1979).

As noted above, about 21 percent of the 220,640 workers who entered the U.S. under PL-45, came to the PNW. Initially welcomed by the receiving communities, the braceros worked in deplorable conditions and growers and state agencies ignored most of the minimal contract stipulations designed to protect workers from more serious abuses. Perhaps, the most important observation on the recomposition of the working class during this period was engagement in labor strikes in the states of Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. From the perspective of the workers, given the conditions of work, the refusal of work was the most important response to capital. Beginning with the first strike in Burlington, Washington (1944) over the issue of dual wage systems for Mexicans and white workers, the strike ignited and set the pattern for Mexican workers to engage in more strikes across the region.

Most of the strikes in the region exemplify the richness of working-class subjectivity. Braceros working in Preston, Idaho went on strike over wages (1944); in

Klamath Falls, Oregon they did a wildcat strike over the establishment of a higher fixed wage (1945); and the bracero asparagus cutters in Walla, Walla, Washington also went out on strike for better wages (1945). It is noteworthy to point out that in some instances workers were successful in their struggle for a better wage, while in other instances they were subjected to state repression. In some cases, by refusing to work at strategic times related to non-mechanized processes, workers were able to pressure growers to accept their demands. Their success at articulating the strategy of the refusal of work and the culmination of World War II set the stage to end the first phase of the *bracero program* (PL 45).

3) Post-Bracero Era, 1947-1968: The Height of Mass Worker Struggles and the Building of Permanent Communities

In the third historical period (1947-68), we witness the emergence of a new set of conditions that prepares the ground for the political recomposition of the Mexican origin working class in the region. By 1947, the Pacific Northwest economy had continued to grow and the growers wished for the continuation of the benefits of the original Bracero Program. However, the policy regulations of the PL-40 program ended the dreams of profits at the expense of cheap managed labor. The new Bracero program included changes against the interests of capital in the Northwest, more specifically, the program ended government subsidies for transportation costs. More significant, the entrance of large number of Mexican Americans recruited from the Southwest transformed the communities and a gradual political recomposition of the Mexican-origin working class. Once again, the workers and capital faced each other without the direct intervention of the state (Gamboa, 2000, p.124). Following the end of the WWII, the region witnessed

the rise of the greatest increase in the use of migrant workers since 1942. This expansion was influenced by several factors including the greater mobility of migrant workers, higher wages, expanding job opportunities, and the impact of braceros during the Great Depression. Thus, the post-war farm wage economy attracted many new Mexican Americans and Mexicans to move to the Pacific Northwest (Gamboa, 2000, pp. 124-125).

As communities in the region grew with the entrance of domestic migrant labor (i.e., Chicana/os), primarily composed of U.S. born residents and Mexican immigrants, in some areas, the signs of a permanent Mexican working-class community appear in various forms. Beginning in the Yakima Valley, by the 1950s the signs of a permanent population appeared: The community witnessed the first Spanish radio program, establishment of Mexican food stores, and the first Spanish-speaking priest in the Catholic Church. Case studies of other communities in the state of Washington illustrated the growth and changes of the Latina/o working class. By the 1960s, the Mexican origin population in such communities as Quincy and Othello, Washington reflected the changing class composition of those communities. By the late 1950s, there was a small group of Mexican and Mexican American migrant domestic labor force primarily employed in the labor-intensive crops of sugar beets. However, by the early 1960s, the population had settled down in the region.

Some of the factors that affected the change from a migrant to a permanently settled community included the building of labor camps and the establishment of processing plants, which provided year-round employment. Housing became accessible to the growing permanent population employed in the plants. The technological decomposition of capital shifted part of the labor process from the fields to the factories

(processing plants) dividing the Mexican working class in the region. On the one hand, the processing plants in potato, apples, and other crops provided work to most of the permanently settled Mexican-origin population. On the other hand, some of the migrant workers and the remainder of the settled population still worked in the agricultural fields picking crops. Migrant health clinics, day care centers, community organizations for migrant families, labor camps and housing were significant issues and defined the terrains of struggle for both the temporary and permanent farm working community. For the permanent community closely tied to the processing plants, the terrains of struggle expanded including the creation of social-cultural community organizations, farm worker's cooperatives, political organizations and voter registration drives and related electoral activities (G. Garcia, 1995; J Garcia, 2002; G Garcia, 2002)

By the end of this period (1968), Mexican-origin and Mexican American workers had established sufficiently stable and permanent communities in the PNW. This strengthened the prospects for self-organization and this process did indeed begin to take root and allowed for the development of new workers' organizations and terrains of struggle. The second and third cycles of struggle outlined above were clearly and largely defined by efforts to establish working-class communities. The struggle for community involved building the institutions required for working-class self-organization that we see unfolding during the last stage since 1968. At the end of the era, the Latina/o population was more visible than in previous decades but continued to be composed of primarily Mexican and Mexican American origin people. The establishment of the permanent communities fueled the emergence of new political and social organizations, such as the embryonic farm worker's union and statewide organizations representing the interests of

the predominantly Mexican working-class population. This set the stage for the initiation of the Chicana/o civil rights movement in the region and signaled the beginning of a new historical era for the Mexican working class. In the next chapter, the dissertation presents the final historical period in the context of the rise and development of new organizational strategies, which culminates with the day worker centers and the formation of Casa Latina.

Conclusion

While there are many historical examinations of the experience of Latina/o workers in the Pacific Northwest, they are limited by the weak theoretical foundations, most of them grounded on some sort of push-pull theory and superficial insights on the nature of working-class struggles. In this chapter, I proposed a new theoretical interpretation and offered an alternative historical periodization. First, it presented the basic theoretical framework of the historical cycles of struggle of the Latina/o working class in the Pacific Northwest. It applies the concept of cycles of struggle, which begin from 1900 to the present, focusing on the changing political and technical composition of the Latina/o working class. More specifically, the alternative historical periodization and interpretation is defined by the central tenets of the “autonomist Marxist” tradition, a class perspective absent in most historical accounts of the Latina/o working class in the region. With the application of Marxist epistemology (Cleaver, Negri, and Tronti) and Chicana/o anthropology, this chapter offered a new perspective on the experience of the Latina/o working class and proposed four historical moments of the Latina/o experience, predominantly of Mexican origin.

Chapter 4] The Rise of Urban Communities and Flexible and Transnational Labor: The Day Worker Centers and Casa Latina

To understand, the emergence of the new organizational strategies responding to the political and economic changes in the region, more specifically, the creation of Casa Latina, the most important and only day laborer center in the Pacific Northwest, it is necessary to place it in historical context. First, the following chapter presents a brief historical overview of the contemporary changes affecting the Latina/o working class community in the region. Second, the chapter examines the demographic changes affecting the Latina/o working class in the Pacific Northwest, more specifically, the state of Washington. In the discussion of the contemporary demographic profile of the community, it provides an analysis of the characteristics of the population shift of the Latina/o population from Eastern to Western Washington, re-defining a new direction in the formation of the community. Third, the study examines the distribution of Latina/o workers in the occupational structure and compares the differences between Eastern and Western Washington. Finally, the chapter presents the rise of Casa Latina, the day laborer center in the state of Washington, a new form of working-class organization, in response to the new social and economic reality of the Latina/o communities in the state of Washington, from its beginnings to the contemporary period.

The fourth cycle of struggle represents an era that signals a political and economic transformation of Latina/o working-class communities in the Pacific Northwest. On the one hand, the political struggles of the national Chicana/o civil rights movement reached the Mexican populated areas in the region, and on the other, the economic transformation

of the area signaled changes both in communities and class composition in rural and urban areas. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, Mexican Americans who called themselves Chicanos joined student protests, labor unions, and became involved in political struggles. Also, the gradual movement of Mexican origin people begins to shift from the rural-agricultural areas to the urban areas in the states of Oregon and Washington.

Within twenty years (1968-88), the numerous communities in the Yakima Valley in Washington, the Willamette Valley in Oregon, and the Magic Valley in Idaho see significant demographic growth due to the entrance of a new group of immigrants, primarily from Mexico and to a lesser extent from other parts of Latin America. The last two population Censuses, 1990 and 2000, recorded one of the most dramatic changes in the region: The population growth of the Latina/o community and the movement from a rural-agricultural area to the urbanized centers of the Pacific Northwest. According to Frías, in 1990, the Latino population of the region was 398, 374 making it the largest ethnic/racial group in the region and one of the fastest growing populations in the area. Washington ranked 10th in the nation with the largest increase in Latina/os.

Rather than verifying some vague “hispanization” of the region, the recent Census data records a definitive “Mexicanization”: The Mexican-origin population constituted the largest Latino national origin group in the state of Washington and many of the communities located in the states of Idaho and Oregon as well. Other features of the population included the *urbanization* of the Latina/o population in the state of Washington and the shift of labor from agriculture to blue-collar occupations accompanied by continuing high poverty levels. By 1990, only 24.3 percent of Latina/os

worked in agricultural jobs in the region (Frías, 1995). A decade later, the 2000 Census reported on the continued rapid growth of the population in the region and continuation of the urbanization of the community that led to the technical recomposition of the working class as it gradually changed into a major force in the service and construction sectors of the Pacific Northwest economy.

During this period, the Chicano community has repeatedly engaged in farm worker's strikes in agricultural regions (Maldonado, 1995; Alaniz and Cornish, 2008), student struggles in the major universities (Alaniz and Cornish, 2008, Garcia, 2005), and political struggles in local communities across the Pacific Northwest (Garcia, 1995; Garcia, 2015). In fact, the history of struggles of this period includes a diverse set of terrains of struggle from a focus on wage type struggles to resistance by the unwaged (women, youth, and student struggles).

For example, the embryonic farm workers union in the state of Washington and the phenomenal organizing campaigns of the PCUN (*Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste* or Northwest Tree Planters and Farm Workers United) in Oregon illustrate the engagement with organizing activities to address workplace health and safety hazards that are tied to demands for access to humane housing, education, childcare, and health care. The PCUN is an especially poignant and iconic case that illustrates the process of working-class political re-composition since it involves self-activity by a new sector of workers comprised of a diverse alliance of native-born Chicana/o workers, many of them direct descendants of Bracero Era settlers, and newly arriving displaced native Mesoamerican workers. These are the workers of what Mares and Peña (2011ab) call the “post-NAFTA Mesoamerican Diaspora”. The PCUN workers capture an important aspect

of the political re-composition of the latter part of the current period, in which we have witnessed, with the sustained effects of NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement) which unfolded after 1994: PCUN represents an effective response by workers to the consequences of neoliberal policies that displaced indigenous small farmers from their ancestral *ejidos* across Mexico. In effect, corn growers in Mexico became tree planters in Oregon. They did not take this lying down and instead organized themselves into a form appropriate to their newfound circumstances as flexible transnational labor (Stephen, 2012).

By the 1980s, the communities in the region saw the entrance of larger numbers of immigrants, both undocumented and documented including many from indigenous rural and urban communities. The arrival of indigenous communities in the region altered the political composition of the Latina/o working class in the region (Stephen, 2007) as is illustrated by the struggles of the PCUN workers. According to Stephen, the impact of neoliberal policies transformed the US-Mexico economy, “Commercial fruit and vegetable production expanded in northern Mexico and became incorporated with that of the United States, providing an alternative labor market for rural Mexicans. This change was driven in part by US consumer demand” (Stephen, p. 131).

These new developments are significantly redirecting the process of the political re-composition of the Mexican origin working class and once again presents us with a complex set of new political, economic, and racial/cultural challenges. In the sphere of workers’ self-organizing activity, the growing number of Mexican undocumented or out-of-status workers finds that traditional labor unions remain an alienating and unwelcoming experience. Consequently, many of these workers are gravitating toward

the establishment of day laborer centers where their autonomous practices can become legitimated in the context of community-based organizations focused on enhancing the capacity for collective action.

These new out-of-status workers pose a different challenge compared to the farm worker and student activism of the 1960s and 70s: This involves the creation of a *dual-wage system* that is reminiscent in many ways of earlier historical eras (i.e., one wage for U.S.-born and another for foreign-born workers). However, day laborer centers allow workers to renegotiate the conditions of the sale of their own labor power. Wage-setting through day labor centers appears to be emerging as a more powerful expression of collective action rather than the more typical experience in which individual workers most resort to direct “boss-to-worker” negotiations that merely reinforce racial and class paternalism in the construction of a contrived “cheap labor” regime. The deployment of racial and cultural “stigmas” that serve to devalue labor power affects both native-born and out-of-status workers, but it seems more blatant and pervasive when concocted in opposition to the wage demands of indigenous workers.

According to Lynn Stephen, the impact of neoliberal policies transformed the US-Mexico economy:

Commercial fruit and vegetable production expanded in northern Mexico and became incorporated with that of the United States, providing an alternative labor market for rural Mexicans. This change was driven in part by US consumer demand” (Stephen, 2007, p. 131).

Also, the implementation of neoliberal landholding policies in Mexico attacked the traditional community systems through privatization and this initiated a new form of primitive accumulation. This process of capitalist development accelerated the

immigration of thousands of indigenous and mestiza/o working-class people. The peoples of the Mesoamerica Diaspora are now becoming a major force within the new workers' movements of the current post-1994 era characterized by flexible and transnational labor. The historical analysis of the Latina/o working class in the Pacific Northwest presents examples of the diverse organizational responses to the nature of capitalism in the region and demonstrates the ability of the workers to challenge the political and economic forces against their class interests. While many times, labor unions in the United States failed to incorporate their interests, the Latina/o working class found other organizational alternatives, such as *sociedades honorificas*, mutual aid societies, and local community organizations addressing the issues of the emerging communities in the region (day care centers, clinics, housing, and political representation). As the communities entered the new era, with the advent of the Chicano Civil Rights Movement in the region, the communities experimented with a diversity of organizations ranging from worker's cooperatives to full blown unions, student-based organizations to local community organizations addressing education, health, and legal rights of the community. These changes occurred with the settling down process of the Latina/o population in the states of Washington, Oregon, and Idaho, an important process that forced them to address the social, economic, and political issues directly affecting the growing population in the region. The Civil Rights Movement in general, but more specifically, the Chicano Movement fueled the emergence of new organizations and leaders in the areas of education, health, and the rights of workers. The economic transformation of the region resembled other regions where Latina/o workers became the new economic force and developed new forms of organizations in response to the re-structuring of capital. For

example, Valdes documented the dramatic changes occurring to the Latina/o community in the Mid-West region of the United States, where the region experienced the shift from industrial labor to the service sector and the rise of new working-class militancy (2000). As an example of the changing characteristics of the Latina/o working class, Valdes documents the participation of undocumented workers in challenging the conditions of work and the utilization of diverse political strategies (use of legal victories of the working class, the media, and the ultimate confrontation in the courts). Similar processes occurred in the Pacific Northwest region as the Latina/o community underwent social and economic changes in the new era of cycles of struggle.

Demographic Trends and the Latina/o Community

From 1970 to 2010, the Latina/o community in the Pacific Northwest, more specifically, the state of Washington, was affected by the significant population growth of the community and its gradual transition from a historically agriculturally based economy to the growing needs of the service and construction sectors of the economy in the urbanized regions of the state.⁵ An analysis of this transformation is necessary to understand the shift in the narrative on the Latina/o experience from an agriculturally based economy predominantly in Eastern Washington to an urbanized and changing Latina/o community in the state of Washington. This section presents a general overview of the demographic changes in the Pacific Northwest region, with special attention to the state of Washington. The analysis examines three areas: population changes, native and foreign-born population, and occupational distribution of the Latina/o population.

Early demographic studies of the Pacific Northwest document the gradual transformation of the Latina/o communities in the region. In 1979, Slatta reported on the

urbanization of the communities in the region, thus challenging the migrant farm worker image: “The migrant farm worker image, though still valid for a minority, is inappropriate for nine-tenths of all Chicanos” (Slatta, p. 157). Once again Slatta reported on the continuation of the urbanization process of the Latina/o communities in Oregon and Washington and the gradual growth and presence of Latinas/os in the counties of King and Pierce Washington (1984, pp. 113-115). Cook’s examination of the Latina/o community in the Pacific Northwest concluded there was “a greater difference between the Hispanic population by residence in metropolitan-nonmetropolitan counties; and within nonmetropolitan counties in low and high agricultural counties than is the case for the white population” (1986, p. 213). These early studies clearly identified major development occurring in the formation of the Latina/o communities in the region.

The 1990 US Census corroborated the transformation of the Latina/o community in the Pacific Northwest with the population growth in comparison to Latinas/os nationwide. Friaz noted “Hispanics in Oregon and Washington grew at a much faster rate than Hispanics nationwide (53 percent) in the same time period. Washington ranked 10th in the states with the largest increases in the Hispanic population” (1995, p. 44). Other characteristics of the Latina/o population in the region corroborated the trends in previous population counts; the Latina/o population was the largest ethnic minority; the majority are of Mexican origin; a large percentage (74 percent) live in urban areas and only around one quarter work in agricultural jobs; a similar breakdown between native and foreign born to nationwide figures (64). Utilizing 1990 Census data, Friaz noted the “Mexicanization” of the Latina/o population in the region: “Although almost every group in every state increased numerically, the proportions of Hispanic subgroups varied in the

region. Mexican Americans grew from a regional average of 69 percent of all Hispanics in 1980 to about 78 percent in 1990.....By 1990, Hispanics became less diverse as Mexican Americans increased their percentage of the Hispanic population (1995, pp. 45-46)”. An examination of the 2000 and 2010 US Census for the three states in the region recorded the continued growth of the Latina/o population from 7.7 percent to 11.4 percent of the total population. Moreover, the pattern of “Mexicanization” continued in the region, the Mexican origin population constituted 78.9 percent in 2000 and 81 percent in 2010 of the total Latina/o population in the region (Oregon, Idaho, and Washington).

Population Shift: Eastern to Western Washington

For purposes of this study, the analysis focuses on the state of Washington and examines the differences between eastern and western Washington. Previous demographic studies failed to compare and contrast the patterns between eastern and western Washington communities; by 1990, the Latina/o population in western Washington outgrew the population in the long-established communities in eastern Washington. The pattern established in 1990 continued unabated in the following decades; the western region grew from 111,018 in 1990 to 450,334 in 2010. By 2010, there were only 350,038 Latinas/os in Eastern Washington.

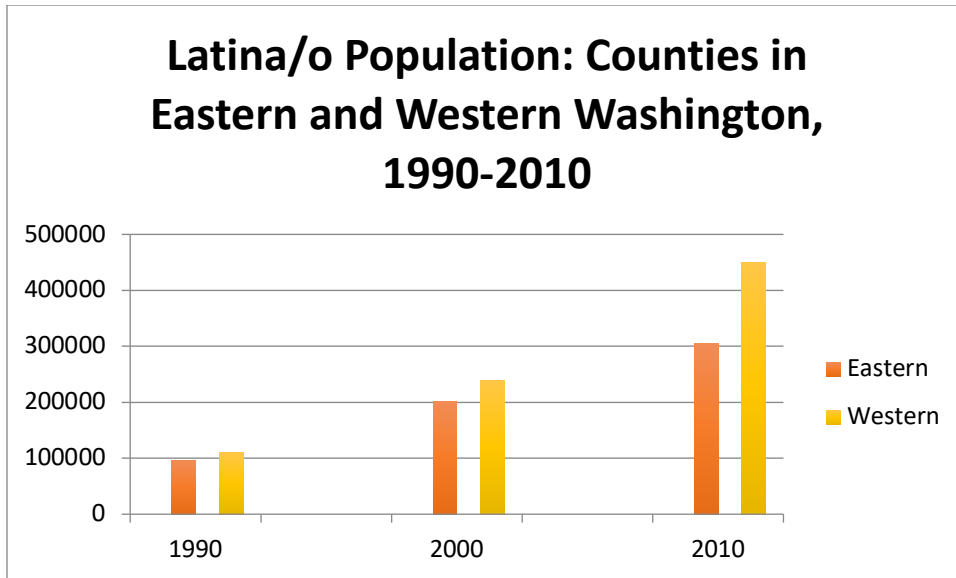


Table 1: Source: 1990 US Census; 2000 US Census; 2010 US Census

The graph in Table 1 illustrates the shift from the traditional Latina/o population centers in eastern Washington to the new urbanized communities in western Washington (see Table 1).

In Western Washington counties, the Latina/o population is concentrated in King, Pierce, Snohomish, Clark, Skagit and Thurston, where you find the most important cities with a sizeable population.

Latina/o Population by Counties in Western Washington, 1990-2010

	1990	2000	2010
Clallan	1150	2189	3627
Clark	5872	16091	32166
Cowlitz	1672	4213	7975
Grays har	1173	3244	6272
Island	2006	2961	4295
Jefferson	241	455	848
King	44337	95250	172378
Kitsap	6169	9609	15686
Klickitat	928	1532	2171
Lewis	1366	5357	6527
Mason	883	2358	4844
Pacific	433	1102	1677
Pierce	20842	38577	72849
San Juan	121	378	857
Skagit	4335	11586	19709
Skamania	172	331	553
Snohomish	10656	27340	64249
Thurston	4873	9067	17787
Whatcom	3718	8316	15756
Wahkium	71	35	108

Table 2: Source: 1990 US Census, 2000 US Census, 2010 US Census

The cities of Seattle, Tacoma, Vancouver, Kent, Everett, Federal Way, Renton, and Mt. Vernon contain the largest concentration of Latinas/os with populations ranging from 10,686 (Mt. Vernon) to 40,329 (Seattle) inhabitants. Other cities reported increases in the Latina/o population, which ranged from close to 6,000 to 9,000 people, in some cases large enough to present the characteristics of emerging Latina/o communities in the state. As noted on the regional level, the Latina/o population in the major cities of

western Washington is predominantly of Mexican origin, in some cases such as Mt. Vernon, the Mexican origin population constitutes 90 percent of the total Latina/o population. In other cities with more than 10,000 Latina/o inhabitants, the Mexican origin population constituted from 61 percent in Seattle to 78 percent in Kent and Federal Way to 79 percent in Vancouver, Washington of the total Latina/o population. This demographic trend both at the state and local level challenges the previous characterization of predominant “Hispanic” settlements in western Washington versus the predominant “Mexican” settlements in eastern Washington.

Latina/o Native and Foreign Born Population

The 2000 census provides insights on the historical entrance and presence of the foreign-born population in western Washington through the identification of the number of immigrants and the year of entry into the state. An examination of King, Pierce, Snohomish, Clark, Skagit, and Thurston counties in western Washington revealed the gradual entrance of immigrants into the region. According to the census, the majority of Latina/o immigrants in five of the counties entered the state between 1990 and 2000 (King 60.6 percent, Pierce 60 percent, Snohomish 55 percent, Clark 58.9 percent, Skagit 64 percent).

This development goes hand in hand with the growth of the Latina/o population in western Washington; by 1990, there were more Latinas/os in the region than in eastern Washington. A careful examination of the census information contains additional insights on the Latina/o communities in western Washington, the data indicates the presence of a larger native population over a foreign-born population. For example, in the 2010-2014 American Community Survey, King, Pierce, Snohomish, Clark, Skagit, and Thurston

recorded the presence of a large native-born Latina/o population over the foreign-born Latina/o population (from a low 60 percent to a high 77 percent).

Nativity and Citizenship Status (Hispanic or Latino) in selected counties in Western Washington, 2010-2014

	Native Born	Foreign Born
King	60	40
Pierce	74	26
Snohomish	65	35
Clark	70	30
Skagit	68	32
Thurston	77	23

Table 3: Source: 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

In the 2000 Census, Seattle had the largest number of Latinas/os with 60 percent and 40 percent for native-foreign born respectively. Other cities recorded similar patterns: Tacoma (67/33), Vancouver (62/38), Federal Way (64/36), and Everett (63/37) recorded similar percentages for the Latina/o native-foreign born population. Thus, these percentages reveal differences as well the diversification in the Latina/o population, in the eight cities with a Latina/o population 10, 000 or more; the percentage of native-born to foreign-born reflects the presence of a large community of second and third generation Latinas/os as well as the persistence of a large foreign born community. This diversification illustrates the maturity and complexity of the growing Latina/o community in Western Washington.

Occupational Distribution of Latina/o Workers

Finally, the most important insights from the census information concern the distribution or location of the Latina/o population by occupation in Western Washington. The insights on the type of occupations held by the Latina/o working class reported in the various government documents provide the context to understand the location of the contemporary day laborers. At the state level, on the distribution of occupations for the civilian employed Hispanic or Latino population 16 years and over, the census reported the presence of Latina/o workers in service and natural resources, while the rest of the population is almost evenly distributed in the categories of management, sales and office, and production occupations. Upon closer examination, the gender distribution of the occupations for the estimates of the 2006-2010 and 2010-2014 present a different story: males dominate in the natural resources, service and production occupations, while females dominate in the service, sales and management occupations.

	Washington			
	2006-2010		2010-2014	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Management	8	9	9	9
Service	13	13	12	14
Sales	12	11	7	10
Natural Resources	20	3	19	4
Production	6	5	12	4

Table 4: Source: U.S Census Bureau, 2006-2010; 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Percentage Civilian Latina/o Employed Population 16 years and over

A comparison of both regions in the state of Washington revealed clear differences in the location of Latinas/os by type of occupations. The 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates presents data on the civilian employed Latino population 16 years and over on selected counties in Eastern Washington. The counties of Yakima, Franklin, Grant, Chelan, and Adams recorded the most important occupations for the Latina/o communities: the civilian employed Latino population concentrates in the natural resources and production sectors of the economy. Service and sales occupations followed in importance and to a lesser extent the management occupations. There is a clear contrast between the civilian employed Latino population 16 years and over in the selected Western Washington counties of King, Pierce, Snohomish, Clark, and Skagit. The counties in Western Washington recorded higher percentages in service, sales and office occupations, and in management, business, science, and arts occupations. At the county level, King and Pierce contained the largest number of civilian employed Latina/o population 16-Years and over. King county reported differences in the distribution of the employed Latina/o population by sex, for example, males dominated in the service, natural resources and production occupations and to a lesser extent in management and sales. On the other hand, Latina workers prevailed in service, management, and sales occupations but reflected similar state patterns in natural resources and production occupations.

