

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

The Trail of Dreams: Queering Across the Fight for Migrant Rights

This thesis submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree Masters of Arts  
in Chicana and Chicano Studies

by

Rafael Ramirez Solorzano Jr.

2016

ProQuest Number: 10250059

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



ProQuest 10250059

Published by ProQuest LLC (2016). Copyright of the Dissertation is held by the Author.

All rights reserved.

This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code  
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

ProQuest LLC.  
789 East Eisenhower Parkway  
P.O. Box 1346  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 - 1346

© Copyright by

Rafael Ramirez Solorzano Jr.

2016

## ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Trail of Dreams: Queering Across the Fight for Migrant Rights in the South

by

Rafael Ramírez Solorzano Jr.

Master of Arts in Chicana and Chicano Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2016

Professor Leisy Janet Abrego, Chair

Influential elite allies; a supportive electorate; and organizations with a sizable base. These are just a few of the predictors that have traditionally been used to measure social movements. Yet during the year 2010, a national movement emerged, led by undocumented/undocuqueer youth and guided by the slogan, “Undocumented and Unafraid.” To gain national attention, youth activists organized a series of marches and civil disobedience acts that would ultimately lead to executive actions like Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. Departing from traditional social movement theories, this thesis offers an alternative framework to more dynamically capture the ways that undocumented/undocuqueer youth built and mobilized a movement through political ingenuity, resourcefulness and *queerness*.

As a case study, the Trail of Dreams demonstrates how a collective action led by non-normative and queer political subjects—undocumented migrants living in the southeastern U.S.—centered the intersections of race, gender, class, sexuality, and legal status within the broader scope of the migrant rights movement. The Trail not only recovers the history and agency of activists but contributes to new theoretical directions in Latino politics, queer migration studies, and social movement theories.

The thesis of Rafael Ramírez Solorzano Jr. is approved.

Grace Hong

Maylei Blackwell

Leisy Janet Abrego, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2016

DEDICATED TO

Rafael Hernandez Solórzano and Rita Ramirez Solórzano

For teaching me to love, hope and fight for justice

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
Understanding the Current Moment within the Migrant Rights Movement	
Queering Across	
The Trail: A Mode of Queering Across	
<b>The Politics of the Trail of Dreams 2010</b> .....	11
<b>Practicing a Queer of Color Critique</b> .....	15
<b>Literature Review - Coalitions</b> .....	21
Traditional Notions of Coalitions	
There's Coalition Building and Then There's Radical Coalition Politics	
Shifting positions, Changing positions, Repositioning Ourselves	
<b>Studying the Trail of Dreams: A Note on Methods</b> .....	31
From the Margins to the Center – Participants	
Interviews	
Walking Into An Experience	
<b>A New Type of Politic: The Trail and Modes of Queering Across</b> .....	36
Welcome to Miami	
Queering Across Connects a Variety of Non-Normative and Queer Formations	
Undocumented/Undocuqueer Formations In Limbo	
Queering Across Requires Moving Across to Create Space	
Queering Across Demands Risk-Taking	
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	53
<b>Appendix 1: Glossary</b> .....	57
<b>References</b> .....	59

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is a testament of the amazing communities in my life. It is their belief in me and encouragement that has allowed me to complete this first step toward documenting the story of the Trail of Dreams. I am also grateful to the Cesar E. Chavez Department of Chicana/o Studies and my doctoral program colleagues, whose intellectual support has guided my current and future research to come. This project was supported financially by UCLA's Institute of American Cultures and the Chicano Studies Research Center at the University of California, Los Angeles. Their funds allowed me to travel to Berkeley, CA, Miami, FL, Atlanta, GA, New York City, NY and Washington D.C. to conduct interviews and visit local archives.

## INTRODUCTION

2010 was an important year for migrant rights activism. By the end of that year, a national movement had been created and guided by the slogan, “Undocumented, Unafraid and *Unashamed*.”<sup>1</sup> To gain national attention, youth activists organized a series of marches and civil disobedience acts that would ultimately lead to Executive Actions like Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (2012) and Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (2014), discretionary acts that temporarily shielded eligible undocumented migrants from deportation and allowed them to stay and work in the U.S. This series of civil disobedience acts was set off on January 1, 2010, when Gaby Pacheco, Felipe Matos, Juan Rodriguez and Carlos Roa laced up their new pairs of walking shoes at the foot of the Freedom Tower, a landmark building in downtown Miami.<sup>2</sup> They embarked on a four-month walk to Washington D.C., called the *Trail of Dreams*, to protest what they called Obama’s lack of action on legislation granting legal status to undocumented migrants.<sup>3</sup>

The Trail of Dreams and Undocumented Youth Movement elevated the fight for migrant rights to the national scale, thus expanding the geographical reach of what began as a local campaign. Before 2010, undocumented/undocuqueer youth activists constantly found themselves outside legal and political fronts. As explained by political scientist, Amalia Pallares (2014),

---

<sup>1</sup> Depending on the region, the action and leaders, organizers used either “unapologetic” or “unashamed” to mark their defiance to national ideals of acceptable behavior and respectability by immigrants (Nicholls, 2013). The assertion of being “unashamed” presents a declaration of a queer identity within the Undocumented Youth Movement. Like “unapologetic,” its appendage challenges the social stigma applied to migrant youth who are perceived to be violating traditional gender roles and/or expectations of sexual behaviors.

<sup>2</sup> Since 2010, Juan Rodriguez has changed his name to Isabel Souza-Rodriguez. During a private interview, Isabel shared how his name change was part of his pursuit of affirming his gender non-conforming identity. We agreed to use his previous name in order to document his involvement in the Trail as Juan or when others cite him as Juan. As for pronouns, it was agreed that the following pronouns can be used – she, he, his, ze, they. For the purposes of this paper, I will be referring to Isabel, when discussing interviews, and will refer ze to Juan when citing others.

<sup>3</sup> Preston, J. (2010, January 1). To Overhaul Immigration, Advocates Alter Tactics. New York Times. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com>

their “political agency and participation was not recognized but also denied as a possibility” (13). Not only did undocumented youth activists face feelings of containment in their own home cities, due to their illegality, but also found themselves forced to negotiate spaces of confinement within the migrant rights movement. When undocumented/undocuqueer activists displayed the courage and commitment to move across space, outside the county limits of Miami-Dade County and beyond their comfort zones, they revealed the complexity of migrant biographies living under the shadows and the possibilities of radical coalition building. By walking from city to city, they demonstrate how to transform sites of containment and confinement into spaces of community making.<sup>4</sup>

Political activism is neither unusual nor unexpected in Miami but for undocumented/undocuqueer Latinx youth to walk across the South, unafraid of detention and deportation was especially historic locally, regionally and nationally. With only two months of planning, a dilapidated truck for storing food, water, first aid, clothes and shelter; they also were able to connect and build a support network that would help them reach Washington D.C. The Trail thus represented a resourcefulness and political ingenuity by marginal political subjects.

The Undocumented Youth Movement has attracted much scholarly attention as researchers develop numerous frameworks to understand these migrant rights struggles emerging in the twenty-first century. In this thesis, I develop a new theoretical framework from which to understand the experiences and contributions of those most marginalized within the migrants’ rights movement. Through the words of the four walkers and many of the people who supported them on their journey, I argue that the Trail of Dreams is best understood by what I call queering

---

<sup>4</sup> In his text, *How Racism Take Place*, George Lipsitz (2011) illustrates the special commitment to travel across space among African slaves, who escaped the Deep South, making their way north, moving from plantation to plantation. Their actions demonstrate a new scope of space, which involved “moving outside the terrains controlled by the slave masters” (53). Lipsitz notes that these actions by runaways, carved out limited zones of freedom.

across. Queering across, in brief, is a radical coalition politic that connects a variety of queer formations and recognizes the resourcefulness of non-normative political subjects. The Trail, as a mode of queering across, created new areas of political engagement in the most unlikely spaces and places. In the following sections, I explore how other political theorists and scholars from queer of color critique have framed previous alliances and what we can learn from them to understand the contemporary migrant rights movement.

### *Understanding the Current Moment within the Migrant Rights Movement*

As described in *Reform Without Justice* by scholar-activist Alfonso Gonzales (2014), “the migrant rights movement is a multiethnic and multisector constellation of actors that overlap and intersect with the even broader US and global left” this includes student and youth groups, party organizations, labor unions, faith-based organizations, nongovernmental organizations, hometown associations, and racial, ethnic, and sexual minorities (p. 3). As many scholars (Chávez, Gonzales, Nicholls, Pallares, Terriquez) have noted, illuminating the events of 2010, such as the Trail, not only describe undocumented/undocuqueer activism, but rather spotlight a story of the entire migrant rights movement in the U.S. Clearly many dynamic actors were part and parcel to the emergence of the migrant rights movement, and often these very same actors created the sites of confinement that the undocumented/undocuqueer youth would break free from.

Similar to the rise of “new social movements” that emerged in the 60s, 70s, and 80s, the Undocumented Youth Movement embodied new ways of doing politics that challenged an era filled with division, characterized by marked camps. For the migrant rights movement, these camps were divided into immigration reformers, those leading national organizations and

coalitions (National Council of La Raza, Reform Immigration for America), who targeted and pressured adversaries in Congress to “fix the broken immigration system,” and oppositional forces, those grassroots activists and organizations, who saw power as “a highly fractured space consisting of multiple arenas [local, regional, national] with various connections between them.”<sup>5</sup> As an oppositional force within the migrant rights movement, the Trail not only illustrated the power of local organizing efforts but the potential to rearticulate a movement, as it relates to place and space. The Trail demonstrates how local politics and organizing efforts are moments through which national movements are constituted, invented, coordinated and produced. Similarly, feminist geographer Doreen Massey (2004) notes how localities and regions (local organizing efforts) are nodes of intersections between disparate trajectories and are necessary places of ‘negotiation’ for the larger movement. What Massey (2004) argues is another form of imagining local politics, one that takes seriously “that oft-repeated mantra that the local and global are mutually constituted” (p. 11). Therefore, by examining the Trail of Dreams as a necessary place of negotiation for the migrant rights movement, we can begin to document how their movement building and mobilizing strategies, which I term *a mode of queering across*, transformed a movement.

While undocumented youth have played critical roles in the fight for migrant rights, there are few reports on the role or analysis of the fight for migrant rights in the rural South, especially

---

<sup>5</sup> Immigration reformers, a label created by political theorists Luis Fernandez and the late Joel Olson, seek to defend the rights of migrants by reforming the immigration system within the dominant policy framework, whereas oppositional sector seeks transformative change that breaks with the good immigrant-bad immigrant binary (as cited in Gonzales, p. 9). Additionally, in his essay, “The Worst and Best of Times: Contrasting Strategies of the Immigrant Rights Movement, 2000-2014,” Walter Nicholls describes two different interpretations of the migrant rights political arena and two contrasting strategies. W Nicholls. (2015, December 3). The Worst and Best of Times: Contrasting Strategies of the Immigrant Rights Movement, 2000-2014 [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://www.mobilizingideas.wordpress.com/2015/12/03/the-worst-and-best-of-times-contrasting-strategies-of-the-immigrant-rights-movement-2000-2014/>

by undocuqueers.<sup>6</sup> I am interested in examining how the Trail of Dreams was organized. Specifically, what frameworks best capture organizing by undocumented/undocuqueer youth whose actions stand directly against normative notions of nation-state building?

Traditional understandings of social movements and American political behavior, and their elements (who participates in political activity and protests, where, why and how actions and mobilizations develop) cannot fully capture the value and energy created along the Trail. Social movement scholar Laura Pulido (1996) notes that the difficulty of answering these questions “is most striking in reference to the mobilization of poor and subaltern groups, largely because the most prominent theories are formulated in reference to the middle classes of the First World” (p. 12). Similarly, political scientist Chris Zepeda-Millán (2016) critiques social movement academics that argue an open “political opportunity structure” (POS) is fundamental to movement building and mobilization processes. In other words, the assemblage of likeminded Social Movement Organizations (SMOs) with a sizable base, influential elite allies, governmental institutions, foundations, and supportive electorate, cannot always be extended to all mobilizations. These traditional approaches to studying social movements can be limiting in understanding the political approaches of community leaders and grassroots organizations. How do we study the deepening and broadening of grassroots tactics that link-up undocumented/undocuqueer migrants (youth, families, undocuqueers) across place and space? What do we call organizing practices that embody alternative understandings of going to-scale, people’s organizing power and the nature of power?

---

<sup>6</sup> In his essay, “Weapons of the (Not So) Weak: Immigrant Mass Mobilization in the US South,” Chris Zepeda-Millán (2016) examines how nativist legislation can spark immigrant large-scale collection action in Fort Myers, South Florida. His essay, one of few articles published on latino activism in the South, illustrates the organizing efforts among immigrant soccer league members and small business owners.

Using the case of the Trail of Dreams, I examine the emergence of a collective action led by non-normative and queer political subjects-undocumented migrants and communities living in urban to rural spaces in the U.S. South. Studying their political participation and ingenuity along the Trail is vital. In many respects, these episodes of contention highlight the scope of the migrant rights movement in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and its intersections of race, gender, class, sexuality, and legal status. The research in this study finds that women of color feminism and queer of color critique provide the tools and lens necessary to determine what it takes to bring non-normative and queer groups together and keep them together. Engaging women of color feminism and their theories of coalescing provides us with an opportunity to reorient functions that are central to understanding movement mobilization processes, like going to-scale or scaling up. Scaling-up and various related phrases are widely used to describe coalitional efforts by SMOs, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), labor unions, policy-making institutes, and others, who aim to expand their sphere of influence and elevate local campaign issues to a more strategic target at the national level (Ito, Pastor, Ortiz, 2012). For social movement academics and practitioners, scaling up is perhaps the most exciting practice and development in social movement building (Ito, Pastor, Ortiz, 2012). National campaigns and networks led by migrant rights activists have gained traction and open source campaigns, like #Not1More, has proven to be a vehicle to fight against the deportation and detention of undocumented migrants.

