A Futurist Archive in the Sonic Collage "Caminxs del Sur"

Un archivo futurista en el collage sonoro "Caminxs del Sur"

Paula S. Ayala

University of California, Los Angeles, EE.UU.
ayala.paulasofi@gmail.com

Resumen: Este artículo propone la creación de un archivo sonoro futurista como vía para cuestionar las realidades de personas desplazadas, pueblos originarios y afrodescendientes, dentro y fuera de sus territorios. A través de la yuxtaposición de las narraciones de las experiencias que inspiraron el collage sonoro "Caminxs del Sur" y la descripción del collage, la autora –miembro del colectivo artístico Quetzal Beats– sitúa los procesos de escucha activa en la re-existencia, la resistencia y la memoria colectiva en el istmo centroamericano, México y Estados Unidos. La propuesta busca destacar la capacidad del sonido para evocar experiencias dolorosas de desplazamiento y generar nuevas narrativas en torno a las identidades centroamericanas o del Sur global. Así, a través de distintas secuencias visuales y sonoras, el artículo construye entramados históricos y experiencias compartidas entre mundos pluriversales.

Palabras clave: Centroamérica, desplazamiento, pluriversal, mundialización, archivos sonoros, memoria sonora, decolonialidad

Abstract: This article proposes the creation of a futuristic sound archive as a route to question the realities of displaced people, native peoples, and Afro-descendants in and out of their territories. Through the juxtaposition of the narrated experiences that inspired the creation of the sound collage "Caminxs del Sur" and the description of the collage itself, the author—a member of the artists collective Quetzal Beats—places active listening processes in the re-existence, resistance, and collective memory of the Central American isthmus, Mexico and the United States. The proposal seeks to highlight the capacity of sound to evoke painful experiences of displacement and generate new narratives around Central American identities, or those of the Global South. Thus, through different visual and sound sequences, the article constructs historical fabrics and shared experiences between pluriversal worlds.

Keywords: Central America, Displacement, Pluriversal, World-making, Sonic Archives, Sonic Memory, Decoloniality

Recibido: enero de 2025; **aceptado:** marzo de 2025.

Cómo citar: Ayala, Paula S."A Futurist Archive in the Sonic Collage 'Caminxs del Sur.'" *Istmo. Revista virtual de estudios literarios y culturales centroamericanos* 49 (2024): 11-27. Web.

Quetzales

Quetzal Beats emerged out of a necessity to visually and sonically know and understand the historical complexity of the Central American isthmus.[1] During March and April of 2018, the student organization Latin American Studies Society of California State University, Los Angeles, organized several mutual aid campaigns to support the massive people movement of the migrant caravans. Central American students, educators, and community members of Los Angeles gathered material support to accompany the thousands of people being actively displaced by decades of neoliberal and capitalist restructuring in Central America, largely in Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador. In their support efforts, the students realized the importance of making a call to bring to fruition what they had been learning at this public and working-class university: a need to build transnational networks of care, resistance, and solidarity.

Many Central American students in the US have collectively experienced the negation and erasure of their-our histories. The Latin American Studies Society (LASS) offered a space for rethinking, reworking, and understanding Central America through the lenses of relationality, intersections, and global defiance from the center of the continent and alongside pluriversal paradigms of the Global South—or, as Walter Mignolo describes it, "pluriverses that are convivial, dialogical and plurilogical in opposition to imperial and war-driven universality" (qtd. in Firmino Castillo 56). In this way, I conceive a pluriversal Central America akin to the pluriverse as epistemologically kaleidoscopic, encompassing peoples, movements, geographies, land-sea relations, and the many methods of protest, survivance, resistance, and contestation. In this work, I address how these conditions propel and animate liberatory spaces of expression, realization, community-building, and action-oriented solidarities using voice, such as in Melissa Cardoza's song "13 Colors of the Honduran Resistance" (Cardoza, López, and Lara), and (re)imaging the historical and contemporary archives depicting many communities of the isthmus. The video production "Caminxs del Sur" emerged through this knowledge center and creative space.

The "x" in "Caminxs" references the use of the "x" in trans-inclusive and gender-nonconforming anarchic thought and practice, from as early as the 1990s and 2000s. Similarly, Alan Paláez López proposes its representation as "four dominating wounds still very much present in Latin America today, those being settlement, anti-Blackness, feminicides, and inarticulation" (1). In "Caminxs" we have attempted to highlight these wounds and defiance through this sonic collage.

Quetzal Beats as a collective has functioned informally and transnationally with artists and intellectuals in Los Angeles, Costa Rica, Brazil, and with allies across the isthmus. This six-minute video production was organized alongside Ana Pano from Fresno, California, and Chiapas, Mexico; Nancy Escalante from Los Angeles, California, as well as El Salvador and Honduras; and me, Paula Ayala from Fresno, California, and El Salvador.

[1] I use Central America, isthmus, and Abya Yala interchangeably.