	King			
	2006-2010		2010-2014	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Management	19	27	23	29
Service	29	36	29	37
Sales	11	27	11	25
Natural Resources	27	2	27	1
Production	20	8	30	7

Table 5: Source: Sex by Occupation For The Civilian Employed Population 16 Years And Over (Hispanic or Latino) 2006-2010, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

In Pierce County, the civilian employed population reflects a similar distribution of the occupations: Latino males dominate in natural resources, service, and production, while Latinas dominate in the service, sales and management occupations. Female workers represent an insignificant percentage in the natural resources and production occupations, and almost an insignificant percentage in production and natural resources. The following table illustrates the percentage distribution of the Latina/o civilian employed population 16 years and over for the 2006-2010 and 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-year estimates

	Pierce			
	2006-2010		2010-2014	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Management	14	24	16	25
Service	22	33	20	36
Sales	12	32	12	28
Natural Resources	30	1	33	2
Production	21	11	19	9

Table 6: Source: Sex by Occupation For The Civilian Employed Population 16 Years And Over (Hispanic 2006-2010, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

An examination of data recorded for the 2011-2013 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates provide a more specific analysis of the types of occupations for the Latina/o working population in King and Pierce County. According to the census information, female workers in the management sector are employed in management occupations and education occupations, while male workers are employed in business and financing operations, computer engineering and science occupations, and education occupations.

Both Latina and Latino workers dominate in the service sectors; females share a higher percentage of the occupations in food preparation and serving sector occupations, building and grounds cleaning and maintenance occupations as well as personal care and service occupations. Latino workers in both counties are employed in food preparation and building and ground cleaning.

Latina workers in both counties represent a significant percentage of the total civilian employed Latino population in sales and office occupations. This is particularly

the case in office and administrative support occupations. Meanwhile, Latino workers share a lower percentage of the occupations in the sales and office sectors.

On the one hand, in King and Pierce counties Latino workers share a large percentage of the occupations in natural resources; more specifically, in construction and extraction sectors. While on the other hand, Latina workers are underrepresented in the general occupation categories of natural resources and production occupations. This pattern reflects the trend at the state level; women recorded a lower participation in the natural resources and production occupations.

This demographic analysis offers the background and context for the examination of the position of day laborers in the occupational structure in Western Washington.

From Unions to Worker Centers

Given the characteristics of the Latina/o community (predominantly of Mexican origin) in the Pacific Northwest, labor organizing centered on the rural communities in Oregon, Idaho, and Washington. After many years of organizing, Washington pioneered in the establishment of labor unions for Latino/a farmworkers in the Yakima Valley, culminating with the formation of the Washington Farmworker Union (Lemos, 1974) and in Oregon the establishment of the Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (Stephen, 2012). As the population shifted into the urban areas and the participation of Latina/o workers in different sectors of the economy, the emerging working class required a new form of labor organization: the worker centers.

Studies on the nature of day workers and worker centers are few but provide a general overview and assessment of the characteristics of the new model of labor organizing. One of the most complete studies on worker centers examines a variety of

topics including among several, the origins and characteristics of worker centers, organizing around ethnicity, gender, race, and class, relationships with unions, the internal life of worker centers, and an assessment of the worker centers phenomenon. Fine's study identifies three waves in the formation of the phenomenon of worker centers. First, the study discusses the formation of three waves of worker centers. Due to changes in the economy, the first wave emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, especially in manufacturing, which according to Fine, "resulted in worsened conditions, factory closings, and the rise of lower paying service sector jobs" (2006, p. 9). According to Fine, major catalysts such as the inequality between African American and white workers and the exploitation within ethnic economic enclaves as well as the broader economy accelerated the rise of worker centers. The activists who founded these centers originated from a diversity of organizing experiences from peace, student, civil rights, and worker movements from the 1960s and 1970s. The first wave of worker centers in general were "pro union", however were critical of organized labor. The large number of Latino immigrants originating in Central America, many of them moving to metropolitan urban and sub urban areas influenced the second wave of centers from the 1980s and early to mid 1990s. In this wave, there was also an important participation of immigrants from South East Asia. These groups of centers learned from the organizational experience of the first wave of worker centers influenced by churches, other faith-based organizations (NGOs) and unions. However, the third wave of worker centers began in 2000 to the present and emerged in the cities. Never the less, this wave has seen the rise of worker centers in suburban and rural areas and in the American South, a region affected by the rise of Mexican and Central American immigrants concentrated in the service, poultry,

meat packing, and agricultural sectors. The third wave has seen the rise of a more ethnically diverse population of Filipino, Korean, African, and South East Asian immigrants and represented more in faith-based organizations and unions (Fine, 2006, p. 11)

According to Fine, worker centers share a diverse set of features and characteristics: “Certain first-wave and early second-wave centers have been the inspiration that others have modeled themselves on, there is no specific organizational model, strategy, or structure that predominates across all or most centers.” Though, there seems to be two general approaches or tendencies: 1) one tendency works closely with the faith community; a close cooperation with government agencies; and encouraging union organizing, 2) the second tendency while not rejecting or discouraging union organizing, prefer the creation of an independent direction for workers in the communities. Despite the approach the centers take, Fine asserts the centers engage “in helping workers to claim unpaid wages, working with government agencies to improve enforcement, mounting across actions organizing campaigns against specific employers and sometimes across particular industries, and engaging in leadership development and popular education activities.” Finally, the study concluded that the worker centers emphasize the need for an independence from each other and other national organizations or networks.

Fine’s study provides an excellent overview of the features of most worker centers in the United States. Fine discovered the following features: 1) hybrid organizations, 2) service provisions, 3) advocacy centers, 4) organizing centers, 5) place-based rather than work-site based, 6) strong ethnic and racial identification, 7) leadership

development and internal democracy, 8) popular education, 9) thinking globally, 10) a broad agenda, 11) coalition building, and 12) small and involved membership (2006, pp. 12-14). To conclude the examination of this major research project on worker centers, Fine presents an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the worker centers. Among the strengths identified in this study of worker centers, Fine emphasized the following: 1) leadership development, 2) providing vehicles for collective voice, 3) effective enforcement of minimum wage and other employment laws, 4) pioneering campaigns for improving conditions in low-wage industries, and 5) experimentation/”Bottom upness” (2006, pp. 248-252). On the other hand, the weaknesses of the worker centers included 1) numbers/scale, 2) economic and political strategy/research, 3) sustainability, and 4) political, moral, and economic power” (Fine, 2006, pp. 252-260).

The following section examines the history of Casa Latina, and how it emerges as a day work center in the Pacific Northwest. Through my direct participation in Casa Latina, my ethnographic research based on conversations and interviews with workers and the organizers of the center allowed me to document this important chapter in the history of Latina/o day laborers in the Pacific Northwest.⁶ A central and foundational participant and player is Hillary Stern, the founder and Executive director of Casa Latina since its inception in 1994 until 2015.

The historical narrative of the center is divided into three important phases: 1) the first phase 1994-1998, 2) the second phase 1998-2008, and 3) the third phase 2008-2015.

Casa Latina: 1st Phase 1994-1998

In the early 1990s, community organizers noticed the demographic changes in the Seattle area, with the entrance of large number of Latino homeless in the downtown area.

This trend corresponded with the demographic shift noted in the census discussion on the Latina/o community in the state of Washington (see Table 1): already beginning in the 1990s, the Latina/o population shifted from the traditional rural Eastern Washington communities to Western Washington urban communities. Community organizer Hilary Stern, former director of the Seattle Education Center in 1993 and co-founder of the contemporary Casa Latina provide an important overview of the emergence of day laborers in the Seattle area. According to Stern, this early contact with predominantly Latina/o homeless in the city via education started with an English as a Second Language (ESL) program.

A few years before, her predecessor received a grant to teach ESL to homeless Latinos in the downtown area and noted the changing demographics in the city:

“My predecessor before I got the job, which was 1992 or 1991, she had gotten a grant to teach ESL to homeless Latinos downtown. She noticed that there was an influx of Latinos that were coming downtown and that were homeless. They were coming to look for work after being recruited by the fishing industry. But they didn’t have any social ties here, so when they got here they were poor, and most of them came here by hopping freight trains. So they get down to the train station down in Jackson, and they just kind of get off and wonder around Pioneer Square. It was their first point of arrival in Seattle. Occidental park became kind of the center where homeless Latinos were hanging out. Also, they started applying for jobs in fishing, but the contracting process was not immediate: they didn’t have any savings, or money or know anybody to have a place to stay. Thus, they started making their way over to traveler’s aid in the downtown Y, and at that time nobody in Traveler’s aid spoke Spanish, nobody really spoke Spanish at all in Seattle. There was not any perceived need to speak Spanish if you worked in the downtown shelters, until all of sudden people who were coming only spoke Spanish”.

Later, Stern received a grant through a federal program called Adult Education Program for Homeless and began her work in the same floor with Traveler’s Aid. The organizers of the growing Latino homeless population in the Seattle area interacted closely with older established social service organizations such as the Traveler’s Aid service

organizations and the Millionaire Club. This location was an excellent place where she met workers seeking help in translation and thus became acquainted with the needs of the Latino working population. Further indication of the changes in the Seattle area, Stern noted the following trends in the city:

“First of all, I found out people were going to look for work temporarily for example at the home depot. They came from LA and that area. They go to Home Depot, but there was nothing going on. There was not any tradition of hiring. If you want to get work, they would go to the Millionaire Club, but they couldn’t really get registered because nobody there spoke Spanish. The Millionaire Club thought it was a requirement to speak English; first they could not communicate with them, and they could not communicate with the employer. The Millionaire club thought it was a requirement for them to speak English. So, they started waiting for work outside the Millionaire club.”

Organizers in Seattle discovered the Millionaire Club area was located in a corner associated with the hiring of workers. It was a ship out zone for longshoremen and it was known as an area to pick up laborers before the 1930s. Historians of the central area of Seattle support the importance of this area in the attraction of homeless workers. In the 1930s, Morrow described the high demand for housing in the central area of Seattle:

“Social service agencies were suddenly overwhelmed by the rising demand for assistance. In Seattle, groups like the Salvation Army faced a substantial rise in the demand for housing. While the organization operated two shelters in Seattle for homeless men, they could simply not meet the need. In 1932, they converted an unused federal immigration building at the corner of second and Main in the heart of the day labor district to add more space. The new facility held nearly seven hundred beds in dormitories with triple stacked bunks. It was regularly filled to capacity. (2015, p. 280)

Historically, the Millionaire Club operated in the city since the 1920s due to the economic effects after World War I in the United States. Founded by Martin G. Johanson, a local businessman founded the charity organization inspired by the lines of people in a local soup kitchen. Subsequently, the organization offered social and support services such as

jobs, and hot meals to the local population in the Seattle area.

In the 1990s, organizers noted other developments in the rise of new laborers, the presence of group of laborers in the Belltown area.

“At that time, when we started to investigate more we found there were groups of laborers organized by nationalities. They each had a zone. There was a pecking order, because there were certain areas that were better because they were close to the cars. So, most of the cars all came off from 99 than started on Western. They go down stream. There was a big pecking order of sorts, I do not remember, but I think it was Mexicans, Central Americans, and Indigenous people who did not speak Spanish. People stood with people they could talk to and relate to. It was also organized in prime spots and other spots were not as great.”

As organizers became aware of the rise of this new type of workers, it was difficult to identify them since at time there was no such thing as day laborers.

Part of the problem in identifying them was the diverse background of the workers, Hilary described the type of workers entering the state of Washington, more specifically, the Seattle area:

“They were coming to Seattle to look for work; some of them had worked in the fields before, some came directly from Mexico but most of them came first from Los Angeles. They had family and were working there, but found it was saturated with people with the same skills. There was not enough work, so they started going farther north. They heard in Seattle there was a lot of work in fishing. This is why they started coming to Seattle. We didn’t know what to call them, they were kind like migrant workers, but we called them urban migrant workers.”

According to Stern, there were other people in the area interested in organizing this new type of workers. For example, there was a Salvadorian union organizer by the name of David Ayala who came up to the United States through political asylum. With a one-year grant from the Department of Neighborhoods in Seattle via the Northwest Immigration Rights Project, David was organizing a new group mostly to teach them immigration rights:

“He would gather them up in Occidental park in Pioneer Square in the afternoons.

He would have meetings every Thursday at 4 pm. He would get them around in a giant circle, there were probably between 50 to 100 people every time, and then each week they were identifying issues, kind like our “asamblea” now. They would identify issues, and he would form committees to investigate solutions. For example, one of the issues was people needed a place to look for work. Others wanted ESL classes. Yet others wanted a place to be there in the day, because they were staying in shelters, and were kicked out in the morning. They did not have a place to be inside particularly in bad weather.”

This attempt to organize Latino workers in the Seattle area failed to materialize due to the constant move of the leadership. According to Stern, “The people that had the highest leadership capabilities would come and take a leadership role and after a few weeks they would leave. They wouldn’t stick around to be a leader for other workers.” The new strategy involved the organization of a more stable leadership, thus, David reached out to a group of around six to seven organizers. The group met every week to discuss the organization for this new type of workers: the group of organizers shared the same vision of a welcome center or a physical space. However, the diversity of interests among the organizers eventually led to a split into two groups. Hilary Stern describes the result of this split in the group:

“We decided to split the group in two. We just meet separately on our different strategies for starting something up and also connect once a month to see how each was going. But it kind of became like a race to see who could be more successful. It turned out that my group was more successful. Part of the reason, I was the only person in the group who had any experience with administration of programs since everybody else was direct service. I was able to work with the Y, who was going through a new strategic planning process with their new CEO. It seemed like the programs we were doing for Latino homeless was really not fitting into their strategic plan, so they were very happy to help me spin off that part into a new organization. They facilitated those two grants going off into this new organization. So, I went with the two grants (Adult Education for Homeless and Street Theater).”

One of the most interesting projects in the early years and in preparation for the type of work with the day laborer center was the street theater. In the words of Hilary

Stern, the street theater was based and inspired on popular education. Popular education is based on the important work of Paulo Freire and the Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Freire challenged traditional models of education and literacy and proposed several features of a critical perspective on traditional education: 1) the schools do not teach students to be critical thinkers; 2) the schools promote what he called the “banking concept of education”; 3) students repeated and memorized facts; 4) this method of education resulted in the acceptance of the status quo; and 5) this resulted with the ideological control of the people through symbols, patriotism and other forces of control. According to Freire, the new method of education and literacy should be based in the development of critical thinkers who challenge the status quo with the acquisition of “consciousness”. Students learn to read and write but at the same time apply critical thinking skills to expose the “oppressor” and at the same time, the “oppressed” want to liberate the “oppressor” from the dehumanization of the system. Hilary Stern described the activities of the street theater in reaching out to the homeless Latino workers. After listening to the work of the street theater, in fact, it illustrated the close connection between the theory of popular education and its application to the reality of the workers:

“We were first finding out what people issues were and pick whatever issue they had and make a little skit out of it. We tried to exaggerate as much as possible and show the skit. At the point of greatest conflict, we would stop it and ask: hey what is happening? Has this ever happened to you? People would share experiences and we asked, what could you do? Sometimes we do English classes or we give out information about clinics. Then we had people re-do the skits using what they learned.”

Further demonstration of the effectiveness of popular education emerged in the various topics covered by the street theater project. Hilary identified wage theft as one of the most important topics.

“The topics were for example wage theft. It was for example a couple of people jumping in a car not exactly knowing what they were supposed to do. Later on they found they were taken down to Olympia to do a job in roofing. They did not know what they were doing. They were scared and they never asked how much they were going to get pay. The employers said you are going to get ten dollars. The workers would say oh! ten dollars an hour after they finished it. The employer said, “Just 10 dollars.” The worker asked ten dollars each? The employer replied, “No ten dollars for the two of you”. We thought it was funny and exaggerated. When people would share experiences, no matter how bad we try to make it up, they always had a worse one. This is when we discovered wage theft. They would tell us on how the employer paid them with a check that bounced. That was really common. We go into what we can do. We developed another one: how do we get enough from the person, and where can you complain?”

Other important topics presented by the street theater were the aids epidemic, general health issues (dental clinics, health clinics), and work-related issues. In later years, organizers and workers incorporated these lessons as part of the training of the day laborers. Hilary recalls the following topics of the street theater:

“Aids was a big thing, for immigrants, they never heard of it before in the early 1990s. In the US, it was an epidemic. We talked on and how they could use condoms. We did tooth aches. The workers did not know where to go to health clinics or dental clinics. A few (skits) around work: just being able to negotiate conditions of work and part of how you talk to employers before you get into the car. What are you supposed to do?”

As an outreach tool in the search of workers, the presentations were done twice a week and rotated in different locations. There were performances twice a week and lasted from one to two hours, depending on the location of the presentations. According to Stern, one of the places was Western Street, however, it was more difficult to do the skits in the streets: people had shorter attention span.

At other times, the performances were done inside, for example in places like the downtown public library, where people found newspapers in Spanish as well as at the Gospel Mission and downtown emergency service center. One of the places stood out

from the other locations:

“There was this place where somebody just did movies. It was a Thursday afternoon movie. It was near Seattle U, somebody, I do not even know who it was. They had gotten this dingy room, a place where they would give out soup and play movies. People would go there, but a lot of them were not sober. It was a tough crowd. Sometimes they were great, sometimes we really got heckled. Those were the different places we had the street theater.”

The first years of the organization emphasized education and the use of street theater in reaching out to the Latina/o homeless working-class population in the Seattle area. In order to stabilize the organization, the leadership initiated the formalization of the organization by looking for a fiscal sponsor. Eventually, the Northwest Immigration Rights Project became the fiscal sponsor who provided a loan of four thousand dollars, which had to be paid in two years. In the beginning, the group did not have a name, until it became CASA (Centro de la Ayuda Solidaria de los Amigos). According to Stern the real start of the organization began in January of 1994. The organizers focused on the formation of a board, the bylaws, and the preparation of the articles of incorporation. It was not until April of 1995, when the organization received the 501CR3 and became independent from Northwest Immigration Rights Project. While working in the community, the group found out there was an organization with the same name. It stood for Court Appointed Special Advocates, a program advocating for children. It caused confusion while working in the community, thus it eventually became CASA Latina. As the organization became known in the area, more people started to look for them in the first physical location. After complaints from the building manager, the group was evicted from the office space.

The organizers began to look for a new place in Belltown and eventually found office space in the area. Since the city funds were for homelessness, there was a

requirement for the use of the funds: the neighborhood had to be notified of their intention to move in the area. By this time, the Belltown area saw an increase in the number of workers in the streets and it became a concern to the business and residents in the neighborhood. The group notified the Belltown Business Association and was glad to see an organization responsible for the presence of day laborers in the streets of the community. Hilary described the reaction from the association:

“We contacted the Belltown Business Association to tell them that we were moving in and nobody knew who we were at that point. But the Belltown Business Association when they found out that we were moving our offices there, they responded with relief, “Oh my god you work with the people outside on the street? We’ve wanted to figure out how to basically get rid of them. When we talked to the Millionaire club we were told, they are not part of them so they do not take any responsibility for them. We are so glad to find you: we can finally talk to somebody who takes responsibility of the people in the street”

Initially, the organization focused on educational issues in their outreach to the community of homeless people and what they called “urban migrant workers.” As the story unfolded, it became clear to the leadership, the organization faced a new issue. Hilary noted the beginning of a “negotiated solution” in attempt to determine what was best for the neighborhood and the day laborers.” Thus, the organizers brought the workers into the discussions for a solution between the various political forces involved in the neighborhood. This particular phase of the politics of the organization took place around the month of July of 1998. The negotiations were conflictive since some of the members in the neighborhood expressed anger towards the day laborers. Prior to the negotiated solution the members in the neighborhood attempted other solutions to the problem, for example, they brought the immigration in hopes of removing the workers from the streets as well as the police to arrest and fine the day laborers for public urination and public drinking. However, the workers returned to the streets preparing the

ground for an alternative solution to the problem. Following the basic philosophy and ideals of popular education, Hilary took the workers to the meetings, which indirectly helped in minimizing the racist overtones between the participants in the negotiations. During one of the retreats of the staff, the discussion focused on one of the defining issues of the future of the organization and forced the organizers to reconsider a new mission: the issue of employment and the organization of people around work.

Consequently, the leadership hired Jaime Mendez as the first coordinator of the workers who was also responsible in reaching out to the neighbors. Moreover, the organization hired, Martin, one of the day workers to help out in the meetings with the day laborers in Western as well as reporting on the results of the discussions to the staff. While the organizers met with the workers in the streets, they met a musical group called Los Jornaleros del Norte from Southern California led by Pablo Alvarado. The meeting with the group from Southern California was like an epiphany to the organizers of Casa Latina. Hilary recalled the importance of the encounter with Pablo Alvarado and the Jornaleros del Norte:

“Completely, this was before the internet. We didn’t know this was happening anywhere else but in Seattle. Here we are meeting people from Los Angeles with day laborers and we called them urban migrant workers. They had a center and they were organizing 300 corners in LA at that time. You are doing the same thing and I could not believe that we did not even know we had the same experience. We did not realize the national context until we met them.”

Discussions with the organizers from Southern California allowed them to see the connections with the issues of day laborers in other parts of the United States, specifically, the social and economic forces affecting urban areas. Hilary articulated well the social-economic forces transforming communities throughout the United States, which were very similar to those impacting communities in the cities. Gentrification was

a major force in the re-development of urban communities, which directly affected poor working-class communities in the cities:

“When we were organizing there were warehouses, they were bought out and re developed block by block. They closed a piece of Western moving the day laborers from one place to another. Belltown became a hip place to go out for nightlife. They wanted to build a tourist destination. They just built a cruise ship pier. They wanted them directly to Belltown but went through a path to day laborers. They wanted to move them away: they were intimidating to the tourists coming to Belltown”

Most significant in the contact with Pablo Alvarado and the Jornaleros del Norte was the experience and knowledge in connecting with the political forces to advance the interests of the day laborers. Hilary recognized the importance of the lesson to organize neighbors, workers and the establishment of centers supported by the local political structures.

Consequently, the next step was to identify local politicians who could play an important role in promoting the new mission of the organization. Even though, she did not know any of the council members in Seattle, Hilary approached Richard Common and asked him on the possibility of acquiring a space or property for the center. In fact, he had a map of city owned property and located a property in Western and Battery. It was rented to a parking company. The council member collaborated with Hilary to take back the property from the parking company and to rent it in the process to serve the day laborers. Thus, the organizers of Casa Latina in cooperation with the city council member mobilized people during the budget hearings. According to Hilary about 100 people came to testify, including the police, the Belltown Business organization and the day workers. Eventually in October 1998, the city council provided one hundred thousand dollars to start up the workers center. This was the beginning of a new phase in the history of Casa Latina.

Casa Latina Second Phase: 1999-2009

It's easy to forget that Casa Latina, as an organization never started as a worker center. Even for many of the workers who have spent many years in the organization, forget this history and assume that Casa Latina dispatched workers since its inception. It was the second phase from 1999 to 2008, when it begins to be recognized nationwide as a model for other day worker centers.

With the city's approval in 1998, Hillary and associates now had the task of introducing Casa Latina to the community of Belltown. Seattle, once considered a very "blue collar" town, was undergoing the process of gentrification accelerated by the hi-tech industry (Microsoft, Amazon etc.) The Belltown neighborhood constructed very expensive condominiums, changing the face of the neighborhood. To many of the neighbors of this area the presence of Latino day workers was an eyesore, to their booming community. Like Belltown, the city of Seattle also saw great change. With new buildings, and the re-modeling of houses, this economic boom increased employment, more specifically the hiring of day workers. In conversations with many of the workers who were around this time in the area, they corroborated there was plenty of work available. It was common for many of the day workers during this time to get work from months to years. With more available work, fewer workers traveled to Alaska, and stayed year-round in Seattle. The increase of Latino day workers, and the booming economy in Belltown came into conflict with the day worker population. The community members associated with the gentrification of the city saw the workers as a liability to the investments in this area. Thus, these political interests decided to go to city hall to force them out of the area. Despite the opposition, the new workers center opened in the

summer of 1999, and began to dispatch workers. The connection Hilary made with Pablo Alvarado, and *Jornaleros del Norte* was essential to the development of Casa Latina's new dispatch center: They were part of the development of day labor centers in the state of California. Casa Latina sent two workers to train them on how to run a day worker center.

As Casa Latina initiated the outreach to the growing day worker population, it faced the dilemma of how to attract the workers to the center. In the beginning, the organizers faced opposition or reluctance from the day workers to participate in the new center. Consequently, there were two rival forces; one group of workers connected to the center and the other group of workers to the street corners. The location for the day worker center was prime with its proximity for cars coming off the Alaska way viaduct. The leadership of Casa Latina examined the ways to convince workers to join the center and stop the competition with the street corner day laborers. There were several reasons Casa Latina faced this resistance from the workers, for example, on the corner workers did not have to follow rules or any type of conduct. More importantly from the perspective of the workers, they felt more in control as individuals in deciding the wages for their labor.

In the words of Hilary Stern, the director of Casa Latina:

“They had more ability to get better work by themselves and then trying to work with a group. Also, they thought basically they like to hustle, and they also didn't want to follow any rules.”

This contrasted with Casa Latina workers, where the workers set the wages as a class. An interesting note, about this time as mentioned before, home improvement stores like Home Depot or Lowes have yet to become sites for day workers in the Seattle area

(compared to the experience of other areas such as California). With the publicity of the new center, according to Stern, Casa Latina may have created new hiring sites at Home, Depot. Workers were left at Home Depot with a chalkboard and flyers. However, what they found out when they went to pick up the volunteers, the workers were nowhere to be found, except for the chalkboard. Customers from the Home Depot were hiring the volunteers on a regular basis.

Casa Latina decided to find ways to attract the workers to the center, but it had to set conditions in the competition with the day workers in the corners. However, Casa Latina had to decide not to compete with the day workers in the corners by essentially establishing their territory: After experiencing the continuous struggle between the two groups, the director decided it was time to change the strategy:

“Finally, we just actually stopped competing and said okay from this line forward which is our property line you guys stay off on this area right where our driveway is, you guys can have the rest of it”

According to Stern, Casa Latina had to find ways to connect with the workers in the corners rather than compete with them and the employers. Consequently, the staff in Casa Latina concluded they had some advantages over the workers in the corners. First of all, they had a telephone number that could be used in publicity flyers to announce the work of the center.