The research presented in this study illustrates how this movement-building element can be limiting in several ways to studying social movements, as a way of doing politics and as a general template for studying grassroots organizing strategies. Therefore, I propose a reorientation of scaling up, to a mode of “queering across,” a *movida*, a way of doing politics, that not only comprises coalition-building practices but is anchored in the place and

resourcefulness of undocumented-women of color, -queers, -feminist and non-traditional leaders. The Trail of Dreams not only advocated for legal status for undocumented migrants but disrupted and undermined the structures of heteropatriarchy within the migrant rights movement.

### *Queering Across*

A central goal of this research is to highlight the multiple dimensions of the Undocumented Youth Movement, specifically the Trail of Dreams. As such, I coin the term *queering across* to capture and document the radical promises of undocumented/undocuqueer youth organizing in the Southeastern United States. There are three essential properties to social movements that illustrate a queering across. First, movement building and mobilization efforts must connect a variety of non-normative and queer formations, from migrant rights organizations, LGBTQ, labor groups to undocumented queer youth groups in the rural South. Second, organizing efforts require the special commitment to create a new scope of space, the inversion of sites of confinement to spaces of community making. A queering across approach shifts our understanding of movement and mobilization outcomes so that we can see a variety of possibilities at the same time, emerging from different places and spaces. Thus studying modes of queering across in social movements will help us identify creative forms of opposition and emancipatory practices. Third, social movements are enacting risk-taking strategies. They are engaged in a practice and intimacy that demonstrates what it takes to come together as queer political subjects. By examining the Trail of Dreams as a mode of queering across, my goal is to demonstrate how it reorganized and linked geographies of those at the border, opened new spaces and made undocumented/undocuqueer youth visible leaders of a movement.

*The Trail: A Mode of Queering Across*

After years of organizing within marked migrant rights camps, the rise of a DREAMer nation was not long in coming and at the center of these tactics was undocumented/undocuqueer youth of color. On Friday, January 1<sup>st</sup> 2010, Carlos Roa, Felipe Matos, Gaby Pacheco, and Juan Rodriguez spoke to about 100 people of a “deep desire and need for complete citizenship” after they reached dead-ends in school or work because of their lack of immigration status.<sup>7</sup> Juan’s inaugural “Notes from the Trail” blog post captures their commitment to fighting for the rights of workers, educational equity, “a just and humane pathway to full citizenship,” and protecting “the sacred bonds and unity of our families.”<sup>8</sup> In interviews with American and Latin American reporters, Felipe states, “we are risking our future because our present is unbearable.” Felipe’s awareness of the risks of walking through the rural South, and the threat of being detained by immigration authorities during the 1,500-mile walk speaks to his refusal to continue to live in a cage.<sup>9</sup> These acts of resistance and risk-taking by undocumented youth inspired the emergence of a movement, that was fearless, resourceful, unapologetic and shameless, which then led to articulating new ways of organizing within the migrant rights movement. And, it is within these new ways that political possibilities emerged and the migrant rights debate was transformed.

In her text, *Family Activism; Immigrant Struggles and the Politics of Noncitizenship*, Amalia Pallares (2014) aptly articulates the rise of a new way of doing politics by undocuqueers by recognizing a growing activism that challenges the divisions and categorizations of the state as well as other sectors of the migrant rights movement.

---

<sup>7</sup> Preston, J. (2010, January 1). To Overhaul Immigration, Advocates Alter Tactics. New York Times. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com>

<sup>8</sup> J Rodriguez. (2010, January 1). New Year’s Day 2010 [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://www.trail2010.org/blog/2010/jan/1/new-years-day-2010/>

<sup>9</sup> Three of the four activists at that time didn’t have legal-resident status. At that time, Isabel was not at risk of being detained because ze became a legal resident in 2008, after living for 13 years as undocumented in the U.S.

As the 'undocuqueer' identity becomes increasingly politicized and becomes a larger presence in the movement, a more open inclusion of undocuqueer voices within the larger movement (they are already very present and among the main leaders of Immigrant Youth Justice League, as well as the national youth movement) and the related expansion and transformation of the 'worthy' family seem imminent. (p. 127)

By identifying the growing presence of undocumented/undocuqueer political activism in Chicago, Illinois, Pallares acknowledges the impending possibilities of a movement organized by non-normative and queer formations. Led by undocumented-women of color, -queers, -feminist and non-traditional leaders, The Trail of Dreams not only advocated for legal status for undocumented migrants but challenged and undermined the structures of heteropatriarchy within the migrant rights movement. When preparing for press conferences or speaking with media, Felipe shares how the walkers always positioned Gaby at the center. He states, "there is one reason why Gaby was always in the forefront, it was because she was a woman. We wanted to make sure that the voice of immigrant woman was pronounced...she spoke at every one of our events and interviews, we always prioritized her because of that." As a mode of queering across, the Trail centered the visibility of marginal and non-normative political activists, and, by doing so, challenged society's racialized and gendered value of undocumented/undocuqueer youth.

The Trail demonstrates how emancipatory practices are inherent to creating a new scope of space. I want to emphasize that I'm not just trying to demonstrate the history of the Trail or its strategies or what really happened along the route. Instead I want to show that the multiple possibilities that emerged from its risk-taking practices make visible the forms and functions of radical coalition building as described by women of color feminists (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1983, Reagan, 1983, Anzaldúa, 1988, Martinez & Davis 1993, Cohen, 1999). The historian Bernice Johnson Reagan saw these precarious movidas as coalition politics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; practices that kept you on the move, grounded in everyday lived experiences, pushing your boundaries,

and placing you with others who do not agree with you. If we see the actions by the Trail as a mode of queering across, we also acknowledge how walking across the South (into the streets, into churches and people's homes) by undocumented/undocuqueer youth, transformed places and spaces into what I call "limited zones of coalition". I assert that the ways undocumented/undocuqueer youth applied risk-taking *movidas* and created new scopes of space catalyzed the Undocumented Youth Movement from the fight for comprehensive immigration reform in 2010.

My research explores the following question: How does applying a queer reading practice to the Trail of Dreams and the Undocumented Youth Movement allow us to contest the past and amend it in a manner that tells more of our stories, while allowing us to uncover the voices from the past that honor multiple experiences? And, more specifically, how does an analysis of the practice of "queering across" during the Trail redefine our scholarly understanding of political activism by undocumented/undocuqueer youth from the South in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

In the pages that follow, I will expand on the background to the Trail and describe my theoretical framework, which has guided me in understanding undocuqueer activism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I survey the relevant literature on traditional notions of coalitions as well as theories of coalescing by women of color scholars. Next, I describe a new mode of coalitional politics, a queering across, that addresses oppression and power at its root by centering the experiences, tactics and technologies of marginal subjects by utilizing difference as a resource. I highlight the experiences and stories of the organizers, which illustrate the Trail's risk-taking and space making practices. Reflecting on the implications of this research, I emphasize its impact on how we theorize undocuqueer youth activism and social movements in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. To conclude,

I discuss how I gathered the organizing stories that shaped the walk, which have led me to my findings.

### **THE POLITICS OF THE TRAIL OF DREAMS 2010**

At first glance one might interpret the Trail as strategy to pressure and build support for the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, which would have provided undocumented youth the legal right to stay in the United States. The *New York Times* described their trek as a tactic, a carefully planned action that would push the Obama administration to “overhaul bills that would open a path to citizenship for students who came to this country illegally when they were young.”<sup>10</sup> One could also interpret their tactic as an act of self-interest, where undocumented students revealed their status in order to build support for the DREAM Act.<sup>11</sup> Five years later, when having conversations with those who were key actors of the Trail of Dreams, they highlight the ways their actions went beyond superficial interpretations. The organizers describe their actions as a fight for dignity that demanded an end to deportations and the separation of families.

In the summer of 2015, I set out to interview key actors, (walkers, coalition leaders, student leaders, and adult allies) who had participated in the trail. During one-on-one interviews, Trail of Dream organizers and participants reflected on the vision and the goals of the Trail, which took them over four months, 16 miles a day, several highways, over 150 cities, stopping at

---

<sup>10</sup> Preston, J. (2010, January 1). To Overhaul Immigration, Advocates Alter Tactics. *New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com>

<sup>11</sup> In their essay, “Out of the shadows; DREAMer identity in the immigrant youth movement,” Pedro de la Torre and Roy Germano (2014), describe DREAMers as undocumented immigrants in their teens, twenties and thirties, who reveal their undocumented status in support of the DREAM Act and other immigration and higher education reforms. They note that the development of a DREAMer nation “inverts common stereotypes of unauthorized immigrants by high-lighting the achievements, contributions and diverse experiences of undocumented youth.” Many other scholars have critiqued this tactic as an investment in liberal promises of citizenship that demanded recognition by the state, and, in doing so, posits the state as a site for resolution, rather than as a site of violence through deportations and through the promotion of integration for some “worthy” immigrants (Pallares, 2014, p. 100).

churches, and community centers across the southern eastern United States. During an interview, while now living in New York City, Isabel Sousa-Rodriguez, a walker, recalls and describes the goals and objectives of the trail:

The goal was honestly...we are determined to change hearts and minds. We want to use our personal stories to change the narrative and we want to train people all along the way to share their stories, to empower them. And, all throughout, we are going to be demanding an end to deportation and immigration reform, in whatever way immigration reform comes.<sup>12</sup>

Isabel's vision of the Trail speaks of the way the Trail challenged how migrants were racialized in the South as "illegal aliens," as invasive violators of the law. In her testimonio, Gaby Pacheco states that they walked through the country, one community at a time, talking to average Americans dispelling myths and stereotypes.<sup>13</sup> According to undocumented activist and scholar Chantiri Resendiz Ramirez (2016), these "informal intrapersonal tactics," such as testimonio, not only dispelled myths of undocumented/undocuqueer migrants, but also stood as a "method of bringing the private to the public sphere" (p. 9). She found, that coming forward, "acts of presenting the self and the body as visible," asserted difference and rejected "the secrecy, shame, and criminalization of their immigration status" (p. 6). By branching out and burrowing in (appearing on network television, press conferences at historical monuments, blogs, social media, and organizing forums, conducting one-on-ones, and staying in peoples homes), the Trail was challenging the stereotypes that characterized undocumented migrants in the South. Their "story of the self," acted against a prevailing discourse that painted them as those who are taking jobs away from Americans, breaking the laws, driving down wages, causing a financial burden

---

<sup>12</sup> Isabel Sousa-Rodriguez, interview with author, August 2015

<sup>13</sup> Along with many other undocumented youth testimonios, Gaby contributed her Trail of Dream experience to *Undocumented and Unafraid*, which was published at the UCLA Center for Labor Research and Education.

to the state, and increasing pressure on social and educational services.<sup>14</sup> During an interview, Andrea, who was part of Presente.org and served as project manager of social media, describes the Trail as a performance, a work of art that shifted people's imagination of who was undocumented in the United States. Presently, she states, "[I] resist the urge to see [the Trail] as a direct action," but rather an act of story telling.<sup>15</sup> Isabel, Gaby, and Andrea's voices, not only describe the use of nonviolent methods and strategic conversations with people from across the political spectrum, but also illustrate the multiple possibilities emerging from these emancipatory practices.

After traveling over 2,500 miles, from Los Angeles, CA to Miami, FL, during the summer of 2015, I also met with Claudia, executive director of Florida Immigrant Coalition (FLIC), whose offices are on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor and overlook Biscayne Bay. Claudia has been FLIC's executive director for over 10 years and was the first staff person hired by the coalition. FLIC is a statewide coalition of more than 65 member organizations and over 100 allies, who envision a new Florida based on inclusion and equality, without racism and exclusion, where immigrants can live and love without fear.<sup>16</sup> It was at Students Working for Equal Rights (SWER), FLIC's youth organizing arm, where Carlos, Felipe, Gaby, and Isabel met. During my visit, we talked

---

<sup>14</sup> In multiple interviews, many of the organizers spoke about attending trainings where they were taught "the story of the self," which was developed by sociologist Marshall Ganz. In his essay, "The Power of Story in Social Movements," Ganz (2001) argues that, "story telling is central to social movements because it constructs agency, shapes identity, and motivates action. His work on "the story of the self" provides a framework to understanding how undocumented students used nonviolent methods to build understanding and coalitions with people from across the political spectrum during the Trail of Dreams.

<sup>15</sup> Andrea helped design the identity of the Trail, she designed and managed the Trail's website, designed their branding strategy, shirts, and social media presence. She describes her daily hustle as making sure all the moving parts were functioning. "I just always had to make sure they were using their cameras, that they were shipping their cameras, help with fundraising, and kept an eye of where they were going, so I can fly and support them. I had to make sure they had everything they needed to make a public impact." Andrea, interview with author, August 2015

<sup>16</sup> On their organization website, FLIC describes their organization as a hub for a bold, agile and strategic multi-racial, intergenerational social movement. Mission and History. (n.d.). Retrieved April 17, 2016, from <http://www.floridaimmigrant.org/mission-history/>

about the Trail of Dreams and I began to realize how the Trail's narrative was not based only on building support for the DREAM Act, but, rather, it started as a defense of migrant families living in Southern Florida.<sup>17</sup> Looking back, Claudia shared how she understands why people would think that the Trail was for the DREAM Act because DREAMers played a key role:

The Trail of Dreams was an escalation action of a walk, 1,500-mile walk from Miami to D.C. to bring attention to the detention and deportation crisis and to demand executive action...Looking back at it, maybe if we had a parent or mother, maybe that would have impacted that.<sup>18</sup>

Naming the Trail, the Trail of Dreams, can be a helpful descriptor but also a misleading name. Contrary to popular belief, the Trail embodied what Pallares (2014) describes as “not exclusively youth-oriented but about the defense of the family.” But, for the purposes of this research, it was *La Jornada*, a Mexican newspaper that said it best, when describing the Trail of Dreams. U.S. correspondent, David Brooks, describes the first undocumented youth led action in 2010 as “una caminata ... por la dignidad de su comunidad con la demanda de una reforma migratoria para finalizar con la separación de familias, las deportaciones y la vida inhumana en las sombras para más de 12 millones de indocumentados.”<sup>19</sup> Yes, the walkers were all students from Miami Dade College, but when Gaby, Carlos, Felipe and Juan laced up their shoes, they were about to reveal the complexity of migrant biographies living under the shadows and the possibilities of radical coalition building.