Given my positionality as a mixed-race Indigenous descendant *femme*, whose family was displaced from El Salvador in the 1980s, I know and understand that my research modality and worldview are in constant dialogue and acceptance of anti-colonial and decolonial paradigms—that is to say, my understanding of decolonial epistemes is in flux with Indigenous scholars, artists, and collaborators and my rooting and (re)rooting with my kin is a constant process of (re)covery. I am considered and often referred to as *chela* or white within my community and kin, but I consider myself a person of Indigenous descent whose known matrilineal and patrilineal lineages are rooted in eastern El Salvador, in what is known as Lenca territory. I bear the responsibility of acknowledging this region's complex colonial histories, specifically Indigenous genocide and African enslavement. These histories are known and traced within my family through inter-racial relationships, ancestries bound to hacienda plantations as "workers," and internal forced displacement due to the genocide of the 1930s. I consciously refuse the category of *mestizaje* due to its fraught alignment to the "utopic mestizo futurism" (see Hooker 4; Cornejo 36) marked and propelled by nation-state projects of *indigenismo* (see Safa 307). I seek to problematize this category for the multiple mixed-raced and working-poor people of the isthmus who understand their direct ancestry in complex and complicated ways beyond the triad and binary racial discourses made common by indigenist proponents—like José Vasconcelos—throughout Latin America (see Hooker 4). Although I do not belong to an Indigenous community—due to El Salvador's recent genocidal histories as well as the systemic erasures of the memory of the 1980s and the well-documented *matanza* of the 1930s (see Ching and Tilley 121-156)[2]—, the ancestral practices and worldviews that my kin are descendants of remain visible, audible, and corporeal in my everyday life.

DIY-ing the Future

While constructing this video, we realized it functions as a still-photo montage in four songchapters with videos, photographs, soundbites, and archival posters collected by all three of us with the support of Chinese-Nahuatl Pipil visual artist Alicia Maria Siu. In this way, we took on, tried, and tested DIY methods—embracing a do-it-yourself attitude—for the project, which was limited in scope then. Decolonial feminist scholar Macarena Gómez-Barris names a similar filmic method as an "archive for the future," which asks, "how does experimental film shift normative imaginaries of land and landscape through visuality that documents the already arrived apocalypse toward life after extinction?" (68–69). Gómez-Barris explains that Mapuche filmmaker Francisco Huichaqueo "has deliberately created an archive that will illuminate to Mapuche peoples living in the future the terrible conditions that (we) live through now" (qtd. in Gómez-Barris 69). We did not intentionally replicate Huichaqueo's

[2] The Salvadoran poet and filmmaker Daniel Flores Ascencio documented the oral history of Don Juan Ama, nephew of Indigenous campesino leader Feliciano Ama, who was murdered by the Salvadoran state in 1932 (see Córdova).

proposal while making this sonic collage, as we were unaware of their film and thought process. Through further reflection, we collectively realized that "Caminxs del Sur" shows a way to archive the future specifically for Central America and the geographical non-statist space of the isthmus. Art historian Kency Cornejo elucidates that "Central America remains hypervisible in US imaginaries as a tropical site of misery and violence in need of intervention, while artistic and cultural production from the region remains little known, or unimaginable" (36). Although this six-minute sonic collage partially contains the hypervisibility named by Cornejo, we have attempted to convey an ethos of joyful militancy. We hope that it encapsulates the paradoxical nature of subversion in celebration, bright color, and bass-filled sound amidst the long centuries of settler-collapse and processes of imperial invasion, as Giovanni Batz and the Ixil community of Guatemala have historically denounced (see Batz 6).

Bass, Sonics, People-Territories: Cantos Curativos

The video begins with a healing song of the Waunana, an Indigenous community in the Choco region of Colombia. The song evokes playfulness with lament in a nursery song style. The chanter is an unnamed woman participating in the project and the drummer is Manuel Santos Peña. The original leaflet of the musical project describes this song as being sung, danced, and instrumentalized with flutes and drums (see Bermúdez). Interestingly, it describes the drums as having an Afro-American influence and the researcher does not specify anything further. Placing this song was an act of ancestral recovery, although not specifically to Central America. It acknowledges the cosmopolitical exchange from the southern continent and the historical exchange routes through the isthmus. We recognized and made these exchanges audible with Southern Indigenous nations as ongoing spatial and temporal sonic mobilities. The first voice-over superimposed on the healing Waunana chants is by Indigenous land defender Margot López of Izalco, El Salvador. Her words state, "¡Nuestras luchas en los territorios!" This soundbite, which begins the digital ceremony conveyed by the first images, was extracted from an interview conducted by professor Ester Hernández and me in Santa Ana, California, for the independent radio show *Radio Santa Ana* in August 2019 (see Lopez). Lopez's voice is heard throughout the video collage in soundbites that make up a larger interview conducted in Los Angeles on the current displacement of Nahua and Lenca communities and their fights for land and water.

The sonic collage continues with a broader symphony of heavily digitized bass by the experimental Argentine DJ Uji, and ends with the lamenting Andean flute song "¿Por qué estás triste?" by Savia Andina that we transitioned with sonic blends of electronic house. After listening to hours of digital recordings, interviews, and live performances, we selected the songs, soundbites, and spoken word that would be strategically collaged alongside the visual collages of Central America in a counter-hegemonic movement and placed to evoke emotion in the viewer-listener. In this way, "Caminxs del Sur" is a thematic repre-

sentation of a cosmopolitical future that centers cosmologies and politics of the pluriverse of negated people and territories. As Aguilar states:

> Es decir, trabajamos a partir del presupuesto general de que los pueblos centroamericanos tienen sus cotidianos y destinos situados entre las tensiones que les ejercen las geopolíticas y las cosmopolíticas, en cuanto dos grandes constructos conceptuales y prácticos para las definiciones de los parámetros y ordenamientos sociales en sus territorios. (70)