“People could actually call us in and order workers in advance. It was the beginning of our flyer project designed to get employers to use the center for workers.”

Casa Latina began to offer a van service to take the workers to the location of the employers for US\$ 5. This was an advantage to the workers in the corners and the employers since it established a more organized dispatch of the workers.

As more workers connected with the activities and services of the center problems began to arise in different areas. The dispatch system was called a drop-in system where any worker could come into Casa Latina without any commitment or membership requirement. Eventually, a committee of workers began to examine the possibility of a membership fee. They met several times to discuss how it could be implemented; however, they failed to keep the workers informed on the direction of the discussions. The actions of the committee members alienated a large number of Casa Latina day workers, who felt the US\$ 50 fee was too excessive and punitive.

There were other problems with the growth of the day laborers participating in the new Casa Latina center. Another issue was the increase of injuries occurring to workers and the inability of the center to address the problem. Consequently, university professors at the University of Washington completed a study on questions of health. As a result of this study, it forced Casa Latina to begin training via workshops on health risks related to jobs performed by day laborers.

Another problem facing the center with the growth of day laborers and the drop-in system included the lack of control of job preparation. Many workers asserted they knew how to perform a particular skill, for example, painting houses or construction tasks. However, many times the workers did not know and caused quality problems with the employers (and an increase of complaints against the workers in the center). Other problems were related more with conduct or behavior, for example, drinking in the job.

Towards the end of this phase conflict eventually emerged among the day workers in the center as well as in preparation for the move to the current location for Casa Latina. In two articles published in the Seattle Times on February 15 and March 18, 2007, the

newspaper reported that central area community and business leaders supported the establishment of a social service agency. Initially, Casa Latina explored the possibility of establishing the center of operations in the Old Chubby and Tubby Garden Center; however, it faced vocal opposition from the community. In May 2005, Casa Latina gave up on the project after concluding the site was too expensive to re-develop. Eventually, Casa Latina and central community and business leaders concluded an agreement to house the social service agency on 17th Ave and South Jackson St. a US\$ 3.5 million complex. The city gave US\$ 250,000 to begin the construction of the structure, which according to the newspaper, provides an organized, safe process for hiring day laborers, while addressing safety concerns by requiring employers to pick workers inside the property than on the streets. However, the community opposed the move into the new location and exposed the race and class fault lines in the debate over Casa Latina. The newspaper recorded that in “One well attended meeting dissolved into hissing and shouting after some residents compared the day laborers to trash and said they would pose a threat to school children.” The residents (both white and African American) expressed typical arguments in the opposition of the center in the community by citing its impact on property values with the presence of day laborers and the increase of traffic of trucks and cars in search of employment. Residents complained of the lack of communication and information of the approved plan to relocate Casa Latina to the new location. Moreover, the newspaper article reported the opposition forces collected more than 1000 signatures for a petition opposing the move. Once again, the typical complains cited the increase of “transients and “tag-along” associated with crime and social problems in the neighborhood. Hilary Stern responded to the newspaper that the center

informed the community in various ways including community outreach programs, contacting social service agencies and neighborhood groups, sending post cards to all neighbors within 1000 feet of the site. Also, spokesperson for the Mayor reiterated that Casa Latina spent months talking to people and garnered significant support from community groups.

Part of the opposition came from Kawabe Memorial House, a 10-story apartment building for seniors, while the Japanese Congregation Church supported the move to the site. Hilary Stern commented on the reception from the community:

“We were very surprised. It was so noncontroversial when we did our outreach around the new site. We were greeted with not just tolerance but welcoming from the people we talked to and we were very excited about moving.”

Finally, during the same time period towards the end of the second phase, the success of the center in attracting workers posed new problems amongst the day laborers and staff in the center. In a March 1, 2009, article in the Seattle Times, a group of day laborers protested the direction and administration of the activities in the center. This group of workers criticized the assignment of jobs and demanded the dismissal of 3 staff members. Moreover, the group demanded the formation or establishment of worker board of directors. In response to the protest and the complaints from the workers, the director of the center in collaboration with the Department of Human Services formed a 40-day laborers and job staffers in the center to investigate the accusations from the workers. Upon consideration of the findings of the review group, Hilary Stern, the director of the center addressed the issues of the workers. It was decided that workers would be involved in job distribution, and the commitment from Casa Latina to form a worker board of directors. However, she refused to fire staff members accused by the group of workers

and concluded it was a problem without proof.

Casa Latina Third Phase: 2009- 2015

The final phase in the history Casa Latina, deals with moving Casa Latina offices, and the DWC into a new building in the central district area of Seattle. During this time, I was able to experience changes firsthand. Before my intentions of making my dissertation site Casa Latina. I started as a volunteer at Casa Latina, working in the day worker center in the early part of 2008, and finished my volunteer work during the summer. I returned until 2011 where I remained full time at Casa Latina, and officially became my dissertation site. A staff who remembered me as a volunteer joked about my return to the center: I returned to Casa Latina when it was a much calmer place, and that I should have experienced the problems Casa Latina when they moved into the new building.

I was able to experience very little of the 2nd phase when the DWC was located in Belltown, and problems that occurred right after I left, when they moved to the new site, in the Central District of Seattle. I was able to experience and see the differences between both places, and how much of a different place Casa Latina had become in such a short time. During my time, the recession had hit hard Seattle, especially day workers. The number of jobs had greatly decreased, and by 2009 coupled with the negative press, of the conflict between workers, Casa Latina dispatched its fewest jobs between 2008 through 2011. The wages of the workers had changed in 4 years, with a minimum of US\$13. Following the “revolution”, new rules were put in place that allowed it lay the foundation for a much stronger DWC down the road. One of the biggest changes that occurred was the weekly meeting “*la asamblea*”. It allowed workers to discuss

questions about dispatch, sanctions against workers, and the current political climate. With less work, the *asambleas* were filled, and had a large active participation.¹

By 2011 Casa Latina received enough funds through their capital campaign to complete the DWC. By fall of 2012 Casa Latina began to expand again by building a new 3-story building, which eventually contained the new DWC, and classrooms for ESL and other activities. By this time, dispatching became more modern with the creation of a new database called “*Machete*”. Workers were now logged into a central system, where workers saved their jobs. On the heels of the election of Barrack Obama, and feeling optimistic, there was hope for full immigration reform. With the data saved, it could be used as means to prove they existed, in case of some immigration reform program. It was also easier to make reports in fundraising activities.

By 2012 signs of the recession and memory of the problems they had before ended. There were more jobs, and the workers decided it was time to demand higher wages; the minimum rose to US\$ 15. By this time House cleaners, (called Household helpers) become a much stronger presence at the center. The women had a larger presence, via the monthly “*asambleas*” to discuss their problems. While often dispatched with men, they had a different type of dispatch. Before, the space was never shared between women. By end of 2012 construction of the building was completed, and the work center moved into a much larger space. On the heels of success in 2012, work continued to increase by 2013.

¹ This aspect will be covered more extensively and in more detail in Chapter 6.

The following table identifies the various terrains of struggle of Casa Latina's day workers from 1999 to 2015.

The Terrains of Struggle of Casa Latina's Jornaleras and Jornaleros, 1999-2015

- **Organization of People Around Work**
- **Wage Theft**
- **Workplace Safety and Health Hazards**
- **Exposure to chemicals and fumes**
- **Lack of safety equipment**
- **Exposure to dangerous conditions (Occupation Safety Hazard Association violations)**
- **Health Risks of day laborers**
- **Domestic Bill of Rights**
- **Defending Fair Wages and the \$15 dills campaign**
- **Establishment of Women's Cooperative**
- **Domestic Workers and the Elderly Care campaign**

Table 7 The Terrains of Struggle of Casa Latina's Jornaleras and Jornaleros, 1999-2015

By 2014 Casa Latina, and workers joined the fight for \$15 dills in Seattle. Many workers spoke bravely at city council detailing, how Casa Latina already had a \$15 dollar minimum. The diversity of terrains of struggle the *jornaleras* and *jornaleros* engaged in the history of Casa Latina is a testament to the power of the workers in challenging the power of capital in its own terms.

CONCLUSION

By 2015 Hilary Stern decided to step down as Executive Director of Casa Latina, and it concluded the final phase of her tenure. Hilary with the help of countless others were able to create a space (Casa Latina), where day workers and domestic workers can practice their agency and fully participate in a democratic system created by themselves. It is important to document this emerging community of workers, and their impact both locally and nationally. Every experience and struggle that occurred, from its foundation to the present, has made Casa Latina a stronger organization.

This chapter examined the social, demographic, and political changes in the Latina/o community in the state of Washington, which gave rise to a new form of labor organization. It recorded the demographic changes of a traditionally rural community historically located in the Eastern region of Washington to an urbanized population in the Western Seattle-Puget Sound region.

These changes gave rise to new terrains of struggle for the growing Latina/o working class population in the Pacific Northwest region as well as in the state of Washington. Through an examination of the rise of Casa Latina, a worker center located in the Seattle area, the chapter illustrates the changing characteristics of the Latina/o population. Based on interviews and personal participation in the activities of the center, this study divides the development of Casa Latina into three periods or phases. From 1994 to 1998, Casa Latina origins began through a focus on popular education and the development of political consciousness among homeless and unemployed people in the Seattle area. In the interaction with the Latina/o homeless population, the organizers noted the changes occurring in the Seattle area and the presence of a growing day laborer

population experiencing such things as “wage theft”. However, it is until the second phase from 1998 to 2008, when Casa Latina engages in a full attack in the protection of the day laborer population in the Seattle area and the beginnings of a new terrain of struggle: the organization of Latina/o day workers and the struggle for fair wages and better working conditions. After experiencing problems in the organization and establishment of the worker center, by the third phase from 2008-2015, Casa Latina was stronger and able to address a variety of tasks and struggles affecting the “*jornalero/a*” population in the Seattle area. During this phase of the worker center, there are now weekly meetings, where information on immigration, questions about dispatch, and sanctions are taken into a vote. Specialty jobs are designed to make sure workers can perform the work and avoid the problems of the past in Casa Latina. There is a great discussion of wages and an active participation in the demand for higher wages. To avoid or minimize the impact of injuries in the job, the worker center implemented the training of workers in safety in the workplace through workshops and educational sessions in the use of chemicals and other potential dangers in the safety of day laborers.

Chapter 5: Resistance and Agency: Women of Casa Latina's Worker's Center Struggle for Dignity and Empowerment

Women are the new face of resistance at Casa Latina, retelling their stories in front of city hall or at the forefront of a march. The women who belong to the *HHH(Household Helpers)* and *Mujeres sin Fronteras(Women without borders)*, represent the day workers as the face of Casa Latina. While the focus of Casa Latina has not changed, as discussed in previous chapters, political participation from the day worker side of the programs has dwindled over the years. Women who participate in the program take a much more active and political role in the struggle for worker and women rights. This chapter examines the history of women in the foundation of Casa Latina, and their contribution to the larger working-class struggle in the United States.

Studies on day laborers focus primarily on male *jornaleros*, however, in recent years, there has been a rise in the participation of women day laborers in labor struggles. The participation of women day laborers in Casa Latina present one of the first experiments in the development of leadership and organizational skills in the outreach to the growing involvement of women in day worker struggles. While women in day labor struggles, is a recent development, historically, Latina women have been involved in working class struggles. There is a research and scholarship on how women organize politically and challenge the male centered community organizations. Consequently, this chapter examines a selective body of the scholarship relevant to the participation of women in community struggles and the lessons and insights it provides in the study of

women day laborers. A second and important focus of the chapter is the analysis of women organizing within Casa Latina, more specifically, the creation of women led groups such as *Household Helpers (HHH)* and *Mujeres sin Fronteras* find a space in a predominantly male day laborer center. First it describes their role and their relationship to Casa Latina. *HHH* are domestic workers of Casa Latina who set their own rules and participate in their own “*asamblea*”. *Mujeres sin Fronteras* is a group dedicated to the discussion of women issues, family, health, immigration, and work. Also, *Mujeres sin Fronteras* are involved in such campaigns as the “*Not 1 More*”, “*\$15 Now*”, “*Crossing Generations*”, and “*Hundred Women, Hundred Miles*”.² The chapter focuses on organizational decision making in *HHH*, and *Mujeres sin Fronteras* and offers an assessment of the role of women at Casa Latina’s political campaigns and political power. Finally, it concludes with a discussion of the significant themes and ideas presented in the voices of the activists and organizers of Casa Latina.

Day Workers Literature and Gender Issues

A review of the literature on dayworkers reveals that there is a paucity of studies on the role of women in the formation of day-worker centers in the United States. Fine’s excellent study on worker centers examines the role of gender in three pages and highlights the activities of a small number of centers on the participation of women. The study identifies several of the problem’s women face within worker’s organizations, including poverty, ethnicity, and gender. Women must confront the patriarchal structures

² These political campaigns range from immigration issues, fair wages, and care for the elderly.

of worker's organizations and the subordination of women needs to the rule of men. Moreover, women fail to recognize or accept their work as "real work", especially in housekeeping work. According to Rice, worker centers emphasize "consciousness raising" and "confidence building components" in the pursuit of "for their larger project of organizing women to improve their labor market positions to succeed (Fine, 2006, p.70)." This was done with the establishment of separate all-women spaces for discussion such as autonomous projects or committees. Some worker centers focused on women laboring in sewing and housekeeping jobs, while others emphasized leadership development goals and programs for women of color. Fine examined the emergence of women activist committees within the larger context of organizations such as the co-operative UNITY. *Fuerza Laboral Feminina* was a committee in the co-operative in response to the subordination of women within the organization and provided a space for women to discuss workplace issues, community building and the ability to plot strategies. Finally, there has been an increase in the recognition of gender issues among the staff of worker centers, which has led to "a more participatory process for campaign strategy planning and decision making" (Fine, 2006, p. 71).

Literature on Latina Laborers, Activists, Organizers, and Leaders

Research and scholarship on women in the region is an emerging body of literature that includes a diversity of topics from general overviews of the Chicana in the Northwest (Villaroel & Fancher Garcia, 1995), local community activists (Garcia, 1998), Mexican American women politicians in Seattle (Salas, 2003), and regional farmworker organizers (Cuevas, 2005). In spite of the limited body of literature on women in the Pacific Northwest, the participation of Latinas as activists, organizers and leaders in the

in the region is grounded in a long history of working-class movements in the United States. There is a body of literature that informs the activism and organizing of Latina women on their participation in the day labor movement. This body of literature focuses on the contribution of radical and feminist scholars primarily from the field of Chicana/Latina Studies, an interdisciplinary emphasis, which includes sociology, history, anthropology, and feminist studies.

The classic studies by Vicky L. Ruiz's (1987) *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950* and Patricia Zavella's (1987) *Women's Work and Chicano Families: Cannery Workers of the Santa Clara Valley* established the foundations for an understanding of Latina working class movements, with a critique of traditional interpretations of women activism in labor movements. Ruiz captured the significance of the early struggles of women in labor movements: "Mexican working-class history is a chronicle of struggle, a struggle of proud courageous men and women joining" together whenever possible to counter economic and ethnic oppression" (1987, p. 123). In the analysis of women of Mexican origin, Ruiz discovered similar defining characteristics associated with labor and its impact on the family structure. "In general, women's employment in food processing industry strengthened, rather than disrupted Mexican families. The extension of family and friend networks inside southern California food processing plants nurtured the development of a closely knit work environment, one which eased their adjustment to the routines and conditions of labor peculiar to canneries and packing houses" (1987, pp. 19-20). This study challenged the stereotypical conception of passive and subservient Latina women in labor struggles and provided evidence of the participation of women in

organizational leadership positions. In fact, the UCAPAWA recruited women into leadership positions from steward to international vice president and incorporated Mexican and other ethnic women into diverse positions of decision-making (Ruiz, 1987, pp. 38-39). In summary, the study documented the important role of Latina activists in leadership roles and recorded the “highest percentage of shop stewardships, executive board offices, and committee posts. Beyond leadership positions, *Mexicanas* and Mexican American women represented their locals at government hearings (Ruiz, 1987, p. 83).” According to Ruiz the “exchanges on the line between family and friends, sharing interests rooted in ethnicity, generation, and gender, not only integrated operatives into the routines on the shop floor but could also serve as the conduits for trade union activities. Thus, rather than interpreting the “cannery culture” as a negative force among activists, this empowered the women “the means for exercising control over their work lives “(1987, p. 84.). Zavella’s scholarship continues the critical tradition established in previous studies on women and labor activism and proposes a socialist feminist alternative perspective. In this study, the author examines the connections of the institution of the family and gender inequality in the context of the labor market. More specifically, Zavella explores the historical aspect of inequality in long term seasonal employment in the canning industry, however, in contrast to Ruiz’s study, the author applies an anthropological perspective (ethnographic) with a radical feminist perspective. Throughout the study, Zavella provides what the author called, “actor-oriented descriptions” or “interpretations of informants’ rendition of their experiences, but I use women’s own words to convey the meanings of their actions as they manage work and family responsibilities (1987, p. xvi).” On the issue of family constraints and women’s

work, Zavella's research offered new insights on previous scholarship on the nature of Latino families and employment. Even though, the women faced protests from their husbands in entering the labor force, such factors as an additional wage for the family or the women's own assertion to join the labor force as well as the maternal right to provide for the children resolved the conflict in the family. Moreover, the fact work would be temporary added to the resolution of the conflict between the man and women in the family. Zavella concluded that the women's participation in the labor force as temporary workers contributed to their segregation at work (1987, p. 98). This study expanded on Ruiz's scholarship through the presentation of the three major phases of development in the canning industry focusing on industrialization, mechanization and its impact on Latina/o workers in the industry. Zavella concluded that the experience of unionization and its impact on occupational segregation failed to bring about change for workers, wage differentials continued between regular and seasonal work, with no interest in women concerns or the Spanish-speaking workers. In the end, Mexican American women were placed in low paying cannery jobs and despite litigation efforts, they were ineffective in bringing about change.

Contemporary research on leadership styles among Latina women activists and organizers recognize the persistence of diverse styles, many times challenging accepted assumptions on the impact of familial relations, gender roles, and notions of motherhood. In "Traditional and Nontraditional Patterns of Female Activism in the United Farm Workers of America, 1962 to 1980" Rose examined the characteristics and factors behind the emergence of different forms of activism among the women leadership of the United Farm Workers of America. To illustrate the different patterns of women activism, Rose

examined the particular role of two important women in the United Farm Workers union: Helen Chavez, the wife of Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta, the co-founder and contract negotiator of the UFW union. Through a close analysis of the different experiences and attitudes toward politicization, union work, visibility, and domesticity, Rose concluded that Latina activists reflected different patterns of activism and leadership in the organization. On the one hand, Helen Chavez reflected a different generational experience from Dolores Huerta, while both were born in the United States their parents came from different social and economic backgrounds. These patterns of activism and leadership were affected by such factors as different generational experiences, language, economic opportunity, education, and social class. On the issue of politicization, both activists initiated their involvement as members of the Community Service Organization but followed different patterns of activism: Chavez engaged in more auxiliary type of activities such as office work but worked at home, while Huerta initially worked in similar tasks, over time evolved to positions of responsibility and authority. These differences continued in their work of the National Farm Worker Association, Chavez performed administrative and supportive duties, such as the credit union bookkeeping largely done behind the scenes. Huerta on the other hand, performed tasks in decision-making positions, such as contract negotiation and direction of boycott activities of the union. These types of activities presented two different types of activism, one was more behind the scenes, while the other type was more public. Rose concluded that Chavez and Huerta represented two types of activism and leadership differentiated by and influenced by the impact of domesticity, while Chavez placed the importance of family central in her

activism, Huerta represented “personal autonomy and trade union activity before family life” (1990, p. 29).

In “As Close to God as One Can Get” Rosalinda Guillen, A Mexican Farmworker Organizer in Washington State,” Cuevas explores the topic of Latina activists through the experience of a farmworker organizer in the state of Washington who played an important role in the labor struggles against Chateau St Michelle. Cuevas’s essay explores the organizing and leadership style of a Latina activist and in the process proposes an alternative perspective of leadership and activist work. This is undertaken within the debate on the general theme of traditional and non-traditional leadership styles. In the words of the author, “For example, ideas that place women in the home as the sole nurturer, caretaker, and martyr as in putting others before her are traditional views of women being submissive and subservient.” Cuevas advances the application of a “Chicana epistemological framework,” a perspective that “places Chicanas at the center of the research activity and legitimizes the knowledge that arises from her “social, political, and cultural conditions.” According to Cuevas, the story of Rosalinda Guillen offers a “model of leadership” manifested from her raced, classed, and gendered social location.” Born of migrant parents over time, Rosalinda became a middle-class bank employee. She was involved in community work with the Rainbow Coalition that eventually connected her with the Chateau Ste. Michelle Winery in central Washington. Rosalinda quit her middle-class job at the age of forty to work with the farmworkers in central Washington. Through Guillen’s experience, Cuevas identifies the basics of an alternative perspective on leadership and activism centering on organizing, transformation, and social change. It is a transformational experience affecting “the

relationships to the land, to the community, to the grower, to other workers.” In the process, the men and women transcended gender and perceived themselves as “workers, organizers, a community with common goals.” Cuevas captured the significance of this alternative organizing experience, in the words of Guillen, “When the possibility of actually winning a good labor contract began to be realized, the men could see for themselves (by that time) the women being courageous and taking on responsibilities through union organizing which resulted in changes in all of their lives... changes in the way they would work with each other... changes in the way they related to each other at home.” Cuevas discovered in Guillen’s narrative the importance of the family structure in the labor struggles and decision-making process, thus, the strengthening of unity and power against the wineries. Guillen rejected the traditional agricultural model and proposed a viewpoint emphasizing the value of food and food production, which changed the value of the farmworker. In highlighting positive values in farm-work and the struggle for a union contract, Guillen’s observation captured the essence of the transformational impact on the workers: “it gives them a sense of the value of their worth when they paid well and can take care of themselves with a good labor contract. It becomes real in economic terms, which in turn, makes a difference in how they see themselves, with pride and respect.” Cuevas concluded that through this alternative organizing strategy, the transformational experience affected both women workers in their working environment and the home as well as in the liberation of male workers from old sexist ideologies and behaviors.

With the changing world economy, Latina workers form part of the changing working-class structure and participate in a diverse labor market from the agricultural

fields as farm workers to the urbanized centers service oriented as domestic workers. In *Domestica: Immigrant Workers Cleaning and Caring in the Shadows of Affluence*, Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo examines the life experiences of Mexican and Central American immigrant women who take care of people's home and children as well as the people who hire them in the Los Angeles area. In the interpretation of the world economy, the study cites the work of Saskia Sassen, a major proponent of globalization and the proposition of an "informal market" that defines the economic position of some workers in contemporary society. Hondagneu-Soto's analysis focuses on live-in nanny housekeepers, live-out nanny housekeepers, and house cleaners and finds a complex set of interacting factors such as class, race, nationality, and citizenship. The complexity of the study is captured in the following description of the relations between the various experiences of women in the study:

"We can view contemporary relations between women whose social positions are in stark contrast between poor women and affluent families; between foreign-born, immigrant women and U.S.-born citizens and between members of the growing, but still economically and racially subordinate Latino communities and the shrinking population of white suburban residents, many of whom feel increasingly anxious about these demographic developments." (Hondagneu-Soto, 2001, pp. x-xi)

Hondagneu-Soto examines the role of agencies in what the author calls formalizing the informal job sector and uncovers the stratification of domestic labor around three tiers shaped by race, class, citizen, and immigrant factors. The high-end tier places white nannies in a privileged position with careful screening, restrictions on the job sites, formalization of the employment with contracts, and race confers privilege to the job

seekers. The mid-tier agencies place English-speaking Latina nanny housekeepers with strong references and job experience and inform the clients of some job standards (hours and tasks), These nannies are subjected to lower expectations on earning to place them in jobs, though, in other instances may seek higher earnings, to collect higher fees. In general, like the nannies from the first tier, they may find satisfactory jobs through the agencies. However, in the third or bottom tier the nannies face worse conditions due to the character of the destitute job seekers and employers who pay less. Thus, the agencies experience a more extensive adjustment of expectations for the employees and employers for the placement to be successful. This group of nannies faces a more conflictive job placement and end up in anger and resentment (2001, pp. 102-107) Hondagneu-Soto concludes with the need for the regulation of employment, filing for back wages through the courts, and the necessity for collective organizing among domestic workers (2001, pp. 211-243).

In the analysis of the Chicana/Latina experience, it is limited to radical and socialist feminist perspectives. Federici defined the basic position of each of the traditions, on the one hand, the radical feminist position emphasizes the study of “trans historical cultural structures” operating “independently of relations of production and class,” while the socialist feminists tradition places the historical experience of women connected to systems of exploitation. They are incorporated in the division of labor as women workers and in the process, they are left out from the “sphere of reproduction as a source of value creation and exploitation.” In this perspective, the levels of inequality and power differentials are dictated by “the women’s exclusion from capitalist development.” (2004, p. 7) In contemporary Chicana/Latina feminist studies, the

literature continues to be limited by an emphasis on the inter sectionality of race, class, gender, and the contemporary focus on LGBTQ (Cordova, 1992; Garcia, G, 1995; Garcia, A, 1997).

However, the work of Silvia Federici is applicable in the examination of day laborers, and more specifically, female day laborers. Federici's intellectual origins is in the autonomist Marxist school of thought, known for the classic study *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and the Primitive Accumulation* (2004). The autonomist Marxist theory from a feminist perspective of capitalism, instead proposes a different interpretation, the application of the Marxist concept of the primitive accumulation of capital, which provides the basis for an examination of the origins of capitalist society. However, Federici criticizes the original Marxist formulation for placing the centrality of wage male worker and the development of commodity production. Instead, Federici's formulation corrects and expands on the concept of primitive accumulation, this is encapsulated in the following position:

“Whereas Marx examines primitive accumulation from the viewpoint of the waged male proletariat and the development of commodity production, I examine it from the viewpoint of the changes introduced in the social position of women and the production of labor power ((2004, p. 12).”

