

The Origins of Contemporary Chicana/o Anarchism

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Introduction

Modern Chicana/o/ Mexicana/o/ Central and South American identity and experience in the United States has been shaped within the context of the invasion, colonization, occupation, and redefinition of nation state boundaries leading up to and following the U.S./ Mexico War. In order to survive, the Chicana/o struggle in the United States has evolved and adapted to cope with the challenges that directly impact the social variables of gender, sexual orientation, race, culture, class, and ecology.

The Chicana/o community now faces new challenges in the twenty first century. Reactionary/ nativist radio disc jockeys, the mainstream media, right wing militant groups such as the minutemen, and the police state have labeled and targeted undocumented immigrants and the Chicana/o community as scapegoats to the flaws found in the economy/ capitalist system.

The problem today is that so many brutalities of global capitalism are not immediately legible. The connections must be made between that which appears unconnected and to show the extent to which suffering in the community is a product of what the dominant culture admires and considers prosperous and desirable in affluent circles. A possible solution for survival is the application of ideology. Unlike traditional leftist ideologies such as Marxism/ Leninist/ Trotskyist, anarchism is an ideology that has the capability to facilitate and be conducive to the needs of the Chicana/o community. Rather than simply focusing on the economic power structure the way Marxism does, anarchism directly addresses the power dynamics and inequalities that impact gender, sexual orientation, culture, race, class, and ecology. It is by this construct that anarchism has the capability in facilitating the Chicana/o community in gaining a better understanding of their environment and their societal and economic placement by transcending beyond nationalism and contextualizing a tangible vision and a synthesized plan for anarchist self-management and Chicana/o self-determination.

In order to survive, one must invent something new. This study proposes that the new phenomenon/social movement of Chicana/o anarchy can suit the needs of the Chicana/o community from colonization and capitalist globalization. The origins of Chicana/o anarchism can be traced back to the Mexican anarchist Ricardo Flores Magon (1874-1922), who organized in Mexico and the United States. Magon's activism and organizing in the U.S. and Mexico has made him the link of Mexican anarchism and the prototype for Chicana/o anarchism.

Ricardo Flores Magon: Anarchism & Mexican Revolutionary Roots

Ricardo Flores Magon has been considered to be the intellectual author and precursor of the Mexican Revolution. He first began in the struggle against the Diaz regime in Mexico and later evolved against all forms of government and organized religion. Magon founded the Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM) and began to incorporate anarchist principles into the party's framework. It was during the PLM's inception that Magon wrote, "Those who do believe in the goodness of paternal governments or in the impartiality of law fashioned by the bourgeoisie, those who know that the emancipation of the workers ought to be accomplished by the workers themselves, those convinced of DIRECT ACTION, those who deny the "sacred" right of property...these revolutionists are represented by the Organizing Junta of the Mexican Liberal Party." (Sandos, 24)

Magon and the PLM were amongst the first to transcend beyond nationalism. In Sembradores, Juan Gomez-Quinones writes that the PLM had a revolutionary ideology and was a proto organization of revolutionary organizers with a clear notion of the class struggle. In the process, he sacrificed his life by facing the systematic intimidation and incarceration in both countries. He was murdered in his jail cell in November of 1922 in a Leavenworth prison.

The collaboration between anarchists and Zapatistas synthesized a cooperative movement that generated mutual support during the Mexican Revolution. But Magon and the PLM made a serious impact to the Mexican Revolution long before it began. The concepts of pluralism and mutualism are found in the agrarian type-anarchism employed by the original Zapatistas, or more explicitly Magon who coined the term "Tierra Y Libertad" which Zapata later adopted to describe his struggles. (Hodges 167) James A. Sandos writes in *Rebellion in the Borderlands*, "[Zapata's] political document, called the Plan of Ayala, reflected some anarchism in addition to its agrarian radicalism...his movement represented the persistence of the direct action that they [the Partido Liberal Mexicano] believed all Mexicans should pursue." (50)