---

<sup>17</sup> The same day the Trail departed Miami, in a neighboring church, St. Ann Mission near Homestead, Florida, five seasoned migrant rights leaders (specifically mothers) also escalated their efforts by participating in a fast, called Fast for Our Families. They too, were demanding “President Obama to use the authority he has to stop tearing families apart.” On their website, the Fast For Our Families campaign shares daily blogs written by the fasters. On day two, Jonathan Fried, a faster writes a post titled, “Day 2 of Fast has begun.” Retrieved November 20, 2016 from <http://fastforfamilies.org/2010/01/day-2-of-fast-has-begun.html>

<sup>18</sup> Claudia, interview with author, August 2015

<sup>19</sup> “a walk... for the dignity of our communities, that demands immigration reform that would put an end to the separation of families, deportations and the subhuman life of living in the shadows for more than 12 million undocumented immigrants.” Brooks, D. (2010, January 2). Inicia marcha de estudiantes migrantes por la dignidad de esa comunidad en Estados Unidos. Retrieved from [www.jornada.unam.mx](http://www.jornada.unam.mx)

## PRACTICING A QUEER OF COLOR CRITIQUE

Studying the ways in which the Undocumented Youth Movement transformed the migrant rights movement reveals various inquiries and analysis from different parts of the United States: Los Angeles, CA, Chicago, IL, Tucson, AZ, and Washington D.C. My exploration into the Movement builds on the recent work of Walter J. Nicholls' *The DREAMERS*, Alfonso Gonzales' *Reform Without Justice*, Amalia Pallares' *Family Activism*, Karma Chavez's *Queer Migration Politics* and UCLA's student publication *Undocumented and Unafraid*.<sup>20</sup> With the exception of *Queer Migration Politics*, research on and of undocumented queer youth is limited and when written about, their voices and efforts are relegated to a few pages at the end of migrant activism texts. Latina political scientist and community activist Amalia Pallares (2014) aptly articulates how the fight for migrant and LGBTQ rights have captured significant attention in the U.S. public sphere in the twenty-first century. But, what methods and tools allow us to integrate the stories of undocumented/undocuqueer youth activism with a critical eye?

As a study that examines undocumented youth activism and radical coalition politics in the Southeastern United States, my work is in step with documenting the significant interventions of non-normative and queer formations (undocumented migrants and communities, rural spaces). By applying a "queer of color critique," a practice that sees, recognizes, acts, interrogates and reinterprets representations of marginal and non-normative subjects, which may or may not fall into conventional definitions of LGBTQ communities, my research captures the Trail's multiplicity and range. This study accomplishes what Caribbean feminist M. Jacqui

---

<sup>20</sup> In *The DREAMERS*, Nicholls explains how, in the span of ten years, this undocumented youth leadership came to assume a leading role in the country's immigration debates, specifically in the state of California. In *Queer Migration Politics*, Chavez documents how activists in Arizona have used coalition to articulate shared concerns of queer politics and migration politics. In *Reform Without Justice*, Gonzales argues that that migrants are not victims of state violence but also political actors, and in Pallares' *Family Activism*, she examines the ways in which the family unit and youth have become politically significant in the fight for migrant rights in Chicago, Illinois.

Alexander describes as writing less in support of “not forgetting” Latinx undocumented/undocuqueer youth activism but rather more in support of actively “remembering” (as cited in Hames-Garcia & Martinez, 2011, p. 3). Alexander notes, “remembering does not entail obsessing over the past so much as “daring to recognize each other again and again in context that seems bent on making strangers of us all” (as cited in Hames-Garcia & Martinez, 2011, p. 3). Therefore, it is critical to apply a critical lens to the Trail of Dreams that is useful, that exemplifies the praxis of the Trail, and allows us to recognize each other as queers, migrants, feminists and people of color activists in all our multiplicity. The methods and tools that allow me to study the Trail and undocuqueer activism are not located in queer theory, but rather in queer of color critique.

Genealogies of queer theory and gay and lesbian studies are central to studying lesbian, gay, and trans communities but as argued by Jose Esteban Muñoz (1999), “most of the cornerstone of queer theory [that emerged in the 90s] that are taught, cited, and canonized in gay and lesbian studies classrooms, publications and conferences are decidedly directed toward analyzing white lesbians and gay men” (p. 10). Additionally, in his essay, “Queer Theory Revisited,” which is part of the *Gay Latino Studies: A Critical Reader*, ethnic studies scholar, Michael Hames-Garcia (2011) notes that these early canonical works of “queer theory” (Eve Sedgwick, Judith Butler, Teresa de Lauretis, Michael Warner) focused on articulating sexuality as distinct from gender, race, and class.<sup>21</sup> These early works stand in “direct contrast to the normalizing tendencies of hegemonic sexuality rooted in ideas of static, stable sexual identities and behaviors (Cohen, 1999, p. 438). The lack of attention to race in queer theory (or in the work of leading lesbian theorist), for Chicana cultural studies scholar Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano,

---

<sup>21</sup> Hames-Garcia notes that queer theory at-times, but not always was understood as lesbian and gay sexuality.

reaffirms “the belief that it is possible to talk about sexuality without talking about race, which in turn reaffirms the belief that it is necessary to talk about race and sexuality only when discussing people of color and their text” (as cited in Muñoz, 1999, p.10). Once more, these seminal texts in queer theory failed to address race, and in doing so build a consistent pattern of erasure, marginalization, and tokenization of people of color subjectivities (Hames-García, 2011, p. 21). According to Hames-García (2011), these texts therefore depended on the “erasure or rejection of several decades persistent calls within feminism, antiracist movement and lesbian and gay of color theory and activism to understand how different aspects of identity interconnect and mutually constitute each other...” (p. 23).

Therefore, I turn to queer of color critique because unlike queer theory it recognizes the multiplicity of subjectivity and the interconnection of oppression, which speaks to the shared experiences of those who were active participants on the Trail. Applying a queer of color critique to the Trail of Dreams not only entails “theorizing intersections” but requires one to “draw from activist scholars who have been theorizing at the intersections of race, gender, class, and sexuality for decades,” from earlier theorists like Angela Davis, Cherrie Moraga, Gloria Anzaldúa, Bernice Johnson Reagon and Chela Sandoval to recent scholars like Cathy Cohen, José Esteban Muñoz, Roderick A. Ferguson, to name a few (Hames-García, 2011, p. 37). For example, Roderick A. Ferguson’s *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique*, grounds his book on Marx and women of color feminism when interrogating canonical sociology and African American literature. By doing so, he carves out an alternative genealogy for critical thinking about sexuality in the U.S. (Hames-García, 2011, p. 21). Queer of color analysis, as defined by Ferguson (2004), extends the “theorized intersections” of women of color feminism “by investigating how intersecting racial, gender and sexual practices antagonize and/or conspire

with the normative investments of nation-states and capital” (p. 4).<sup>22</sup> By applying a queer of color analysis to tactics, such as testimonios, we can begin to see them as not only asserting difference, but as conspiring against the normative investment (challenging heteronormativity) within the migrant rights movement and the state. Historically women of color feminism and queer of color critics have demanded that social formations be reconceived in terms of the complex intersections of race, gender, sexuality and class, because by doing so, it “provides a critique of the idealism of the essence and the empiricism of the heteronormative subject” (Ferguson, 2004, p. 11). Indeed, for Ferguson (2004) women of color feminism and queer of color critique provide the impetus for moving beyond the postulates of national formations.

In their edited collection of essays, *Strange Affinities*, Roderick Ferguson and Grace Hong (2011), define women of color feminism and queer of color critique as a profound questioning of nationalist modes of political organization and one which crafts alternative understandings of subjectivity, collectivity and power. By applying a women of color feminism and queer of color critique, as scholars we are able to reveal “the ways in which racialized communities are not homogenous but instead have always policed and preserved the difference between those who are able to conform to categories...and those who are forcibly excluded from such categories” (Ferguson & Hong, 2011). They argue for a new methodology for the study of racial formation in present-day mobilizations of power. Therefore, in order to understand those who have been impacted by neocolonialism and globalizations, such as undocumented/undocuqueer youth living and organizing in the South, we require a new methodology for understanding their resistance and radical coalition politics (Ferguson & Hong, 2011).

---

<sup>22</sup> Ferguson notes that a queer of color analysis opts for an understanding of nation and capital as the outcome of manifold intersections that contradict the idea of the liberal nation-state and capital as sites of resolution, perfection, progress, and confirmation.

By applying critical queer reading practices to the Trail, I am able to draw from different kinds of archives such as those found in the valuable work of queer and women of color feminist scholars that mainstream social science scholars fail to draw from. In thinking about a “queer reading practice,” I’m inspired by Emma Perez’s (2003) queer of color gaze which is a trained eye that can uncover a history of sexuality on the borderlands. In her essay, “Queering the Borderlands: The Challenges of Excavating the Invisible and Unheard,” Pérez (2003) argues for scholars to see within a decolonial queer gaze, a nonwhite, noncolonial, nonheteronormative critical eyes that looks beyond white colonial heteronormativity which pushes them to interpret documents differently. For Pérez, a decolonial queer gaze allows us to interrogate sources-cultural and literary texts, newspapers, websites, blogs, social media, youtube videos, press releases, daily agendas, maps, interviews, as well as political strategy for representations of sexual deviants and track ideologies about sex and sexuality. For my purposes in this thesis, the decolonial queer gaze allows a seeing and knowing that breaks away from a “colonial white heteronormative way” of writing history. In other words, like Pérez, I’m committed to writing a social movement history that is not grounded in normative investments of nation-states and capital, but rather one that captures the queerness of a movement. But, what does the label queer or queerness represent throughout my research?

My application of the word queer draws from women of color theorists and activists (Anzaldúa, Cohen, Hames-Garcia, Moraga, Perez, Rodriguez), who saw it as an emerging and confrontational politic in the 1990s. Frustrated with what was perceived as assimilationist tendencies of AIDS activism, organizations like ACT UP New York exemplified this queer politic when they came together “to challenge dominant constructions of who should be allowed and who deserved care” (Cohen, 1999, p. 460). According to political scientist Cathy J. Cohen,

the emergence of queer/queerness served as a coalitional term for those who found themselves on the margins, “operating through multiple identities and thus not fully served or recognized through traditional single-identity-based politics” (Cohen, 1999, p. 440). By attaching, inserting, and marking my terms with the label queer, such as “undocuqueer” and “queering across,” I’m signaling an emerging confrontational queer formation within the migrant rights movement. Undocuqueers, similar to ACT UP activists, became frustrated with reformist strategies and the prevailing homogenized identity of the ideal immigrant that did not speak to the multiplicity in their lives. In her essay, “Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?” Cohen (1999) recognizes the political promise of theoretical conceptualizations of queerness. For Cohen, queerness symbolizes a potentiality that is embedded in everyday survival and the “multisided resistance to systems that seek to normalize bodies, exploit our labor, and constrain our visibility” (Cohen, 1999, p. 440). She is interested in examining the concept of “queer” in order to think about how we might construct a new political identity that is truly liberating, transformative, and inclusive of all those who stand outside of the dominant constructed norm of state-sanctioned white middle- and upper-class heterosexuality (Cohen, 1999, p. 441). Therefore, I turn to queerness (like Cohen, Ferguson, Hong, Perez) to theorize the Trail’s movement building efforts, as not only spaces organized by queer activists, but rather a promising coalitional and transformative space centered by one’s relations to power and committed to a multisided resistance to the state (new ways of doing politics).

Sociologists and political scientists have traditionally approached coalition-building as a function to do something, rather than highlighting their formations, their strategies of countering hegemonic discourses. The dominant stance within these fields of study is that alliances and coalitions are “often discussed as one element of power building and movement building,”

and/or occurring within one organization doing cross-racial community alliances (Ito, Ortiz & Pastor, 2010).<sup>23</sup> Undeniably, these studies omit other theories of coalescing, at times calling them semantics, therefore denying an opportunity to engage at a deeper level of analysis.<sup>24</sup> My study, on the other hand, seeks to write a social movement that highlights *queer movidas indocumentadas*, modes of queering across, which at first glance, might look like organizing tactics, strategies, or *movimientos de rebeldia*, but are in reality, a way of knowing, a consciousness rooted in queerness, illegality and living in the borderlands. While this study engages in an epistemological shift and is centered in the new ways of doing politics on behalf of undocuqueers, it is important to explicate a partial study of traditional notions of coalition building, both to establish the mainstream definition and practices of coalitions, but also to highlight their limiting features in trying to help us appreciate the impact of the Trail of Dreams.