Federici's conception of primitive accumulation proposes several distinguishing historical factors ignored in Marx's conception of the origins of capitalism. A central idea countering the Marxist framework advances the identification of a new sexual division of labor, where the subjugation of “women's labor and women's reproduction function to the reproduction of the work force.” It is important to note that the concept refers to

aspects beyond having and raising children and includes work or tasks included in the notion of essential labor. Second, this feminist framework on primitive accumulation advanced an important historical factor: the identification of a patriarchal order organized around” the exclusion of women from waged work and their subordination to men.” Third, and a defining characteristic of the new formulation omitted from Marx’s framework, consisted in what Federici called “the mechanization of the proletarian body and its transformation, in the case of women, into a machine for the production of new workers.” Finally, Federici includes the persecution of the witches in Europe as an important historical force comparable to the “colonization and expropriation of the European peasantry from its land in the development of capitalism (2004, p. 12).”

An article on the Covid lockdown highlighted the impact of the crisis on the exploitation of women and the undervaluing of the domestic labor or essential labor. The crisis exposed the inequalities of work, at a time when low wage workers lost their employment and continued unemployed longer. Over half of essential workers are women with most women of color, who are at risk for their health. A report on health care recorded that 72 percent of the care workers hospitalized due to Covid were women. Those affected by the disease were nurses involved in direct care, an occupation with women and people of color, with less compensation than male workers. For example, hospital housekeeping and home health aides were infected and died in higher numbers (Federici and Hamza, 2021). Federici’s solution focuses on the need to reverse “enclosure”, which includes not only the land and property, but such factors as the bodies, time, education, health, relationships, and minds. Enclosure refers to a process that divided the world and it was contained for profit. The solution for Federici is the

“commons” or “resources, (land, knowledge, cultural and intellenctual material) commonly held outside and kind of market (Federici and Hamza, 2021).” This proposal of commoning seeks to place life activities beyond the reach of commodification by developing exchanges or networks of “symbiotic relationships” to increase resources for the community (Federici, 2019). A reading of the interviews of the women involved in Casa Latina will reveal how women in the day labor center engaged in “commoning”.

The following section presents the stories of several important female day laborer organizers and leaders in Casa Latina some who began as day laborers and eventually became leaders, organizers, and activists in the organization. Each narrative reveals the experience of Latina day laborers in the establishment and organization of a labor center in the Pacific Northwest. They represent the voices of a diverse group of women workers in Casa Latina and their struggle to be recognized in a predominantly male day laborer center.

Las Voces de la Mujer: Women Workers in Casa Latina

The participation of women in Casa Latina is based on the stories of several women who started as former workers but who eventually became part of the organizational structure of the day worker center. In my initial contact with the women organizers and workers in the center, I attended some meetings and gained the trust of the participants. Thus, the voices you hear in the stories reflect the concerns and the struggle of a group of women workers seeking power and a sense of dignity in work.

According to Casa Latina organizers, the participation of women began as the result of several factors unique to the emergence of Latina/o communities in the western region of Washington. Demographically, the Latina/o population in the Seattle Puget

Sound area dispersed throughout the region, consequently women attracted to Casa Latina came from different regions in Western Washington. These group of women were not necessarily part of the day laborer force but were many times related to male workers seeking employment in the laborer center. One of the factors attracting women into the network of day workers In the Seattle area started with the services of English instruction in the community. Male laborers participated in English classes offered through the Millionaires Club in the mornings. However, women felt uncomfortable attending classes with predominantly male workers. One of the organizers encapsulated the opinion of many of the early women participants in the labor force experience in Seattle:

“En las mañanas casi eran trabajadores jornaleros que esperaban trabajo en la calle, y el club de millonarios les dio un espacio para dar clases, casi la mayoría eran hombres. Y uno como mujer pues a veces no se sentia muy comoda entre tanto trabajador.”

“In the mornings the majority were day laborers who looked for work in the streets, and the Millionaire Club offered the majority of the male workers a space for English instruction. As women, many times we did not feel comfortable among the workers.”

Eventually, in the afternoons, English classes were offered in the Gethsemane Church and more women enrolled in the classes. However, the women brought their children, thus, Casa Latina offered a day care center for the children. In fact, classes were given in the office and in another room, volunteers took care of the children. Consequently, the services of the day care center provided a welcoming environment for women in the center, and this attracted women from the northern and southern parts of Seattle, while others lived in the vicinity. According to the organizers, the story of the early women participants in Casa Latina reflected a second concern, the need to connect with a Spanish speaking community with common concerns associated with the needs of

children. It is important to note that Seattle had its own Chicana/o community center, called El Centro de la Raza. A community center established during the Chicano Movement era in Seattle. The new immigrants only spoke Spanish, and the Centro de la Raza did not provide a comfortable place to participate. The center did not offer English classes, and felt that this community center focused primarily on Mexican Americans or people of Mexican origin who spoke only English. They gravitated to newly formed organization, with members who spoke primarily in Spanish. This was no different from previous historical periods of the Mexican origin population who gravitated towards immigrant dominant organizations (for example, the traditional mutual aid societies of the late 1880s and early 1900s). This sense of community and collective experience was expressed the following way. Araceli, one of the Casa Latina organizers remembered:

“Me acuerdo que una de las mujeres venia con la mama y esa señora fue como la mama de todas las demas, más porque era la que nos daba recomendacions con lo niños. Porque en verdad en ese entonces, estoy hablando de 1997, en Seattle no habia muchas familias Latinas.”

“I remember that one of the women brought her mother, and she became the mother of all the other women, more importantly she advised us on the needs of the children. In reality during those times, especially in 1997, Seattle did not have many Latino families.”

In fact, census data on the Latina/o community corroborated the observation of the organizer: the community was dispersed all along the North-South I-5 corridor. The organizers realized that women came to learn English but they also came in search of a Spanish speaking community of women with similar needs. As a result of those factors, the first leadership group for women emerged in Casa Latina, mostly made up of mothers seeking information on the services of the city, especially the schools and clinics:

Araceli stated:

“Este grupo salió de las estudiantes de inglés en donde está Verónica fue contratada como AméricaCorp para servir en las clases de inglés, pero como ella vio que había necesidad de tener un grupo donde las mujeres se pudieran juntar hablar y todo eso, entonces Vero trabajó hasta para conseguir fondos y tener este grupo de liderazgo.”

“These group came out from the students taking English classes, where Veronique received funds to teach English classes from AmericaCorp and when she saw the need for the women to gather and talk about their basic needs, applied for funds to establish the first leadership group.”

Araceli, the organizer, explained that “In the English classes for women, for those few women who worked in the cleaning of houses on their own, the class focused primarily on how to negotiate for employment, call, and leave messages. They were not employed as part of Casa Latina.” Classes covered more on basic grammar, though in the mornings it was survival English. According to Araceli, this group operated more or less from 2000 until 2007, the year *House Hold Helpers (HHH)* emerged in Casa Latina.

The organizers in Casa Latina formed one of the first Spanish speaking leadership groups in the city of Seattle. Later, other groups emerged on domestic violence and parent’s groups, but in reality, the women in Casa Latina formed the first real Latina leadership group in the area. Araceli recalls that the group was primarily involved as a network of women supporting each other:

“Yo trabajé con Vero para para crear el grupo aunque su trabajo era mas administativo, pero yo era parte del grupo y era voluntaria. En ese momento ya me pagaron 5 horas a la semana pero bueno yo estuve desde el principio.”

“I worked with Vero to create this group, but her role was more administrative, I was part of the group and a volunteer. Later I was paid 5 hours a week and participated in the group from the beginning.”

She added the women continue to get together and the children are now attending and graduating from universities, but there was no name for the support group.

From around 2000 until 2007, the women met but faced many problems primarily paying the salary for Vero, the coordinator of the group. Eventually, she went to other organizations and provided mentoring for a brief period of time. Around 2005, Araceli recalls, Vero began to work with more women brought by their husbands to the region. Initially, the men worked in the fishing industry and traveled through the area and eventually returned back home. Immigration enforcement increased, forcing the men to bring the women to the region. Araceli notes,

“As more families came to the area, Daniel, the coordinator registered the women and he called them when there was a need for house cleaners. While other women with children and the elderly preferred to wait for the workers.”

Araceli describes the growth of the women in Casa Latina and the beginning of a new phase of the women workers in the center:

“Era interesante ver cómo empezaron dos mujeres, luego tres mujeres, cuatro mujeres que estaban ahí esperando trabajo igual que los jornaleros.”

(It was interesting to see the growth of women two, three and four women were waiting for work just like the male day laborers.)

Around 2007, this group of women eventually became part of a worker’s cooperative under the leadership of Veronique and began the promotion of women workers in the center. This is how the center began to offer work, the rules, the dispatch and the search for employees. This was the beginning of the House Hold Helpers (HHH). By 2010, the organizers in Casa Latina continued to work with the growing number of women laborers in the establishment of a cooperative, which led to the development of the leadership in the center. The leadership component was absent in the laborer center. Eventually, women workers faced a crisis and rebelled against Veronique, the organizer, while at the same time, the funds disappeared for the position of the *HHH* organizer. Thus, the

initiative became another employment program concurrently operated with the male laborers. According to Araceli, the rebellion reflected the presence of high levels of energy among the women and the potential for leadership and this motivated the organizers to implement a leadership program. From this group of women emerged *Mujeres sin fronteras* who were angry at the organization but showed great levels of commitment and felt comfortable in their space.

Women laborers used many models such as a rotating list, but according to Araceli, It was never done via a lottery system. There has always been a problem on why some people had more opportunities to work. As the workers interacted with other organizations, the women developed organizational skills and knowledge instrumental in the development of Casa Latina. Araceli recalls the impact of such interaction:

“In 2007, I attended the first social forum in Atlanta through an invitation of the organization Leelo as a representative of the Latino community. By chance, I attended the first assembly or conference for domestic workers in Atlanta. I remember the organizations from San Francisco, New York, and Washington DC participated in the conference and created the National Alliance of Workers (Alianza Nacional de Trabajadores).”

While attending the conference, organizers like Araceli learned from the women in other organizations, more specifically, the women’s collective in San Francisco. This model provided the guidelines on the operation of the organization, salaries and other aspects of the women workers in Casa Latina. According to Araceli, the participation of women in the various conferences expanded their knowledge and skills and applied them in the development of Casa Latina. The following year, in the New York conference women learned about workers as well as the models of conduct facing women worker discontent. Araceli recalled the early activities of the group:

“The organization created a curriculum on how to work with domestic or house hold workers. Even though, there are many models, this is like the model we use in “*HHH*” or *House Hold Helpers*. It is like a collective or cooperative.”

Other workers focused on labor rights as well as immigration issues. As the women gained more knowledge and confidence in the participation and interaction with other women organizers, the women gradually became more politically conscious and active.

Araceli recalled the early days of the organization of women in the center:

“In the beginning, the women met every day, we attracted them to meet and discuss the need for a space where women could talk about the challenges of work and how to improve working conditions. We followed this strategy but I do not remember how many women participated.”

The process was slow but eventually women began to articulate the concerns of the laborers:

“ It took several meetings to agree on the objective of the group and what the women wanted from the group. I was surprised that many of the women wanted or yearned for dignity in work.”

The group did not demand fair wages because many felt comfortable with their wages. Many women felt no dignity in work or labor and lacked any power in confronting the employees. Immigration was another issue that affected many of the woman, they were mothers who left their children in their home countries. Finally, Araceli states:

“We made a list of goals for the group and came up with the name of *Mujeres sin Fronteras* (Women without Borders). We started slowly and what really helped us came from the materials from the *Alianza*, especially the workshops on history of domestic labor in the United States, the workshop on how negotiate our labor and facing your employee.”

In the beginning the women organizers spent time in the creation of a leadership team and worked together in the establishment of an emergency fund. Later the group worked on funds to attend the conferences of National Day Laborer Organizing Network

(NDLON). The participation in those workshops and the celebrations of Day of the Mother and Day of the Father it helped in the creation of a political consciousness. The issue of immigration motivated and helped in the organization of women. Araceli summarized the central ideas of *Mujeres sin Fronteras*:

“There are at least three common threads in *Mujeres sin Fronteras*: the first one is the issue of identity and the challenges as women, immigrants and workers. This is the most distinguishing aspect of this group from other women groups. Nevertheless, there is always the identity of women workers.”

Araceli recalls that women became involved in the \$15dolls movement with the support of Cariño, one of the organizers in Casa Latina who brought information on the campaign. Many of the women were part of HHH, where many of them earned around \$17dolls an hour. She noted, “We were afraid we could lose employees, but it did not happen.”

In reality, the *Alianza Nacional de Trabajadores del Hogar* created a coordinating committee, which later became the board of directors. Araceli explained the role of the organizers, “Gilda and I joined this committee and even though we were new, they could see we were establishing a strong foundation and a logic to emphasize labor and later the development of leadership skills among workers. The organizers became part of the board of directors of *NDLON* and it is there where the women learned how to find more protections for the household workers or domestic labor. According to Araceli, there were some who are cleaning houses, while others were asked to take care of the elderly at their homes. Consequently, this is where the women organizers saw the need to create a group of women capable in the care of the sick and the elderly. The women worked several years on that campaign, but saw challenges in the struggle for Medicare, an issue that affected the employees and the workers. Araceli emphasized the issue of immigration and the connection to the policy concerns of caregivers across generations:

the creation of a pipeline for better wages and the acquisition of legal residence. The organizers had to change the focus more on expanding the collaboration with the *NDWA* (*National Domestic Worker Alliance*) and the labor union for caregivers. This is where Casa Latina organizers saw the opportunity to pass a bill of rights that would give benefits to the domestic workers or household helpers in the Seattle area. The organizers focused on the bill of rights since it helps in the development of leadership among women, and it will be the most progressive in the country. Araceli added more on the *Bill of Rights*, “other bill of rights are being approved, for example, establishing salaries, the payment of break hours, the passing of other rights for resident house hold helpers to work no more than 8 hours, The workers must take breaks, this is limited in Seattle. There are laws that protect their rights. The workers want benefits but the employees would have to contribute part of the benefits.”

Another challenge, for example, are the women cleaners working through the companies. What the Casa Latina organizers learned from the ordinance on wage theft. it is very important: the need for an enforcement process and education. Women should be part of a board where they can negotiate, with representation of employees, workers, and government. It is an ambitious project that would advance with the maturity of women leadership. The organizers want more representation of these groups in the city. Araceli states:

“One of the differences from women working in companies and through the services of Casa Latina is the wage difference since those working in the companies get paid around \$13 dlls, while in Casa Latina, the workers can get as much as \$23 dlls per hour.”

Also, those working for companies are pressured to work faster. When the women workers enter Casa Latina, the women want to establish an agenda of workers, which can

be done, if and when the women have experience and speak English. According to Araceli, the challenge facing Casa Latina is that there are many members and few jobs, thus they have to be patient with the system in place. The workers need somebody who can help them economically while they develop a file. What the organizers see is that many of the women working in companies need funds and this is the difference between those working in companies and Casa Latina.

Araceli one of the members in the staff made the following observation on the women in Casa Latina.

“For me, it is a great satisfaction to see the results of the process of leadership development in Casa Latina. Those women who started as workers and joined the staff came from the *HHH* program in Casa Latina. In my opinion, the experience of the women demonstrated that when a woman has interest in the community, Casa Latina is an option that provides the tools for leadership development. The women represent the success of leadership and we have more successes with women establishing businesses.”

Over the years, Casa Latina welcomed a diversity of women voices into the development of a leadership team representative of the Latina/o community in the region. In the following story you hear the voice of women from the Latin American experience but in the context of the US economy and its impact in the largest national group. Gilda started in Casa Latina around 2009, when she was recommended to search for work in the center. She was interested in house cleaning work but found out that there was already a group of women registered for those jobs in the center. Since jobs were limited, she decided to stick around and learn English and to gradually become integrated into the list of house cleaning workers. In the meantime, she participated in workshops and volunteered in the center activities, until several months later, she was hired in the first house cleaning job. According to Gilda, it was a long process in becoming part of Casa

Latina, but it was a place for opportunities to grow personally. The personnel in the center recognized the leadership potential and she was hired to be part of the popular education program in Casa Latina. She was involved in providing information on the labor and educational programs to the participants and later became a leader in the Mujeres sin Fronteras leadership program. At first, Gilda's participation with the women focused primarily on work and encountered other women among household helpers in the center. She recognized the need to integrate and to work collectively with other members of the community. This is related in the following comment:

“Como mujer afro descendiente como Garífuna y me vine en una comunidad muy extraña para mí en verdad, así como aprendí de la comunidad también la comunidad aprendió de mí y pudimos hacer como una mancuerna de cómo te diría yo la palabra de que no nos hicimos aliados.”

“As a Garifuna Afro descendant woman, I came to a truly a strange community, just like I learned from the community, the community learned from me. Thus, we were able to unite or in other words we became allies.”

In meetings with the workers, Gilda shared information on the *Alianza Nacional de Trabajadores del Hogar* and the activities at the national level for women workers.

However, Gilda and Araceli saw the need to create a space for the women workers and develop a leadership team for the center. From these meetings and discussions, the group of women workers decided in the formation of *Mujeres sin Fronteras*, in fact, the name came out after a series of discussions and a final vote on the name.

On the issue of work, Gilda describes the origins of household work as part of the learning experience from the Latin American experience:

“Por ejemplo yo soy guatemalteca verdad no le venimos de un país latino latinoamericano que yo soy afrodescendiente pero en nuestras casas verdad nuestras madres nos enseñan cómo hacer las cosas de casa. Porque yo en lo particular mi mamá me decía tú no sabes dónde te va a servir verdad? Tú no sabes lo que te va a servir, aprender hacer algo.”

“For example, I am from Guatemala, we come from a Latin American country, an Afro descendant, but in our houses, our mothers teach us how to take care of our houses. In my case, my mother told me you never know when you will need this skill? You never know what is going to help you to learn something.”

Gilda’s story compares the period before and after her participation in Casa Latina, in the narrative, she describes how in the beginning, work meant sleeping in those houses and working more than 16 hours, washing, cooking ironing and do all that is required in house hold work. Even though, she was prepared for this type of work, she could not say no for fear of losing the job. In her story, Gilda expresses pride in the development of pride in work instilled by the father who was a master cook and the household skills from her mother. However, she was not prepared to withstand the pressure of work and the abuse that impacted her emotionally and verbally. However, this was in total contrast with her work experience in Casa Latina, for example, she learned the tools and skills in demanding her rights from the study of labor history in the United States. Gilda describes the Casa Latina experience for women workers:

“Después de llegar a casa latina de recibir a los talleres de conocer tus derechos, verdad sí trabajo hecho trabajo pagado todo eso éste: sí una patrona te dice que tienés que planchar cuando no está en el acuerdo pues tienés que negociarlo. Todas esas cosas lo fui aprendiendo y pude conseguir patrones o a persona con quien yo trabajaba de parte de Casa Latina.”

From Gilda’s perspective, she offered labor with a high level of professionalism and in turn her labor was full of respect and dignity. She offered the following description of her perspective on respect and dignity:

“Dejen en qué el trabajo hable por usted de verdad y ahí me daba cuenta que el trabajo mío estaba hablando por mí. Pero entonces cada vez que el trabajo habla por ti dejas esa semilla y verdad dejas esperanza, dejas ese respeto verdad, esa dignidad dentro de lugar de trabajo, por lo cual encuentras en buenas personas en el camino.”

“Let the work speak for yourself and that is where I found out my work for myself. Thus, every time work speaks for yourself, you leave a seed and in reality, you leave hope, you leave respect and dignity in your work. Consequently, you find good folks on the road.”

On the political activism of *Mujeres sin Fronteras*, Gilda articulates an important position of commitment as a woman involved on issues affecting Latina workers. This commitment comes from her daily contact with the women and the connection of their stories to the problems affecting the community. As an organizer Gilda felt connected through those stories and their stories energized her to become politically involved on behalf of the women in the organization. A central idea originating from Gilda’s story is the need to defend the rights of women workers and in the case of house hold workers, where the women are subjected to constant abuse, but at the same time, workers dignify labor:

“Como trabajadoras del hogar en el país y ni digamos aquí en el estado de Washington con Casa Latina a ver sobre todo viendo las cantidades de abuso que nosotros enfrentamos en nuestro trabajo, el trabajo del hogar es un trabajo que hace posible otros trabajos, el trabajo del hogar debemos de dignificarlo como mujeres”

“As household workers in the nation and the state of Washington, specially, in Casa Latina, in experiencing the quantity of abuses we confront in our work, domestic labor is a type of work that makes possible other jobs, as women, we must dignify domestic labor.”

She concludes that every household worker and every activist become politicized. Gilda notes the changes from before to after the activities of Casa Latina, for example, the different conditions of work and wages, where before the worker engaged the employees individually and suffered the consequences of being powerless. However, when the women are part of Casa Latina, they benefit from the establishment of fair wages and the presence of an organization that looks after the interests of the workers.

Gilda observes:

“Al llegar aquí a casa Latina, es algo que Casa Latina ya venía trabajando en eso salarios verdad, sé que ha sido un proceso verdad, porque, este es muy importante porque no en todos los lugares encontramos un lugar aquí donde ya te han negociado lo justo para tu trabajo y también por la credibilidad de nuestra organización, de que de que si nos tratan mal ahí afuera, pues Casa Latina vera por nosotros. Entonces esa confianza que se tiene dentro de Casa Latina es lo que hace ver que los patrones allá afuera tengan cuidado.”

“When I arrived in Casa Latina, it is something Casa Latina was working on for fair wages. I know it has been a process, because this is important to note not all places have a space where there has been a fair negotiation for your jobs and the credibility of the organization. If we are not treated well outside, Casa Latina protects us. Thus, this trust within Casa Latina for workers makes the employees cautious in our treatment as workers.”

In the following statement, Gilda highlights the different experience for women workers who are protected by the presence of the organizational structure of Casa Latina in contrast to the experience of workers fighting individually with employees:

“Contratar una persona de aquí de la organización, porque tenemos muchas cosas ya establecidas en la organización en la cual sabemos que es nuestro derecho, a pelear tu derecho tú sola. Ahí afuera es muy complicado que ser parte de una organización así como Casa Latina.”

“To contract a person from this organization, there are many rights, rather than fighting alone. Outside is very complicated than being part of an organization like Casa Latina.”

According to Gilda, *Mujeres sin Fronteras* became the political face of *HHH*, an organization that had no resources, only the support from people in the program, in reality the credit for this organization comes from everybody in the center. Another aspect in the development of *Mujeres sin Fronteras* was the visibility of the organization and the realization of the leadership of the program that women were fighting for their cause as well as the cause of a recriminated and invisible community. According to Gilda the role of *Mujeres sin Fronteras* in the development of women leadership, who's

work has been devalued to a certain extent, devalued by society and the community we live. From her perspective, without knowing the language and not feeling part of the community, *Mujeres sin Fronteras* became the change mover for the women. On the question of leadership, Gilda stated the following:

“The development of leadership does not take place from the night to the morning, rather it is a slow process, which eventually contributes to importance of the role of women organizers.”

Among the women who came to Casa Latina more voices became part of the leadership development of women activist in the struggle for power and dignity. The following women activist was a player that added in the development of leadership in *Mujeres sin Fronteras*. Silvia came to Casa Latina in October of 2011, with an interest in making money and joined the *HHH* program or the house-cleaning program. However, to join the program, new workers had to accumulate points and take English classes to improve their chances for employment. Silvia took the classes and focused on her original idea of house cleaning labor, however, she heard of the *Alianza Nacional de las Trabajadoras del Hogar* and the workshops given by the *Mujeres sin Fronteras* in the center. She participated in the meetings held from 2011 to January 2012 but the program led by Alma came to an end and focused on the English classes and preparing for work. Later, the organizers announced the planning for a trip to Washington DC by the household worker group that was under the leadership of *Mujeres sin Fronteras*. There was a great deal of enthusiasm from the women and Silvia joined the women in raising funds to attend the conference. As she participated in the meetings and interacted with other women, she noticed the transformation of the participants from being timid and continued with their participation in the meetings. Silvia asked to join the leader Gilda in

the preparation for the conference by helping in the workshops, eventually, during the absence of the leader, she was given the opportunity to lead the workshops. The organizers were successful in attending the conference in Washington DC with around 15 women and 4 children with *Mujeres sin Fronteras*.

Silvia continued to focus on the original goal of work and found jobs through the *HHH* program in Casa Latina and received training in the use of house cleaners (Green Cleaning) and made recommendations on the use of nontoxic products and the ergonomics of the use of the body in work. Before becoming a household cleaner, Silvia worked in a fast-food restaurant something like Subway making sandwiches and never cleaned restrooms since the restaurant had a janitor. The need for money forced Silvia to work in house cleaning jobs as well as fast food restaurants to pay for the educational expenses of the children.

Eventually, once she fulfilled the requirements to be dispatched, Silvia found house cleaning work through Casa Latina. The second time she was dispatched to work, the client or employee requested her services every 15 days. The need for money and work, she would ask them if they were satisfied with her work and if they needed her to let her know. When people were moving out, Silvia made it a point to ask them to keep her in mind for any house hold services and provided her phone number. At that time the wages were US\$ 12 but it was only for a while since the wages went up to US\$ 15. Silvia recalled that there use to be small job requests or "*las chambitas*" (little jobs) for 3 hours and paid Silvia US\$ 50, and if the client wanted more, an additional charge was added for her services. Silvia did not negotiate the wages since she always worked with the salary

established by Casa Latina. Though, the employees or clients added US\$ 10 to US\$ 20 tips for her labor and usually the payment came out to her expectations.

The assemblies use to be at times heated due to complaints from the workers: the abuse from employees on the orders for work; they added more services beyond the work orders and many times the persons refused to pay the complete services. According to Silvia, this practice continued today, for example, if two persons are sent to work, and they are working 4 hours, sometimes the workers misunderstood and the wages were divided among the two workers. Silvia remembers when it went from US\$ 15 to US\$ 18 some agreed so that they would not lose the clients. They did not want to risk losing jobs when the wages went up and they could stop calling Casa Latina.