Magon tried to combine the legacies of two different revolutionary traditions: the radicalized liberalism of the French Revolution and the communalized socialism of Marx and his followers. The focused opposition was property, state, and the church because these were the sources of worker exploitation and human oppression. Magon's inclination to abolishment of government and identification with anarchism progressed with his experiences. He accurately predicted that once a revolution would take place in Mexico, that it would fail if its aim were to replace one form of centralized government with another. In Sembradores, Juan Gomez-Quinones annotates Magon's argument, stating, "The Mexican Revolution, by necessity, would have strong anti-capitalist tendencies: give the land away, let the people take over the mines and factories, dispossess the national bourgeoisie first, the foreign owners later. In the process the people would learn solidarity and mutual cooperation. Importantly, international relations were to be established with socialist and anarchist organizations." (35)

In *Ringside Seat to a Revolution*, David Dorado Romo elaborates, "Only in an anarchist revolution, governed from the bottom up by a loose federation of autonomous worker and campesino communities could prevent this (capitalist dominance) from happening once more." (54)

Because of his political activities in the United States, Magon was a precursor and prototype model for Chicana/o anarchism. He secured his base of support through Spanish dialogue. "His principles appealed to one of the most oppressed segments of the working class, Spanish speaking workers in labor-intense sectors of the economy such as agriculture and mining, where working conditions bordered on exploitation and sometimes exceeded tolerable limits." (MacLachlan x) He understood that Mexicans in the United States suffered just as greatly as Mexicans did under Diaz in Mexico. He wrote:

"Mexicans have been abandoned to the forces of luck in this country-akin to the way they are treated in Mexico...excluded from hotels and restaurants...found guilty and sentenced in the twinkling of an eye; the penitentiaries are full of Mexicans who are absolutely innocent. In Texas, Louisiana, and in other states they live without hope."
(MacLachlan 9)

Magon's organizing with the PLM was far reaching and activated many Mexicana/os in the U.S. Frank P. Barajas writes in *Resistance, Radicalism, and Repression on the Oxnard Plain* that

within the Mexican community itself, one radical socialist, Simon Berthold, lived and worked on the Oxnard Plain. Barajas writes, "In addition to his circulation within socialist circles, Berthold had been an insurgent leader of a movement devoted to the anarchist cause of Ricardo Flores Magon's El Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM)." (4)

The Mexican Revolution accelerated the dissemination of Mexican anarchism and early forms of Chicana/o anarchism in the United States. As the Mexican Revolution worsened, more Mexican nationals fled to the southern region of the U.S. Many went to Texas, finding work and temporary homes. Neil Foley writes in *The White Scourge* that Mexicans who joined the Socialist Party did it through association with the PLM. He elaborates, "...Many Mexicans who joined the Socialist Party in Texas were already members of the PLM and IWW and served as valuable links between the Mexican Revolution and radical movements throughout the Southwest." (108) The anarchist radicalism found in the PLM was considered a threat to U.S. authorities. Foley stipulates that, "U.S. officials arrested Magonistas and Mexican Socialists in Texas for violating neutrality laws, but their real concern was that Mexicans were radicalizing local labor struggles." (108) Foley highlights Jose Angel Hernandez, F.A. Hernandez, and Lazaro Gutierrez de Lara as important Mexican radical organizers who belonged to both the PLM and the Socialist Party in Texas.

Magon wrote about creating a "communist society without classes and without hierarchies" in his weekly newspaper, *Regeneracion*, which ceased publication after his arrest and incarceration in a U.S. prison, where he was murdered. (Hodges 7) *Regeneracion* was directed at the Mexican and Chicana/o labor sector and emphasized the need for an organized opposition party. Magon's writings influenced Mexicans from both sides of the Mexican/U.S. border. James A. Sandos writes in *Rebellion in the Borderlands* that, "*Regeneracion* had become a newspaper concerned about Mexico but read primarily in the United States with the Mexican American communities in Texas and California and by readers of other radical newspapers." (59) The permeation of Mexican anarchism/radicalism in U.S. politics came to form Chicana/o anarchism.