In tandem with what Aguilar describes as cosmopolitics, I introduce and employ what Zapatistas and so many communities of the isthmus and beyond adhere to in practice: a pluriverse—the ancestral cosmologies and worldviews of the isthmus and those constructed in dignity from beyond it. These cosmologies have been instrumental for communities against settler-colonial oppression and imperialism. The neon aesthetic of the artwork portrays colors commonly found throughout the tropical ecologies of the isthmus—those glowing with the wounds of genocides, reverberating and finely attuned to the drastic realities of territorial displacement and ecological collapse brought on by capitalist destruction. Colors like aqua and jades of the many waters, bright pinks found in its flora and birdlife, illuminant yellow hues of the day, deep indigos as the purple night skies have been curated to oppose these destructions that continue to greatly impact this once vibrant and lush land, turning it into what scientists deem a "dry corridor" of drought—a zone more prone to so-called "natural disasters" (see Walia 47). The sounds, placed alongside the visual atmosphere of communities in a complex fight for survival and kinship, can be heard and understood through the necessity of militant joy (see Montgomery, Bergman, and Aluri). The Waunana song opens with a high-tone hum that evokes and invites us to the awakening of the morning dawn upon the brush leaves of palm fronds, the morning dew and enters into the world of one's *senti-pensar* (see Botero Gómez 302). This sonic collage aims to unravel the illusory formulations of settler innocence that lesbo-feminist author and poet Melissa Cardoza proclaims "will rot in the throats of these historical traitors of life" (Cardoza, López, and Lara 03:22).

The narratives featured in this video are intertwined within symbiotic networks whose intersections combine and collide like the subterranean streams and the transisthmian volcanic archipelago's lava flows. The digital networks present in our project fit with Garifuna scholar Paul Joseph López Oro's description of the Garifuna communities' way of "embodying, archiving and performing ancestral memory across their own diasporic communities through social media and digital spaces" (López 166). "Caminxs del Sur" asks us how the grounded knowledges of experiential opposition to oppression throughout the isthmus detail a *condición ístmica*. I consider the *condición ístmica* and articulate the intersections and interstices of the geopolitics of settler-coloniality and the centuries-long residual effects on originating peoples and those trafficked and enslaved who cohabitate among many people's pluriverses of Abya Yala's cosmologies. I also remain open to conversations about the cosmologies of

settler and mixed-race peoples, whether denied, preserved, held, or cared for. I believe the communitarian discourse of *pluriverse* allows for these worlds to exist and rupture the white supremacist logic of a *raza cósmica* in honest and new ways.

This sonic collage, "Caminxs del Sur," offers an autoethnographic and communitarian testimony that collects over ten years of documentation, archival sources, primary sources, and photographic and sonic collages through the practices of DIY. This video also evidences grassroots solidarity-building efforts based on mutual understanding. These efforts emerge from those living and working to build transnational and trans-local solidarities across the global North and South, with the center serving as the committed axis-praxis. We have named this effort Quetzal Beats.

Ritos visuales

The first images in "Caminxs del Sur" portray in succession: a reworked and collaged version of the cover image from Alfredo Espino's poetry book *Jícaras tristes*, which depicts two sisters; Berta Zúñiga Cáceres; a Nahuatl elder in Tazumal, Ahuachapan, El Salvador; a Cuna weaver and Indigenous leader of Oaxaca who was assassinated against the backdrop of her artisanry; and a photograph of an anti-mining march in El Salvador featuring a banner that reads "NO a la MINERIA METALICA: Mesa Nacional Frente a la Minería" (Ayala, Escalante, and Pano 0:00–0:23). As the Waunana song continues, a historic painting depicts Satuye—a well-known emancipatory leader of the Garifuna people—and a group of liberated Yoruba Africans escaping the prospects of enslavement by the French and British in St. Vincent Island off the coast of Honduras.

Some of these images and sounds may be unknown to Central American students, whether residing in or out of Central America. For many of us, specifically those outside of Central America, these images and sounds have been subversive and hidden due to their anti-colonial and anti-imperialist nature. I infer that a collective energy has been formed through generations of displacement, organization, and culture, thanks to the work of resistance, protest, and dissent. K'iche scholar Gladys Tzul describes how in the decades after state-sponsored genocide in Guatemala, Ixil women looked to organizing communal celebration as an act to build strength amid so much pain (see Tzul 406). I envision this sonic collage as giving back to a communal celebration that exists in the digital realms of Central American cultural work. In the first chapter, the healing chant of the Waunana intends to place front and center the cosmologies and survival of Black and Indigenous life throughout the isthmus.

Miradas anticoloniales

The second chapter transitions with the colonial document used by white European colonizers of the United States, the Declaration of Independence,

highlighting an excerpt dehumanizing the Americas' ancestral life to one of "merciless Indian savages" (Ayala, Escalante, and Pano 1:42–1:50). We decided to transition with this document and release an array of imagery depicting the savagery of the ongoing European, United Statesian and colonial domination through transnational extractivist projects and historical movements that keep on defying the layers of super-imposed necro-politics or the politic of death (see Mbembe 66). The image following the declaration is a mural photograph from my archive, a mural in which I participated in painting with Fresno-Veracruzan artist Mauro Carrera and Tzotzil graffiti artist Freddy Gómez López of San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas. We worked on the mural in November of 2014 in the neighborhood of El Cerrillo, San Cristóbal. Carrera, who had expressed his desire to paint in his homeland of Mexico, and I traveled together for two weeks and painted on walls that locals granted us access to (see Carrera). We painted an Indigenous Tzotzil-Tzeltal young girl. I also supported the project by building collaborative relationships with young people I had worked with in the mountain town. We coordinated our meeting times, meals, and supply needs together. The mural project was self-funded and managed, and served as an offering to the communities that continue to be impacted by global extractivism, colonialism, and now gentrification. Likewise, throughout the video, one will notice photographs and videos of people on the migrant routes, most of which are depicted as being in Chiapas and Veracruz (see Ayala, Escalante, and Pano 1:39, 2:14, 2:59). These images and soundbites were collected by Zapotec DJ-activist, Ana Pano, and myself over seven years of grassroots and independent documentation and solidarity work.