There were differences in the assemblies of the *HHH* and *Mujeres sin Fronteras*, whereas, in *HHH*, it focused on work. Women asked questions such as where are you going to work? Did you get an order to work? How many bosses do you have? Are you going to volantear? In *Mujeres sin Fronteras*, the environment was more peaceful, where work was not the topic of discussion, rather the needs of women, to discuss the children in the family, to bring information on the community, and to identify with cultural issues. It was more emotional and spiritual with a concern over personal well being with hugs and well wishes.

Silvia asserted the women workers in *HHH* are invited to participate in *Mujeres sin Fronteras* since some of them may want to develop personally, a passion or share a disagreement. However, these types of concerns are not part of the *HHH* dynamics since it is about work. *Mujeres sin Fronteras* on the other hand offer a space where women can voice their concerns beyond labor. Silvia distinguished the differences between the

women who participate in *Mujeres sin Frontera and HouseHold Helpers*: these group of women feel the need to voice their concerns. This is why the women who attended the conference in Washington DC and the *Alianza* continue to participate politically, to have their voice heard. Silvia stated this observation clearly:

“Hay personas que se brincan a Mujeres sin fronteras por esa hambre, esa necesidad de que quiero que escuchen mi voz. Por eso es que las mujeres que van a Washington DC que están con la Alianza, me ha tocado ver que hay unas que van y jamás se alejan porque no es lo que ellas pensaban quizás o no esa hambre que tenían, esa necesidad, pero otras que siguen envueltas porque quieren que su voz se siga escuchando.”

“Some people join *Mujeres sin Fronteras* for that hunger, that need for your voice to be heard. This is why the women who go to Washington DC and who are part of the *Alianza*, I have been able to observe that some who attend always do not return. This is probably because it was not what they expected or perhaps they did not have that hunger or need. But other women continue involved because they want their voices to be heard.”

The *Alianza* is more political since the focus is on how do you feel first as a woman, who can be heard for the first time without being judged. There were examples of some women victims of domestic violence who did not have the courage to speak about their experiences in-group settings. The workshops did not provide advise on self esteem, rather they are workshops where people attend for their own well being. The workshops provide training on how to speak in public settings and the women attend spaces they can identify. Silvia stated she enjoyed attending the workshops due to the pressure to participate but in a peaceful space where you take the first steps at your own speed. At the same, as an organizer Silvia appreciated the success of other women who speak out in the workshops, which gives courage to other women to speak out; especially those who do not want to speak out.

Silvia expressed concerns on the impact of the space for women in the organization of Casa Latina:

“There was no space for the women but in reality, I enjoyed being together with them. I understand there is a space for the women who feel comfortable, but why not intermix with the women. If we are talking about equal rights some men complained on how the women and the men met separately.”

Never the less, Silvia acknowledged that it was problematic in meetings with men:

“It felt that she had no voice or vote, because some of the men were louder than others and sometimes shut the women off. Machismo predominates and knowing that many women come from a Mexican culture, if the man speaks loudly you must shut up and be submissive. This is why I think they felt with no voice or vote.”

Later, they said you have a space where you can speak. Moreover, she remembered the themes of the men, so why should the women talk of the same over and over again.

Silvia works half time for the center but continues to work as a domestic worker. She continues to be involved in *Mujeres sin Fronteras*, more as a member not as a leader and continued to be a worker. She worked directly with the AYL de worker center. With the *jornaleros* Silvia began to be part of *Mujeres sin Frontera*:

“In 2015, I had a better grasp of *Mujeres sin Fronteras* and in HHH but as a domestic worker. I think this is why I get this passion to speak and take the message, because I know the need we are living as domestic workers. We are not paid enough, no worker rights and this is why we are fighting for a workers rights document. When you are living and feeling the needs is when you can speak out, I cannot imagine how it would be to represent the workers when you do not feel the pain of a domestic worker.”

Silvia expressed a positive assessment of the employees of the Casa Latina workers. She shared the following observation on the relationships with employees:

“There is a lot of satisfaction to have clients who also fight for social justice and be part of such clients. To see the support from those employees is encouraging and motivates you to continue in the struggle. I have a lot of employees who

donate to Casa Latina who are always asking how to help us. If I have a trip or if they can help the domestic workers or the organization.”

Casa Latina organizers and workers expressed a great sense of dignity of work. Silvia made a comparison between a dentist and household helpers to illustrate the importance of her work and how it is connected to a sense of dignity. She stated the following:

“Un ejemplo de un dentista yo digo nosotros trabajadora del hogar vamos y limpiamos yo no me siento menos que los que son los dueños de las casas como un doctor dentista porque uno va a un dentista y te limpian tu así como están las casas de sucias, a veces vamos a que nos limpie a nosotros los dientes, las enfermedades que tenemos, cada quien tiene su espacio.”

She summarized the many ways a household helper represents an occupation that is full of satisfactions, for example, as an independent worker you decide your schedule, wages and in the end, it is not denigrating job, but it is full of dignity.

Silvia remembers when her daughter went to the university and they asked her about the legal issues of a social security and her ability to survive without financial aid. They would ask her how are you paying school? and she responded my mother pays for my expenses. What kind of work does she perform? Silvia told her daughter to let them know the origins of her source of money:

“My mother is a household cleaner. She stated, “Entonces en cuanto ya le dices y mi mamá limpia casa y ya de ahí se quedaban calladas pero le digo porque su trabajo es digno como cualquier otro.”

On her employees, Silvia is assertive when it comes to the value of her work:

“When I have new employees, they tell me, you were recommended to me and they describe the house and ask me how much I would charge them for my work. I am very straightforward and inform them of my charges for the services. I hope it works for you and if it does not work out, I thank them for contacting me.”

According to Silvia, if you doubt the value of your work, the people will doubt the value of your work. She tries to convey this message to her friend household workers to never doubt the value of their work.

Despite Silvia's recognition of her background as a household helper, she is active in political matters affecting women workers. She described her political activism:

“My role in the Alliance is as a member of the board of directors and represent the workers through my experience in the past, present and what we want in the future. The struggle for a worker's rights and the conversations with Veronique of a medical insurance and sick leave days. You can apply for medical needs to charitable entities that may cover major illness but you will not have paid sick leaves or paid vacations. These issues can be presented to the national level for the workers.”

Women activists in Casa Latina shared a collectivist orientation in pursuing the interests of women workers. This was exhibited in the organizational skills and the ability to recognize the needs of the Latina immigrant women reaching out to the worker center. Using popular education, the women organizers empowered the women to become more independent and to search for the strength of agents of social change. Veronique started officially in a position for AmeriCorps in 1999 as coordinator of the children from the families taking English classes in the evenings in Gethsemane Church. In 1999, Veronique's work focused more on the children and the mothers of the children, even though, there were immigrant families, the Seattle area did not have a concentration of Latinos or a barrio. First the males arrived in the area to look for work and later the families joined them. When the women arrived, they would stay at home but they had to face a new society. They had to find schools, doctors, and food in spite of the problems of a different language with little knowledge of the system. Thus, these women suffered

isolation and depression, lonely and taking care of the children, while the males were outside working.

In 1998 or 1999 the Millionaire Club began offering evening classes in English when more families and women arrived in the area. During the breaks, the mothers asked information on Spanish speaking doctors, where to buy *pozole* and the location of Mexican stores. These were basic and necessary aspects of the families. The women saw the need for a space to exchange information on the basic needs of this community and eventually a group of women met and talked to Hillary for a space to discuss the basic needs of the children and families. Thus, this was the first group of women and while Veronique worked with the children, later became interested in the plight of the women seeking information on the school system and the health services in the community.

Veronique described her role in Casa Latina:

“My job as the coordinator of the children changed more towards working with volunteers and developing a curriculum for the mothers or women. It was a support group of women who could meet to find and learn the resources in the new community and to learn from each other. I became the facilitator of the first group, which was joined by Araceli, Alicia and many other women who still visit the center.”

According to Veronique, the first six months were dedicated to access information and the creation of a cultural space, where women could escape from the isolation and recuperate their culture and community. As a result, a strong bond between the women developed through the use of the space to share the culture with the other women and children.

The idea was to develop a sense of identity with their children, thus in the beginning, the group dealt with general ideas and later added songs. Veronique identified other issues such as working on depression caused by the isolation and domestic violence

as well as emergency plans for the women. The group met at least one day a week and provided child day care for the children. In reality, it was a support group who sought information affecting the family needs: but there was no discussion on the notion of work. In the beginning of Casa Latina, many of the women worked on their own or with their husbands but there was no system of a dispatch for domestic workers. Instead, the women relied on their contact with other people in the center with no structure to send workers. It was not until the center started in 2000, it began to invite the women but they could not wait like the man all day and there was no interest in promoting this type of work. By the second year, according to Veronique there was a regular group of women working on the development of leadership:

“I worked with around 45 women so that they could become facilitators. It was hard for some women who had to deal with the children and to travel by bus far away from the center. On the third year, I began working with more women to become facilitators and was able to start groups in 2004-2005 in areas related to health issues. In one of the clinics, there was a social worker who gave classes on information for pregnant women.”

She helped to connect the groups with health-related organizations and to get a space for the group of women. Another community organization worked with the tenants in low-income buildings and worked with the children on homework and transition to the schools. However, they found out there were many problems affecting the community and the mothers of the children asked for a meeting space. Veronique had contact with those organizations so the organizers made a deal to get a free space and in exchange, the organizers would work with the mothers to meet with the facilitators involved in popular education. The training of the women empowered them to be their own agents:

“The women were trained to prepare an agenda, evaluations, and connections with other community organizations dealing with health, education, immigrant

rights, diabetes, and the transition of children in the schools while they learned English.”

Veronique added that other issues appeared and more in line with organizational aspects, for example, the Real ID. For example, a group was organized and met with an assistant of the governor. Another issue the women took was the problems in the schools and the lack of interest in the Latina/o community who showed still a great deal of racism, for example on issues such as poor lighting and the need for transportation. Using popular education, the parents in the community learned the skills to put pressure on the schools. The parents acted and wrote a letter requesting a bus for transportation.

The above stories from the women workers and activists in Casa Latina provide an insider’s view of the struggle of immigrant and Latina workers who confronted an alien environment far away from the large concentration of Latina/o communities in the state, the region, and the nation. Each of the stories demonstrates the power of organizing and the gradual empowerment of a group of women alienated in an environment hostile to people of color. Through their participation in educational workshops, political meetings guided by a group of organizers who were workers established the foundation of a different organizational structure.

Conclusion

In the context of the history of women workers in the Latina/o community, the narratives presented through the voices of a select group of women activists and organizers, the case study of the women day laborers in the state of Washington informs and illustrates the specificity of the regional labor struggles, while at the same time it makes the connection to national Latina women organizers and activists. This section will conclude with some final observations on the contents of the interviews and their

relevance to the scholarship of women activists, organizers and leaders in the Latino/a community.

First, the emergence of Latina organizers and activists in the working-class day labor movement in the United States is recent but it is part of a longer historical record of working class struggles that extends to the early labor struggles of Chicanas in the 1900s, more specifically, as documented in the the participation of women in the cannery labor struggles (Ruiz, 1987: Zavella, 1987). The stories of the women workers and activists highlights and illustrates many of the recurring themes affecting women in the work force: sexism and racism, politicization of women and families, and the historical re-composition of the labor struggle of workers of Latina/o origin in the United States (Aztlán Special Issue, 1991). Theoretically, the studies represent different phases of Chicana feminist thought and interpretation of the reality of women's struggle in the United States. For example, Garcia identified three tendencies in the literature on Chicanas. One body of literature emphasized the great women approach in the study of Chicana political participation, which tended to be descriptive and ignored the social context of women's experiences in society. A second body of literature emerged in reaction to the great women approach and highlighted the nature of social movements and social forces affecting Chicanas. The third body of literature reflected the tendency among Chicana writers to examine the inter sectionality of the experience of Chicana women by focusing on ethnicity, race, class and gender in the analysis of the social and political reality of Chicanas in the United States (Garcia, 1990, pp, 19-27). In contrast, this study builds on previous theoretical tendencies but distinguishes the significance of each factor of identity and proposes the centrality of class as the defining force in the

analysis of the struggle of women day laborers. Even though, the women activists and organizers in the day labor center recognize the importance of other factors of identity such as ethnic, gender, and immigration identity, the interviews forcefully place a higher degree of importance to the notion of working-class identity. This is illustrated through the various sites of struggle such as the campaigns “\$15 Now”, and more specifically, the Worker Bill of Rights. Throughout the narratives of the women day laborers, there is a constant referral to their struggle as members of the working class (before ethnic, gender, or immigrant status or identity). An alternative interpretation of the women activists and organizers is found in the narratives of women presented in this study. The stories of women in Casa Latina illustrate how they self-valorize their labor power through wages. Moreover, this alternative perspective challenges the use of the so-called “informal market” when describing the participation of women day workers. The concept of the “informal market” originates from the scholars on “globalization” who fail to critically examine the nature of capitalism. A related concept in the failure to access the objective conditions of the workers is the use of the so-called “un-skilled” labor, and participation of workers in the “informal market”: these theoretical concepts diminish the agency of workers and the valorization of labor power. But how do the participants of the *HHH* and *Mujeres sin fronteras* exemplify and support the theory of value? Setting their own wages, according to their own self-valorization. The difference from previous studies on domestic work, and the emergence of Casa Latina is that workers now have a space where the interest of the workers and their agency are the foundation of this new organizational structure. The owners of hiring halls have subjected domestic work in the

past to the negotiation of the individual, but in contrast, the workers of Casa Latina are in full control of their agency.

While the workers in *HHH* focus on wages as part of their self-valorization project, the members of *Mujeres sin fronteras* are also actors in the political composition of the working class. The state of exception is an example of how the state, and capital is political decomposition. Current laws and actions by the Trump administration have become a direct attack to the Latina/o community. However, the women have affirmed their agency, in the state of exception through political re-composition. They continue the struggle by actively fighting against these injustices. The women in MSF are constantly participating in actions against them in both national, and local movements. These narratives illustrate the agency of workers and their constant struggle against capitalist domination

This research project uncovered a regional contribution to the historical memory of the models of leadership styles in the organization of the Latina/o community as well as the important role of women directing the struggles of the larger Latina/o community. Farm worker women leaders and organizers in the Pacific Northwest contributed with one of the few models of leadership in the region (Cuevas, 2005) and the participation of women in electoral politics in the state of Washington added to the diversity of leadership and activists in the Pacific Northwest region (Salas, 2003). However, the experience of the jornaleras or day labor women workers in Casa Latina contributed with an urban example of the growing working-class Latina/o population in the northwest. The scholarship of the rich history of women activists and organizers from the early struggles in the 1930s, 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, the social and political movement of the mothers

of East LA, and the experience of women activists in the farm worker movement corroborates the long history of women activism in the Latina/o community (Ruiz, 1987; Zavella, 1987; Pardo, 1998).

Finally, the specific experience documented in the stories and narratives of Latina workers and activists in the Pacific Northwest informs and illustrates the changing character of the nature of the Latina/o family and the politicization of women or motherhood. These issues were documented in the early scholarship of the cannery women workers and activists, where the role of the “traditional” Latina/o family was subjected to social change and adapted to the political forces affecting women and familial relations. One of the best illustrations on the impact of activism among women in Casa Latina is the inclusion of children among the women participants in conferences and worker’s meetings. The presence of children was not an impeding issue in the politicization and activism of the women in Casa Latina.

Chapter 6 | Declino! The Political and Economic Life of the *Jornaleros/as*: The Struggle for Working-Class Subjectivity

The stories of the *jornaleros/as* reveal the evolving and changing character of the working-class struggle in the Pacific Northwest and more specifically, the state of Washington. Two interrelated factors emerge in the study of day laborers: First, is the political life of the *jornaleros* with special attention on how workers created a self-governing organizational form through the “*asamblea*.” Second is the self-valorization of the workers at Casa Latina through higher wages and the refusal to work, *el declino*.

The first section of this chapter presents insights inspired by these workers and the re-reading they led me to do of the literature on “labor” organizations. The result is an analysis of the political dynamics of day laborers through an autonomist Marxist interpretive lens. The next section examines the central themes of the study by focusing on two important planes in the political and economic life of the *jornaleros*. The political plane involves a thick ethnographic presentation of the “*asamblea*” understood here as an organizational structure created by the workers who demanded a space to discuss issues and problems affecting workers affiliated with the center. Through this space, the day laborers took ownership of the organization placing “*los trabajadores en control*” (the workers in control) and in charge of the appropriation of the value of worker agency. On the economic plane, the study examines the self-valorization of the day workers at Casa Latina by observing how they set wages and refuse work.⁷ The self-valorization of the workers is examined in two distinct economic periods; first during the crisis of 2007-08 when wages stay steady and second during the post-crisis when the rates go up. In this

context, the day laborers demonstrate agency and re-value labor power while liberating themselves from an existence reduced to being labor power through the refusal to work.

Organizational Forms and Leadership and Theory of the State

Mexican-origin and other Latina/o workers in the United States and in the Pacific Northwest have a longstanding legacy in the history of labor organizing and innovative leadership styles. This is corroborated by their participation in the various phases of the labor movements at the national level and in the Pacific Northwest. This legacy stretches from the early labor struggles between 1900 and the 1930s and first entries and resistance movements to the arrival of Bracero workers in the region during WWII, and eventually the movement of Mexican and Mexican American workers during the Post Bracero era characterized by the formation of the first permanently resident communities in the region (all discussed in Chapter 3 above). The contemporary phase of labor struggles and organizations, with the movement of people to urban areas and employment in the service and construction sectors of the regional economy established the social, economic and political conditions for the rise of the day laborers or *jornaleros* in the growing Latinx communities in the region.⁸

Marxist interpretations of working-class struggles pose important questions and issues on the nature of organizations and the type of leadership. Aranowitz and Bratsis present an interesting observation on the politics of working-class struggles emerging from the discussions on the debates on the capitalist state, more specifically, the instrumentalist and structuralist debates on the nature of the state in capitalist political economies:

Afterall, what is Miliband's "instrumentalist" claim that the state has been captured by the capitalist class by way of political organization other than a repetition of Lenin's argument that the state is an instrument of the capitalist class and, necessarily, his defense of organization and the role of the revolutionary party (a result of the instrumentalist concept of power common to both)? (2002, p. xiii)

This reference is useful in presenting the role of a political party directing the interests of the working class against capital. However, Aranowits and Bratsis re-posit a structuralist perspective to examine implication on the nature of working-class struggles:

What is Poulantzas's "structuralist" claim that the state is capitalist by virtue of its functions and acts to disorganize the working class other than a repetition of Luxemburg's argument that the state apparatuses are by function bourgeois and, necessarily, her defense of self-organized and autonomous working class movements (that is, outside the formal and legal logic of "the state" and hierarchical organization)? (2002, p. xiii)

Historically, these Marxist debates on the nature of the organization of the working class play an important role in shaping the discourses of working-class struggles against capital. They are part of the continuous analysis and re-interpretation of capitalism and the impact of those interpretations and application in real struggles against capital.

An autonomist Marxist interpretation provides the basis for understanding the political and economic forces at work in the analysis of the contemporary movement of the jornaleros or day laborers. For purposes of this section, it is important to identify the central tenets of the autonomist Marxist perspective to understand the dynamics of the struggle in the evolution of the jornalero experience at Casa Latina. A brief reference to the central tenets of the "*autonomía*" Marxist perspective offers an alternative to more orthodox Marxist perspectives. To begin with, it is important to understand that this Marxist perspective provides a praxis-oriented examination of the study of capitalism based on a political reading of the *Grundrisse* and *Capital*, two

foundational studies on capitalism. This theoretical and methodological framework incorporates relevant observations applicable to the experience of worker resistance to capitalism across gender, race, and national-origin positionalities. Examples of this approach include Maria Rosa Della Costa on women, C.L.R. James on African American struggles in the United States, and this dissertation on jornaleras/os in Seattle.

A critical re-reading of the autonomía Marxist perspective offers several important concepts for a “practice-of-struggle” approach to the interpretation of the jornalera/o experience in the United States. The first concept is that this approach rejects traditional Marxist interpretations focused on presenting a one-sided analysis of capitalist control and domination. It instead shifts analysis toward a focus on working class subjectivities, the self-valorization of the worker, the political and technical composition of the working class, and the analysis of waged and unwaged labor within the proposition of the theory of value in the social factory. This perspective proposes that under capitalism there are two subjects: the capitalist class and the working class. They exist in an inherently antagonistic relation in which the capitalist seeks to maintain control over labor power through the imposition of the necessity to work and extraction of value from unpaid surplus labor-time.

However, instead of presenting the working class as a powerless entity, this approach seeks to analyze the working class as an independent political subject and change agent. Through the use of the refusal to work, the working class seeks to break the power of capitalist control. As an antagonistic force, the strategy of refusal becomes a “separation and its realization undermines and destroys capital’s dialectic.” (Negri, 1999, p. xxvii) Thus, the result of this battle against capital, the working class develops its own projects focused on self-valorization. Ultimately a central idea in this analysis of workers’ autonomy in the refusal to work is in reality

the long-term objective of the abolition of work and the constitution of a “new mode of producing and new multidimensional society” (Negri, 1991, p. xxvii).

A second important concept in *autonomía* theory is a rejection of traditional Marxist interpretations in which capital is essentially objectified as capable of easily subordinating the interests of the working class. In sharp contrast, *autonomía* theory as presented in the early work of Antonio Negri, focuses on the self-valorization of the working class. Negri seeks to understand strategies for “...working for oneself as a class asserting one’s own needs as primary to capital’s need for value.” (1991, p. xxx). Negri further proposes that this involves “independence and separation of the working class from capitalist development” (1991, p. xxx). Working-class valorization is an antagonistic force and “could subvert the valorization of capital, which depends in the subordination of the workers” (1991, p. xxx). The refusal throws the system into crisis, and this form of struggle rather than “seeking to control, the objective is to destroy and to free itself” (1991, p. xxi).

The third concept in the *autonomía* perspective refers to the notion of working-class composition, which examines the changing characteristics of the working class under contemporary forms of capitalism. The analysis includes both the technical and political composition. The technical composition refers to the division of the working class by capital based on the position of workers within the assemblage of technologies, skills, and disciplinary practices in the workplace. The political composition of workers includes the organizational forms as well as the tactics or practices those workers use in conflicts in and against work. These include absenteeism, strikes of various types, mutual aid, marches, demonstrations, etc. (Negri 2005: xxxii). Finally, the *autonomía* Marxist perspective offers an alternative to traditional frameworks used in studies of *jornaleras* and *jornaleros* who are simply considered as a

precarious segment of some sort of informal market. My approach instead proposes the concept of the “social factory”. This theoretical shift allows the analysis to include struggles beyond the point of immediate production and how workers seek to mobilize these against capital.

Autonomist Marxists long have proposed the concept of the “social factory” to understand the circulation of struggle between the workplace and the community. This allows activists to see the linkages between workplace struggles and community conflicts over housing, food, health care, education, and even utility prices (Tronti, 2014; Palazzo, 2014).

The day laborers do not fit in the traditional conception of the factory worker but should not be considered members of some sort of informal market. This is because they have formally organized themselves to strengthen their positions in a labor market that capital prefers to keep informal because unregulated. The day workers at Casa Latina have exercised this sort of self-valorizing agency by regulating this labor market and formalizing many of the conditions workers face based on their own terms (like the setting of wage rates for different types of jobs) and needs (more free time). Thus, the concept of social factory provides a space of inclusion in the discussions and analysis of capitalist relations of production: the day laborers or “*jornaleros*” are an intrinsic component of the working class under contemporary capitalism.

“La Resistencia” or “La Revuelta”: Early Struggles of Leadership and Organizational Structures in Casa Latina

In March of 2009, newspapers reported on the complaints from a group of day laborers self-described itself as “*la resistencia*” or the *resistance*⁹ to the staff and leadership of the labor center. But for the other workers in Casa Latina, it was described as “*la revuelta*” or the revolt. While the staff was shocked and surprised by this group of *jornaleros* and their challenging the leadership of Casa Latina, the director understood the roots of this

rebellion: “We have noticed that these disgruntled workers have learned how to have their voices heard (probably thanks to us!) and have successfully gotten some media attention for their cause” (Stern Interview, Seattle, March 16, 2009). Casa Latina organizers utilized Paulo Freire’s school of popular education, indeed the workers learned well from the organizers since the central objective in popular education is in the development of critical thinkers who challenge the status quo with the acquisition of “consciousness”. See the discussion of Paulo Frieire in Chapter 4.

The resistance, as they called themselves, was brewing since October 10, 2008, when the first complaint criticized the direction of the center and more specifically against several staff members at the center. Workers charged the leadership with practicing discrimination and favoritism, which resulted in sending close friends to jobs and the unfair application of the rules on the dispatch of workers. The message reflected the dissatisfaction and frustration of this group of workers. One of the workers stated:

Where are the principles of these people, the workers who want change are tired, and want respect of the raffle process, with an organization of people with ethics and education so that we can be treated with respect and dignity. (Tapia interview, Seattle, October 10, 2008).

A second complaint on November 16, 2008 continued the criticism of the staff and leadership of the labor center and, while critical, nevertheless offered suggestions to improve the dispatch of workers. At the time of the complaints, the workers in Casa Latina discussed the issue of membership and provided recommendations from three discussion groups consisting only of workers. A US\$ 50 membership fee caused a great deal of negative reaction from some of the workers, more specifically, the disgruntled

workers of the “resistance” (Notes from Membership Meeting, Seattle, February 1, 2009). By February 9, 2009, the concerned workers recognized improvements to issues raised in previous complaints but cited new areas of concern such as the membership criteria and especially the proposal of a US\$ 50 membership fee. This particular issue initiated additional critical inquiries on the finances of the center and suggested attention to worker input for the better utilization of funds. Other criticisms at this time focused on the improvement of inclusion of workers in the discussion of important proposals in the assembly meetings and concluded with an interesting vision of the future with the input of experts based on a vision of justice and administration:

Vean a nuestra institución y a los miembros que la conforman (staff y trabajadores) como las dos caras de la misma moneda para que con respeto mutuo y reciproco de nuestros derechos se puedan canalizar proyectos que nos den beneficios a todos, y no que nos hagan entrar mas bien en conflicto.” [See our institution and the members (staff and workers) like the two faces of the same coin so that with mutual and reciprocal respect of our rights can be channeled for projects of benefit for all and to minimize conflict.]