## LITERATURE REVIEW - COALITIONS

### *Traditional Notions of Coalitions*

Social movement scholars in disciplines such as sociology, political science, and in interdisciplinary fields such as ethnic studies and queer studies, have created a vast range of social movement literature. Since the 1960s, they have been theorizing the value and energy of movements by answering the questions of who participates, where, why and how actions and mobilizations develop. This work, which has mainly focused on US movements, has identified fundamental predictors to people's likelihood for engaging in political activity, such as open "political opportunity structures" (POS) and a person's "socioeconomic status" (SES) (García

---

<sup>23</sup> I will use coalition and alliances interchangeably, with the understanding that they come in many shapes and forms, sometimes calling themselves "partnerships," or "networks."

<sup>24</sup> Reports on coalition building fixate on their functionality, thus overlooking their configuration, which at times harbor feelings of tension and discomfort between individuals and groups. And, because the focus is about political change, the development and execution of a successful campaign, subverting systems of domination are thus relegated to winnable campaigns, reform.

Bedolla, 2014, Zepeda-Millán, 2016).<sup>25</sup> Yet, when this work has been extended to study mobilizations enacted by poor and subaltern groups, these prominent theories do not explain all the aspects of their engagement (Bedolla, 2014, Pallares, 2015, Pulido, 1996, 2006, Zepeda-Millán, 2016). Therefore, many of the scholars mentioned here have attempted to find other explanations to counterhegemonic movements that challenge “the power of the homeland security state” and the fight for a more democratic society (Gonzales, 2014, p. 171). These models have centered on movement building and mobilizations through building coalitions or alliances.

Literature on coalition building offers a useful starting point for understanding its effectiveness as a form or/and function within social movements. Traditional notions of coalition building have generally been approached as a function, a step within a political campaign trajectory or an organization’s effort to create a lasting and significant impact. In a recent report, “Connecting at the Crossroads; Alliance Building and Social Change in Tough Times,” Jennifer Ito, Rhonda Ortiz, and Manuel Pastor (2010) provided an investigation of written literature on alliances and social movements.<sup>26</sup> They defined coalitions (alliances, partnerships, networks) as the coming together of two or more organizations to build power to affect broader change and

---

<sup>25</sup> Political scientist Lisa Bedolla García (2014) notes how scholars in her field have found that a person’s socioeconomic status (SES)-their education, income, and occupation-dictates political engagement (electoral and nonelectoral participation). She states, “those who are more educated, have higher incomes, and come from professional occupations (versus more blue-collar jobs)” are more likely to engage in all aspects of political engagement than those who are less educated, poorer, or do manual labor (p. 21). But, she too like Pulido, Zepeda-Millán, and Pallares, demonstrates how these prominent theories fall short when extended to minority communities. They continue not to be able to explain all the aspects of their engagement. Many political scientist have written about this “underestimation of political engagement” as it relates to the 2006 immigration marches.

<sup>26</sup> The report included interviews with thirty organizations covering a wide variety of issues and constituencies, and an analysis of a convening of more than twenty of the best alliance builders in the country. The authors mention that the scarcity of existing literature was an indicator that they may be filling an important niche, while at the same time, it meant they relied mainly on interviews with practitioners. The report was produced by the University of Southern California’s Center of Program for Environmental and Regional Equity.

transform systems of power.<sup>27</sup> Sociologists and political scientists have traditionally approached coalition-building as an element occurring within organizations, SMOs, NGOs, labor unions, etc... involved in movement building efforts and/or doing cross-racial community alliances. In their view, coalitions are a critical factor for SMOs because they “realize that the scale of change needed to reverse inequities is beyond the ability of any one organization – and so they have to learn to stick together through differences to make progress” (Ito, Ortiz & Pastor, 2010). For this reason, coalitions and alliances have been central to local organizing efforts, who are looking to expand their sphere of influence, in order to elevate local campaign issues to a more strategic target at the national level.

Conventionally, coalitions connect like-minded organizations engaged in similar work or issues, thus allowing resources and people to be shared within a given project or campaign. I have found that those who professionally consult on local to national campaigns, which I call *movement-building gatekeepers*, utilize coalitions and alliances as part and parcel (a function) of scaling-up campaigns to pull off big wins.<sup>28</sup> For theorist and practitioners, scaling-up-an organization’s ability to affect greater change by expanding their sphere of influence and elevating issues to more strategic targets-is perhaps the most exciting practice and development in the field of social movements (Ito et al., 2012). The critical role the Trail played within the undocumented youth movement in 2010 is a good case in point. By applying a scaling-up frame to the Trail, one can understand how a Miami-based SMO was able to elevate their campaign from a local scale to a level where regional, state and national impact is possible. But, for some

---

<sup>27</sup> I will use coalition and alliances interchangeably, with the understanding that they come in many shapes and forms, sometimes calling themselves “partnerships,” or “networks.”

<sup>28</sup> Movement building architects are those forces (individuals, organizations and foundations) who operate at a local to national level educating, training, coaching and expanding campaign strategies within progressive movements.

social movement scholars, applying templates to movement-building processes can be limiting, for they do not explain all aspects of engagement.

Pallares (2014) argues that American social movement theory “attempts to identify patterns and/or create a template that would allow us to make generalizations about a social movement’s cause, strategies, and effectiveness” (p.12). The assumption made is that there are certain features shared by all social movements and that we can engage in a comparative analysis that helps us understand how these actors deploy strategies and resources differently (Pallares, 2014). I observe that studies and reports, which omit forms and theories of coalescing, are rooted in normative ideals, which desire to produce “user friendly” functions. Consequently, these functions are then recycled within movement building spaces, by those who’ve been identified as “experts” most likely funded by foundations and labor unions, as one-size-fits-all strategies, thus failing to realize that their application negates the tactics and technologies of the “other” non-normatives.<sup>29</sup>

Studying coalitions only as a function is problematic. This approach, not only discounts the impact of “learning to stick together through differences,” but erases and tokenizes the participation of those active within coalitions and alliances. This becomes a problem, when those organizations and leaders are people of color, working families, migrants, queers of color, and youth. If you do not center the leadership, resourcefulness, and creativity of “queer” participants, who have emerged through participatory movements, then you do not capture the nuances that make-up coalition politics within these movements. Therefore, the research presented in this

---

<sup>29</sup> Relatedly, in her foundational text, *The Decolonial Imaginary*, Emma Pérez, analyzes the ways in which historiography has served as a colonialist project. She argues that, “historiography produces a fictive past, and that fiction becomes the knowledge manipulated to negate the “other” culture’s differences” (xviii). I borrow this line of thinking, in order to argue, those who have been deemed movement-building gatekeepers, are directly and indirectly benefitting from the erasure and marginalization of women of color, who historically have been at the center of progressive movements.

thesis illustrates the needs for a paradigm shift, a reorientation of functions, in order to highlight the multiple dimensions and formations within the Undocumented Youth Movement, specifically the Trail of Dreams.

As movement-building gatekeepers and academics underscore the utilitarian characteristics of coalitions, women of color feminists theorized (and practiced) their formations and political possibilities. It is through women of color scholarship where we can discuss, what it takes to bring people together and keep them together. As Karma Chavez (2013) remarks, “Women of color feminism have long advocated for the necessity of coalitional politics to address oppression and power at its root and to utilize difference as a resource rather than a hurdle to overcome” (p. 7). Unlike traditional theories of coalitions women of color activists, writers, and cultural workers were finding ways of creating connection via difference rather than coming together to win political campaigns. The way that women of color practiced coalition speaks to the vital importance of its formation-its configuration, who gives it its shape, its style, and its variety. Placing importance in form, centers organizations and people who are in coalition with one another, in this case those who are coming together under a shared commitment to change.

As I demonstrate in the sections to come, by drawing from women of color feminism, I’m then able to challenge and re-appropriate functions, like scaling up, in order to appreciate the political activism by undocumented/undocuqueer youth, whose organizing practices embodied alternative understandings of space, scaling-up and people’s organizing power.

### *There’s Coalition Building and Then There’s Radical Coalition Politics*

As indicated earlier, at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Cathy Cohen (1997) examined how we could move concretely toward a transformational coalitional politics among marginalized

subjects. In her essay, “Punks, Bulldaggers, And Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential Of Queer Politics?” Cohen (1997) offers a discussion “as a starting point for reassessing the shape of queer, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered politics in the twenty-first century” (p. 462). She critiques the limits of identity politics based on a civil rights strategy, where assimilation and replication of dominant institutions are the goals. And, similar to many women of color scholars (Moraga, Anzaldúa, Reagon, Davis, Martínez), she is searching for a new political direction and agenda. She is invested in a practice of “queer politics,” which she argues is “a truly radical or transformative politics [that] has not resulted from queer activism” (Cohen, 1997). A queer politic is the destabilization of assumed categories and binaries of sexual identity not the reinforcing of simple dichotomies between the heterosexual and everything queer (Cohen, 1997). In her essay, Cohen envisions a coalescing of political comrades that comes from one’s relation to power, and not some homogenized identity. Her essay explores the current politics of activism and detects lessons to be learned that can help us construct a new politic within the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

It is important to note that ten years prior in 1988, we see a similar address and discussion with Gloria Anzaldúa (1988) in her keynote address to the Lesbian Plenary Session of the annual conference for the National Women’s Studies Association. In her essay, “Bridge, Drawbridge, Sandbar, or Island; Lesbians-of-Color Haciendo Alianzas,” Anzaldúa offers questions and suggestions for activists interested in engaging in coalition work. Anzaldúa is concerned with the internal dynamics of how alliances form, and raises the following questions: 1. How do we share or don’t share space while in coalition? 2. How can we align ourselves with individuals or groups who are different from and at odds with each other? and 3. How can we reconcile one’s love for diverse groups when members of these groups do not love each other, cannot relate to each other, and don’t know how to work together? She states that alliance work is the attempt to

shift positions, change positions, reposition ourselves regarding our individual and collective identities. And that, one should not be “lulled into forgetting that coalition work attempts to balance power relations and undermine and subvert the system of domination-subordination that affects even our most unconscious thoughts” (Anzaldúa, 1988, p. 149). By drawing from women of color scholars and activists, one can begin to find answers to Anzaldúa’s questions and what to keep in mind when making alliances and building coalitions.

*Shifting positions, Changing positions, Repositioning Ourselves*

In *This Bridge Called My Back*, published over 30 years ago, Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (1981) are looking for a movement that addresses particular and relational conditions of oppression suffered by women of color. Moraga’s preface touches on coalition building and understands that they are not a given between women of color. She too, like Anzaldúa recognizes power relations among people of color, “It is not given between us—Chicana and Black—to come to see each other as sisters. This is not a given. I keep wanting to repeat over and over and over again, the pain and shock of difference...” (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981, p. xiv). The pain and shock of difference is Moraga’s recognition of her racialization over and against her women of color sisters. And to build this bridge across individuals or groups who are different from and at odds with each other, she notes the importance of getting to know each other intimately and the importance of being honest of recognizing it when it is not there. When Moraga describes an individual’s incapability to connect/relate/bridge with others, she too like Anzaldúa, sees the importance in repositioning ourselves in order to work together. Not only does Moraga conclude by writing how she will reposition (lay) her body down for that vision but speaks to what Anzaldúa calls, “the deadly serious and difficult game of making alliances work” (Anzaldúa, p. 149).

That same year at the at the West Coast Women’s Music Festival, in California, Bernice Johnson Reagon (1981) presents her essay, “Coalition Politics: Turning the Century.”<sup>30</sup> Speaking to a crowd, Reagon describes the foundation of what she considers coalition politics in the turn of the century and challenges white feminists to go beyond their comfort zones. By exploring feelings of comfort and discomfort, her speech problematizes what one should feel when doing coalition work. Reagon (1981) states that nationalism isn’t a coalition; it is not work done in your home but rather work that has to take place in the street, with others who don’t agree with you, in spaces where you feel threatened to the core. She asserts, “It is very important not to confuse them—home and coalition” (Reagon, 1981, p. 347). Reagon’s (1981) essay works as a reminder and guide, prompting us to be aware of the tension within reconciliation between those who are different from and at odds with one another and helping us understanding the transformative possibilities of reconciliation/coalition within movements. Her words at the Music Festival illustrate a political theory of change, one that is horizontal but also temporal, a way of doing everything so you can “throw yourself into the next century” (Reagon, 1981). By engaging in political activism that drives your campaign to the streets, in this case walking across the South, one community at a time, the Trail not only seized spatial access but left an impression in the lives of others. Reagon provides another way of looking at coalition building one that deeply understands that shifting, changing and repositioning is necessary when individuals and/or groups are at odds with each other. Her work, challenges political scientists, sociologists and activists who only see the possibilities within its function and not in its formation-its intimacies and differences.

---

<sup>30</sup> Both Reagon’s and Anzaldúa’s essays are a reflection of the experiences and subjectivities of U.S. Women of color, who at that time were expanding the definition of third world feminism.