Our inclusion of Chiapas, Veracruz, and, to some extent, Colombia, as part of the isthmus imaginary took a lot of thought and continues to be shaped. As a person whose family experienced direct displacement from El Salvador during the US-funded civil wars, this imaginary and blurring of geographical place in relation to the nation has become a necessity. This calls for imagining people, and specifically marginalized Central American peoples, as stateless. If we think of Central America through a lens of statelessness, there may be larger possibilities for asking the questions of race and ancestrality, settler-coloniality, displacements, nationalisms, and what I would propose as pluriversal possibilities across death-making worlds and borders. Furthermore, the practices that have been long carried out specifically through matrilineal, matriarchal, and cooperative world-building for displaced Central Americans are evident in the networks of remittances, care work, and a deep commitment to kinship and ties across vast territories and geographies (see Abrego 4, 20–21).

There is also the possibility of turning away from the common traditional masculinist anti-imperialist narratives that have dominated the ways dissidents have organized in the isthmus. Although these narratives are important, there is an emerging need to turn inward and look to the horizon of femininity, gendered and genderless queer defiance, rage, ancestral and present grief, and a stateless autonomy that has emerged with the onslaught of neoliberal economic restructuring and the NGO-zation of depoliticized and demobilized communi-

ties in what is called now "post-war" Central America. Thus, we have studied and read these movements through our own visceral experiences. We have done so alongside the people depicted in the video and we have dreamt also in solidarity with the ghostly voices of children and people murdered at the hands of neoliberal capitalist states, the US, Mexico, and the nation-states of the isthmus.

A man on "La Bestia", the main rail line used by migrants, is recorded saying "de haber entrado a México, pero de Honduras 15 días," while the image of a young man on the train throwing peace signs flashes (Ayala, Escalante, and Pano, 2:07–2:09). You also see a young Honduran woman inside one of the temples of Lacan-Ha, colonially known as Palenque, an ancient Maya ceremonial and political site. I met her shortly after she found out she was pregnant in the city plaza of Palenque as a thunderstorm swept through. A group of about seventy-five to one hundred displaced Central Americans was in the plaza that night. I was there as a working-poor and traveling backpacker with a passport, an artisan hitchhiking my way through the isthmus. I heard voices speaking a vernacular form of Spanish I would recognize only from the intimacy of my home in Fresno, California, where we were already so few. I listened and mustered up the courage to ask the group my partner and I were sleeping next to, where they were from. They became alarmed and answered my question with a question. They said, "Where are you from?" and I replied, "I'm Salvadoran and grew up in California." We became quiet and looked at each other, and one said, "Somos de Honduras." My heart dropped. The night before, my partner and I had slept on a sidewalk outside of a tour bus office in the town center. We met a man selling lollipops who had a broken ankle. We spoke with him for several minutes, and he informed us that "La Bestia" had derailed between Coatzacoalcos and Palenque, near the entrance to Veracruz. People were stranded and left without much possibility of mobility in towns like Palenque and, further south, in Tapachula. We discussed this with the new group we met, and they confirmed that this was the case. They were also stranded with very limited survival supplies and few options to move northward, except by minivan, since those are less routinely checked by the National Migration Authorities of Mexico (INM). We shared some stories of being on the road, albeit under very different conditions, yet still under the neocolonial violences of border militarization, and the nationalist-patriarchy that exists in a country that has a long history of anti-Central American sentiment and opposition. We decided to make the most of our strandedness in Palenque, and we invited the group on a day hike to the temples. The walk from the town center to the top of the mountain would be long. We prepared the day before by doing our best to sell artisanry in the city center and attempting to take a minivan (*combi*) to the top. The next day, we learned very quickly that it would be impossible. The minivan driver took our payment to take us to the top without explaining that non-Mexican nationals who lacked documentation would not be allowed to get into the National Park. At the entrance of the nationalized park and ceremonial site, a security officer asked us to get out of the van. I was given an exception because of my passport and did my best to advocate for our new friends, but the privilege could only go

so far. I decided to exit the van and we devised a plan to escape the situation. Finally, thanks to some hustle and getting lost in the jungle, we got to the other side of the park and onto a trail to hike up. That day brought relief to the six of us: four people from Honduras, one from Veracruz, and the Fresno-Salvador-an-LA girl. We tried to scheme together and coached on what to say if an INM officer stopped them, they would reply that they were from Veracruz because our Spanish is similar. Then, we took a break on our way up for sandwiches and a refreshing dip in one of the countless waterfalls, and felt the camaraderie of moving together with a sense of protection.

In "Caminxs del Sur," one can hear Margot López' soundbite "y nos negamos a morir, ¡somos y seremos un pueblo en resistencia!" (Ayala, Escalante, and Pano 2:39–243). Along with her voice, you see the face of our comedian friend from Honduras, a *mestizo* man who filled our mountain hike with laughter, questions, curiosity, and so much joy, in defiance of all the horror they had already experienced far from their homelands. They shared with us their anxiety and fear of being detained, their families not having been able to wire them enough funds, and the violence they were facing. We shared food, stories, tips, left them with camping and travel gear, and a map of Mexico to help them continue northward. We stayed in communication for years thereafter, learned of the baby's birth, and of two of the men's deportations back to Honduras.

I think about this militarized zone in Mexico's southern border, a paradox of hyper-surveillance and artillery-grade automobiles and paramilitaries that continue to violently demarcate borders onto local Mexican and Guatemalan communities and all those displaced that cross through (see Walia 117). The Maya Zapatista territory, in contrast, is a geopolitical space that has become a great symbol of Indigenous resistance. The sonority in the jungles we attempted to cross adds to this paradox. A non-harmonizing blend can be heard: local *corridos* of the working-class blasting from the pick-up trucks and, interestingly for me, house, techno, and minimal music from the jungle hotels and resorts. It is hard not to notice the majority of white European and United Statesian trance and rave festivalgoers, but something interesting also lends itself to the closely listening ear and unseeing eye: an underground scene of local DJs who love this music as well. Although they indirectly contribute to entertaining the privileged and well-off traveling tourists, in some instances, they keep this scene exclusively for locals and specifically for racialized and working-poor Latin-Americans who have found themselves traveling under scant conditions.