Magon was greatly influenced by the Oaxaca indigenous community he grew up in. Thomas C. Langham writes in *Border Trials* that Magon's father was an indigenous man who was a leader in their community in the mountains of Oaxaca. (7) Juan Gomez-Quinones states in *Sembradores*, "Flores Magon's later utopia, Anarcho-communist, was inspired in part by this Indian reality and historical heritage. He consistently reaffirmed his commitment to collective values." (13) At the same time, Magon was influenced and respected by international anarchists. "In St. Louis this tendency toward anarchism was strengthened by contacts made outside the liberal group, such as a meeting with Emma Goldman, the most famous anarchist in the United States. As a great supporter of Magon, Emma Goldman's newspaper *Mother Earth* created a forum for the PLM. (MacLachlan 39) Magon was also influenced by Kropotkin's writings such as *The Conquest of Bread, Fields, Factories and Workshops*, which carried a development of anarchist moral philosophy. (Gomez-Quinones 7)

As already alluded to, Chicana/o anarchism's relation to both Anarchists and Chicana/os remains an enduring theme. A focus on the Chicana/o experience in occupied America likewise remains an enduring theme in Chicana/o Anarchism. The issue of colonization, in particular, received attention from Ricardo Flores Magon and specifically with articles written in *Regeneracion*. In the *Dreams of Freedom* translation of *The Mexican People are suited To Communism* (September 2, 1911) Magon wrote:

“As regards the mestizo population [of mixed Indian and Spanish heritage], which is the majority of the people of Mexico- with the exception of those who inhabited the great cities and large towns- they held the forests, lands, and bodies of water in common, just as the indigenous peoples did. Mutual aid was also the rule; they built their houses together; money was almost unnecessary, because they bartered what they made or grew. But with the coming of peace authority grew, and the political and financial bandits shamelessly stole the lands, forests, and bodies of water; they stole everything. Not even twenty years ago one could see the opposition newspapers that the North American X, the German Y, or the Spaniard Z had enveloped an entire population within the limits of “his” property, with the aid of the Mexican authorities.

We see, then, that the Mexican people are suited for communism, because they’ve practiced it, at least in part, for many centuries; and this explains why, even when the majority are illiterate, they comprehend that rather than take part in electoral farces that elect thugs, it’s better to take possession of the lands-and this taking is what scandalizes the thieving bourgeoisie.” (177)

Just as Magon was influenced by the indigenous, Magon in return influenced them. This is reflected in the 1994 indigenous uprising of the Zapatistas in Chiapas in its response to the passage of the neo-liberal North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Benjamin Maldonado states in *Dreams of Freedom*,

“...The presence of Magonism in the present-day Zapatista movement leads us to examine the mutual presence in both historic movements. This has led us to discover that there was an approach between the two movements between 1912 and 1914. This approach implies that the Zapatistas were familiar with the Anarchist objectives of the Magonist struggle, expressed in the slogan Viva Tierra y Libertad!, which since 1910 was the principle Magonist slogan. And the struggle for Tierra y Libertad was a libertarian revolution, not a “revolution” for a change in government, but a revolution whose aim was the destruction of the capitalist socioeconomic model and the reconstruction of Mexico based on a libertarian schematic nourished by the historical experience of indigenous community organization. (The formation of this proposal to turn one’s eyes toward the forms of indigenous life had three central proponents within Magonism: Ricardo Flores Magon, Voltairine de Cleyre, and William C. Own, all of whom from the beginning of the decade in 1910 developed and published these ideas.)

In sum, Magonism is certainly close enough to Zapatismo in the present epoch; this much is certain, and it implies that Magonism had an important role in these moments when the nation-state model is reaching exhaustion, propelling us toward a new social compact.” (15)

Indigenous resistance to globalization means constructing autonomy for a new world. This is a strongly conducive to anarchist and Chicana/o struggles. Ramor Ryan states in *Triptych: International Solidarity* that, “...It is not a question of solidarity with the struggle of others, but of understanding that the Zapatistas and we are part of the same struggle.” (53) The corresponding

sensibilities found in anarchism/Magonismo and Zapatismo have been accepted and adopted by a contingency/sector within the Chicana/o community, creating a new phenomenon known as Chicana/o anarchism.