The director of the center responded to the worker’s message and accepted the criticism on the need for more discussion and participation of workers in the membership proposal and fee. On the finances, she clarified the finances of the center were in good standing (Stern Interview, Seattle, February 18, 2009). In a February 13 message, the leader of the disgruntled workers continued challenging the staff and leadership in the center citing intimidation and abuse from certain members of the center. In the same message, the worker suggested a worker’s survey of the dispatch of workers and the assessment of the internal and external institutional image of the Casa Latina (Tapia Interview, Seattle, February 13, 2009). The director responded to the letter and suggested to meet with the staff at the center (Stern Interview, Seattle, February 18, 2009).

Within days, the workers were not satisfied with the director's response and began a more active campaign for change. With a handwritten letter dated February 22, 2009, the workers demanded the removal of the dispatcher and other staff at the center; the letter was signed by around 40 workers. On February 23 2009, under the heading of "Urgent Administrative Changes for a Better Direction of the Center," the workers offered a list of issues on the problems of the leadership of Casa Latina, from charges of inequality in the distribution of opportunities, intimidation against the workers, and the imposition of a membership fee without the input of the worker, the lack of input from the workers on the decision-making process of the center and the imposition of personnel incapable of completing duties professionally and ethically. The workers demanded the termination or removal of staff members at the center who were engaged in the application of unjust norms and actions against the freedom of speech of the workers and preferential treatment of certain workers.

A second important demand included the establishment of a committee on the dispatch of work at the center under the direction of the workers themselves to minimize the misuse of the distribution of work. The workers demanded the creation of a Worker's Board of Directors or Advisory Board responsible for the solution of problems inside and outside the institution. This demand cited the need for labor training, clarification and enforcement of performance norms and disciplinary procedures, economy and finances at the center, psychological reparation of the workers affected during the center's struggle for change, and the participation of workers in the evaluation and selection of the dispatcher personnel (Commission for Change, February 24, 2009).

By-and-large, this was the most ambitious and well-thought-out list of demands from the Commission for Change or the resistance. The director of the center informed the Board Members and Steering Committee Members of Casa Latina on the emerging public conflict with a group of workers critical of the direction of the center (Stern Interview, Seattle, February 27, 2009). A public statement from Casa Latina recognized the struggle by the workers and listed the demands which included the termination of certain members of the staff, the establishment of committee of workers involved in the dispatch of work, and an advisory board of workers for Casa Latina. The statement found the termination of the staff members as problematic without proof of the accusations. It was signed by around 150 workers (Declaración de Casa Latina March 6, 2009). Casa Latina decided to prohibit the entrance of the workers participating in the protests against the center until they accepted a dialogue to solve the problem (Stern Interview, Seattle, March 6, 2009). In response to the prohibition of the entrance of the workers in the center, the dissatisfied workers argued the actions against the workers as unjust and unnecessary and requested individual letters prohibiting the entrance of the protesters (Commission for Change, March 8, 2009). The members of the *Comisión por el Cambio* proposed more serious demands from the leadership of the labor center by demanding the finances of the center for several years and the manual or statutes guiding the work and activities of the center (Commission for Change March 10, 2009). In a letter dated March 13, 2009, the leaders of the protesters submitted a document with the proof of the complaints against Casa Latina. All the documents in the report were individual summaries of the affected workers in various areas such as abuse of authority, intimidation, criticisms of the dispatch of work, and the lack of a voice from the workers

at the center. An exact copy of the documents was submitted to the Mayor of Seattle. The following are examples of the jornaleros complaints against the leadership at the center.

Daniel Medrano, a Mexican from the state of Durango, declared he was subjected to abuse of authority and intimidation from one of the staff members. He stated the following in the report submitted to the center and the Mayor of Seattle:

Estábamos en una reunión en el Centro de la Casa Latina, y ella estaba hablando sobre la membresía, por la cual yo me opuse diciendo, “Señora nosotros no estamos de acuerdo con la membresía y la venta del café.” A lo que ello respondió “Cállese Daniel Medrano, eso no discutamos eso fue un acuerdo de asamblea.” Y yo le dije que la membresía no estoy de acuerdo y que no me puede obligar a pagar, y ella me digo otra vez: “Cállese o le echo la policía, y yo le dije yo tengo mi derecho y puedo hablar, lo que ella me dijo: “retírese del centro o le llamo a la policía” En ese momento la gente me apoyo pero la Sra hasta cambio de color de ira.”

[We were in a meeting at the Casa Latina Center and she was talking about the membership fee, to which I shared my disapproval and stated: “Lady we are not in agreement on the membership or the sale of coffee.” She responded, “Shut-up or I will call the police.” I told her that I had rights and I can talk. She responded, “Get out from the center or I will call the police.” At that moment, the people in the meeting supported my position as I noted the change of color from her anger.] Other workers complained of the failure for due process and the application of

harsh rules on jobs completed via the center dispatch. This was the case of Juan from Mexico who complained of a harsh punishment or sanction for a complaint from one of the employees:

Que resulta que un día se me envió a trabajar, pintando el ceiling del baño, el cual quedo a completa satisfacción de la dueña de casa. Pero resulta que a las 2 semanas la Sra. Guadalupe me llamo diciéndome que la pintura se había desprendido del techo interior del baño, lo cual me causo asombro y me pregunte como puede haber sucedido eso, y me reclamaron después de dos semanas, por lo que sin darme tiempo a dar explicaciones de mi parte, y de la otra, fui victima de una suspensión temporal de dos meses, y creo que tengo derecho al reclamo y verificación, lo que no concedieron.

I was sent to work on a paint job for an employer and the person was completely satisfied. However, two weeks later Mrs. [sic] Guadalupe call me and told me that the paint came off from the ceiling, to which I was surprised, after two weeks of

doing the work, without any time to explain the problem, I was a victim of a temporary suspension for two months, to which I felt I had the right for a claim and verification of the sanction. I never got it.]

Beyond the complaints on abuse of authority or the application of unfair sanctions, some of the workers were critical of the handling of the raffle for the daily jobs offered at the center. On the raffle of tickets for jobs, the following complaint was lodged against the staff:

Había casos anteriormente de algunos trabajadores quienes no encontraron su ticket en el ánfora, pues ellos sospechaban que confabulaban contra su persona, pues yo había hablado con ellos. Por mi parte comente en ese entonces hice ver al coordinador Miguel López, que también los despachadores los doblaban los tickets de diferente forma, a unos trabajadores le doblaban el ticket en dos y a otros en 4, y a la hora de sacar estaban palpando con la mano, lo cual es de conocimiento publico, frente a ello la Sra. Araceli me corto la palabra e incluso le dije que no había acabado pero así fue.

[There were previous cases of some workers who could not find their tickets in the tickets box, but they were suspicious of an illegal procedure. I had talk to them about it. I shared my concerns with the coordinator since the dispatchers folded the tickets in two or four, and at the time of drawing the tickets, the workers touched the tickets, which is common public knowledge, at which moment Sra. Araceli stopped me from talking I told her that I had not finished, nevertheless it happened.]

On March 27, 2009, there appeared to be an agreement from one of the leaders to end the protest. This new document listed six areas of concern involving the rights of workers to: (1) present ideas and positions within the established norms of the center, (2) to have the center respect the accords from the General Assembly of the day laborers and follow the norms established for the proposition of suggested changes in cases of disagreement with the decision of the Assembly, (3) to have the center respect the limited authority of the personnel related to any decision on the supervision and hiring of the personnel, as well as any decision in the area of finances and legal matters and to participate in the decisions

of authority relegated to the workers in the statutes of workers and the system of distribution of jobs, and 4) to participate in the organization based on mutual respect with the personnel and the participants in the organization (Convenio de Común Acuerdo). However, the leader of the Comisión por el Cambio recanted the agreement with the leadership of Casa Latina. The document included several concerns on the situation of the center and the workers: (1) the changes demanded by the workers are only on paper, (2) we must adopt the publication of job openings, (3) we must be vigilant of the central values of the institution (social justice, dignity, respect, democracy, integrity and learning), and (4) everybody deserves a dignified and respectful treatment without intimidation in the search for employment (Worker Statement April 3rd, 2009). As a result of the broken agreement to stop the protests of the center and to dialogue with the leadership of the center, the workers of the Comisión por el Cambio were prohibited from entering or returning to the labor center.

While on the surface, the struggle of this group of workers appeared to fail in the transformation of the labor center, through the political actions of the jornaleros, the organization began a new cycle of struggle in the recognition of the centrality of the workers and the necessity for the empowerment of the workers as agents for change. One result of these struggles was to initiate a new phase in the evolution of the nature of Casa Latina through a series of organizational changes and strategies promoting the inclusion of the workers in the direction of the center. In fact, this involved the establishment of worker control. At the end of the struggle, the participation of the workers in the direction of Casa Latina re-defined and re-asserted the power of the workers acting as an “independent class-for-itself through struggles” rather than a “fragmented mass requiring instructions in its class interests”. While the workers at Casa Latina

experimented with democratic practices from the very beginning, it was not until the clash between the leadership and the membership of Casa Latina that the workers established the foundations for the direction of the activities at the center under the power of the workers themselves. At the end of the struggle, the organizational structure was strengthened and provided the basis of worker control in the decisions affecting the jornaleras and jornaleros through the establishment of clear and transparent statutes via the General Assembly governing the rights and treatment of workers at the center.

La Asamblea: los trabajadores en control/The Assembly: Workers in Control

The activist participation of the workers led to changes in various areas of concern including the political organizational structure sought to resolve problems between the workers and leaders of Casa Latina. Even though the organizers of Casa Latina recognized the need for democratic practices and the inclusion of the workers in the direction of the activities in the labor center, it is not until the second phase of the center's history that Casas Latina formally established the General Assembly. It is through this organizational tool that the workers can now participate directly to provide direction and input on various issues affecting the workers at the labor center.

According to the new statutes of the organization, the center provides procedures to create, amend, or eliminate rules and agreements. In the General Assembly, any proposal must be written and receive the support of at least 20 participants with the names of all the workers supporting the proposal. If the proposal is approved, it will be discussed at the next General Assembly meeting. The General Assembly will identify, analyze, and make an assessment of the potential negative consequences of the implementation of the proposal. All of the potential doubts or confusion must be clarified at the meeting to reach a

consensus on the matter. The next step in the procedure is a vote on the proposal. If the vote generates conflict the vote is subject to a secret ballot. For the proposal to be accepted, it must obtain at a minimum 51 percent of the total vote. An announcement is then made to the participants on the day the new rule or modification is implemented. An interlude of time of at least one week is allowed to implement and evaluate the results of the rules or agreements. After the lapse of time stipulated, it must be revised and evaluated to determine if the rule is functioning as a final decision in the General Assembly (Statutes Casa Latina, 2018).

One of the first applications of the General Assembly rules involved in the discussion of the topic of membership, which was a controversial issue among workers in Casa Latina. Nevertheless, it illustrated the advancement of democratization of decision-making by the workers at the labor center. The participants in the General Assembly divided into three groups to discuss various aspects connected to the topic of membership requirements. One of the most controversial aspects was the \$50 membership fee. From the three group discussions, one rejected the fee while the other two groups sent the proposal for consultation from the workers. Just as importantly, they also, asked for clarification of how the membership funds would be utilized by the labor center. In addition, the workers asked for:

1. Training workshops and knowledge of basic security in the handling of tools.
2. Proper evaluation of new members.
3. Requiring workers to remain involved in the activities of the center to keep membership.

4. Careful attention by the leadership to the skills of workers based on previous work assignments.
5. Participation in the dispatch of work based on the commitment of workers in organizational meetings; and
6. Respect for the fair dispatch of work in the center.

All the above suggestions were to be subject to a member vote (Report Membership Meeting, February 1st, 2009). This type of worker participation in the discussion of rules and guidelines for the center became incorporated in the final document of statutes for Casa Latina.

An examination of the statutes reveals other aspects of the empowerment of the workers at Casa Latina, which describes and expounds in detail the rights and responsibilities of the workers. Such rights and responsibilities resulted from the interaction of the workers and the leadership of the center over years of political “*concientización*” and organizational struggles. Among the basic rights included in the statutes for the workers, it includes the treatment of workers with respect, dignity and to be heard; the right to appeal a decision or sanction in the General Assembly if subjected to an injustice; the right of workers to propose the creation, modification, or elimination of rules; and the right to be elected for a committee or other representative structures in the center. These rights reflected the progressive stance of the leadership of the center and the recognition of the centrality of the rights of workers. These rights were supplemented with an important set of responsibilities for the workers at the center such as the participation in decision-making processes. These rights are meant to internalize solidarity and require leadership to adhere to the decisions of the majority of jornaleras and jornaleros; this also

formalized the workers' right to participate in activities for the development and growth of the center and for leadership to respect the wages established in the General Assembly (Reglamento Casa Latina January 24, 2018)

Another example of the workers' ability to solve potential conflict in the labor center involved the formulation of a detailed and transparent set of rules for the dispatch of workers at the center. This was one of the most serious issues raised by the resistance of workers involved in the critique of the leadership of the center. The dispatch rules covered instructions on the raffle used for the daily list of workers, however, now it was done using a computer program. Under these guidelines members must show a valid and current ID to prove membership in the labor center. To minimize any doubts about the transparency of the process, during the raffle, the selected ID must be shared with the workers with the name of the worker selected for the job; if any doubts exist the workers have the opportunity to check on the accuracy of the selection. The dispatch of workers includes strict rules on the type of specialization and the application of sanctions. On the requirements for specialized jobs, workers had to show previous employers recommendations as well proof of participation in specialty training workshops at Casa Latina. To avoid conflict among workers, the rules established clear guidelines for the dispatch of jobs. There were now clear stipulations on factors that would affect the dispatch of work—for example, waiting in the hall, informing the staff for excused exits from the hall with the prospect of losing their place in the dispatch job order. The rules covered potential issues with the use of personal vehicles and the responsibilities of the drivers.

In general, the rules on the dispatch of workers were complete and responded to any potential misunderstanding between the workers and leaders at Casa Latina. Besides

the rules affecting the workers at Casa Latina, there were rules concerning the interaction of workers with their employers. These included rules of worker behavior at the job site, the rules for renegotiating a work order, prohibition of demand for food from the employers (with sanctions), and for misinformation to an employer on the ability to do specialty jobs (with sanctions). In an examination of the statutes, most of the rules on the dispatch of jobs was approved by the jornaleros and jornaleras in assembly meetings from 2009 to 2017.

Finally, the statutes for the labor center contain a list of categories on behavior rules for the workers in Casa Latina. Workers under the influence of drugs, alcohol or smell of alcohol are prohibited entrance to the center and informed of a set of sanctions to correct the behavior. Other issues include rules against disrespectfulness with aggressive behavior and insults as well as the introduction of alcoholic beverages in the center as primary instances. The sanctions vary from being denied entrance and service for one week for the first offence and up to permanent denial after the fourth offence. For less serious categories of unacceptable behavior, the workers can appeal the charges on behavior in the General Assembly. For serious criminal charges, those lay beyond the reach of the workers at the center.

Wages and How the Working-Class Re-values Itself

This section examines the self-valorization of the day workers in Casa Latina by observing how they set wages and refuse work. The self-valorization of the workers must be examined during two distinct economic cycles: First, during the (2007-08) crisis, when prices stayed steady; Second, after the crisis when rates can go up. In this context, the day laborers demonstrate agency by re-valuing their labor power with sometimes refusing to work.

During the earlier years of Casa Latina, the organizers were not involved in the activities of the labor dispatch center. Nevertheless, their encounter with workers in the community gradually moved the organizers into the building that became the community labor center. An examination of the history of Casa Latina reveals those early encounters with workers over the issue of wages was negotiated through the early work of the street theater project. This was done by picking topics for the theater group and the workers picked up the topic of wage theft. According to the narrative from the stories of the workers on wage theft, when the street theater presented stories of workers affected by this loss, “people would share experiences, no matter how bad we try to make it up, they always had a worse one.” (Stern Interview). This is the early phase when Casa Latina organizers were not involved directly with worker’s issues since there was no such thing as a dispatch program.

As a center specializing in the organization of workers, during the more recent history of the center, the dispatch of workers became a central organizational concern in the establishment of the center and the individual unorganized day laborers in the streets. This study documented the various times the organizers confronted the resistance of the street day laborers who did not want to follow rules for any type of conduct. For the workers in the streets, they felt more in control as individuals in deciding the wages for their labor. Consequently, the leadership and organizers of Casa Latina had to resolve how to integrate the day laborers in the streets to become part of the day labor project in Casa Latina. In my experience as an early participant in the work of Casa Latina, I remember the impact of the recession in Seattle and how it affected day workers. For example, there was a decrease in the number of jobs during the years of the “resistance” from 2008 to 2011; the center

dispatched the lowest number of workers for jobs in the market. The wages of workers changed in 4 years, with a minimum of US\$ 13. By 2014 Casa Latina and the workers had joined the fight for US\$ 15 minimum wage in Seattle. Many workers spoke bravely at city council detailing, how Casa Latina already had a US\$ 15 minimum.

In this regard, women from the *HHH (House Hold Helpers)* participated in the \$15 dollar campaign, when many of the women were earning around US\$ 17 an hour. In the discussion of wages with the workers at Casa Latina, women organizers noted the differential in wages between women working in for-profit labor centers and those working at Casa Latina. Those working in companies were paid around US\$ 13, while Casa Latina workers got as much as US\$ 23 per hour. The economic and the political became one as the day workers joined Casa Latina:

Where before the worker engaged the employees individually and suffered the consequences of being powerless. However, when the women are part of Casa Latina, they benefit from the establishment of fair wages and the presence of an organization that looks after the interests of the workers.

The stories of other day workers supported the impact of Casa Latina. For example, the norms established by the workers clearly stated the negotiation of wages as individuals was not accepted but instead, they had to work with the salary established by the center.

La Asamblea, Wages, and the Power of Workers

As stated before, Casa Latina was not always known to be a model worker center. Academics and activists from other worker centers marveled at how smoothly Casa Latina ran, and were impressed with its democratically run “*asamblea*” where the day workers made some of the most important decisions for themselves. However, the “*asamblea*” emerged from a crisis and troubling times that almost destroyed Casa Latina’s outreach to

the growing community of *jornaleros*. Historically, the worker center has had two very distinct eras. The first phase began in a vacant lot in the Belltown neighborhood with a small trailer for its center of activities. The second phase led to the current location with a fully functional meeting space and building in the Central District neighborhood in Seattle. From 1999 to 2008, Casa Latina was in an abandoned lot provided by the city near the piers at the bottom of the many waterfront hills in downtown Seattle. This contrasts with the current location near the top of a hill on Jackson with a view overlooking the city. The workers referred to the old as “*allá abajo*” or the space below in the vacant lot near the piers. When I became a volunteer at the worker center in 2008, I experienced first-hand how the center functioned when it was located “*abajo*” in contrast to the current location. It’s important to mention that on Western Avenue, the initial center was located in a geographical place that historically attracted unemployed workers from the city of Seattle. This is the same neighborhood, where The Millionaire Club, a day worker center founded during the depression attracted unemployed workers to the vicinity.

At the current location, the *asamblea* meeting room has become a symbolic and sacred space for the workers; it is a place where important decisions are made and where workers are remembered and honored. The discussion of wages and other labor related issues at the center is one of the most important decisions addressed in the General Assembly meetings. When Casa Latina began to dispatch workers a committee of workers decided the initial wages since there was no *asamblea* Araceli, a member of the leadership of Casa Latina, recalls that workers got together to decide the value for each specialty (painting, landscaping, tiling, carpentry, and drywall). The wages were

announced and later posted in front of one of the buildings. These wages stayed the same from 1999 until the relocation from Belltown to the Central District.

While this type of workers' action seems revolutionary, and a clear example of self-valorization of labor power, the process was not flawless. The wages stayed relatively flat for many years even though these wages were much higher than the state minimum wage and closer to union wages during the time period. One of the reasons wages stayed the same was that workers had no real accountability, The Center during this time was a welcoming place to workers and had a drop-in (first-in-line) system. This meant that anyone who came to the center was admitted into the program, and thus could look for work immediately. This system did not allow the workers to create a cohort of workers who stuck around long enough to create a strong group. Under the drop-in system, workers could claim to know any type of skill or job and there was no accountability on the preparation or skills of the workers. As a volunteer in the activities of the center, I witnessed this flaw many times alongside problems in the dispatch of work at the center. If a job request came for a gardening assignment, and the worker had to know how to use a specialized machine for the yard, the worker who was next in line could claim to know how to use the machinery. Many times, the workers lacked knowledge of the operation of the machinery or equipment. Consequently, if an employer filed a complaint, there was no way to really sanction the worker because of the worker's temporary and weak connection to the center. In the drop-in system, there was no accountability for the performance of work.

When the center moved from Belltown to its new home in the Central District the workers and the leadership adopted new rules and regulations to help workers truly re-

value their labor power. After the *revuelta*, the workers of Casa Latina wanted more accountability and transparency in the dispatch of job assignments. The dispatch of jobs became more efficient with the implementation of *Machete*, a computerized system for the distribution of jobs. A second change in the dispatch of jobs included a shift from a drop-in system to the adoption of a payment fee for a Casa Latina ID. This change provided more consistency in the participation of the workers, rather than a temporary labor force with no commitment to the operation of the labor center. Araceli asserts that this established the foundation for a group of *jornaleros* who were really committed to the ideals of Casa Latina and were willing to follow the rules and regulations. At the beginning of the crisis the protest really affected the amount of work dispatch from 2009 to 2011. As part of the changes designed to create a group of committed workers, in order to gain membership, workers also needed to accumulate points for full membership in the direction of the center. Workers accomplished this by taking classes and participating in workshops to improve job skills or safety guidelines in the workplace. During this time the workers created a list of specialty jobs, instead of sending out workers who claimed to know how to work, the organization established rules to minimize the number of complaints from employers. This included the need for job recommendations from employers to demonstrate the skills and experience in specialty jobs. The regulations were clear in the dispatch of specialty jobs to avoid complaints from the employees, with a strict set of rules or sanctions that affected the ability of workers to ignore the basic requirements in the workplace. These rules helped to strengthen the “specialized skill” category, provided a safety mechanism to address employer complaints, and strengthened the reputation of the labor center.

By 2011 the crisis seemed to be over, and work started to pick just as the center implemented a computer program called *Machete*. It contained employer names and addresses, making it easier and faster to create work orders. The program also made employers accountable. If employers did not pay workers, then they were easily found in the database which rarely happened in the past. The program created a database for use by the workers and included information on the attendance of workers in workshops and the development of necessary skills. This computerized system provided more transparency in the dispatch of jobs and eradicated the problems associated with the drop-in system. For example, work orders, which were once handwritten, were now saved in the database. This was a response to the early criticisms directed at the dispatch of jobs. Workers who questioned the work dispatch were now able to verify all the work orders processed at the center.

As a participant at the center, in the summer of 2011, I attended one the first meetings where workers discussed the issue of wages. With an increase of jobs offered by contractors instead of homeowners, the workers were sent out on more rigorous jobs, for example, the specialty job of digging (excavation). Lacking regulations on the jobs and wages, digging was combined with weeding, a category that had the lowest wage rate. The workers complained on the US\$ 13 wage for the combination of digging and weeding. Over time, workers complained on the wages for these two rigorous jobs and began to decline jobs for digging until a change was made. Eventually the specialty of digging was separated from weeding and became its own category with a wage of US\$15 an hour. As workers became more cognizant of their labor power, after this initial challenge in the wages for digging and weeding, the workers started to demand explicit

job requests and the categorization of specialty jobs (the non “specialized skill” jobs only included general labor, weeding/digging, and moving). As a result of this new awareness of their labor power, the workers created new categories such as demolition and hauling, with their own wage value in specialized skill jobs.

Over the course of the years the workers would meet during the *asamblea* in the winter to decide the new rates for the upcoming season. Every year since 2009, they have raised their rates by one dollar. By 2015 the minimum rate for Casa Latina workers was US\$ 18 per hour. Nik Theodore completed a study for NDLO on wages to determine if worker centers had any influence on the wages at informal hiring sites. The survey found that higher wages at Casa Latina helped raise the wages for workers on the streets.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the problems and solutions to the issues of leadership and organization in working class struggles against capital. Through a critical interpretation of the politics of the jornaleros and jornaleras, the case study of Casa Latina exposes the crisis in working-class movements between the leadership and the membership. The politicization and consciousness of the members at the center demanded worker control over the direction of the center to best serve the interests of the workers. The leadership of the center responded in a creative manner to the demands of the workers who were critical of the direction of Casa Latina.

The “resistance” or “Commission for Change” demanded attention to issues of transparency and the just application of norms. The critical stance of this group of workers initiated a new phase in the history of Casa Latina with the establishment of statutes formulated by the workers themselves. This was, in fact, the self-valorization of the workers and self-agency in action. An examination of the statutes reveals the democratic participation of the workers in the determination of the final set of regulations or statutes. The result of the struggle within Casa Latina was the empowerment of the workers through the collaboration of the membership and leadership, rather than the imposition of regulations or statutes established by the leadership from the top-down. This is understandable since most of the staff or leadership of Casa Latina were originally and, in some cases, continue to be day laborers.

In reference to the organizational structure, the membership of Casa Latina strengthened the General Assembly as the mechanism for worker’s control of the direction of the center. While in the early years, workers participated in decisions

concerning the activities and direction of the center, it was not until the latest phase of the evolution of Casa Latina when workers took control over the direction of the center. In the general assembly workers were able to discuss problems and issues affecting them and, in the end, resolved those problems through a democratic process in the hands of the workers. In the general assembly meetings, the workers decided on the resolution of norms and rules concerning the participation of workers at the center. This includes norms related to the dispatch of workers, the application of sanctions to bring order to the activities of the membership, the resolution of worker's conflict with the leadership/staff and the employers, rules of behavior in the workplace, and the renegotiation of work orders.