The remaining two song-chapters of "Caminxs del Sur" reflect these sounds and the sonic possibilities throughout the isthmus (see Ayala, Escalante, and Pano 3:23–6:32), where the futurism of house, techno, psytrance and so many subgenres of what is mostly Black-queer future disco become exhilarating sonic spaces that must not be overlooked or simply discredited as neo-hippie music. I consider contemporary electronic music an offspring of Black-queer future disco, due to its origins in Black and inter-racial queer working-class nightlife. Although there are problems that must be disentangled, specifically to address white supremacy and its connection with gentrification and displace-

ment projects in electronic music scenes tied to mega tourist projects, there is an equal need to recognize the affective and somatic effects that higher paced beats per minute have on individuals, collective social movements and paradigms for people local to the region, and on those who have grown up with a politicized understanding of dissident queer culture and the many ways that house became a space to theorize and enact liberation truly. First, for the house music lover or enthusiast, by producing a necessity to move one's body in ways that contest colonial shame and modesty (see Taylor 3); by encouraging movements that question and contemplate sexual deviance and liberation; and through embodied gestures that respond to sounds that hold emotion, lyrical and non-lyrical messaging, sampling, and connections to ancestral memory through instruments and rhythms (see Alma 16; Taylor 3).

Central American scholar Karina Alma describes this engagement with sound as the way "Central American creatives materialize their embodied memory (thus rememoria) across generations (time) and in crossing the Isthmus to the United States (space) as evinced in their cultural art making" (16). I contemplate the experiences of people following generations of displacement and the meaning of listening to ancestral instruments, whether of one's ancestry recognized as such or not. I also consider instruments of different origins and how they have historically been undervalued, folklorized, or, as anti-colonial scholar Aimé Césaire would phrase it, subjected to *thingification*. This process of othering and exoticizing knowledges and technologies occurs within the elitist and hierarchical structures of musical composition and theory (see Césaire qtd. in Kelley 9).[3]

With Césaire in mind, I ponder the meaning of hearing these ancestral sounds for the first time, whether in the privacy of one's bedroom or the public's intimate rave with fellow displaced and traveling comrades, without a dime to our name or the cushion of a middle-class family. Or of hearing an Andean flute play *"¿Por qué estás triste?*"—a song that became a lament and solace for one's family amidst war—and finding it still recognizably familiar even when mixed and blended with synthesized beats, still drawing your body to dance to it, revel in it, ponder the experience of the family, and transport you to a place where possibly one's ancestors listened and where your feet and hips recognize the simultaneous presence of urgency and joy. These are broad questions that deserve thought and care alongside the urgency to act in solidarity with dispossessed people, regardless of one's ancestry. But, for many people like myself—Salvadoran, Central-American, whose lineages are still experiencing the aftermath of very recent state-imposed genocides, continued criminalization and displacement—these are questions that fulfill ancestral desires and grant a horizon of place(s) on the maps of the pluriverse.

[3] Aimé Césaire describes the human subjugation of Afro-Antillean people by European colonizers as to be "thinged"—not human but othered non-human.

"¡Y nos negamos a morir, somos y seremos un pueblo en resistencia!"[4]

As we continue with the sonic collage, the third song-chapter displays images of the recent caravans of 2018 that also reflect the sonics and paradigms where young folks have also found and come to love hip hop. An image of two young men whose hats read "Funk" and "Soul" recalls a battle competition we witnessed in the center of San Cristóbal de las Casas. I met many young people passing through the small mountain city: Mayan Guatemalans, racialized Salvadorans, Hondurans, Nicaraguans, Panamanians, and *Ticos* (Costa Ricans). Travelers coming from Central America, or those who are Central American, can easily become friends. We meet each other on the streets, *vendedores ambulantes*, *malabareros*, mimes, guerrilla theatre performers, and musicians. Most of the travelers I met from Central America loved Mexico and specifically Chiapas, yet they often expressed an underlying fear and paranoia about getting caught, jumped on, or beaten by Mexican nationals. It was known among most of us to keep our identity under wraps or hidden as much as possible. Stories had circulated of young folks getting beaten for their artisanry and merchandise. A friend from Santa Ana, El Salvador, whom I met in San Cristóbal, had been traveling for nearly two years and subsisted by performing his *malabares* in the city intersections. We split up in Chiapas but stayed in contact as he moved northward towards Xalapa, Veracruz. A few months later, I learned he was in critical condition in the hospital because, while he was performing, a group of unknown people attempted to burn him alive by pouring gasoline on his face and body. Previously, a group of Mexican *malabaristas* had warned him not to work at that intersection. He survived and was left with permanent wounds and scars, and through emergency and solidarity efforts of many of his friends and family, he was sent back to El Salvador. My heart goes out to him. We had spoken before at one of the Zapatista collective centers in town about the need to stay quiet about our identities in Chiapas, although he more than I. We understood the risks of violence that came with nationalism, even in the alternative economic spaces of traveling artists.