Similarly, in the 1990s, women of color activists continue to share their on-the-ground experience of coalition building. On May 12, 1993, Angela Davis and Elizabeth Martínez spoke at the University of California, San Diego on a panel called "Building Coalitions of People of Color."<sup>31</sup> They, too, discuss building coalitions across differences, different needs, tensions within them, issues and ideologies within coalitions. Martínez and Davis (1993) ask us to imagine "what kind of coming together do we need to win these demands," and to be flexible in our ways of thinking about working together "across difference." Their discussion challenges traditional notions of organizing campaigns and building political power, that define coalitions and alliances between like-minded people and/or organizations and engaged in single-issue campaigns. For Martínez and Davis, coalitions should not be romanticized, they should be about taking risks and creating political subjects, like women of color, which make us "rethink identities in dynamic ways and lead to transformative strategies" (Martínez & Davis, 1993). Perhaps what Davis and Martínez are suggesting is what Anzaldúa envisioned, a network of kindred spirits, a kind of family, to assist in transforming the planet. In her canonical essay, "La Prieta," Gloria Anzaldúa (1981) envisions a coalition built by third world women, lesbians, feminists, and feminist-oriented men of all colors. For Anzaldúa, it is queer groups (those who share a relation to power, who don't belong anywhere) who have the capacity to empathize and identify with each other's oppressions. For Anzaldúa and Cohen, queer is a coalition term that signifies a dynamic political subject whose issues and ideologies vary. And, it is within this

---

<sup>31</sup> Both Angela Davis and Betita Martínez are known internationally for their ongoing work to combat all forms of oppression in the U.S. and abroad. Davis is an advocate of prison abolition and has developed a powerful critique of racism within the prison system. She is a founding member of Critical Resistance, a national organization dedicated to dismantling the prison industrial complex. Martínez has been an advocate against land rights, poverty, racism and militarism in the U.S. In the early 1960s she began working as a volunteer with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) as a way to fight racism and supporting the civil rights movement. In the 1990s she cofounded the Institute of MultiRacial Justice in San Francisco, which served to combat white supremacy and advance solidarity among people of color.

variation, that Anzaldúa (1981) reminds us that queers do not always derive at the same processes and solution (Anzaldúa, 1981).

Additionally, Cohen (1997) writes about who should be at the center of radical coalition building. Rather than being led by governmental institutions, foundations and national/international labor unions and non-profits, it is those who are the “forgotten,” the women of color feminist, queers and people of color, who make-up the opposition. Cohen suggests, it is the non-normative, the punks, bulldaggers and the welfare queens, at the center of organizing. And for Karma Chávez (2013), she identifies the queer immigrant as an inherently coalitional subject, one whose identities and relationships to power mandate managing multiplicity.

In *Queer Migration Politics: Activist Rhetoric and Coalitional Possibilities*, communications scholar Karma Chavez (2013) examines instances where migration politics and queer politics meet in ways that challenge neoliberal projects of inclusion and “shift the political focus to other sites of activism.” Her book draws on Argentine feminist philosopher María Lugones, who also contends that coalitions should not be understood only as a temporary and strategic relationship designed to achieve specific goals, but rather as “a present and existing vision and practice that reflects an orientation to others and a shared commitment to change” (Chavez, 2013, p. 146). Chavez sees coalescing/coalition building as a precarious space of engagement and full of tension (Reagan, Anzaldúa, Lugones). Echoing other women of color feminists, Chavez (2013) states that, “Coalition is not comfortable. It is not home. It is scary and unpredictable” (p. 147). It is a space that cannot be taken for granted and requires constant work if it is to endure. For Chavez (2013), queer migration politics is an ideal area of study in which to learn about coalition through the exploration of coalitional moments, a moment where political

issues coincide or merge in the public sphere in ways that create space to reenvision and potentially reconstruct rhetorical imaginaries. She also suggests “understanding coalition at the intersections of queer migration politics provides important insight into dominant imaginaries of belonging within the US nation-state” (Chavez, 2013).

Women of color activists and scholars provide us social movement scholars a political theory for change, one that allows us to reorient ourselves and see the political possibilities when women of color, punks, and los undocuqueers are at the center of organizing. In order to understand the success and difficulties of the Trail of Dreams, whose leaders were queer, youth, women of color, undocumented, displaced, and poor, I must rely on women of color feminist thought and practices. Once again, by drawing from the radical works of women of color—speeches, conversations, journals articles, collection of essays and poems, and texts—I depart from traditional ways of examining social movements. Applying these theories allows me to understand what the walkers, coalition partners and allies were practicing when they were walking through one community at a time, talking to people across the political spectrum, meeting with Sheriffs in Georgia, taking risks, risking deportation and detention as they walked across the rural South. I suggest that if we are to understand the Trail, we must not only recognize these elements but pay careful attention to how their arrangement speaks to a radical politic, which I refer to a politics/mode of queering across.

### **STUDYING THE TRAIL OF DREAMS: A NOTE ON METHODS**

Choosing which methods to use in my field research, how to implement these methods, how to analyze the data, and how I stay involved with my research is ultimately shaped by my epistemological standpoints (Acosta, 2013). My research design is driven by my privileged position of being once a youth activist, a community organizer who participated and witnessed

the emergence of youth-led campaigns across the state of California, and my commitment to a women of color feminist theory and queer of color critique as a Chicana and Chicano Studies scholar. Drawing on Trail of Dream participants' narratives, my study seeks to understand how undocumented queer voices help shape knowledge about the fight for migrant rights in the southeastern region of the United States. This study also highlights the vital importance in centering women of color feminism and queer of color critique to contemporary politics and movement building.

*From the Margins to the Center – Participants*

My analysis is based on a one year and a half study of undocumented youth activists in the South, which included ten in-depth interviews with Trail of Dreams coalition partners, youth and adult allies and the four walkers, who in 2010 lived in Florida, newspaper discourse of the Trail, primary sources (organizational records and archives, blog posts, youtube videos) and detailed fields notes of my engagement with organizers and my travels through out the southeastern region of the United States.

Interviews were conducted in the summer and fall of 2015 and participants were selected by level of involvement, by referral, organizational affiliation and positionality. In accordance with feminist methodology (standpoint theory), this work uses the lived experiences of undocumented/undocuqueers as a site of knowledge production (Harding, 2004). Relatedly, in *Feminism without Borders*, Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003) proposes a new direction and analytic strategy that is anchored in the place of the most marginalized communities, in this case women, poor women of all colors “in affluent and neocolonial nations; women of the Third World/South or the Two-Thirds World” (p. 231). For Mohanty, the political acts emerging from marginalized communities (poor women of all colors, queers, undocumented youth) offer us

access to the workings of power and provide the most inclusive paradigm for thinking about social justice.<sup>32</sup>

Following these premises, I was committed to validating and centering the knowledge and multiple subjectivities of undocumented/undocuqueer youth in the Trail of Dreams. I first outreached to key informants, the walkers and executive directors, who provided an inner workings perspective of the Trail. From these interviews, I obtained the origin story of the Trail, in-depth descriptions, and collected potential participants, who were also undocumented, queer, women of color and migrant rights activists. By cross-referencing key-informant responses, I was able to develop a Trail of Dreams participant map and identify potential participants. Key informants connected me with other participants via email or facebook. My experience of privileging the standpoints of undocumented/undocuqueer youth allowed for a multiplicity of undocumented subjects to emerge within my research design. Half of the interviewees were undocumented youth activists between the ages of 18 to 30, but a number of interviews were conducted with migrant rights advocates and supporters. A wide range of sexualities and gender expressions are present, with half of the interviewees identifying as queer. Four of the participants were women of color, four were male and two youth activists identified as gender non-conforming. Four of the respondents were born in South America, one in Mexico, two in the United States, two in Central America and one in Puerto Rico. Eight interviewees had migrated to the United States, by themselves or with their families, seeking political stability and economic security. Those from Central America and South America fled physical violence and economic insecurity. Socioeconomic backgrounds varied. It is important to note that while the walkers were latinx, those who actively supported and organized the Trail, were Latinx, White,

---

<sup>32</sup> Equally, Chela Sandoval in *Methodology of the Oppressed* discusses how this very position of marginality to power places/allows women of color activists a very different position from which to view power.

Black, and of mixed race. Their activism and leadership is suggestive of the inter-racial coalition building efforts in the southeast region. And, by not seeking a fixed, static group, those who participated in the study represent a range of experiences.

### *Interviews*

At the center of this study are ten-in depth interviews gathered using qualitative methods during fieldwork from August 2015 through November 2015. My undertaking was to understand how undocumented/undocuqueer youth activists were redefining the migrant rights movement in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and in turn, challenging categories of the state-race, gender, class, and sexuality. I was interested in their political strategy that critiqued racialization projects in the Southeastern United States. And, how their coalitional politics embodied political possibilities within the Undocumented Youth Movement. To arrive at these responses the interview guide focused on three major areas: (1) personal and organizational background and current involvement in the fight for migrant rights; (2) level of participation and experience within the Trail of Dreams; and (3) reflections and critiques of the Trail of Dreams and the Undocumented Youth Movement.

The interviews with the four walkers were particularly helpful to understand the urgency and the day to day experiences of the Trail and veteran coalition leaders were useful in assessing the political context and strategy at a local, regional and national level. Interviews with parents and youth allies also helped me understand the direct and indirect impact of the Trail. I paid special attention to experiences that involved coalition building and personal experiences by undocumented/undocuqueer youth. I was interested in understanding their leadership challenges, successes and points of solidarity in organizing for migrant rights. Except for four interviews that I conducted via video conference calls, all interviews were face-to-face. Interviewees lived in the following cities, Miami, Florida, Albany, and Atlanta, Georgia, Greensboro, North Carolina,

Washington, D.C., Berkeley, California, Chicago, Illinois and New York City, New York. Most interviews were performed in the interviewee's organizing spaces or home, due to mostly my suggestion, which allowed me to see pictures, newspaper clippings and their workspace. My personal preference for face-to-face interviews was linked to a prior bad experience with video conference calls and understanding that there is so much more to sense, feel and experience in face-to-face meet ups for both sides.

It is important to note that before my visit to the region, migrant rights organizers in Georgia had shared that post-Trail, in 2011, raids and deportations impacted many of the communities and individuals who were part of the Trail. The experience of undocumented and mixed-status families and the fight for migrant rights varied from state to state. While a broader movement was coalescing to pass the DREAM Act in 2010 and organizing to pass legislation extending in-state tuition rates to undocumented students, states in the South were barring students from attending their public universities (Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina). Over the course of a year, I have learned a great deal about the multiple/regional experiences undocumented/undocuqueer Latinas/os were living in the Southeastern U.S.

### *Walking Into An Experience*

Visiting these cities (now historical sites of the Trail of Dreams) was a complementary source of data. Immersing myself within these sites allowed me to see how space and places shape racial formation and activism in multiracial and rural places throughout the South. Visiting the Freedom Tower in Miami, Florida and the Albany Welcome Center in Albany, Georgia, allowed me to visit places where the Trail made stops, community members gathered and stories where shared. And, choosing to take Greyhound bus lines from city to city, while doing my field research, allowed me to see and experience the landscape and observe who was traveling within

and between states. It was within these spaces that I would come into contact with young people, migrant families or single men or single mothers. By experiencing these spaces as queer man of color raised in Los Angeles and San Francisco, I realized the stark differences between the urban and the rural-open spaces dominated by woodland and farmland. I became aware of spatial organization, proximity and distance; how road systems looked endless, the remoteness of water and food sources, and how walking across these roads and state lines meant putting one's life in danger. For example, my familiarity with the landscape and U.S. Route 319, which runs across Florida and Georgia's state line, allows me to contextualize the relief and excitement the walkers and allies experienced when arriving to Cairo, Georgia. Not only did they walk 33 miles, from Tallahassee, Florida to Cairo, Georgia, but they experienced roads without sidewalks, cold weather in February, Georgia's history of racial terror, and the uncertainty of being detained and deported in the state of Georgia. Traveling on Greyhound provided me with another layer of understanding these communities, an experience that captured the mobility of people. Undeniably, there was so much to take in and imagine within these places.

### **A NEW TYPE OF POLITIC: THE TRAIL AND MODES OF QUEERING ACROSS**

By drawing on women of color feminism, I can begin to understand the value and energy created along the Trail. Now grounded with other theories of coalescing, not only do I see other emergent possibilities, but I am able to re-appropriate functions like scaling-up, in order to grasp and capture a communities resourcefulness, alternative understandings of space and people's organizing power. As alluded to in the introduction, I coin the term queering across to capture and document the radical promises of undocumented/undocuqueer youth organizing in the Southeastern United States. There are three essential properties to social movements that

illustrate a mode of queering across; 1.) Queering across connects a variety of non-normative and queer formations, 2.) Queering across requires moving across physical places and spaces to create new areas of political engagement 3.) And, queering across demands risk-taking. As a mode of queering across, the Trail practiced strategies that required them to immerse themselves locally, in order to create new spaces of political engagement (physical or cyber). Applying a queering across lens shifts our understanding of movement and mobilization outcomes so that we can see a variety of possibilities at the same time, emerging from different places and spaces. In the next section, I analyze the experiences of the walkers and various participants as told to me through a series of interviews that took place in 2015, five years after the Trail.

### *Welcome to Miami*

South Florida has experienced unprecedented social and economic change since World War II. At the southeastern edge of the continental United States, the Miami metropolitan area has emerged as a major gateway of the Americas. People, commodities, money and information flow through the city to and from locales throughout the hemisphere. Over the past half-century, technological advances, mass migration, increased tourism, expanding international trade and new forms of cultural expression have all contributed to the dynamism and unpredictability of the city. Miami constantly re-creates itself as its diverse inhabitants pursue their dreams of a more rewarding life. Commentators sometimes refer to Miami as a “city of the future”—an experiment in urban life that indicates the direction in which America as a whole is moving. *-History of Miami. “Miami: Gateway of the Americas.” Tropical Dreams exhibit. Plaque.*<sup>33</sup>

In the summer of 2015, I set out to interview undocumented youth activists, allies and coalition leaders who participated in the Trail of Dreams in 2010. My undertaking was to understand how undocumented/undocuqueer youth activists were redefining the migrant rights movement in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I was interested in how their life experiences shaped their activism

---

<sup>33</sup> The noted epigraph is part of a permanent exhibit, Tropical Dreams: A People’s History of South Florida, at the History of Miami Museum, which explores South Florida history from prehistoric times to the present day.

and wanted to understand their impetus in joining the fight for migrant rights. What motivated Carlos, Felipe, Juan and Gaby to walk across the Southeastern United State into hostile anti-immigrant territory? How did their agency and vision of political liberation re-orient our understanding of coalitions building within the migrant rights movement? And, how where their ways of doing politics embodying radical political possibilities within the Undocumented Youth Movement and reshaping social structures?