Contemporary Chicana/o Anarchism

Chicana/os/ Latina/os who also identify themselves as anarchists have been largely ignored by academia and ethnographic research. The lack of research prompted a series of participant interviews with several numbers of the Chicana/o community who identified themselves as anarchists. Three Chicanos are identified as Kualyque, Joaquin Cienfuegos, and R. De La Riva. Joaquin is a member of organizations such as Revolutionary Autonomous Communities (RAC) and Cop Watch LA, based in South Central Los Angeles. Kualyque edits and publishes from Los Angeles a free quarterly 'Zine entitled *The Sickly Season* that features poetry, critical essays, and in-depth community based articles. R. De La Riva is an artist/muralist based in Los Angeles.

One of the main common themes that were raised was an emphasis on culture identification. For example, R. De La Riva explains that culture comes before ideology by stating, "First, acknowledging my Mexican American heritage and being proud of my culture. Secondly, in relation to anarchy, you know, just adhering to anarchist principles and believing that anarchy can work." (R. De La Riva interview)

Joaquin Cienfuegos pointed to particularities found in the community and his convictions as an anarchist. He states,

"It's more about the principles and the ideas that apply to our lives as Chicanos and as anarchists; what ideas, and how these ideas, how this strategy can lead to our liberation as a people. It takes organizing within the Chicano community and applying anarchist ideas to our lives, our work, our organizing, that will lead to the liberation of not only our people. Of course, our people- Chicanos have particularities but liberation of humanity as a whole eventually. What makes me a Chicano anarchist is basically the need for freedom, the need for liberation. I think that oppression, colonialism, imperialism, patriarchy, capitalism, all these things-the system of oppression we're living under is plaguing our communities. It's keeping us in a state of slavery and subjugation so I feel that as a Chicano anarchist I'm seeing myself as part of the revolutionary process, getting rid of that system in general and creating the social relationships, creating the society-the communities; that they're healthy and where people rely on themselves. I see myself committed to that struggle and living for that purpose. That's what makes me a Chicano anarchist." (Joaquin Cienfuegos interview)

Kualyque explains that he does not solely identify with anarchism. He states, "There's another ideological strand that really embodies more puritanical values and I think it derives from a puritan tradition. You see the similarities if you look at anarchist groups in the United States and you look at the puritans, who first came here, there are a lot of similarities in how they construct their ideology. The ideological associations that I identify with run directly counter to the puritanical tradition. That's usually how I identify the difference, not just anarchism, but in other leftists-in general in social interactions, there are usually people who identify with the

European puritan ideology and history and there are those who do not. Those who do not, it's more identified with an American indigenous way of being and interacting, and also with an Asian way of being and acting. I've noticed that there's a lot of crossover with Chicanos and Asian philosophy and Asian practice. For example, in my own ideas and practice, I've tended to gravitate toward things like Taoism because that reflects a similar indigenous spirit of anarchy." (Kualyque interview)

There were variations in the area of social/political awakening for the three participants. R. De La Riva points to punk music as an influence that led to his interest in Anarchism. Kualyque does not stipulate a particular starting point but does identify being influenced by political events of the time and the books exposed to him. Kualyque states, "...I started getting involved with Independent Media Center and I went to Washington to protest the [Bush] inauguration. I started dating someone who lent me A People's History of the U.S. and from that point it was all over. Then I started reading everything online that I could. What turned me to anarchism was this guy, Charles Hother; he's a book buyer now at Sky Light Books in Los Feliz. I went over one day and I'd been reading a little bit about anarchism and I knew that he was an anarchist and I went over. I said, "All right Charles, hook me up, what do I need to read to understand this?" He took me through his selection of books there and gave me about ten books and I bought them all and read them. It was crazy stuff. It was general stuff like No Gods, No Masters, which was a general overview of anarchist theory and history. Then he gave me stuff like Hakim Bay's Temporary Autonomous Zone, really way out there radical shit. Against the Mega-Machine, which is almost a primitivist green anarchist critique of civilization and that was it." (Kualyque interview)