One of the images in this chapter reads "No nos adaptaremos a este sistema" and an anarchist "A" is highlighted following the images of Margarita Murillo (Ayala, Escalante, and Pano 2:50–2:52), a *campesina* feminist organizer and founder of the National Popular Resistance Front (FNRP) of Honduras who was assassinated while defending herself from a hit man in Honduras in 2014 (Aguilar and Ayala).[5] Margarita's daughter joined Quetzal Beats' first concert in 2018 at MacArthur Park, a central location for Central Americans in Los Angeles. She used the platform given by the concert in Los Angeles and the National Network of Women Human Rights Defenders in Honduras to denounce her mother's assassins and educate the community about the political situation

[4] Words of Margot López (see Ayala, Escalante, and Pano 2:39–243).

[5] For a summary of Quetzal Beats's first concert led by Central American artists in Los Angeles (see Aguilar and Ayala).

imposed by hydroelectric and extractive capitalism in Honduras (Red Nacional de Defensoras de Derechos Humanos en Honduras). An archival poster depicting Mexico and US relations and migrants follows a casual photo of Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) guerrillas taking a break and posing for a shot. We placed these photos in this order to sit with the complexity of present displacement, persecution, and lateral state relations, as well as the historical memory that many Central Americans have regarding revolutionary movements tied specifically to communism and anti-imperialism.

I think about how so many Central Americans are illegible in Mexico and to Mexicans for these present and recent histories. How a narrative of submissiveness and silence does not fit the national imaginaries imposed onto us once we are physically in contact with one another. How our robust and confident laughter often becomes misinterpreted, and how our loose, coastal, and Indigenous languages—still existent—also become sites of racialized violence in Mexico, and yet ancestral relations exist with the marginalized of southern Mexico. These relations can and do lend themselves to solidarity efforts. It is also imperative that we name the generational violence committed against so many of our people—Central Americans experiencing displacement and Indigenous, Black, brown, and mixed-race communities. The chapter highlights the man from the second song-chapter—anonymous for safety purposes— who was on "La Bestia" in Veracruz when the clip was recorded in 2016 (Ayala, Escalante, and Pano 2:53). The soundbite starts with that anonymous man saying, "a nosotros aquí nos llaman los charoleros." Then Margot López's voice quickly interjects, and the soundbite concludes with her words, "y nos negamos a morir, somos un pueblo en Resistencia" (Ayala, Escalante, and Pano 2:49–2:53).

Aguas, archipiélagos, istmo

> Sagrada sal de nuestras luchas.
> Lluvia sobre las milpas.
> Presas repartidas, juntos de las manos.
> Vida toda.
> Berta. Compañera.
> ¿Qué sabrá el asesino de la luz de su esperanza?
> No podrá tomarse la utopía el cobarde, ni en palabras.
> Muchos siglos tendrán para pagar esta muerte.
> Y ojalá que se les pudra el agua en la garganta.
> Bertita nuestra.
> Berta de las aguas.
> El odio de los hombres que tanto nos añoran.
> No pueden con tanta belleza, con tanta fuerza y gracia.
> Y por eso matan y por eso matan ¡y por eso matan!
> No saben de esta venganza nuestra.
> De ser libres y no cambiar la rebeldía por nada.
> (Ayala, Escalante, and Pano 3:35–4:31)

Cardoza's voice echoes over a deep baritone drum and the rhythm of *ayoyotes*, or *sonajas* if held by the hand. This song chapter—the fourth and final

one—is sampled by Argentinian DJ-producer Uji, who does not identify as Indigenous and uses samples of Indigenous instruments from Abya Yala in his electronic productions. Aesthetically, the sound, tempo, and crescendo transmit a notion of redemption and the high-toned flutes invite one to imagine an airy expanse. The chapter is dedicated to the waters and shows the urgency of water defense. Cardoza's poem, an open letter to Berta Cáceres' assassins, utilizes principles of a sharp tongue to communicate the dignified rage of stolen lives at the hands of the *hydrocratic* (between autocratic and hydroelectric) power imposed by the Honduran state and the transnational corporation, Desarrollos Energéticos (DESA). "Caminxs del Sur" includes footage from recent uprisings in Honduras and Nicaragua, as well as archival posters from El Salvador's historical movements for life (see Ayala, Escalante, and Pano 4:08–4:32). One of the images depicts a protest that erupted in April of 2019 in Nicaragua. A group of farmers holds a sign that reads "No! Al Canal!" in protest of the transnational deals made by the Ortega regime and Chinese capitalists, which will literally rip through Managua Lake and devastate Indigenous, Afro-descendant and working or poor communities (Ayala, Escalante, and Pano 3:42). Similarly, the photos of young people we included depict Honduran students who took to the streets during the onslaught of the oligarchic rule of Juan Orlando Hernández. Militant students can be seen holding a banner that reads "MEU-vs", which I interpret as "Movimiento Estudiantil Universitario." Coincidentally, a state propaganda banner reading "Báñate en menos tiempo"—which shifts responsibility for water shortages onto citizens—is also visible.

The chapter also incorporates a map of the United Fruit Company's empire in Central America and the Caribbean. It displays a key that shows the banana, sugar, cacao, abaca, and oil palm plantations. The bottom text reads, "United Fruit has principal divisions at the cities and towns named on the map" (Ayala, Escalante, and Pano 4:42). The map includes the following Central American locations: Tiquisate and Puerto Barrios in Guatemala; Tela, Honduras; Bluefields, Nicaragua; Limón and Golfito in Costa Rica; and Almirante, Panama. The Caribbean locations include Cuba; Puerto Libertador, Dominican Republic; and Kingston, Jamaica. I do not believe this is an exhaustive list of the cities and towns where the United Fruit Company operated. However, we get a glimpse through this archival source map of its extensive reach in Central America, the Caribbean, and even further south. The following two images are of a US air base, with an unidentified location in Central America. Sourced from the local Belizean newspaper *Amandala,* the next image is an artistically rendered collage of an article headlined "Artists to Protest Israeli Training of Belize Police." We chose this image to hone in on the militarist and hegemonic ties between the settler and imperial nations of the United States and Israel, which are crucial for understanding the region insofar as displacement, settlerism, extraction, and militarist training. The collage's background shows my photograph of a political worker and journalist in Belize who shared insights about Black Belizeans experiences after the British colonial rule and their connections and relationships with Garifuna people across Central America—though she does not

