Editorial

Of belongings and transformations

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As debates about immigration reform continue to heat up with no resolution in sight, the reality of the changing demographics in the United States is present across multiple domains. Just a few examples: Latinos are now residing in every state and region of the United States. Currently, one out of every four public school students is Latino, and Latinos make up one in four of all students enrolled in 2-year colleges (www.pewhispanic.org/2012/08/20/ii-hispanic-public-school-enrollments/). Last summer, Univision, the Spanish language broadcaster, for the first time ranked number one in the monthly ratings competition (www.npr.org/blogs/codeswitch/2013/07/23/204604220/In-The-Summer-Univision-Is-Numero-Uno), signaling, among other things, that the mainstream networks continue to ignore Latino viewers at their own peril. What do these significant milestones mean for the day-to-day experiences of Latinos, citizens, foreign-born, documented and undocumented? Unfortunately, for many Latinos, an increasing population has not yet brought with it equal access and opportunity but rather heightened scrutiny from a repressive militarized immigration regime. The essays in this issue explore issues of recent immigrants as well as those long settled in the United States and working to impact their communities through avenues such as community-based organizations (CBOs), literary production and the production of images of the Latina body; together, they highlight themes of belonging, participation and transformation in an ever-evolving nation.

Theoretically, at least, Latinos born in the United States should enjoy the rights and privileges bestowed on all legal citizens. In her contribution, Christina Getrich demonstrates that, on the contrary, Latinos are not always accorded such rights. She documents how second-generation Mexican youth in the San Diego–Tijuana region are negatively affected by racialized, immigration enforcement practices. Quite often, these youth live with a heightened sense of anxiety and worry not only about the possibility of losing those they love to deportation but also about the reality that their own status, as Latinos, renders them as always suspect. As surveillance of immigrant and non-immigrant Latino people and racialized enforcement practices expand across the United States, Getrich describes how Latino borderlanders – both documented and undocumented – respond to and sometimes rebel against the reality of immigration enforcement

policies that stretch far beyond the physical border. One of the harmful repercussions of this relentless state power is that even children born in this country begin to internalize negative messages and question their sense of belonging in their nation of birth.

Rodolfo Rosales also encourages us to think about our understanding of citizenship beyond legalistic frameworks and to expand our notion of belonging. He provides an historical and political argument for the development of an inclusive concept of citizenship that takes into consideration that fact that the global economy is borderless. Thus, the focus of citizenship should be on workers and their contributions rather than on borders that are arguably becoming less and less relevant in a globalized world. As Rosales argues, such an expansion, centered on workers' participation, "can lead to the empowerment of not only the individual worker but also of the excluded communities, both immigrant and non-immigrant, that have shouldered a large part of the burden of our economic system."

In these times of diminishing support from federal and state governments, the defunding of nonprofit organizations, and the marginalization of immigrant communities, Glenn Jacobs and Jacqueline Lazú highlight the importance of CBOs in Latino communities. Jacobs shares how, despite massive cuts, CBOs strive to reinvent themselves and provide much-needed services. He documents the challenges and obstacles facing two CBOs located in Chelsea, a working-class immigrant community in Massachusetts, particularly the contradictory aspects of their compliance with and resistance to changing demands on nonprofits. Greater competition for scarce resources as well as more stringent demands from funding agencies means that CBOs must make modifications to their operations that sometimes inhibit community participation and carry dangers such as cooptation and a narrowing of focus for multi-issue organizations.

Jacqueline Lazú's article also serves to reaffirm the central place of CBOs in fighting against the marginalization and deterritorialization of Latino peoples. She describes collaboration between prominent Nuyorican writer, Tato Laviera, and Batey Urbano, a Chicago-based organization run by Latino youth. Together they developed a series of plays: *The Spark* (2006), *The '77 PR Chicago Riot* (2007) and *Bandera a Bandera* (2008) that assess the past and look to the future of the Puerto Rican community. Laviera worked with the youth to understand the violence inflicted on Chicago-based Puerto Ricans over the last 40 years, particularly the long-standing struggle against gentrification, and to appreciate the strategies of resistance and protest mounted by community members. Lazú unveils the evolving "transformative aesthetics" built through this innovative and radical intergenerational collaboration. As Lazú suggests, the play represents another instance of "Nuyorican theater's inclination toward the blending of the arts and civic engagement."

Taking the idea of transformation and aesthetics onto a somewhat different plane, Hilda Lloréns leads us through a fascinating exploration of the world of

elective aesthetic surgery. She reveals that Latinas are important consumers for surgical enhancements and details how multiple actors co-construct notions of Latina beauty. She details the workings of a global beauty industry and documents how Latinas are active participants in this area. Through an analysis of narratives of Latinas who endorse elective surgery, beauty pageants and reality TV, she describes a system of aesthetics of an international, idealized Latina body that can be attained through body modifications. As Lloréns argues, “understanding the trends and practices in body modification is ever more important as we increasingly participate in a global public culture that rewards individuals who are attractive and visible. In this global public world visibility is power and (white) beauty is social capital.”

Two *Vivencias* essays and a *Páginas Recuperadas* contribution round out the issue, each highlighting a different stand of activism and transformation. Ernesto Todd Mireles takes us back to the 1990s, a time of radical politics at Michigan State University that led to the establishment of Chicano Studies on that campus. Seline Szkupinski Quiroga’s piece echoes Getrich’s intervention and reminds us of the toxic effect of the current repressive immigration regime, this time in Tucson, while concurrently pointing out how documented and undocumented citizens resist such punitive policies. Nicolás Kanellos calls our attention to the writings of Blanca de Moncaleano, an early twentieth-century feminist anarchist. Kanellos, a leading figure in the ongoing task of recovering, preserving and making accessible important historical documents, introduces us to de Moncaleano’s “*Manifiesto a la Mujer*”; published in 1915, this riveting statement offers a passionate and stirring call for women to understand and challenge their history of oppression and exploitation.

Each essay contributes to our understanding of how Latinos, historically and in the present, are transforming themselves and the world around them and establishing diverse modes of belonging.

As we go to press, we are saddened by the news of the passing of a truly transformational icon of Latino studies, Tato Laviera. He was a key figure of the Nuyorican Movement and for decades, his essential poetic and dramatic works have resonated with readers of multiple generations across nations and ethnicities. He will be missed. We will present a tribute to Tato in our next issue.

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