For Joaquin, his consciousness evolved through his experiences with police and public school. Cienfuegos states,

"I think mainly my life experiences have led me to label myself and identify myself as an anarchist or anarcho-communist, right? Just growing up as a Chicano in South Central, working class. A lot of my experiences, dealing with authority and the state have been negative. I think the state in general is used to oppress and keep us in this position and subjugation especially how the U.S. was founded and capitalism was developed in the U.S. through white supremacy off the backs of indigenous people here, Blacks, Africans, and Mexicans. The theft of land- the southwest, which was North Mexico. They use institutions like the police, the prison industrial complex, the schools to continue not only the colonial mentality but the colonial reality in our communities where the police are locking us up, brutalizing us, killing us. They're an occupying army. I now understand the community as a neo-colony so my experiences on a daily basis that of a person living under colonial conditions.

Going to school, especially around the time of proposition 187; Getting into conversations with the teachers that were telling me that immigrants were coming here, especially from Mexico, Central America and stealing people's jobs. And this time I was living in Fresno and I was 11 or 13 at the time and I would challenge the teachers because they were white and I didn't see them working in the fields. All the people working in the fields were Mexicano or Central American...Challenging that and challenging my teachers and getting into trouble was one thing that actually made me see what kind of role the schools play. The feeling was always liberating to challenge them. Even though I got into trouble, I knew in my heart and my mind that it was right to do so because they were wrong. They were racist and classist and all these other things." (Joaquin Cienfuegos interview)

Two of the participants observed problems with white leftists such as an imbalance with power dynamics. Kualyque explains his experiences with white anarchists and white leftists. He states, "It's not that different than dealing with white people in general. It's the same issues I think. I know Gloria Anzaldua talks about this question of how are we to deal with white people. You can make choices about that, you can either mediate or you can write them off all together. There's different ways to deal with that and I've found that it's too much work. I think there are others who are willing to do that work and I'm not, to deal with the power dynamics. The problem is what I've found with white leftists is that they don't want to give up their power. It's the same problem I've found with men on the left too. They're always the ones who screw it up and if you get a white man in there, forget it. They do not want to give up any of their power, ever, ultimately. Sometimes it's even more difficult because they're leftists, because they're anarchists, because they're claiming all of these positions it's much more difficult to call them on it. It sort of creates this screen, you can hide behind this ideology or that label and say, "Well, what do you mean? I'm not doing that." That's a particular difficulty I've found with dealing with white people and anarchism- that they can hide behind that. Even when address those issues, even when they say, "Ok, you called me out. Let's deal with this." The problem is I had to call you out in the first place and now we're dealing with it. It always goes back to you, it always revolves around you and we have to deal with it. So with all of that stuff I said forget it. I'm bi-cultural/bi-racial so that's a part of it, probably why I chose not to deal with it anymore. I'm already dealing with enough of my own shit to have to work around that kind of stuff." (Kualyque interview)

It is possible that Chicana/o anarchism's strong point is the multifaceted ability in addressing all the social variables including but not limiting to sexual orientation, gender, culture, race, class, and ecology. Joaquin highlights this on his critique of white leftists and white anarchists by stating,

"They [whites] take them to analysis like: only animal liberation, only earth liberation, not human liberation, not having a race analysis, not having a class analysis, gender analysis, and sexuality analysis because its not in their interest to check themselves. They want to be in a movement where they don't have challenge their privilege, in a movement where they can just speak for animals or liberate animals because animals can speak for themselves. I believe as an indigenous person, as a Chicano that the ecology is deeply rooted in our liberation. The land question is deeply rooted in our liberation because of how the capitalist system is destroying our planet and it's destroying us at the same time. That has to be connected with the liberation of Chicano people and all people because if we're liberated, we have the ability to have technology that's not going to destroy this planet, a system that's not going to subjugate animals, not going to have animals of burden. We're going to have harmony with the earth and other living things. I think all these white anarchists; their common denominator is just that-animal liberalism, earth liberation. It's not in their interest to get rid of capitalism or white supremacy." (Joaquin Cienfuegos interview)