self-identify as Garifuna but diasporic African—(Ayala, Escalante, and Pano 4:55). We shared knowledge on the region's militarization in the past forty years and how it was being exacerbated by the training carried out by Israel and the support of the US through military bases such as the Southern Command in the Petén region of Guatemala. She had migrated from Belize to Los Angeles in the early nineties, but was deported and separated from her family due to her political involvement with protests throughout Los Angeles. She shared with me the layers of anti-Black violence she experienced from whites and Latinx *mestizos* while in the detention centers and how she was forcibly caged in the Adelanto Detention Center in Southern California for over a year in the mid-1990s.

(Re)encuentro cíclico

We close the "Caminxs del Sur" collage with a song of lament titled "¿Por qué estás triste?," an Andean huayno recorded and released in 1990 by Savia Andina of Bolivia (Ayala, Escalante, and Pano 5:23–6:32). Our inclusion of "¿Por qué estás triste?" pays homage to the decades of transnational solidarity from South America, particularly sonic solidarities with the huayno, a musical movement born in the Andean highlands. This movement, somehow polemical and popularized as "folkloric" by non-Indigenous musicians throughout Latin America, meaningfully impacted oppressed communities and their liberation movements across Central America (see Gordillo). Although the song is not from Central America, Indigenous Andean music has had a profound influence in Central America, especially in movements of solidarity, specifically with groups like Yolocamba Ita, whose musical repertoire includes *trova*, the instrumentalization of marimbas and flutes as well as contemporary electric guitars, keyboard and percussion.[6]

As the sonic collage continues, one sees an archival poster of Mélida Anaya Montes, which was located at the Centro Cultural Centroamericano in Los Angeles's MacArthur Park and stored there for decades by a collective of Central American artists and organizers. They kindly offered to show us the space along with the stored documents and archival posters, mostly gifts from community members active in various movements in Central America (largely in El Salvador) and later in Los Angeles after their exile. Many archival posters included in this video collage from that archive are now in the California State University Special Collections Library in Los Angeles. Nancy Escalante, an emerging archivist-scholar, generously contributed much of the archival material for this video. She continues her practice of digitizing and expanding upon various archives about and for Central Americans (see "Student curator").

Our efforts to close the "¿Por qué estás triste?" segment were guided by the need to honor the fallen martyrs of nationalist violence that transcends so many borders. The poster of Mélida Anaya Montes has unknown authorship (Ayala, Escalante, and Pano 05:23). It was made for a political education and solidarity

[6] The song "Mestizajes" is a great example of the musical and genre blending of ancestral with contemporary instruments, see Yolocamba Ita.

event held on May 15th, possibly in the late 1980s or early 1990s, in Los Angeles by the Association of Salvadoran Women (AMES) and the FMLN. The poster states in bold stenciled letters at the top that Anaya was murdered by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (Ayala, Escalante, and Pano 5:25). I imagine how non-Central Americans who witnessed these gatherings, led by Salvadorians and other Central Americans themselves, must have re-formulated their understanding of victim narratives. I wonder what the voices of those exiled would reveal, emitted amidst the terror of knowing that a military power such as the US was actively bombing and displacing entire families, such as mine and so many of my kin. I thank them for transforming their rage into militancy and actions for our people across the isthmus.

In the song-chapter's closing, we honor the martyrs and those in perpetual dispossession of land, life, joy, kin, and self-generated possibility. Jakelin Caal Maquin, seven years old, Q'eqchi of Guatemala. Claudia Patricia Hernández Gómez Gónzalez, twenty years old, Mam of Guatemala. Juan de Leon Gutiérrez, sixteen years old, Lenca, and Chorti, Garifuna. Felipe Alonso Gómez, eight-year-old, and Chuj. All martyrs were murdered in cold blood at the US-Texas border by border patrol agents who have not faced any form of criminal charges. Victoria Salazar, murdered in Cancún by Mexican police authorities. Father and daughter, Óscar Alberto and Angie Valeria Martínez Ramírez, from San Martín, El Salvador, tragically lost to the hostile militarized waters of the Río Grande near Brownsville, Texas, as they attempted to cross (see González).[7]

"Caminxs del Sur" concludes with the images and collages of the isthmus' originating peoples, their circular walking, routes, and the confrontations forced upon them by the terror of white-nationalist states, the US and beyond (see Ayala, Escalante, and Pano 5:30–6:32). Their images serve as more than reminders; they represent the infinite possibilities of futurity, a ceremonial rooting in constant dialogue for the displaced who find themselves along these routes. These images model reverence and fellowship with the plurality of peoples, lands, air, waters, soil, and earth life forms that the displaced encountered on their journey. The images breathe through anti-colonial lenses in defiance of individualism and fragmentation, affirming the necessity of the displaced to (re)encounter their kin. Their futurity manifests as a profound reality whose grand weight the isthmus continues to carry. It is a futurity in which justice is impossible, yet the bones of the dead animate the cosmic urgencies of inter-trans-formations, to go into the beyond of transient-ness and movement of worlds, paradigms, peoples, and life. A pluriverse of generational and land-based resistance.[8]

[7] In Texas, deadly floating buoys were placed in the river to deter migrants from crossing the border (see González).