Many of those interviewed expressed how difficult it was growing up undocumented, queer, poor, and vulnerable to deportation and detention while organizing for migrant rights in the South. Before my visit to the region, migrant rights organizers in Albany, Georgia had shared that post-Trail, in 2011, raids and deportations impacted many of the communities and individuals who were part of the Trail. The experience of undocumented and mixed-status families and the fight for migrant rights varied from state to state. While a broader movement was coalescing to pass the DREAM Act in 2010 and organizing to pass legislation extending in-state tuition rates to undocumented students, states in the South were barring students from attending their public universities (Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina). In the State of Georgia, during the summer of 2010 (post-Trail) the State Board of Regents was considering new policies concerning undocumented students at their public universities. That fall, on October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2010 the Regents voted to ban “illegal immigrants” from attending Georgia’s top public colleges and lawmakers where planning to introduce a bill to bar these students from all public colleges – the 35 institutions in the University System of Georgia and the 26 in the Technical System of Georgia. That same year, Alabama’s law, H.B. 56, was passed as the Beason-Hammon Alabama Taxpayer and Citizen Protection Act (Molina, 2014). The act permitted police officers to act as immigration agents, allowing them to demand proof of legal status from suspected persons

during routine stops. It barred undocumented migrants from receiving any public funding at that state level, which included schooling and health care (Molina, 2014). H.B. 56 was regarded the most severe state immigration bill ever passed to date. Over the course of a year, I have learned a great deal about the multiple/regional experiences undocumented Latinas/os were living in the Southeastern U.S, specifically Miami.

In this cultural, social, and physical space, I encountered many youth and adults who were geographically far from their country of birth (Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Haiti, Honduras, Venezuela, to name a few). Described as the “major gateway” city of Latin America, Miami has been a haven for refugees, political exiles, and economically motivated migrants since the turn of the twentieth century. As noted in the above History of Miami exhibit plaque, Miami is a place where “people, commodities, money and information flow through the city to and from locales throughout the hemisphere.” Like many global cities, it is a place in which certain important elements of capitalist globalization are organized, coordinated, and produced. In my interviews, these young activists from Miami, specifically the walkers, shared about their identity, their upbringing in Latin America and their journey to the United States. They shared with me their educational goals, their passage from childhood to adulthood, and how they became aware of their legal status in the United States, and for some their sexuality. Without a doubt Miami, with increased mass migration, is also known as a racially troubled metropolis. Activists shared how growing up in a hostile environment-confronting US racial structure-was the impetus to becoming involved in the Students Working for Equal Rights (SWER) at Miami Dade College. We discussed the Trail, as a tactic and strategy, and how they were able to mobilize their available resources within a matter of months. The activists shared their memorable moments, internal conflicts (pleitos) and coalitional moments along the Trail. What I began to realize is

that these activists began describing how race, gender, class, sexuality and legal status overlapped and were mutually constitutive, and in turn intensified their activism-*intersectional mobilization*. Latina sociologist, Veronica Terriquez (2015), argues that undocumented/undocuqueer activism within the Undocumented Youth Movement can, in part be attributed to their recognition and activation of multiple marginalized identities at various level. In their interviews, they reflected on these multiple vectors of vulnerability and shared how it was different and difficult to be undocumented, queer, poor and living in Little Havana. This relational approach allowed them to build links and coalitions with others, thus intensifying/deepening their relationships with one another.

#### *Queering Across Connects a Variety of Non-Normative and Queer Formations*

The Undocumented Youth Movement in 2010 not only championed migrant rights but allowed for radical formations to emerge—new networks and relationships, new political identities, horizontal leadership structures, multisided resistance strategies and alternative understandings about the nature of power. As a mode of queering across, the Trail connected local, regional, statewide and national migrant rights organizations and built relationships between racial justice and faith organizations, queer rights and labor rights groups. It created and strengthened community and campus youth organizing efforts across the region. Many undocumented youth groups were founded because the Trail brought these individuals together. These groups were comprised of migrant rights activists—undocumented/undocuqueer youth, women of color, people of color, and migrant families living in rural communities. Their coming together, I would argue was not rooted in traditional categories or sameness, but rather a shared marginal relationship to a white supremacist, capitalist and heterosexist system that normalizes, legitimizes, and privileges groups in the South (Cohen, 1997). These new relationships and

networks represented an emerging coalition and a practice that connected a variety of non-normative and queer formations while acknowledging the non-equivalence and incommensurability of these formations.

*Undocumented/Undocuqueer Formations In Limbo*

In our interviews, many of the young men and women activists shared their experience with US structures of race, class, gender, and sexuality, and this idea that they were trying to incorporate themselves into spaces filled with unbalanced power relations. I had the opportunity to interview Carlos Roa, a walker who was born in Caracas, Venezuela, and arrived in the U.S. at the age of two. Carlos, along with Felipe and Juan, lived in Little Havana in 2010 and attended Miami Dade College.<sup>34</sup> In his interview, he describes how many undocumented youth were reaching dead-ends in school and work because of their immigration status. And, it was this living in uncertainty that became the impetus to joining the fight for migrant rights. In the following quote Carlos describes the convergence of conditions at the time they decided to walk.

In my life, at that point I was living with my sister, we had gotten evicted of my house, I was dirt poor at that time. I didn't have any money, I wasn't working, I was just going to school and it was a really depressing time period for me...it was just very difficult to live day to day, even to buy food and stuff like that. I just remember for all of us our lives were complete messes... So when Isabel called me, and I completely agreed, as Isabel told me, I was like yeah, let's do it. Like I'm down. Because the four of us understood the urge, the political urgency... We decided to do the walk because of our political understanding, not only from a strategic perspective, but also the urge we were experiencing in our lives.

During this interview Carlos recalls being at school and receiving a call from Isabel, and agreeing to being “totally down,” with the walk. He points out that Isabel had nearly all his family members deported, dad and sister had moved to Canada, while he was in the process of

---

<sup>34</sup> In an interview with Felipe, he shares how Miami-Dade College “in many ways still is the hub of undocumented youth,” and was a place where their organizing efforts were supported. He states how the college president raised private funds on the down-low to help undocumented youth to go to college. Many of my interviewees shared how they were recipients of these down-low scholarships.

getting his papers. He describes this tormented feeling in Isabel, Felipe's depression and explains how Gaby could no longer afford school.<sup>35</sup> And, as described here by Carlos, the convergence of not having a job, fear of being caught and deported, homophobia, and being homeless in Miami constituted the conditions for the emergence of their involvement. Carlos' political urgency is linked to his "flesh and blood" experiences.<sup>36</sup> And, his standpoint that the Trail was "not only from a strategic perspective," speaks to an understanding or definition of the Undocumented Youth Movement that reflects the experiences and subjectivities of undocumented youth migrants.

In his text, *Lives in Limbo: Undocumented and Coming of Age in America*, Latino sociologist Roberto G. Gonzales describes this distress as part of the dimensions of illegality. He states, "as undocumented young adults transition to adulthood, their lives are increasingly marked by illegality: as a juridical status and a sociopolitical condition that carries exclusionary and stigmatizing consequences" (Gonzales, 2016, p. 199). Understanding undocumented subjectivity, not only allows us to recognize oppression and power, but suggests that undocumented youth indexes a social heterogeneity, an existence and everyday survival that embodies a "sustained and multisided resistance to systems that seek to normalize our sexuality, exploit our labor, and constrain our visibility" (Cohen, 440). Carlos and Felipe's depression highlights the psychological distress that undocumented status can generate. However, it didn't

---

<sup>35</sup> In 2010, the state of Florida did not offer undocumented students in-state college tuition. It is not until May, 2014 that Florida's state legislature voted to make undocumented students eligible for in-state tuition. Currently, at least 18 states have provisions allowing in-state tuition rates for undocumented students. Fourteen states provide provisions through state legislature-California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Mexico, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Texas, Utah, and Washington. Oklahoma and Rhode Island allow in-state tuitions through Board of Regents decisions. Five states either bar undocumented students from receiving in-state tuition or enrolling in state colleges or universities-Arizona, Georgia, Indiana, South Carolina and Alabama.

<sup>36</sup> I link Carlo's urgency to his "flesh and blood" experience in order to note (like women of color theorist have demonstrate) how our "physical realities of our lives" (skin color, gender, sexuality, class, built environment, legal status) all fuse to create a politic born out of necessity (Moraga, 1981).

define the entirety of their experiences. Adult life was difficult, if not a “complete mess,” most days. But those who I met along the Trail, the walkers, coalition leaders, fathers, mothers, youth, faith leaders, farmers and political activists, who were undocumented/undocuqueer did not passively give into the forces that constrained them. And, to the contrary, according to Gonzales, “most of them did what they could to push back against legal and institutional structures” (Gonzales, 2016, p. 135). As a mode of queering across, we are able to acknowledge the livelihood struggles of marginal political subjects and identify how their non-normative and queer formations are linked to a sustained and multisided resistance to the state. Undocumented/undocuqueer Floridian activists and their allies, along with families and youth from Georgia, North Carolina and Virginia, came together, not under a traditional banner, but rather a shared marginal relation to power that normalizes, legitimizes, and privileges groups in the South.

While activism for the DREAM Act had existed for practically a decade, many of the activists interviewed had been introduced to FLIC and SWER through the activism around individual deportation cases. Majority of those interviewed in Miami recalled Juan Gomez’s fight against deportation. Considered once the poster child for immigration reform in 2007, Juan Gomez, a week after graduating from Killian Senior High in Miami, became one more among the thousands of youth who get snared in deportation dragnets along with their parents.<sup>37</sup> Gomez received national attention because of the actions of his high school friends whose internet-savvyness turned his cause célèbre in Washington. Felipe recalls this moment, how his high school friends organized on Facebook and helped him get out of detention during George W. Bush’s presidency. He states,

---

<sup>37</sup> Padget, T. (2007, August 2). Can Two Kids Alter Immigration Law? TIME. Retrieved from <http://time.com/time/politics>

It was in 2007, before Obama, the president was Bush and it was really tough. It was a very tough environment to stop a deportation. They won but the process of that campaign, the pride of undocumented youth, was everywhere in Miami and, so that is where I got in. And, then I called a person who was the lobbyist of the college, of Miami Dade College, and asked them if they knew anyone who was working on the DREAM act and they put me in touch with the Florida Immigrant Coalition, who put me in touch with SWER and that's how I got involved.

During this interview Felipe reflects on his introduction to the fight for migrant rights and his involvement with SWER. Who knew that the resourcefulness of high school youth would have produced the geographical reach it did, the ability to seize traditional and new spaces like social media, newspapers, community centers, and Washington D.C. And, it is these exact methods that the Trail would later enact through their website with daily blogs, twitter and Facebook posts, and weekly appearances on local and national news networks. Chicana and Chicano cultural studies scholars have describe this ingenuity as *rasquachismo*, a resourcefulness that permits marginal political subjects to overcome a lack of resources by stitching together tools, tactics, and strategies from those who are at the table.<sup>38</sup>

In her text, *Environmentalism and Economic Justice*, social movement scholar Laura Pulido (1996) highlights how subaltern environmental struggles fit the mold of neither old nor new social movements. By spotlighting, for example the United Farm Workers Campaign, she attempts to clarify our understanding of the environmental/livelihood struggles of marginalized communities and how their activism is the basis of transformative change at the local and national level. She argues, like Cohen that positionality (ones relation to power) is most important in distinguishing mainstream and subaltern environmentalism activism, because their actors "hold different positions within the socioeconomic structure that, in turn, frame their

---

<sup>38</sup> In his essay, "Movidas Rasquaches: Strategies of immigrant Resistance at the Mexico-U.S. Border," David Spener (2010) describes "rasquachismo" as the celebration of the sensibility of "los de abajo" (the underdogs), whose resourcefulness and ingenuity permit them to overcome adversity by stitching together the tools needed to survive from whatever materials they have at hand.

struggles differently” (Pulido, 1996, p. 25). As alluded to earlier, Mohanty (2003) proposes a new direction that is anchored in the place of the most marginalized communities, in this case women, poor women of all colors “in affluent and neocolonial nations; women of the Third World/South or the Two-Thirds World” (p. 231). Political acts emerging from non-normative and queer formations offer us access to the workings of power and the most inclusive paradigm for thinking about social justice.<sup>39</sup> Walter Nicholls (2013) notes how in 2010, the political activism of the Undocumented Youth Movement, not only built a groundswell of political activism, but rather adopted horizontal leadership and base-membership structures that were inclusive and centered the leadership of those most directly impacted by federal immigration policies. Whereas, scaling-up a campaign is seen to be more effective when executed by influential elites, (governmental institutions, foundations, and labor unions) and SMOs with a sizable base-membership, a mode of queering across a campaign is most effective when undocumented/undocuqueers activists are at the center of organizing. As demonstrated by the Trail, when one centers queer leadership campaign strategies change or shift because their relations to power (queerness) allows them a very different position from which to view power. In this case, instead of replicating vertical structures of leadership within the migrant rights movement, undocumented/undocuqueer youth adopted horizontal leadership structures. Queering across recognizes that meaningful change comes from below (from the grassroots, migrant rights groups to queer youth groups) and that moving across space is needed in order to build spaces of community.

### *Queering Across Requires Moving Across to Create Space*

---

<sup>39</sup> Equally, Chela Sandoval (1999) in *Methodology of the Oppressed* discusses how this very position of marginality to power places/allows women of color activists a very different position from which to view power.