Nationalism is an area that carries complexities in reference to the Chicana/o movement and the ideology of anarchism. Joaquin Cienfuegos points out to what he perceives as negative elements found in Chicana/o nationalism by stating, "We have what are called cultural nationalists who look at culture in of itself as something we need to be looking into without looking into the systemic problems and getting rid of the system that's oppressing our people; thinking that just by dressing a certain way, going back to our indigenous clothes or taking indigenous names is enough to actually liberate our people." (Joaquin Cienfuegos interview)

Despite this, Joaquin supports aspects found in nationalism, including revolutionary nationalism. He states, "I feel unity with revolutionary nationalism, being a Chicano too, these are my people. I feel that the idea of revolutionary Chicano nationalism- that process is the ability or desire for our people to determine their own destiny as an oppressed people, as an oppressed nation. The revolutionary part is that we want to liberate not just our people but we want to build alliances, we want to build coalitions. We want to build organizations in the program that's going to speak to all oppressed nations and all oppressed people. It's going to eventually lead to the liberation of humanity." (Joaquin Cienfuegos interview)

Kualyque points out that Chicana/o nationalism and anarchism have a commonality as ideologies. He states,

"I think it's similar to anarchism in the sense that it can be used tactically/strategically. You can employ it. Ultimately, I think any kind of nationalism is a dead end as well because it's an ideology at base. Other reasons too. The basic problem with any kind of ideology is that you have- it's binary thinking. It's either or, so you have people in the ideology and the people who are outside the ideology. With anarchism, it's a little more hidden because it sort of presents itself as completely open to everybody. But then you have people set up structures within that where either you fit in or you don't. Nationalism is a lot clearer because you're talking about creating a nation. You're talking about a nation and any kind of nation is a fiction and it's creation of borders. That's a problem but in any kind of struggle of occupation and colonization, nationalism plays a very important role and I don't dismiss it at all. I think that it should be used strategically." (Kualyque interview)

Kualyque believes anarchism analyzes and addresses challenges found in the Chicana/o community. He states, " It starts from the principle of attacking all forms of oppression. Anything that works that way has a lot to offer to the Chicano community. It's just like any other community, especially just like any other occupied colonized community, there are a lot of problems of patriarchal abuse, sexism, addiction, all these things that people do in response to being colonized and occupied. Anarchism directly addresses a lot of the underlined issues that lead to those subsequent problems. Like immigration, you're talking about this problem that affects our community, has to do with borders and immigration and then you're talking about an ideology that says there should be no borders, there should be no nations. That's a great example of how the ideology directly addresses a particular problem." (Kualyque interview)

Although anarchism can lead to new ideas and actions, there are challenges of implementing anarchist principles into the Chicana/o community. The complexities of the Chicana/o community reinforce these challenges. R. De La Riva identifies the mechanisms that homogenize norms and ostracize alternative critical modes of thinking and behavior. He states, "To me it's a problem of what I call the authority principle or the authority god of how this absolute acceptance of established power, whether it's government, church, god, the economy/market, all those for example are set authorities and people are born into them and they assume that these are the sources to their freedom and their liberties when in reality those authority gods, authority principles are never questioned because they are born into them. So I think that's a big problem and once people really believe that the source of power really rests in their hands, in their decisions, and in their labor, then could people really free themselves from this yoke that they feel is so necessary for all society." (R. De La Riva interview)

Joaquin believes that the Chicana/o community is capable of applying anarchist principles because it addresses the community's direct and pending needs. Joaquin states,