It is clear the impact of the daily struggles and the organizational maturity of the day laborer increased the self-valorization of the workers and their power over wages. Workers recognized the power of the organization in setting of wages and daily contact with the employers rather than the diminished power of individual workers at the corner or street. In fact, the impact of the center was a factor in the increase of wages for all workers and not just Casa Latina members. In the past, workers performed jobs and accepted the wages of the employers. The maturity and experience of the workers in the organization increased wage differentials in specialty jobs by demanding higher wages for more rigorous and strenuous jobs. When workers recognized the exploitation of their labor power, they demanded higher wages, or they refused the dispatch and did not work.

CONCLUSION

I initiated this research project, first as a volunteer in Casa Latina, and later as a member of the staff in the center. My direct involvement in the activities of the center allowed me to observe the dynamics of an activist center on behalf of one of the most disenfranchised group of workers, the *jornaleras* and *jornaleros* in the Pacific Northwest. The tragic death of “Alvaro”, one of the *jornaleros* in the center offers an insight into the condition of the many workers associated with Casa Latina. Alvaro was one of the many workers who came to look for work at Casa Latina, or if he didn’t come to look for work, he would come by the center to greet many of his friends. The last time we saw him was on a Saturday in September, one of those typical Seattle Fall days grey and rainy. The Fall season signal the start of the slow season, as many knew not much work would be available. I remember greeting Alvaro that day; I didn’t know it would be the last day he would come to greet his friends in the center. Two days later, Alvaro was found dead, murdered outside, Safeco Field. Many people passed by his body unaware as they walked toward the stadium. The police did not notify us (the center) until two days later, when the police came to inform us of this horrible incident. The only identification found in his body was the Casa Latina membership card. His death went unnoticed by the media, not even a bleep on local news channels, or a newspaper account.

Fortunately for him, he was honored for and loved by many of his peers at Casa Latina. The workers created the first altar for him on the *Dia de Los Muertos*; the same altar would later serve as a space of other fallen members from Casa Latina. However, Alvaro received the highest honor as a *jornalero* during the *asamblea* dispatch, when his name ceremonially was put as number 1 of the last that day. This was the highest honor a

worker could receive: it guaranteed the dispatch to a work assignment. As a tribute to the death of a *jornalero*, with the rules of the dispatch, they called out his name three times. “Alvaro” the workers at the center in unison responded “*presente*”; after the third time they called out his name, they wrote next to his name “nr” (no response): he didn’t respond. This was a very symbolic gesture that he could not be there to accept the job. At the end of the tribute, the workers continued with the dispatch as usual.

From the Political Economy of Informal and Formal Market to an Autonomist Marxist View of Day Laborers

My immersion in the literature of the day laborers prepared me in the critical assessment of the experience of the jornaleros/as. Upon close analysis, competing and contrasting views emerge on the interpretation of the death of the jornalero and in general the experience of the jornaleros: from the dominant political economy of informal and formal markets literature to alternative views including social cultural tendencies and the development of social movement and activism scholarship among day laborers or jornaleros. On the one hand, the dominant interpretation of the political economy of the jornaleros renders their experience to economic and political subordination to the forces of capitalism. The scholarship examines demographical variables, socioeconomic status, work-history, and community integration with a combination of survey and government data. The collection of data on the day laborers is guided by a scientific analysis with importance on quantification and measuring aspects of the jornalero experience. Even though it attempts to propose a critical analysis of the laborers experience, it fails to explore the nature of exploitation of the day workers. Within the context of the theory of “globalization”, the scholarship proposes the concepts of a formal and informal labor market, with an uncritical perspective of capitalism on a world scale and its impact on

mass migration in the movement of workers or laborers. This political economy approach fails to examine the conditions of the workers and instead proposes an analysis of the economic forces affecting the jornaleros from the perspective of capital and capitalism, or what autonomist Marxists call “the self-valorization of capital”.

In response to the dominant narrative of the informal and formal labor market literature, the social cultural studies on social movement and activism scholarship challenged the limitations of the quantitative and economic analysis of the jornalero/a experience. Through the application of semi-structured in –depth interviews and qualitative ethnographic fieldwork, the studies examined the day laborer experience from a wider and broader perspective. These studies explored the emotional and social context of day laborers and the impact of immigration status, language barriers, and economic pressure in the utilization of public services. Critical of the economic aspects of the dominant scholarship on day laborers, scholars explored and applied concepts from critical medical anthropology and gender studies. These studies focused in the study of the cultural and personal aspects of the jornalero’s experience with personal and familial crisis involving personal shortcomings and patriarchal failure. Emergent studies examined the impact of immigration and the notion of identity, in the context of spaces beyond the economic forces of the jornaleros. These studies added a new dimension to the dominant economic narrative by focusing on how workers organized and found fellowship and comradeship with other migrants in the area rather than a place limited in the search for work. As noted in the review of the literature, it is an alternative to the purely economic analysis of the informal and formal labor market, since it examines the

self-activity of the jornaleros/as and rejects the reductionist conclusion as just temporary wage labor.

Another contribution in the body of literature of day laboreres beyond the economic interpretation of jornaleras/os includes the scholarship on social movements and activism, an important challenge to the common view of the workers as a marginalized and exploited community. These studies raise the issue of agency and politics in the day laborers community by placing the activities of the workers relationships with community-based organizations engaged in civic engagement and the improvement of conditions in the community. Other studies continued in the same tradition and illustrated the problems with the purely economic approach in the informal and formal market analysis of jornaleros. This is illustrated in case studies on the formation and creation of partnerships between the community and universities that chronicle the creation of participatory and worker-led centers. Finally, the examination and overview of the status of day labor centers provide more insights on the experience of the workers through the use of qualitative and quantitative analysis. One of the strengths of this literature is highlighted on their focus of advocacy, organizing, economic action and public policy as well as the emphasis on leadership development and a host of activities from membership, staff, budgets and fundraising and organizational connection.

Autonomist Marxism and the Jornalero/a Experience

Even though, the previous research contributed with new insights on the jornalero/a experience, this project proposed the utilization of four major sources of knowledge to overcome the shortcomings and weaknesses of the scholarship on day laborers: 1) the epistemology of Chicana/o anthropology 2) alterNative methodologies,

3) critical ethnography and 4) an autonomist Marxist framework. The central premise of this study emphasized the need for an analysis of the jornaleros/as not as individuals but as members of a social class, engaging in organizational empowerment with the acquisition of the self-valorization of the workers and the continuation of the struggle for change.

As a Chicano anthropologist, the legacy of the epistemology of Chicana/o anthropology contributes with an important foundation in the critique of mainstream anthropological studies and the perpetuation of unfounded stereotypes and ethnocentric interpretations of the Latina/o community. The emerging scholarship from both Chicano and Chicana scholars initiated the foundation of a scholarship rooted in the decolonization of perspectives from the early scholarship of Octavio Romano, Americo Paredes and the contribution of women anthropologists in the writings of Zavella and Davalos. While Romano's work challenged the so called objective and scientific foundation of the social sciences, and its impact on the discipline of anthropology, Paredes moved the criticism and discussion of the shortcomings of anthropological studies on the community with a nuanced critique of a distinctly Chicano anthropology. The emergence of new scholars, more specifically, the critique from Chicana feminists, such as Davalos, continued with the criticism of mainstream anthropology and the initiation of a "third stage" through the decolonization of anthropology scholarship. This movement questioned the authority of ethnography, the notion of power, and the promotion of a transformative scholarship. Consequently, these anthropological perspectives informed this study on the importance of community based and applied

research, the combination of theory and practice, and importance of a connection between the academy and the community.

The second source of knowledge in the examination of the jornalero/a experience in the Pacific Northwest originated in the application of AlterNative methodologies, which involves not only the questioning of ethnocentric perspectives and epistemologies of Western science but demands a participatory and collaborative alternative pedagogy and methodology with the community. Peña presents a dialectical definition of the concept of 'alterNative' from the thesis reference to "indigenous knowledge systems, an epistemology that is placed-based, that arises from the ontology of being in place, but is dislocated and ruptured to "homeland commons." This refers to the alterity of the Native or the anti-thesis. It is followed with the synthesis or "rupture": "the ability and strategy of the alter Native to alter the circumstances of the dislocation." In the process, of altering new spaces, the "nativeness" has been reinvented and the relocation of being in place (2010, p. 156). This might serve to interpret the jornalera/o experience. Placing at the center of the dialectical experience of the jornalero/a's daily struggle under the forces of capitalism in the core and its continuous challenges in the refusal to work, or the antithesis, the strategy to alter the dislocation, the jornalero/a completes the struggle with the rupture (the synthesis) and the acquisition of power and autonomy from capital. Thus, this study applied alterNative ethnographic methods, more specifically, the use in-depth ethnographic interviews for life histories focusing on the experiences of migration and work and participant observation of the daily activities at the community center and especially the interaction of workers and staff members.

A third source of knowledge originates from the scholarship on critical ethnography that provides guidelines in the collection of data but with a clear perspective of the relationship of the researcher and the informants. Madison's scholarship proposes the basic characteristics of the methodology in critical ethnography beginning with the central idea of "an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular lived domain" (2005, p. 5). Three methodological themes guide the role of the researcher: 1) positionality, 2) dialogue/otherness and 3) theory/method. The utilization of the epistemology of Chicana/o anthropology, alterNative methodologies, and critical ethnography examined the complexity of the day laborer and established the foundation for a new interpretation on the social, economic and political reality of an exploited community. The completion of the project highlighted the importance of the collaborative ethnography method in the collection of data on the jornalero/a worker in the region. In contrast to mainstream ethnographic studies, this project based on the characteristics of critical ethnography defined the "positionality" of the investigator in the research process, the strong relationship of the ethnographer and the informant, the centrality of a multi-voice narrative, and the accessibility of the research results to the members of the community.³

Despite the important contribution of the alternative and critical theoretical perspectives and methodological tools in anthropology, this project applied a fourth source of knowledge in the examination of the jornalero/a experience: an autonomist

³ During the presentation of my qualifying exams, it is a tradition to invite friends, relatives, and other members in the community to join in a festive celebration. Workers and activists from the Casa Latina listened to the research presentation on the day laborers and joined in the celebration with Mexican food (menudo).

Marxist framework. If the alternative and critical perspectives challenged the direction of anthropological studies on the interpretation of the Latina/o community, the autonomist Marxist framework represented a powerful critique of the Marxist interpretations on the nature of capitalism and its deviation from orthodox observations on the relationships between the central players: the workers and capitalists. The incorporation of the Marxist tradition in the study of the day laborers was a missing ingredient in challenging a major foundation of the day laborer scholarship: the centrality of an interpretation of capitalism under the theory of “globalization” and its subsequent interpretation of the economy, immigration and the application of the concepts of an informal and formal market.

To understand the emergence of the autonomist Marxist tradition, it is important to cite the precursor movements who engaged in analysis of the class struggle from the view of the workers. These movements were critical of the orthodox Marxist interpretations of the nature of the working-class struggle influenced by the tendencies of various forms of Leninism, Stalinism, and Trotskism originating in the Soviet Union and the United States. A central criticism from these early movements was directed towards the nature of socialism and the organizational structures of the working class, such as the unions and the established Communist Parties as defenders of the interest of the working class. Moreover, autonomists from the Johnson Forest Tendency, Socialism au Barberi, and Della Costa contributed both in the critique of orthodox Marxist interpretations and the proposition of new social actors: African Americans in the United States, youth and women.

A review of the scholarship on the day laborer exposed the limitations and weaknesses in the interpretation of capitalism and the necessity for an alternative and

critical perspective of contemporary capitalism. The centrality of “globalization” in the economic analysis of capitalism and its explanation on the nature of immigration from the periphery is an inadequate interpretation on the political and economic forces at work in the analysis of the day laborers. More specifically, the identification of an informal and formal market fails to capture the class relations and the position of the jornaleros/as in the hierarchy of labor. Consequently, this research project challenged and questioned the capitalist interpretations of the day laborer in the United States and proposed the insights and critique from the autonomist Marxist tradition on the nature of the political and economic forces under capitalism.

The autonomist alternative complemented the methodological and theoretical sources of knowledge on the Latina/o community founded in a praxis-oriented examination of the study of capitalism with a Marxist tradition conscious of workers resistance to capitalism across gender, race, and national-origin positionalities. Contrary to the dominant perspective of capitalist control and domination, the autonomist tradition switches to the empowerment and centrality of the working class. This is done by breaking away from traditional Marxism and the proposition of new conceptual tools: working class subjectivities, the self-valorization of the worker, the political and technical composition of the working class, and the analysis of waged and unwaged labor within the theory of value in the social factory. Thus, this interpretation views the worker as an independent political subject and change agent. Autonomists propose the refusal to work as a tool to break capitalist control and the ability of workers to take control of their projects (self-valorization). For autonomists, the real essence of Marxism was the abolition of work and the creation of a multidimensional society. An additional set of observations from the autonomist tradition applicable in the historical development of the jornaleros/as is the examination of the

changing characteristics of the working class under contemporary forms of capitalism. These concepts were useful in the identification and evolution of Latina/o workers in the Pacific Northwest through the application of the concepts of the technical and political composition of the working class. Both concepts broadened the analysis of the jornaleros/as, on the one hand, through an examination of the position of the workers within the hierarchy of the division of labor, skills, and the practices in the workplace, and the other the examination of organizational forms and the political tactics in conflicts in and against work. To conclude, the autonomist Marxist conception of the social factory gives an alternative explanation lacking in the dominant discourse of “globalization” and the centrality of the informal market. This concept places the jornalero/a experience in the center of the struggle against capitalism as members of a social class rather than individuals engaged in a futile struggle against capital. The proposition of the “social factory” is conceptually placing the jornalero/a worker in the struggle against capital allowing activists and organizers the ability to connect the linkages of the jornaleros/as to community struggles. Based on the narrative of the day laborers in Casa Latina, the actions of the workers countered the forces of capital by formalizing many of the conditions such as wages and protection in the jobs (terrains of struggle) on their own terms. Thus, the concept of “social factory” rather than the “informal market” provides a framework in the discussions and analysis of capitalist relations of production: the day laborers or “*jornaleros*” are an intrinsic component of the working class under contemporary capitalism.

Las Mujeres de Casa Latina

One of the central topics of this research project was the examination of the least studied topics in the literature of the jornalero experience: the emerging role of women workers. Fine’s excellent study on the nature of worker centers corroborated the paucity

of studies and attention to the role of gender in the jornalero experience. Despite the limited scholarship on women workers and activists in the Pacific Northwest, Chicana/Latina Studies scholars, with specializations in sociology, history, anthropology, and feminist studies enriched the interpretation of women workers and activism in the region. The narratives of a select group of women activists and organizers from the state of Washington informed and illustrated the specificity of the regional labor struggles, while at the same time making the connections to national Latina women organizers and activists.

A close reading of the narratives and stories of the women day laborers in the Pacific Northwest highlighted and illustrated many of the recurring themes affecting women in the work force: sexism and racism, politicization of women and families, and the historical re-composition of the labor struggle of workers of Latina/o origin in the United States. These themes were present in previous studies on women workers nationally, thus reinforcing the validity of the historical experience of Latina women activists and workers.

Just as important, there is a historical memory of the models of leadership styles in the organization of the Latina/o community as well as the important role of women directing the struggles of the larger Latina/o community. Through the voices of the women activists in Casa Latina, the study recorded the participation of women setting examples of leadership for future generation of women activists and organizers. The stories of the women day laborers leadership established a solid pattern of what autonomous Marxists call the importance of worker's agency on behalf of its own class or the self-valorization of the worker.

Also, the specific experience documented in the stories and narratives of Latina workers and activists in the Pacific Northwest informed and illustrated the changing character of the nature of the Latina/o family and the politicization of women and motherhood. These issues were documented in the early scholarship of the cannery women workers and activists, where the role of the “traditional” Latina/o family was subjected to social change and adapted to the political forces affecting women and familial relations.

The rise of women activists and organizers in the development of the worker’s center in Casa Latina offers lessons for other day laborer centers in the United States. In the initial stages of the participation of women in the formation of the worker’s center, the centrality of the Latina/o family, a recurring theme in the history of Latina women activists and organizers in previous decades emerged in the region. The first women in the worker’s center were not part of the initial phase of the day labor center, as told by the stories of the women, they waited for the return of the male workers in the center. These women congregated in the center along with their children and initiated discussions on the need to advocate for such issues as day care services, health care, and the schools. At first, English instruction attracted the women to the center and gradually, a cooperative formed to respond to the needs of the women. These were the initial steps in the formation of a leadership group that led to the establishment of Household Helpers, however this entity focused on work and labor related issues. The energy and the activism of the women workers who wanted a different type of project led to the formation of Mujeres sin Fronteras, a project with a political and activist direction on behalf of the needs of women workers in the center. Thus, the women activists began the establishment of a leadership capable of mobilizing the political agenda of Mujeres sin

Fronteras and the need for an emergency fund to support the activities of the women. This group of women in the center benefited from the participation of forums and conferences, which led to increased organizational skills and self-confidence as worker activists. As participants in the forums and conferences, the women in the center acquired knowledge on the history of domestic labor in the United States, labor rights, and the ability to negotiate labor with their employees. Moreover, the women learned on the models of conduct necessary in the creation of a process for the inclusion of women in the predominantly male centers and were subjected to organizational curriculum to empower the women activists and organizers. According to the narratives and stories of the women activists and organizers in Casa Latina, immigration concerns were central in their activism, but just as important, as workers, they yearned for dignity in work. The strength of the Casa Latina model lies in the creation and establishment of a group of organizers from the membership of the workers in the center.

In Latina labor scholarship, the scholar's dwell on the issue of identity, many times reflecting the dominant approach in the study of women, from studies focusing on gender specific models to those encompassing the inter-sectionality approach. The experience of women activists and organizers reflected in the narratives and stories of the women in Casa Latina recognize the importance of ethnic, gender, and immigration identity, however, the notion of "dignity in work" and their participation in labor issues place a higher degree of importance to the notion of working-class identity. This is supported by their participation in various sites of struggle, including the project for a Worker Bill of Rights: there is constant reference to their struggle as members of the working class (before ethnic, gender, or immigrant status). For example, the women's

desire for “dignity in work” support the notion of the self-valorization of labor power through wages and their involvement in such campaigns as the “\$15 Now.” The stories of women in Casa Latina illustrate how they self-valorized labor power through wages. A related concept in the failure to access the objective conditions of the workers is the use of the so-called “un-skilled” labor concept, and the participation of workers in the “informal market”: these theoretical concepts diminish the agency of workers and the valorization of labor power. Previous studies on domestic work failed to identify the roots of working-class disempowerment, but the emergence of Casa Latina as a model provided the workers with a space where the interest of the workers and their agency are the foundation of a new organizational structure. For example, the owners of hiring halls have subjected domestic work in the past to the negotiation of the individual, while in contrast the participants of Casa Latina act as workers in full control of their agency.

Casa Latina Worker’s Center as A Model for Jornaleros/as

What are the possibilities to duplicate the basic structure of Casa Latina as a model for other day laborer communities? From the experience of the participants, organizers, and activists, the workers in Casa Latina propose a program that has been tested over time, with the potential for the success of other day labor centers at the regional and national level. My ethnographic research based on conversations and interviews with workers and the organizers of the center is the foundation of this important chapter in the history of Latina/o day laborers in the Pacific Northwest. This research project examined the evolution of Casa Latina and its establishment as a model for other day laborer centers from 1994 to 2015.

In the initial stages of the history of Casa Latina, the organizers responded to the growing Latina/o population in the area and started with English classes in the community (English as a Second Language). Federal program funds supported these early initiatives in reaching out to the growing population in the Seattle area and worked with older established social service organizations such as Traveler's Aid and the Millionaire Club. The organizers noted problems with the older social service organizations, which were not prepared with this new Spanish speaking population in the area. Even though, the older organization served previous settlers in the central part of Seattle, by the 1990s they noticed the rise of different group of workers with different needs. In the early years, the organizers collaborated with other people in the community involved in immigration rights. However, the organizers realized the need for a more stable leadership in reaching out to this new population in the area and the need for a new organization for this new type of workers. Eventually, one group was successful in establishing a space to reach out to the Latina/o workers in Seattle with the use of grants focusing on adult education and a Street Theater community project. One of the lessons from these community initiatives emphasized the need for a central pedagogical approach to reach out to the new population of workers in the region. This became a founding block for a worker's organization guided by the ideas of popular education. Through the Street Theater, the organizers made the connections between theory and the need for action or praxis, the educational aspect of the theatre connected real problems in the community and forced the workers to think for themselves, for example wage theft, negotiation of work and other work-related problems. As the organizers reach out to more workers in the city, it became a priority to formalize the organization, thus the need for a fiscal sponsor. Eventually, in collaboration with other

community organizations, the organizers found a sponsor and worked on the formation of a board, the bylaws, and the preparation of the articles of incorporation. Within a short time, the organizers received the 501CR3 and became an independent entity. The organizers discussed a new direction from purely educational issues to the issue of employment and the organization of people around work. This shift occurred with the interaction between the organizers in the region and activists from other regions involved in the day labor struggles in the United States. An important lesson from these early contacts was the infusion of new organizing ideas in the politics of neighbors, workers and connection to local political structures. More importantly, the new shift connected the interests of the region's workers to the political agenda of day laborers at the national level. Consequently, these developments initiated an emphasis on the acquisition for a physical space capable of serving the large number of workers in the area and began the process of reaching out to the surrounding community for support. This was a lesson passed on from their contacts with organizers and community activists with experience in identifying allies necessary for the mobilization of people in support of workers' rights and issues.

When the center opened with a different focus or shift to the needs of workers, the organizers had to engage in the training of activists essential to the growth of Casa Latina. The organizers confronted a problem that became a challenge in the establishment of the day worker center: the attraction of workers from the streets to the center. After a period of trial and error with the jornalero/a community, the organizers realized that rather than competing with the street corner worker, it was necessary to allow them to decide on their own terms to work and cooperate with the activities of the center. The center's organizers realized they had two strengths in their favor and utilized them in

attracting the workers to the center: the accessibility to a phone and a Van service for the workers.

The organizers faced a diverse set of challenges, which prepared them in the creation of a successful day labor center in the region and an example for centers located in other regions in the United States. First, the center encountered organizational problems from the application of a dispatch system for the workers, the question of a membership fees, the solution of issues associated with injuries in the job cites, the assessment of job preparation of the workers, and the conduct or behavior of workers. Through the early years of the center until its maturity, the dispatch of workers became a perennial problem and the origins of conflict between the organizers and the workers. With the increase of day labor participants in the center, the workers and organizers engaged in the discussion for membership fees to strengthen the commitment of the workers in the promotion of a jornalero/a political agenda. Other concerns involved problems such as injuries among the workers and the quick response in offering workshops to minimize the incidents of accidents or injuries with the workers in the center. This problem forced the organizers in the center to reach out to experts on health issues and the collaboration with educators and health providers. Another issue related to the dispatch of workers involved the preparation or quality of work from the day laborers. Thus, the center-imposed checks on the job preparation of the workers to minimize negative reviews from the employees seeking service from the center. Besides the quality of work, the organizers became cognizant of the potential problem in the community on the behavior or conduct of the workers. For example, the center imposed clear rules of

behavior to avoid problems of alcohol or drug use among the day workers in the work site.

All the above learning lessons for the organizers of Casa Latina became the foundation to respond to challenges in the direction of the center. In part, the success of the center in attracting more day workers presented the activists with a set of organizational problems. In 2007, a group of workers attracted attention from the media and the surrounding communities in the center who challenged the direction and administration of the activities in the center. A central issue from the workers was the use of a dispatch system that favored certain workers on the assignment of jobs. The workers raised the issue of the lack of voice in the direction of the center: they demanded the creation of a worker board of directors and the dismissal of staff members in the direction of Casa Latina. The leadership of the center conducted an investigation to the charges from the workers and concluded with the acceptance of some of the demands from the workers.

The establishment of a permanent space for the center occurred concurrently with the struggle and criticism from some workers, but the collaboration with community and business leaders as well as the active participation of the day workers in pressuring the local authorities were finally successful with their objectives. The success of the organizers was clearly due to the active participation of the workers and organizing experience of the activists in promoting community outreach programs, the contact with social agencies and neighborhood groups and an intensive campaign to convince the neighbors within 1000 feet of the site. All the actions by the activists/organizers convinced the city officials with the confidence of the work from the center in reaching

out to the community and the solution of an organized safe process of the hiring of day laborers and other safety concerns from the community.

Once established in a permanent space, and with the knowledge of several years of organizing and struggling for a physical space to serve the needs of the growing day worker population in the city, the workers and organizers resolved several of the nagging problems from previous years. Those issues included the resolution of the dispatch of workers, the importance of a democratic organizational tool, and the application of clear guidelines and regulations to avoid the conflicts and friction of the early years.

One of the recurring problems affecting the center involved the dispatch of workers, which caused distrust and conflict among the workers and the organizers in the center. The center resolved the issue with the utilization of a database system called “Machete” where workers logged into a central system and saved their jobs in the system. It resolved the previous charges of fraud or favoritism towards certain workers for job requests. More importantly, the system had advantages including the maintenance of records necessary for fundraising activities and the potential use of the records on behalf of the workers for a future immigration reform.

To minimize the potential conflict among the workers, the center in collaboration with the day workers established a weekly meeting or “la asamblea “ or assembly. This new initiative provided a space for a collective and democratic discussion of various issues affecting the center and the workers. The meetings attracted the participation of many day workers in the solution of problems affecting the relations of the workers and the center and the center with the community. One of the positive contributions of the assembly was the compilation and approval of a comprehensive set of regulations or

guidelines for the day worker center.

To conclude, the active participation of the workers and the maturity of the organizers established the foundation for a long-lasting organizational structure in the hands of the jornaleros/as. In my experience visiting and talking to participants in other day labor centers, the historical experience of Casa Latina offers the praxis for other jornaleras/os seeking working class control of their destiny.