[8] Lastly, Quetzal Beats is in a transitory state of collaboration with projects that encompass musical production, literature diffusion and in constant re-assessment of communal and individual creativity. We will be releasing further audio-visuals through our YouTube channel, Quetzal Beats.

Works Cited

Abrego, Leisy. *Sacrificing Families: Navigating Laws, Labor, and Love Across Borders.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014. Print.

Aguilar Antunes, Aleksander. "Territorios, identidades y canales: pueblos centroamericanos entre la geopolítica y la cosmopolítica." *América Latina y sus pueblos en movimiento*. Ed. Nora Garita. Heredia: Letra Maya, 2018. 33–76. Print.

Aguilar Antunes, Aleksander and Ayala, Paula. "Quetzal Beats: Hip hop, diásporas e identidades centroamericanas." *Nómada* 28 June 2019. Web.

Alma, Karina. *Central American Counterpoetics: Diaspora and Rememory*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2024. Print.

"Artists to Protest Israeli Training of Belize Police." *Amandala Newspaper* June 21, 2018. Web.

Ayala, Paula, Nancy Escalante, and Ana Pano. "Caminxs del Sur." *YouTube*, uploaded by Quetzal Beats, 16 Apr. 2020. Web.

Batz, Giovanni. *The Fourth Invasion: Decolonizing Histories, Extractivism, and Maya Resistance in Guatemala*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2024. Print.

Bermúdez, Egberto. *Itinerario Musical por Colombia*. Colombia: Mvsica Americana, 1996. CD.

Botero Gómez, Patricia. "Sentipensar." *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary.* Ed. Ashish Kothari et al. New Delhi: Tulika Books: 2019. 302–304. Print.

Cardoza, Melissa, Inma López, and Karla Lara. "13 Colors of the Honduran Resistance / 13 Colores de la Resistencia Hondureña." *YouTube*, uploaded by Matt Ginsberg-Jaeckle, 28 Nov. 2019. Web.

Carrera, Mauro. "Pinta México Tour Mauro Carrera San Cristóbal de Las Casas Chiapas." *YouTube*, uploaded by Mauro Carrera, 28 Feb. 2013. Web.

Ching, Erik and Virginia Tilley. "Indians, the Military and the Rebellion of 1932 in El Salvador." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 30.1 (1998): 121–156. Print.

Cornejo, Kency. *Visual Disobedience: Art and Decoloniality in Central America*. Durham: Duke University Press. 2024. Print.

Córdova, Carlos. "Interview with Daniel Flores y Ascencio." *BOMB Magazine*, 1 Jan. 2005. Web.

Espino, Alfredo. *Jícaras tristes*. San Salvador: Ministerio de Cultura, Departamento Editorial. 1955. Print.

Firmino Castillo, María Regina. "Dancing the Pluriverse: Indigenous Performance as Ontological Praxis." *Dance Research Journal* 48.1 (2016): 55–73. Print.

Gómez-Barris, Macarena. *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2017. Print.

Gonzalez, Valerie. "Court Orders Texas to Move Floating Buoy Barrier that Drew Backlash from Mexico." *AP News* 1 Dec. 2023. Web.

Gordillo Brockmann, Bernard. "Mass for the Cold War: Sonic Disunity, Pope John Paul II and the Nicaraguan Revolution". UCLA Institute of Latin American Studies. 18 Apr. 2024 Lecture.

Hooker, Juliet. *Theorizing Race in the Americas: Douglas, Sarmiento, DuBois and Vasconcelos*. Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. Print.

Kelley, Robin D.G. "A Poetics of Anticolonialism." *Monthly Review Press* 51.06 (2001): n.pag. Web.

Lopez, Margot. Interview. Radio Santa Ana, 22 Oct. 2019. Recording unavailable to the public since 2021. Radio.

López Oro, Paul. "Digitizing Ancestral Memory: Garifuna Settlement Day in the Americas and in Cyberspace." *Indigenous Interfaces: Spaces, Technology and Social Networks in Mexico and Central America*. Eds. Jennifer Gómez and Gloria Chacón. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2019. 165–179. Print.

Mbembe, Achille. *Necropolitics*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2019. Print.

Montgomery, Nick, Carla Bergman, and Hari Aluri. *Joyful Militancy: Building Thriving Resistance in Toxic Times*. Chico: AK Press, 2017. Print.

Peláez López, Alan, "The X in Latinx is Wound, not a Trend." *ColorBloq the Story of Us* 13 Sept. 2018. Web.

Red Nacional de Defensoras de Derechos Humanos en Honduras. "Honduras / Pronunciamiento de la Red Nacional de Defensoras: Justicia para Margarita Murillo y Macarena Valdés." *IM-Defensoras* 27 Aug. 2018. Web.

Safa, Helen. "Challenging Mestizaje: A Gender Perspective on Indigenous and Afrodescendant Movements in Latin America." *Critique of Anthropology* 25.3 (2005): 307–330. Print.

Savia Andina. "¿Por qué estás triste? (El Búho Remix)." *YouTube*, uploaded by Music Free Copyright of MACS, 31 Oct. 2021. Web.

"Student Curator Nancy Escalante: Finding Community in the Archives." *Yale Library* 16 Feb. 2023. Web.

Taylor, Diana. *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Duke University Press, 2003. Print.

Tzul, Gladys. "Rebuilding Communal Life: Ixil Women and the Desire for Life in Guatemala." *NACLA Report on the Americas* 50.4 (2018): 404–407. Web.

Walia, Harsha. *Border & Rule: Global Migration, Capitalism, and the Rise of Racist Nationalism*. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2021. Print.

Yolocamba Ita. "Mestizajes." *YouTube*, uploaded by Yolocamba Ita-Topic, 14 Feb. 2019. Web.