“I think what's going to lead to our liberation is creating a strategy that also incorporates our principles as anarchists. The key principles that are important to us like I mentioned mutual aid, cooperation, self-determination, self-organization, autonomy, self defense, federalism, creating people's militias, creating duo power, getting rid of the idea that we need a vanguard party, creating the people's institutions, and so on; Popular education, cultural revolutions, all these ideas are anarchist ideas and principles and those are what we need to apply to the Chicana/o community in my opinion and that's where we've seen victories because most people relate to that. They're tired of being involved in hierarchal organizations that reflect the same power dynamics or the same social relationships of this oppressive system or this society we're living under today that we're trying to get rid of. I think this process of creating different social relationships we've seen men and women, between all people, right? How people relate to each other, how youth relate to older folks, how white people relate to people of color in general. All these things, we have to change those relationships now. Not wait for some vanguard party take state power. I feel that even the idea of state power is oppressive, the idea that a centralized bureaucratic body can decide for all these different regions what's in their interest. Going back to the theory as anarchists, it's important but I think mainly, what's important is our practice or creating a new praxis for change.

I think what we do today with the revolutionary autonomous communities (RAC) is we hold or we're trying to build and create the programs that are missing where we live, in our neighborhoods. We need childcare, we need healthy food, we need better education-we need an education that's going to tell us the truth. We need to hold the police accountable, we need to get rid of them from our communities.

So these are different things we need in our communities that we know are needed because we live in them and because we talk to people and we see where they're at and what are their necessities. We try to incorporate that into the programs and have them take them up. So through that, spread the ideas in our vision for a different society; we're self-reliant, we're self-sustainable. Let's say we have a community garden somewhere, we're talking about healthy food. We're trying to challenge the idea that we need these corporations. There's also the idea of land. We need to take back land and own it collectively, organize it collectively. It's a huge challenge, it's a lot of work, you know? It's not just going to be with one tactic that we'd implement, it's going to be multifaceted tactics. The strategy is multifaceted so we can get at the different problems that exist in our communities. We'll also bring in the people, the Chicanos and Chicanas into that process, you know? That they feel that they own the struggle, they own these ideas themselves.” (Joaquin Cienfuegos interview)

Kualyque states that he finds it easier to talk to people in a more simplistic form as to not turn them off from ideology or the misnomers associated with anarchy. He believes one needs to communicate in a non-dogmatic, non-confrontational way. He states,

“I’ve been able to get those ideas out there but I don’t necessarily identify them as anarchist. If people ask me or if it comes up, I’ll say that’s what I am but my challenge I’ve felt is to take those ideas be able to get them across in a way that makes sense. And I’ve found that when I do that, when it’s not coming from this fiery kind of polemical rhetoric, when I’m just talking to people, maybe we’re talking about some topic and I’m voicing my opinion about it, people tend to respond pretty well. Of course everyone wants to be treated with respect and of course everyone wants to be equal and of course nobody likes to be oppressed and of course nobody wants anyone to be bossing him or her around. To me that makes total sense and what I come across is that when I voice opinions that reflect that coming from that position, people agree with me. I think it’s a basic thing about being human. A lot of times I find that people are like, “Oh, you can say that?” or “Oh, you’re saying what I feel but what we are constantly taught not to voice or not acknowledge.” That doesn’t mean I go around saying, “Well, according to anarchism you know we should not have bosses!” I think people would just shut down. But I found that when I’m talking to people at a B-B-Q or something just hanging out and I say something like that, they respond well. There are other people who do not respond well and I don’t think that has to do with being Chicano. That has to do with class interest. You’re talking about upwardly mobile middle class Chicanos who realize that what you’re saying is an attack on their position. They get it on some level and so they respond very negatively but I don’t think that has anything to do with being Chicano. So that’s the distinction. If you’re talking to Chicanos on the left, their rejection of anarchism will be based on an ideological difference.” (Kualyque interview)

Kualyque also emphasizes that one has to be involved in the community in order to reach the people. He elaborates that one must be involved with it, be active, and practice it. Although there is a strong interest in addressing the needs of the Chicana/o community, the main goal is the liberation of all people from oppression. He also expresses the application of Zapatismo as an important element in the process. Kualyque states,