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Appendix

I. Casa Latina:
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With Dignity and Opportunity

Bienvenidos a Casa Latina!

Reglamento

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CASA Latina

Centro de Trabajadores

CASA Latina es una organización sin fines de lucro y tiene como objetivo ayudar a la comunidad latina e inmigrante de bajos ingresos a través de la educación y oportunidades de trabajo.

Programa de Educación y Empleo al Trabajador.

Centro de Trabajadores.- El Centro de trabajadores ofrece un sitio seguro y digno donde conseguir oportunidades de trabajo con salarios justos. Tenemos la finalidad de que los jornaleros y sus familias puedan llegar a ser económicamente independientes y puedan incluirse plenamente dentro de la sociedad. El Centro les ofrece la oportunidad de conocer a empleadores, los que podrían llegar a ser relaciones de trabajo a largo plazo.

Trabajadoras del hogar.— Este un programa que ofrece oportunidades de trabajo de limpieza de casa. Las trabajadoras se preparan a través de talleres y trabajo voluntario para desarrollar su propio negocio o agenda de trabajo.

Grupo de Mujeres sin Fronteras.— Este grupo de reúne cada viernes para compartir información y conocer sus derechos y recursos del área, así como crear una red de apoyo y fomentar el liderazgo entre la mujer latina.

Clases de inglés.- Estas clases son impartidas por voluntarios y son enfocadas en las necesidades diarias de los jornaleros en el lugar de trabajo.

Desarrollo de la fuerza de Trabajo.- Este programa ofrece diferentes tipos de talleres para mejorar la seguridad y las habilidades de los trabajadores para realizar su trabajo. Se imparten talleres como: Salud y Seguridad en el trabajo, Electricidad, Manejo de Químicos, Mudanza, Jardinería Ecológica, Limpieza de Casa sin el uso de químicos, Ergonomía y Limpieza estratégica.

Comité de Defensa del Trabajador.- Este es un programa que ayuda a los trabajadores a recuperar salarios que los patrones se niegan a pagarles.

El Centro del lugar. Los individuos que deseen obtener su membresía e identificación en el programa tendrán que adherirse a los derechos y responsabilidades que les otorga este centro de trabajo, y se comprometen a respetar aquellos acuerdos que se tomen en el futuro, ya que son para beneficio de todos/as los/as jornaleros/as del Centro.

**¡ MUCHAS GRACIAS POR SU COLABORACIÓN DE
MANTENER NUESTRO CENTRO DE TRABAJADORES
ORGANIZADO!**

de Trabajadores es coordinado por personal de CASA Latina. Los jornaleros son quienes establecen las reglas



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REGLAMENTO Centro de

Trabajadores

Reglas de Conducta	
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Categoría #1

1. Se les negará la entrada a las personas que se presenten bajo la influencia de alguna droga, alcohol o aliento alcohólico.

Sanción: La primera vez se le avisará por escrito que si insiste en quedarse o regresar en este estado, se le aplicarán en consecuencia las sanciones relacionadas con la categoría #2

Categoría #2

1. Mostrar falta de respeto, insultos y comportamiento agresivo. 2. Entrar al Centro de Trabajadores con bebidas alcohólicas.

Sanción: Primera vez: Se le negará la entrada y servicio por una semana.

Segunda vez: Se le negará la entrada y servicio por un mes. Tercera vez:

Se le negará la entrada y servicio por un año. Cuarta vez: Se le negará la entrada y servicio en

forma permanente

Categoría #3

1. Cualquier daño físico intencional a la propiedad de CASA Latina.

Sanción Se le negara entrada y servicio por un mes

Categoría #4

1. Asalto violento y/o amenazar a otra persona dentro de las instalaciones de la organización. 2. Entrar a las instalaciones con armas de fuego o armas punzantes o cortantes. 3. Acoso sexual . 4. Robo a la propiedad.

5. Usar o vender drogas, mariguana, así como consumir alcohol o mariguana dentro de las instalaciones de CASA Latina y en sus áreas de trabajo.

6. Discriminar a otra persona (patrón, staff, trabajador o voluntarios) por su raza, sexo, o tendencia sexual.

Sanción: Se le negará la entrada y servicio en FORMA PERMANENTE, y se llamará inmediatamente a la policía en caso de violaciones relacionadas a los puntos 1 al 4

La falta de respeto a los demás, insultos y/o comportamiento agresivo será sancionado severamente.	
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CASA Latina es una zona libre de odio. Cualquier discriminación por raza, sexo o tendencia sexual, será sancionada con la m	
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Todos los miembros tienen el derecho de pedir recisión del caso en la asamblea general Excepto las categorías 3 Y 4.

|| _____ .

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CASA Latina Centro de Trabajadores

I. Reglas de Distribución de Trabajo

Sorteo para la lista del día:

1. De lunes a sábado se cerrará el servicio de registro a las 7:00 a. m, de acuerdo a la hora que se registran en Machete; A esta hora empezara la rifa.
2. Solo los trabajadores que presenten el ID con Membresía vigente de CASA Latina podrán participar en la rifa del día.
3. El trabajador tendrá un mes para renovar su membresía a partir de la fecha de vencimiento.
4. Para crear la lista de trabajo del día, el despacho moverá el bote y sacara el primer ID, esta persona tendrá la responsabilidad de mover el bote y sacar todos los ID's, si esta persona declina perderá su lugar en lista de trabajo y tomara el último lugar de la lista. (3/14/2018. 14 votos a favor. 3 en contra)
5. Si alguien olvida poner su id en el bote y no lo pone antes de las 7:00 am, o hay alguna duda sobre la hora que haya llegado (sin testigos), tomara el último lugar de la lista.
6. Durante el sorteo, el ID premiado se cotejará a la vista, exhibiéndose públicamente el número y nombre del trabajador premiado y permitiéndose la comprobación directa en el momento de quienes tengan alguna duda.

Responsabilidades del jornalero:

7. Todos los trabajadores deberán estar listos con botas de trabajo, guantes , mascarillas Y lentes de protección personales para trabajos que los requieran

Reglas de Despacho:

8. Los patrones podrán solicitar trabajadores con vehículo propio solamente para trabajos alejados de Seattle. (Acuerdo 4/5/2017 18 votos)

9. Los siguientes serán opcionales:

a. Los trabajos fuera de los límites de Seattle b. Las órdenes que requieran empezar a las 11:00 am o después, serán opcionales

solamente si se anuncian antes de las 9 am.

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10. El despachador anunciara públicamente los requisitos de las órdenes de trabajo en el momento del despacho.

11. Los trabajadores que tengan especialidad (código: G, T, M, S, C, L, P1 y P2) podrán pasar las órdenes de Yarda, y de categoría pesada (Demolición, hauling, mudanza, excavación), y perderán por este día el chance de salir en esas categorías. Si pasan su especialidad, se marcara como declinación. (Los que declinan pasan a la última prioridad de despacho)

12. Los trabajadores que tengan solamente los códigos Y y U2, podrán pasar un trabajo en esta categoría, pero

- perderán por este día el chance de salir en la categoría que pasaron. Al quedarse con un solo código, ya no podrán pasar denuevo, y si lo hacen, se contará como declinación. (Los que declinan pasan a la última prioridad de despacho)
13. Solamente la persona que hizo el aseo el día anterior podrá escoger los trabajos que le correspondan (acuerdo Asamblea 4/21/2016)
 14. Si un trabajador no sabe cómo llegar al lugar de trabajo, podrá contratar el servicio de transporte de CASA Latina a un precio especial durante las horas de servicio (acuerdo 4/29/2010), a excepción que no haya disponibilidad en la van de CL.
 15. Solamente el trabajador despachado mantiene su lugar en la lista de despacho del día, cuando es cancelado por el patrón o alguna razón ajena (cambia de día) al trabajador antes de comenzar el trabajo. Bajo estas circunstancias, si el trabajador llega a Casa Latina después de cerrar el despacho, este mantiene su lugar el día siguiente.
 16. Si hay una orden de trabajo para desarrollar un trabajo especializado (pintura, jardinería, albañilería, carpintería, etc.) se despachara al trabajador que se encuentre más próximo a salir en la lista de trabajo del día y que además, esté registrado en la lista de la especialidad requerida.
 17. Si no hay trabajadores con los requerimientos en la lista del día, se realizara una rifa adicional entre los trabajadores presentes que estén registrados en la lista de

la especialidad y que tengan su ID actualizado (excepto cuando haya que sujetarse a algún acuerdo temporal aprobado).

Reglas de espera de Trabajo

18. El trabajador próximo a salir será llamado solamente dos veces. Si no responde, se le marcará NR y pasará a la 3era prioridad de despacho. (acuerdo de asamblea 7.30.09)

19. Es obligatorio que los tres (3) trabajadores próximos a salir en la lista para despacho, deben permanecer en la sala de espera, excepto cuando dejen por escrito en la pizarra que van al baño del centro de despacho. (acuerdo de asamblea 7.30.09)

20. Todos los demás trabajadores son responsables de dejar por escrito en la pizarra, donde estarán. (acuerdo de asamblea 7.30.09) Solamente se localizará a aquellos que estén en la clase de ESL o de computación de CASA Latina y talleres de liderazgo y clínicas. A los demás (lonchera, baño, tienda, etc.) se les saltará.

Despacho del Domingo y días Festivos

21. Las órdenes de trabajo para el domingo se despacharán los sábados, de acuerdo a la lista del sábado (el día hábil anterior, en caso de días festivos).

22. Los que declinaron o fueron marcados “NR” o perdieron su Y o U2, conservan estas penalidades para el despacho del Domingo o del día festivo. (Acuerdo junta de aclaraciones del 11/15/2017)

23. Si algún compañero agarra la orden de trabajo que no le

corresponde o viene a querer agarran patrones como si casa Latina fuera un parón, recibirá una sanción con una suspensión de 1 semana(acuerdo asamblea 7-9-15)

Lesiones:

24. Si un trabajador tiene una lesión, deberá reportarlo a la administración de CASA Latina y deberá aclarar cuáles son sus condiciones físicas antes de registrarse a trabajar en Casa Latina (acuerdo 4/29/2010)

Café, limpieza y seguridad:

A los trabajadores que se apunten para hacer estas funciones

voluntarias, no serán considerados,. Solamente en casos de excepción se les considerará para los trabajos de ese día. Vea “Orden de Despacho”.

25. Limpieza: Para las personas que salieron en la rifa para hacer limpieza deben efectuarlo de 7:30 a 11:00 de lunes a viernes y los sábados de 7:30 am a 12:00 pm.

Si reciben una orden de trabajo o salida de emergencia, perderán la oportunidad de trabajo al día siguiente, aún si hubiesen comenzado la labor de limpieza. Si, ya no hay más trabajadores para despachar y se le ofrece trabajar al voluntario del aseo, podrá salir a trabajar ese día Y también conservar su lugar al día siguiente. Referencia: “Orden de despacho”.

26. Café: A las que salen en el sorteo del café, el horario es de 7:15 am – 10:30am y el día siguiente, de 6:30 a 7:15 am. También se encargarán de vender guantes, sopas, mascarás & lentes de protección. Y limpiar el área del café, y surtir los

suministros (Acuerdo 5/17/2012)

Trabajos permanentes

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27. Los trabajos permanentes serán anunciados y no tendrán relación con la lista de trabajo.

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2. **Quejas de patrones** 28. El reglamento de conducta se aplica igualmente en el lugar de trabajo (Acuerdo de asamblea

4.9.09)

29. Está prohibido renegociar una orden de trabajo, es recomendable hablar con el patrón y rectificar la descripción de trabajo. Si hay alguna dificultad con la orden de trabajo y/o el salario es mejor comunicarse con el coordinador del Centro a través de la línea de emergencia. (Acuerdo de Asamblea 4.9.09)

30. Está prohibido pedir comida al empleador si la orden de trabajo no indica que patrón ofrecerá comida. (Acuerdo de Asamblea 4.9.09)

Sanciones correspondientes a las quejas de patrones (aprobado 7-16-15) Primera vez.- Llamada de atención en privado. Segunda vez - 2 semanas de suspensión Tercera vez - 1 mes de suspensión

Cuarta vez – 3 meses de suspensión Quinta vez – 1 año de suspensión

31. Especialidades: Cuando el trabajador dice que puede hacer un trabajo pero en realidad no lo sabe hacer. (Acuerdo de Asamblea 4.9.09)

Sanción correspondiente:

a-> El trabajador será suspendido por un mes, y, además b-> Saldrá de la lista de trabajadores especializados del área correspondiente definitivamente.

Orden de despacho:

Volanteo:

1. . Lista de trabajo (el sorteo)
2. . Trabajadores que hacen la limpieza primero, después el café
3. . Trabajadores que llegaron tarde y no se pudieron registrar o no respondieron (NR)
4. Trabajadores que declinaron (DC) En caso del despacho para el domingo el día sábado, se llamara por teléfono a los de la lista # 1

a. Invierno: Para los participantes del DWC, solo se hace el volanteo de voluntad, sin recibir trabajos el sábado (Acuerdo 12/19/2013)

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b. Temporada Alta: Todos los jueves saldrán por rifa seis (6)

trabajadores del DWC y

cuatro (4) de HHH, quienes serán los encargados de distribuir volantes de publicidad

del centro. Ellos mismos (los 6 trabajadores del DWC) encabezaran la lista de trabajo

del día sábado, después de los lugares que les corresponden a la limpieza y al café . (Acuerdo de asamblea 5.27.09)

Nota: Si alguien renuncia a distribuir volantes, su lugar será cubierto con una rifa adicional. **3. Regulación de la lista de trabajo para participantes que traen sus**

vehículos

(Acuerdos de Asamblea 6.4.09) a. Solamente los participantes con carro podrán transportar a sus compañeros de orden de trabajo si tienen vigentes:

1) la licencia de conducir, y, 2) el seguro del vehículo con la cobertura requerida;

b. Es necesario que los compañeros de la orden de trabajo estén también dispuestos a viajar con el dueño del carro.

c. (Acuerdos de Asamblea 4.11.13)

Cuando el patrón este pagando por transporte en una orden de trabajo, el trabajador tendrá las siguientes opciones:

Que llegue al lugar de trabajo en la van de CL., o se

puede ir en su carro pero no puede pedir al patrón dinero para el gas. Y En el caso de

que hubiese más de un trabajador implicado en la orden:

2.1- El conductor del carro se compromete a regresarlos a las oficinas de CL o a una parada de camión conveniente para los trabajadores pasajeros.

2.2- En caso de que uno de los trabajadores incluidos en la orden de trabajo no quisiese ir con el conductor, esta opción se cancela y todos tendría que ir en la van.

2.3- Si el conductor no quisiera ir en la van quedaría fuera de la lista de trabajo por el día.

4. Los trabajadores que no cumplan con las ordenes de trabajo los domingos

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c. serán sancionados como sigue:

Primera vez.- Una semana sin poder registrarse. Segunda vez.- Quince días sin poder registrarse. Tercera vez.- Un mes sin poder registrarse.

d.Si un trabajador no puede cumplir con la orden de trabajo, deberá pasar la oportunidad a otro trabajador del Centro, y reportar de esta situación al personal del centro.

e. Si un patrón cancela una orden de trabajo en el lugar convenido o después de haber sido enviado al lugar convenido. Los trabajadores recuperan su lugar en la lista para despacho del lunes inmediato siguiente.

5. **Los trabajadores que no cumplan con el periodo de tiempo de las ordenes de trabajo** Que dejen un trabajo sin avisar al patrón o el centro, o que no avisen que no podrán llegar al trabajo o cuando vean que el trabajo es muy duro se vayan,(aunque avisen al patrón o casa latina) estarán en incumplimiento de las horas que indica la orden de trabajo y recibirán la siguiente sanción suspensión con quince (15) días sin registrarse en el Centro de Trabajo. (Acuerdo de Asamblea 6.25.09) Cuando prometa al patrón regresar otro día al trabajo y no cumple con su promesa, ni habla al patrón, ni al centro, la primera vez, recibirá una llamada de atención en privado, si sucede una segunda vez, será sancionado como no cumplimiento de la orden de trabajo.(acordado 5-14-15)

Si no pueden cumplir con una orden de varios días, podrían ser saltados en la lista de trabajo del día solamente.

6. **Para ser incluidos en la lista de trabajadores con especialidad** es necesario:

- a. Traer dos recomendaciones de patrones con quienes haya trabajado la especialidad y den buenas referencias tuyas.
- b. Traer una recomendación de patrón con quién

haya trabajado la especialidad y de buena referencia suya, junto con un certificado oficial de algún taller o entrenamiento. c. Solo podrán tener 3 especialidades d. Para trabajos de yarda, se requiere tener aprobado el taller de jardinería e. Para hacer trabajos de demolición, excavación, mudanza o movida de material pesado

(tierra, piedras, grava, etc.) se requiere pasar el taller de fuerza

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Derechos y responsabilidades de los trabajadores

Derechos

De ser tratados con respeto y dignidad.

Someter una queja sin temor a represalias en contra del coordinador/coordinadora si cree que sus derechos han sido violados.

Dar su opinión acerca de las operaciones del sitio sin temor a represalias.

Apelar a una decisión, correctivo o sanción ante la Asamblea General si se cree que ha sido víctima de una injusticia.

Pedir explicación cuando crea que hay confusión o no se ha proveído la información necesaria sobre cualquier acción, procedimiento, servicio o programa.

Participar en cualquier actividad que tome lugar

en el Centro.

Elegir o ser electo para un comité u otras estructuras de representantes en el Centro.

Solicitar una audiencia con el/la supervisor/a del proyecto.

Ser escuchado.

Proponer la creación, modificación o eliminación de reglas.

A participar en el Fondo de Emergencia de los Trabajadores Reponsabilidades

Mantener el sitio limpio para que proyecte una imagen positiva hacia la comunidad.

Cuidar los recursos con los que cuenta el Centro.

Venir al Centro con ropa adecuada y si es posible con ropa de trabajo.

Participar en el proceso de tomar decisiones.

Cooperar para que las reglas sean respetadas por todos.

Respetar y cumplir el reglamento del Centro.

Ser solidario y adherirse a los mandatos que toman la mayoría de las jornaleras y jornaleros.

Participar en toda actividad que tenga que ver con el desarrollo y crecimiento del Centro.

Representar al Centro en actividades comunitarias, tales como campañas de limpieza de calles y de

parques, remover grafito, etc. para que el Centro sea bien visto y respetado por todos los vecinos.

Respetar la tabla salarial establecida por la Asamblea General.

Ser honesto cuando salga a trabajar. Se debe desempeñar al máximo las obligaciones de trabajo con los empleadores.

Revisado 1/24/2018

Procedimiento de Quejas del Personal

Se debe de tratar de resolver entre las personas involucradas.

Si no se logra resolver en primera instancia, se deberá hacer una presentación formal al supervisor del empleado involucrado, ya sea por escrito o verbal.

Se llevará un proceso de investigación. El/la supervisor/a reunirá a las dos partes involucradas y se tomará en cuenta a testigos, si es que los hay.

El/la supervisor/a procederá a realizar a sesiones de resolución de conflicto entre las partes involucradas, pero si no se llega a ningún acuerdo el supervisor/a podrá tomar la decisión final.

Se requiere que una queja llegue hasta el paso #4 para que pueda someter su caso a la Directora de Programas.



1 2 3 4 5

Revisado 1/24/2018

Procedimiento para crear, enmendar, o eliminar reglas y convenios.

Cada seis meses se hará una evaluación de todas las reglas y convenios para analizar si funcionan bien o si deben ser modificados. La próxima revisión será en Septiembre del año 2009.

En caso de que urja modificar una regla o convenio antes de la fecha prevista, se deberán seguir los siguientes pasos:

□□□ Cuando se presente una nueva propuesta, se quiera modificar o eliminar una regla, o haya una situación que necesita ser regulada, los participantes deberán presentarla ante la Asamblea General.

□□□ En la Asamblea General se identificará si la propuesta tiene el apoyo de al menos 20 participantes. Si existe el apoyo, la petición deberá ser presentada por escrito, con el nombre de todos los participantes que apoyan la propuesta.

□□□ Si la petición logra el apoyo, se programará discutirla en la siguiente Asamblea General.

□□□ En la Asamblea General se identificará, se analizará y se hará un balance de las consecuencias negativas que pudiera causar la propuesta si llegara a ser implementada. Esta reflexión deberá ser implementada para poder tomar la decisión más sabia. Todas las posibles dudas o confusiones deberán ser aclaradas durante la sesión de asamblea.

□□□ Luego se procederá a votar. Si el voto público llegase a generar conflictos, éste se substituirá por el voto secreto. Para que la propuesta sea aceptada deberá tener al menos el 50% más 1 del total del voto popular.

□□□ Se anunciará a todos los participantes el día en que la nueva regla o modificación entrará en efecto.

□□□ Se dará un lapso de tiempo, por lo menos de una semana, para implementar los acuerdos y ver los resultados.

□□□ Después del tiempo se estipulado se debe revisar y evaluar para determinar si la regla esta funcionando o no y para que la Asamblea tome una decisión final.

Revisado 1/24/2018

Procedimiento de Quejas Entre Participantes.

Cuando un participante presenta una queja del comportamiento de otro participante, es recomendable tratar de resolver el conflicto en una sesión de resolución de conflicto entre las partes. Si la falta afecta a otras personas y/o a la estabilidad del Centro podría crearse el Comité Disciplinario.

El Concilio de Paz será conformado por 7 participantes seleccionados al azar en mismo día:

□□□ El personal de CASA Latina actuara como facilitador para ayudar al Concilio a llegar a una resolución que represente el bien común de la comunidad de CASA Latina.

□□□ Las partes en conflicto se presentaran ante el Concolio a contar su versión de los hechos y podrán presentar testigos o cualquier prueba que se requiera que pueda apoyar su versión de los hechos.

□□□ Los miembros del comité escucharan las dos versiones y podrán realizar las preguntas necesarias para lograr entender mejor los hechos.

□□□ Después de haber escuchado ambas versiones luego podrán deliberar de manera anónima el veredicto y

encontrar la resolución correspondiente.

□□□ Si los miembros del concilio consideran que se requieren de mas información o testigos podría aplazarse la resolución siempre que esta no tome mas de una semana.

□□□ El veredicto les notificara por escrito a ambas partes en no más de 2 semanas.

□□□ La o las personas responsables de la falta tienen el derecho de apelar la decisión ante la Asamblea si consideran que el correctivo o la sanción fue injusta. Este procedimiento debe tener como objetivo el mantener un ambiente de paz, ordenado, de respeto y participación, entre los miembros de la organización con el fin de asegurar el bien común. Acuerdo de Asamblea 6/7/19

¹ For an excellent review of the central ideas of Weber and Marx and its influence in the social sciences, see Chilcote (1994).

² Of course, Hardin misread and misrepresented the qualities of the actual historical “commons” and failed to understand that common property resources are not open-access systems but rather closed-access systems which constitute intensely-managed domains of corporate communities that are designed to exclude outsiders and regulate the governance of the regime of community resource use by moderating and eliminating the dreaded “free-riders” at the heart of Hardin’s totally misconstrued tragedy. As Peña (2005) and others, following the work of Nobel Prize winner Elinor Ostrom, have noted: The tragedy of the commons is really the tragedy of the commoner displaced from the ancestral homeland. It is the erasure of the ecological effectiveness and social equity of common property resource management and the occlusion of underlying norms of mutual reliance interest that the advocates of RCT perpetuate. They abandon any notion of a symbolic and collective cultural order by celebrating the primacy of the multitude of acquisitive individuals who are somehow seen to exist in a mode that is disconnected from the larger culture or community, except as this pertains to their behavioral adaptations as individual rational actors. This leads one critic of RCT, a former practitioner, to summarize the principal objection to this paradigm: It is, simply, a case of “rationality” leading to an “ideology of disconnection” (see M. Taylor 2006).

³ For Negri, Fordist mass production organizational forms were abandoned and restructured when capital shifted the antagonistic relationship beyond the factory to encompass all of society. Hence, he uses the terms “social factory” (for a location beyond the “mass factory”) and “social worker” (as beyond the “mass worker”). In the current composition, all of society is organized on the basis of the factory model and capital now seeks to derive surplus value not just from the labor process but the entire process of the social and cultural reproduction of the working class including its production through *immaterial* labor (e.g., cloud-sourcing on the Web).

⁴ Marshall, as Negri acknowledges, is perhaps best known for popularizing the use of supply and demand functions as tools for price determination, but he is also cited as an influential economist of the “industrial district” phenomenon – seen as a forerunner of the “Silicon Valley” panacea of the late 20th Century. It is reputed that Marshall’s advice to the council of business chambers was essentially: “Don’t fight the problem, decide it”. Tronti further implores us to note the implications of Marshall’s objectivism when he declared in his inaugural address in Cambridge in 1885: “Among the bad results of the narrowness of the work of English economists early in the nineteenth century perhaps the most unfortunate was the opportunity which it gave to socialists to quote and misapply economic dogma.” For Marshall, this justified requisite intolerance toward anything lying outside the realm of classical and neoclassical economic thought. Obviously, in this model Marxist theory and even more radical forms of neoclassical labor economics were banished from academia since Marshall had rendered these as pertaining to political ideology rather than objective science. These results endure as Marxist thought has been banished from academic departments in economics to the peripheral world of the humanities and select social science fields.

⁵ For a review of demographic characteristics in the region, see Friaiz (1995), Cook (1986) and J. Garcia and G. Garcia (2002).

⁶ When I completed the dissertation, one of the few studies on Casa Latina appeared, but I was not able to include in the review of the literature or offer comparative observations on the book, Apostolidis, P. (2019). *The fight for times: Migrant day laborers and the politics of precarity*. University of Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁷ The notion of refusal to work is translated into the Spanish word “declino” or decline to work.

⁸ See Chapters 3 and 4, for the historical overview of the labor history of Latino workers in the region.

⁹ This description of the protesting workers was used in an undated list of workers involved in the protests in front of Casa Latina. Though, the group used a different name in various documents: *Comision por el Cambio* or *Commission for Change*.