The Trail was successful in elevating their campaign from local to the national. They appeared in local, national and international news outlets in Spanish, English, and Portuguese (Miami Herald, New York Times, CNN, La Jornada, too name a few). And, via their website, [www.trail2010.org](http://www.trail2010.org), they kept supporters informed with daily blogs, pictures, videos, news coverage, text alerts and an interactive map of the Trail. The Trail not only exemplified media reach or scaling-up at its best, from the local to the national, but also demonstrated the political skill of moving in and between scales of power and the special commitment to creating new scopes of spaces.

Works that have focused on spatialized politics assist in understanding how the Trail challenged racial subordination and spatial control (Blackwell, 2006, Gilmore, 2007, Lipsitz, 2011, Smith, 1992). In her essay, “Weaving in the Spaces,” Maylei Blackwell (2006) illustrates how indigenous women’s organizing, with limited cultural capital and resources, developed a form of differential consciousness that provided them the ability to weave in and between scales of power (local, national, transnational spaces), in order “to create solidarity and new forms of consciousness” (p. 116). Ultimately, their organizing efforts and immersion in one scale of power provided the influence to open other spaces and leverage demands (Blackwell, 2006). Similarly, in his essay, “Contours of a Spatialized Politics,” Neil Smith (1992) illustrates how a “spatialized politics recovers social space from the abstractions constructed by the capitalist state,” and further argues that, “a politics of scale can also become a weapon of expansion and inclusion, a means of enlarging identities.” In my search for conceptual language, I turn to these scholars, because they illustrate the radical politics (and possibilities) behind the courage and commitment to move across space by subaltern political subjects. They demonstrate that “recovering social space,” not only transforms sites of confinement into spaces of solidarity, but

also challenges the normative investments of nation-states and capital. It is only then fitting, to characterize this politic as embodying a queer politic, a confrontational formation that requires moving across space to create “limited zones of coalition.” As a mode of queering across, the Trail practiced strategies that required them to immerse themselves locally, in order to create new spaces of political engagement (physical or cyber). At times, this local work by undocumented/undocuqueer youth yielded geographical reach-national attention (Anzaldúa, 1983, Gilmore, 2007).

As the walkers made their way, one city at a time building community, undocumented/undocuqueer identities became visible. Activists shared their migrant biographies with others and by sharing their experience of being undocumented/undocuqueer and a women of color, they too were revealing how they were victims of structures of global capitalism, federal criminalization, exploitation and racial segregation in southern Florida. The Trail received national attention because within their commitment to cross into racially hostile environments, they were committed to challenge their racialization and reformist strategies that uplifted the “ideal neoliberal/heteronormative migrant subject.”

Similar too, Juan Gomez’s campaign, the Trail would also develop new ways of opening critical spaces that centered marginal identities and challenged the racialization of undocumented migrants. In turn, these spaces and places, like Miami, would then inspire undocumented youth living in urban, suburban and rural places. The Trail motivated solidarity walks from across the country, from California to Wisconsin to New York. The Orange County Register reported that on February 24<sup>th</sup> 2010, dozens of parents, students and supporters of the Orange County Dream Team held a 5-mile Trail of Dreams march mirroring the 1,500-mile trek as part of a national

effort.<sup>40</sup> The group walked from El Centro Cultural de Mexico in downtown Santa Ana, to Cesar Chavez Campesino Park where they would hold a rally and feature student testimonies.

During this exact time, Amelia Pallares (2014) writes how Immigrant Youth Justice League (IYJL) in Chicago pursued a strategy of undocumented youth coming out to each other, in meetings on campus and in community settings. On March 10<sup>th</sup> 2010, as part of United We Dream's (UWD) "Coming Out of the Shadows" week, Pallares (2014) documents the actions of seven youth, who came out of the shadows and stood on stage in Federal Plaza and announced publicly their name, followed by "I am undocumented and unafraid"(p. 114). Chantiri Ramirez Resendiz (2016) links the method of public testimony, testimonio, to liberation movements in Latin America, therefore highlighting its transformative impact in public spaces across time and place. For Ramirez Resendiz, "the undocumented immigrant youth testimony," was a successful "tool for educating, self-healing, informing and advocating" (p. 10). The Trail built a new momentum and was increasing the visibility of undocumented youth leadership across the country. Isabel stated, "I really believe it created more space for accountability for undocumented youth to stand up to Executive Directors; no you don't speak, we speak. We deserve a seat at the table, if anyone is going to write legislation it shouldn't your lobbyist, it should be my mom. And, a lot of that wouldn't happen before the Trail." The Trail made a statement to the larger migrant rights movement, stressing the importance of who should be at the center of organizing.

### *Queering Across Demands Risk-Taking*

---

<sup>40</sup> Cisneros, T. (2010, February 24). Events to support undocumented students. The Orange County Register. Retrieved from <http://ocregister.com/articles/dream-236064-students-county.html> The Orange County Dream Team (now known as the Orange County Immigrant Youth United) is an undocumented immigrant youth led organization that advocates for the rights of undocumented immigrants to live free from exploitation and persecution by mobilizing undocumented youth to advocate for their communities, and providing a space in which they can grow as leaders. They are based in Santa Ana, CA. As the article reports, not only did they hold a solidarity walk, but in 2010 were able to organize Dream Monologues, drag shows, hunger strikes, community festivals, etc, in order to raise money for scholarship and advocacy costs.

The Trail of Dreams was a risk-taking movida. It involved undocumented/undocuqueer activists vulnerable to the dangers of detention and deportation. The walkers, along with community members, compromised their safety zigzagging in and between cities, counties and states that historically had been racially hostile to people of color, specifically African Americans.

Little Havana is home to many Cuban residents, as well as many migrants from Central and South America and the Caribbean. Cubans began migrating to Florida in the 1950s, and in the 1960s the area was named Little Havana. Little Havana has been a much-written about place and many describe it as a center for social, cultural and political activity in Miami. In their book, *Making a Life in Multiethnic Miami; Immigration and the Rise of a Global City*, Elizabeth M. Aranda, Sallie Hughes and Elena Sabogal (2014) describe Little Havana as an emerging Cuban entrepreneurial center. Even though Little Havana has come to be a home for other low-income and undocumented migrants, and recently the home for unaccompanied minors from Central America, it remains as the heart of Cuban settlement in Miami Dade County.<sup>41</sup> In order to understand the incorporation of undocumented migrants, their multifaceted immigrant practices into global cities like Miami, we need to recognize that migrants did not arrive to an empty space, but rather they were incorporated into spaces of power relations (such as Little Havana, Little Haiti and Overtown) (Grosfoguel, Maldonado-Torres, & Saldivar, 2005). Aranda et al. (2014) have found that incorporation of migrants and minorities varies when confronted with US racial structures. In their chapter, “Race, Discrimination, and Ethnic Rivalries,” they illustrates the area’s Latino and black populations and the influx of new non-Cuban immigrants (Mexicans, Central Americans, Haitians, and South Americans) within a growing segregation of immigrant

---

<sup>41</sup> Chardy, A. (June 14, 2014). Surge in Unaccompanied Minors across Mexican Border is felt in Miami. *Miami Herald*. Retried from <http://www.miamiherald.com>

Miami and its local xenophobic immigration policies that favor some groups over others. Much like other global cities, multiethnic Miami does not necessarily mean all kinds of diversity are equally valued.<sup>42</sup> The racial legacies of US slavery, Jim Crow, redlining, white flight, and presently the racial profiling and criminalization of black bodies have led to the historical positioning of Miami as similar to any other southern US city (Aranda et al., 2014). And, contrary to other areas in the South in which blacks became empowered by the civil rights movement, Aranda et al argue that “the confluence of the Cuban Revolution and the civil rights movement moved Miami onto an alternative path in race relations” (Aranda et al., 2014).

In short, the South (specifically Georgia, North and South Carolina, and Virginia) had a history of racial terror directed at African Americans and a growing undocumented population. In her essay, “Chicana/o History as Southern History: Race, Place and the US South,” Perla M. Guerrero (2016) documents how in 1995, “given the concerns over the growing “illegal alien” population, the federal government coordinated with southern state agencies and launched Operation SouthPAW,” a multi-agency taskforce that raided worksites through the region (pg. 89). Guerrero’s work documents the history of abusive immigration enforcement-bullying tactics. Indeed, those who participated in the Trail risked their security and were taking a gamble

---

<sup>42</sup> My multiple trips to Miami have provided me insight to a different racialization project occurring with undocumented Latinxs in Miami, specifically Little Havana. The following is from a field note, “This morning, I set out to have breakfast at El Cristo Restaurant on Calle Ocho. El Cristo had become my usual morning stop when visiting Little Havana. This particular morning I was going to walk down Calle Ocho to take pictures for my research and buy a souvenir for my sister. I walked into a gift shop and I walked around looking at postcards, t-shirts, magnets and mugs. I asked the gift shop clerk why were there so many images of roosters. The clerk, a young man who sounded and looked Latino--perhaps Cuban--mentioned that the Cuban rooster was a traditional symbol of manhood, strength and courage. As I was purchasing my gifts, our conversation shifted to the purpose of my visit. He asked about my recent trip to Miami, and I shared my research on undocumented migrant experiences in Little Havana. And, he responded, “Oh, those wetbacks, those Central Americans.” I was taken back by his use of words, how could he describe undocumented youth as “wetbacks”. Did they not represent the courage and strength that Cubanos admired? I had not heard this derogatory word in a long time. While struggling not to look shocked, I told him that undocumented migrants come from all over Latin America. His commentary continued and he tells me that, “It must be hard to interview them because they don’t like to talk; they are secretive.” In order to end the conversation, I thanked him for the magnets, paid and exited the gift shop.” Field Notes, November, 23<sup>rd</sup> 2015.

on a desired outcome—ending deportations, stopping the separation of families, and a pathway to citizenship for 12 million undocumented migrants.

As previously stated, traditional notions of coalitions have been generally discussed for their function as an element in winning policy change. Yet my research and conversations with the Trail of Dream organizers and walkers suggest that the act of coalition building along the Trail became a precarious space full of tension and possibilities – like those described by women of color feminist theorists. For instance, how would one describe their decision to walk across hostile anti-migrant territory, the South, meeting with Gwinnett County Sheriff R.L. “Butch” Conway, risking deportation and detention, and coming face-to-face with the Ku Klux Klan in Nahunta, Georgia?

In order to understand the Trail of Dreams, I have to engage with practices that explore the feelings of comfort and discomfort when one moves across space. Sharing or moving across space in order to build community is not easy or a feeling of “home.” As Bernice Johnson Reagon (1981) reminds us, coalition work is not home; coalition work takes place in the streets, is a place of tension and makes one feel threatened to the core. I would argue that risk-taking practices such as those on the Trail, reveal a mode of queering across because they embody practices of intimacy that are necessary to come together as undocumented/undocuqueer political subjects to win demands. It also speaks to the question posed by Anzaldúa, how can we align ourselves with others who do not love each other, cannot relate to each other, and don’t know how to work together?

I had the opportunity to interview Isabel, a walker, who was born in Bogota, Colombia and who is currently a PhD Student at the Graduate Center of City University of New York. Similar to Felipe, Isabel arrived to Little Havana in 1996 when ze was six. Ze describes living in

a two-bedroom apartment with twelve people; his father, sister, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. During the interview ze recalls the one-month walk out of Florida, walking from Miami to Orlando, Orlando to Gainesville, Gainesville to Tallahassee, and then a straight shot to Atlanta. For the SWER organizers walking past Orlando meant walking into unfamiliar territory. Many of their networks and FLIC affiliates were in South Florida. They noted that when they selected the route, they realized many of these places they weaved through had a history of racial terror.

During the interview ze recalls facing the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) and shares a blog post that was written during the trail, titled “Contradictions.” Isabel describes the encounter:

Today we drove to Nahunta, GA where the Ku Klux Klan was organizing an anti-immigrant demonstration, under the premise that “God put each race in their respective continent and they were meant to stay there.” I can’t help but keep being amused by these concepts that the very organization can’t seem to be able to uphold appropriately. Is the KKK secretly on a campaign to reclaim all lands back for the indigenous people of North America and preparing for the voyage back to Europe? I find this highly unlikely... Ultimately, the success of today was to be able to stand hand in hand with our friends from the NAACP; singing liberation songs together and acknowledging our united struggle for racial justice. We ALL deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. We all deserve to be acknowledged for our humanity.<sup>43</sup>

At first glance, one would ask, “What purpose did this political activism serve?” Did the walkers really think that they could win over the KKK? Isabel’s blog post deserves a closer reading, one which requires the use of understanding such a movida as an act of queering across. First, the Trail’s engagement with the KKK’s anti-immigration protest, along with leaders from the National Association for Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), illustrates what one should be doing (and feeling) when organizing for racial justice. Organizers not only entered a hostile environment, but also saw an opportunity to build community across opposing sides. As Isabel

---

<sup>43</sup>J Rodriguez. (2010, February 20). Contradictions [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://www.trail2010.org/blog/2010/feb/20/contradictions/>

notes, the act of standing together hand in hand singing liberation songs next to those who historically have terrorized you, is a step towards demanding that your humanity be acknowledged. Indeed, the Trail's decision to walk across Georgia, in order to visit Nahunta, exemplified Reagon's (1981) characterization of coalition building: taking it to the streets and feeling threatened to the core. Second, Isabel's ridicule of the KKK's tactic speaks to zero marginal positionality within the region's institutional structures of racism. As an undocumented Latinx, she "can't help but keep being amused" because the KKK doesn't recognize what they are admitting to. They are so blinded by their own privilege, they don't realize they are undermining their own construction of whiteness in the southern region of Georgia. Isabel's humor and irony demonstrate how undocumented/undocuqueer youth are able to develop their own survival skills into technologies for reorganizing people and reading power (Sandoval, 2000). Consequently, the Trail's visit to Nahunta, Georgia was not only a discomfort but also an emancipatory practice. They were at once risking their bodies and "throwing themselves into the next century," articulating new ways of organizing within the migrant rights movement as undocumented queer youth.