“In a general way, yes, I think that anarchism suits the needs of all communities. Historically, that’s how humans have organized themselves in their communities. Making a real community involves anarchism. It involves self-organization, self-leadership. But specifically for the Chicano community, it offers, one- there’s already the connection with an indigenous way of being that resonates with anarchist ideas. With the idea of popular assembly, that already resonates. With Zapatismo, you see that connection. You see a lot of young Chicano activists or anarchists who come at it out of Zapatismo like I did too. Early on, that was another thing that propelled me was that I saw a movie about the Zapatistas. That really resonated, at the same time I was thinking about anarchism. In that sense, yeah I think it validates and acknowledges those ancient ways of organizing in community and being in community. So it resonates more than say communism, even though it’s also a European ideology. Even in Europe it goes back beyond an imperialist way of being. The colonization and imperialism started in Europe when the Romans invaded. I think that anarchism sprung out of that same basic impulse towards indigenous ways of being. Over there,

you're talking about tribal paganism in Europe, in Scotland, in Ireland. You're talking about people conquered the same way they were conquered here. In that sense, I think that it does resonate to that situation or that history. Just the same that it has to offer to any community, that utopic vision of equality; that different way of interacting that's equal, that's non-sexist, that's not homophobic, that's non-ageist. It starts from the principle of attacking all forms of oppression. Anything that works that way has a lot to offer to the Chicano community." (Kualyque interview)

It is important to identify that there are other groups that are being oppressed by the capitalist system in United States. The liberation of Chicana/os depends on the liberation of all people. Joaquin also emphasizes on the importance of alliance and solidarity with other oppressed communities. Joaquin states,

"I think in our communities today, speaking of communities of region, for example South Central right now is really integrated. We have Black and Brown in particular. It's important to create that unity amongst other people of color, not just Black and Brown, but all people of color. We have the same battle, we have the similar experience. So I think it's important to create that, not only unity, but also a strategy for liberation for all our oppressed people of color.

Cop Watch LA is mainly Chicano and Chicana but it also includes other people of color so what these ideas do is speak to people of color because they're the ones being harassed by the police. They're the ones being told they're not good enough all the time because of their age, because of their gender, their race and their class. So I think these ideas are mainly relevant to the young people. In reality they are relevant to humanity but they fix them up more-young people, because they have a lot of rage and they are looking for a way out of this shit." (Joaquin Cienfuegos interview)

The passageway for the Chicana/o community to apply anarchism is by addressing the multiple waves of oppression and defending what pertains to the interest of the community. R. De La Riva explains what makes anarchy applicable/conducive to the Chicana/o community by stating,

"For as long as there's minorities that are discriminated against, there's always gonna be revolt and there's always gonna be discontent for as long as their taught to assimilate and forget their own culture. Dissent and education are always going to be at the forefront at those being targeted. Chicanos/Mexican Americans have a rich history of dissent when it comes to tyranny, exploitation, oppressive policy, and law. I believe anarchy can push the envelope for further dissent, creativity, and imagination." (R. De La Riva interview)

All utopianism is the impulse to dream oneself out of the present. This impulse to dream needs to be developed. The struggle of the Zapatistas, Magonistas, and Chicana/o anarchists are just a few examples of sacrifice for survival. This preliminary study is a testament of recognition of their labor/sacrifice for liberation and as a springboard for future dialogue, research, and development. There must be further study in identifying possible strategies and possibilities for victory and

liberty for humankind and mother earth. Additionally, the strategic implications of these studies demand reflection.

In conclusion, Chicana/o anarchism has the capability to be a catalyst for change through resistance of capitalism/dominant culture and the affirmation of radical nationalism/culture. Anarchism directly addresses the power dynamics and inequalities that impact and encompass gender, sexual orientation, culture, race, class, and ecology. It is by this holistic approach that anarchism has the capability in facilitating the Chicana/o community in gaining a better understanding of their environment and their societal and economic placement by transcending beyond nationalism and contextualizing a tangible post-capitalist vision for the future.

We walk diagonally as horizontalists

We walk like Quetzalcoatl, from side to side, listening/learning/touching/feeling/loving our way through as we advance. |

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