## CONCLUSION

After four months of walking over 1,500 miles and visiting over 150 cities, the walkers had become the ideal advocates to push Obama to grant legal status to undocumented migrants. Labor unions, congressional leaders, traditional immigrant rights advocates, and undocumented youth leaders recognized the impact of the Trail and "thousands" wanted the walkers to push their demands at the President. The Trail brought hope to communities throughout the Southeast, as many would later join them to enter together into D.C. Due to the coalition work and radical politics of the Trail, many (youth) organizing spaces and networks emerged in Florida,

North Carolina and Georgia. Similar to women of color feminists (Anzaldúa, Cohen, Davis, Johnson, Martinez, Moraga, and Sandoval), their political activism has set the ideological groundwork and organizational infrastructure that has allowed for more radical organizing to occur in the southeast, such as the regional activism of the Southeast Immigrant Rights Network, the Queer Undocumented Immigrant Project, and the emergence of the undocumented and unafraid activism of 2010.

Throughout this thesis I have demonstrated what frameworks best capture movement building and mobilizations led by undocumented/undocuqueer youth. Instead of relying on traditional of approaches to studying social movements, I pulled from women of color feminism and queer of color critique to piece together the lens and tools necessary to understand what it takes to bring non-normative and queer groups together into strong coalitions. The use of women of color feminism and their theories of coalescing allowed for the reorientation of traditional frames to a mode of *queering across*, a reading practice of social movements that allows us to uncover and highlight the ingenuity and voices of undocumented-women of color, -queers, -feminist and non-traditional leaders.

The examination of the Trail of Dreams demonstrates how a collective action led by non-normative and queer political subjects—undocumented migrants living in the southeastern U.S.—were able to highlight the scope of the migrant rights movement in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and its intersections of race, gender, class, sexuality, and legal status. For example, we saw that, centering undocumented/undocuqueer leadership generated alternative ways of doing politics (horizontal leadership structures, coalition building, facing the KKK) because of their very different position from which they viewed power. We saw, as well, how public testimony, (testimonios), in public spaces or in the media, not only not only served as a tool for education or

advocacy, but rather became an act of presenting the self and the body as an assertion of difference. The Trail had become an act that challenged racial subordination and spatial control. Its strategies shifted the imagination of undocumented youth in the United States, changed how Americans viewed undocumented migrants, and shifted how undocumented/undocuqueer activists built spaces of community. These examples demonstrate how one's relation to power (intersecting racial, gender, sexual, and legal status practices) antagonize and or conspire with the normative investments of nation-states and capital.

Chicana feminist scholar, Chela Sandoval (2000) reminds us that no canonical Western thought is free of de-colonial efforts. So, in essence, coalitions embody an inherent emancipatory practice, in that they allow people of color and queers to develop their survival skills into technologies for reorganizing peoples and their collective dreams of empowerment into images-turned-fact (Sandoval, 2000). Building upon the work of Anzaldúa, Cohen, Davis, Johnson, Martinez, Moraga, and Sandoval, I look for modes of queering across within social movements, to identify creative forms of opposition emerging from abajo, in this case, a political activism that queers across space (and time). As I stand on the verge of watching a new president elect announce the deportation of millions of unauthorized migrants through a process of criminalization and those at the margins, (youth, migrant mothers, undocuqueer, trans\* latinxs etc.) organizing and protesting, we have to continue to ask (support and practice): 1.) How do we continue to build and support a non-normative and queer political analysis, even in changing political climates? 2.) What are the best coalition tactics that challenge racial, gender, sexual and spatial subordination by the state? 3.) We also need to continue to expand upon Anzaldúa's question: how can we align ourselves to fight for sanctuary spaces that protect undocumented

migrants, blacks, Muslims, trans\* and queers, with others who do not love each other, cannot relate to each other, don't know how work together and ask them to take risks?

## APPENDIX 1 GLOSSARY

“Glossary: for readers *from elsewhere*, who don’t deal very well with unknown words or who want to understand everything.”

Édouard Glissant

“This breaking down of categories, questioning definitions and giving them new meaning, moving through spaces of understanding and dissension, working through the critical practice of “refusing explication” is precisely what queerness entails.”

Juana María Rodríguez

Coalition – “Coalitions” should not be understood as a momentary and strategic relationship designed to achieve political goals; it is a practice and vision that reflects an orientation to others and shared commitment to change and struggle. Coalitions cannot be taken for granted; it is a precarious space of engagement at times scary and unpredictable. For coalitions to endure, they require constant energy, resources and work (Johnson, Anzaldúa, Lugones).

Migrant – Migrant draws attention to a circular and mobile relationship in which people, like the several that I interviewed have embodied within their host country; they plan on returning to their host country, or come from families in which people have migrated between two nation states for generations. I often use migrant(s) versus immigrant when referring to latinx migrants and migrants from the global south, the migrant rights movement and anti-migrant groups and policies (Gonzales, 2014).

Immigrant – I use the word immigrant when citing others who use this term, or as a generic reference to all people who have immigrated to the United States. I am following Grosfoguel, Torres, Saldivar (2005) and Gonzales (2014), who argue that the term immigrant signifies a western European experience that speaks to a unidirectional relationship where people come to the host country and permanently settle.

Queer – “Queer” is not simply an umbrella term that encompasses lesbians, bisexuals, gay men, transgender, and two-spirit people; it is a political term that emerged in the early 1990s for those who challenged heteronormativity that sought to normalize our gender, sexuality, exploit our labor, and constrain our visibility (Rodríguez, 2003, Cohen, 1999). I use the word queer to represent those who find themselves on the margins, refusing assimilation tendencies, operating through multiple identities (undocumented/undocuqueer youth) and thus not fully served or recognized through traditional single-identity-based politics (Hames-Garcia, 2011, Cohen, 1999).

Queering Across – I propose a reorientation of scaling-up to a queering across, a political strategy that not only involves coalition building but is anchored in the place of the most marginalized communities. A politics of queering across is a radical coalition politic that connects a variety of queer formations, and recognizes the resourcefulness of queer, undocumented youth and women of color. By building relationships, deepening yourself in the local, you are able to elevate issues to the global, thus seizing the spatial access necessary to challenge normative investments of nation-states (heteronormative subject, racial projects, neoliberalism).

Undocumented/Undocuqueer – I use this spelling to denote the variety of people included in the category of undocumented migrants and the Undocumented Youth Movement. It signals multiplicity within people’s lives, while challenging traditional single-identity based politics (homogenized identities) within the migrant rights movement. Undocumented/undocuqueer captures a potent network of queer undocumented migrant leaders for the rights of undocumented youth and their families.

## REFERENCES

- Acosta, K. L. (2013). *Amigas Y Amantes: Sexually Nonconforming Latinas Negotiate Family*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.
- Aranda, E., Hughes, S., & Sabogal, E. (2014). *Making a life in Multiethnic Miami: Immigration and the Rise of a Global City*. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner.
- Anzaldúa, G. (2009) "La Prieta." *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*. Ed. AnaLouise Keating. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Anzaldúa, G., & Moraga, C.(1981). *This bridge called my back : writings by radical women of color* (1st ed.). Watertown, Mass.: Persephone Press.
- Blackwell, M. (2011). *Chicana Power!: Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement*. University of Texas Press.
- (2006). "Weaving in the Spaces: Transnational Indigenous Women's Organizing and the Politics of Scale." In R. Aída Hernández, Shannon Speed, and Lynn Stephen (eds.) *Dissident Women: Gender and Cultural Politics in Chiapas*. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press. Pp. 240-318.
- Center, S. P. L., & Rights, G. L. A. F. H. (2016). *Families in Fear: The Atlanta Immigration Raids* (pp. 24). 24.
- Chávez, K. R. (2013). *Queer migration politics : activist rhetoric and coalitional possibilities*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Cohen, C. (1997). "Punks, Bulldaggers, And Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential Of Queer Politics?" *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 4: 437-65.
- Crenshaw. K. (1991). "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* 43: 1241-99
- de la Torre, P., & Germano, R. (2014). Out of the shadows: DREAMer identity in the immigrant youth movement. *Latino Studies*, 12, 449-467. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/lst.2014.45>
- Davis, A. & Martinez, B. (1993). "Coalition Building Amongst People of Color." *Inscriptions* Vol. 7
- Dunn, M. (1997). *Black Miami in the twentieth century*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.
- Escobar, A., & Alvarez, S. E. (1992). *The Making of social movements in Latin America : identity, strategy, and democracy*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press.

- Ferguson, R. (2004) *Aberrations in Black: Toward A Queer of Color Critique*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press
- Ferguson, R., & Hong, G. (2011). "Introduction." *Strange Affinities: The Gender and Sexual Politics of Comparative Racialization*. Ed. Roderick A. Ferguson , & Grace Kyungwon Hong. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Ganz, M. (2001). *The Power of Story in Social Movements*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, Anaheim, California. [http://marshallganz.usmblogs.com/files/2012/08/Power\\_of\\_Story-in-Social-Movements.pdf](http://marshallganz.usmblogs.com/files/2012/08/Power_of_Story-in-Social-Movements.pdf)
- García Bedolla, L. (2014). *Latino politics* (Second edition. ed.). Cambridge, UK ; Malden, MA: Polity.
- Gilmore, R. W. (2007). *Golden gulag : prisons, surplus, crisis, and opposition in globalizing California*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Gonzales, A. (2014) *Reform Without Justice: Latino Migrant Politics and the Homeland Security State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gonzales, R. (2016) *Lives in Limbo: Undocumented and Coming of Age in America*. Oakland: University of California Press
- Grosfoguel, R., Maldonado Torres, N., & Saldívar, J. D. (2005). *Latin@s in the world-system : decolonization struggles in the twenty-first century U.S. empire*. Boulder, Colo.: Paradigm Publishers.
- Guerrero, P. M. (2016). *Chicana/o History as Southern History: Race, Place, and the US South* (First edition. ed.). Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Hames-Garcia, M., & Martinez, E. (2011). *Gay Latino Studies: A Critical Reader*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Harding, S. G. (2004). *The feminist standpoint theory reader : intellectual and political controversies*. New York: Routledge.
- Ito, J., Ortiz, R., & Pastor, M. "Connecting at the Crossroads; Alliance Building and Social Change in Tough Times." Retrieved from University of Southern California, Program for Environmental and Regional Equity Website:
- Johnson, B. (1983) "Coalition Politics: Turning The Century." *Home Girls: A Black*

- Feminist Anthology*. Ed. Barbara Smith. New Brunswick: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press.
- Massey, D. (2004). Geographies of Responsibility. *Geografiska Annaler: Series B*, 86, 5-
- Molina, N. (2014). *How race is made in America : immigration, citizenship, and the historical power of racial scripts*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press.
- Nicholls, W. (2013). *The DREAMers : how the undocumented youth movement transformed the immigrant rights debate*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- Pallares, A. (2015). *Family Activism: Immigrant struggles and the politics of noncitizenship*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.
- Perez, E. (2003). Queering the borderlands - The challenges of excavating the invisible and unheard. *Frontiers-a Journal of Women Studies*, 24(2-3), 122-131.
- (1999) *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas Into History*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Ponce, A. (2014). Racialization, Resistance, and the Migrant Rights Movement: A Historical Analysis. *Critical Sociology*, 40(1), 9-27. doi: 10.1177/0896920512465210
- Project, A., & Rights, G. L. A. F. H. (2014). Manufacturing Felonies: How Driving Became A Felony for People of Color in Georgia (pp. 12).
- Pulido, L. (1996) *Environmentalism and Economic Justice: Two Chicano Struggles in the Southwest*. Tucson, Arizona: University of Arizona Press.
- (2008). FAQs: Frequently (Un)Asked Questions about Being a Scholar Activist. In C. R. Hale (Ed.), *Engaging Contradictions: Theory, Politics, and Methods of Activist Scholarship*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ramirez Resendiz, C. (2016). *Subjectivity Making in Undocumented Immigrant Student Organizing* (Master Thesis). Los Angeles, CA: University of California, Los Angeles
- Rose, C. N. (2015). *The struggle for Black freedom in Miami : civil rights and America's tourist paradise, 1896-1968*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.
- Sandoval, C. (2000) *Methodology of the Oppressed*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press
- Smith, N. (1992). Contours of a Spatialized Politics: Homeless Vehicles and the Production of Geographical Scale. (33), 54-81. doi: 10.2307/466434

- Spencer, D. (2010). "Movidas Rascuaches: Strategies of Migrant Resistance at the Mexico-U.S. Border." *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies*, v35 n2 Fall: 9 – 36.
- Stepick, A., Grenier, G., Castro, M., & Dunn, M. (2003). *This land is our land : immigrants and power in Miami*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Terriquez, V. (2015) "Intersectional Mobilization, Social Movement Spillover, and Queer Youth Leadership in the Immigrant Rights Movement." *Social Problems* 62, no. 3: 343-62.
- Weise, J. M. (2015). *Corazón de Dixie : Mexicanos in the U.S. South since 1910*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.
- Wong, K. (2012). *Undocumented and unafraid : Tam Tran, Cinthya Felix and the immigrant youth movement*. Los Angeles, Calif.: UCLA Center for Labor Research and Education.
- Zepeda-Millán, C. (2016). "Weapons of the (Not So) Weak: Immigrant Mass Mobilization in the US South." *Critical Sociology*, v42 n2: 269-287.