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Intergenerational Pláticas as Ethnic Studies Freedom Dreaming in Kern County

Tim Monreal, University at Buffalo, The State University of New York
Felisa Patiño-Longoria, California State University, Bakersfield
Marlene Herrera, California State University, Bakersfield

Abstract

In this article, we center intergenerational pláticas between a recent undergraduate student, a new education professor, and a veteran K-12 teacher as a praxis, a methodological-epistemological location, for pedagogical freedom dreaming in ethnic studies. Our platicando uses our (shared) experiences to produce knowledge about the (im)possibilities of ethnic studies, not in urban or politically progressive areas, but in conservative, even hostile spaces within California's Central Valley. We share excerpts and analysis of our pláticas in order to *create* a living archive (of ethnic studies praxis) for social justice, resistance, and transformation (in Kern County).

> …I throw the bleeding *nopal*
> into a pan, pull out another.
> It takes hours to defang cactus.
> The thought of them: tender,
> cooked in *chile colorado*
> keeps me stooped over the *cubeta*
> ignoring the tiny slivers
> piercing my thumb.
> (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 134, emphasis in original)

> …And past the crowded and lanky weeds
> To stop me from bleeding
> On the same soil she waters everyday,
> Granting the weeds and the sunflowers to grow side by side
> To keep me from leaving
> (Herrera, 2020, p. 41)

Introduction

In this article, we center intergenerational pláticas between a recent undergraduate student (Marlene), a new education professor (Tim), and a veteran K-12 teacher (Felisa) as a praxis, a methodological/epistemological location, for pedagogical freedom dreaming (Love, 2020) in ethnic studies. As we describe in the article, platicando located our (shared) experiences as un camino to produce knowledge about the (im)possibilities of ethnic studies, not in urban or politically progressive areas, but in conservative, even hostile (Monreal, 2022), spaces within California's Central Valley (see also Sawyer et al., 2019). We found ourselves returning to the weeds,

sunflowers, y (bleeding) nopales of our (ancestors') lives in the Central Valley, and thus use the opening epigraph as a way to conjure up an image that speaks to our freedom dreams and critical hope that continues to grow in inhospitable places (Duncan-Andrade, 2009; Monreal & Floyd, 2021). Our work stems from, and is inspired by recent scholarship that locates cross-generational pláticas as a path "to create a self-reflexive space to theorize ways to affirm the lived experiences along *different* points" (Fránquiz & Salinas, 2022, p. 420, emphasis ours) of Latinx teachers' experiences with ethnic studies. We prioritize intergenerational learning and platicando (Fránquiz & Salinas, 2022; see also Blanco, 2022; Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016; Guerra & Rodriguez, 2022) - between teachers who are at different moments in their teaching journey as a way to "conjure commune, consult" and *create* the archives of "cultural homesplaces, communities, classrooms, and institutions" (Joubert III, 2022, para. 1) in the Central Valley.

We lay out the article as follows. First, we place our pláticas within the context of Kern County and Bakersfield, CA, a part of California with outsized historical and contemporary connections to conservative politics (Bakersfield is home to Republican congressman, and now leader of the House, Kevin McCarthy). Next, we use a small sampling of Felisa's family history to explain how even within racist spaces and places, Latinx families and communities find ways to preserve their culture and enact political agency. This theme reemerges in the second half of the paper as we explain how we engaged in pláticas to learn from each other's knowledges, pedagogies, and movidas (see Monreal, 2019, 2021) of everyday hope and resilience (toward ethnic studies). We conclude by emphasizing the need and power of (intergenerational) platicando as a way to support the political work of both teaching and fighting for ethnic studies. As an additional note to readers, we weave portions of pláticas, poetry, and vignettes throughout the article. We feel the notion of *weaving* to be particularly important, as it speaks to how different threads and strands of knowledge and experience come together to *produce* and *generate* ideas and understanding.[5]

Bakersfield and Kern County: Placing (Histories of) White Supremacy

> As a Oaxacan daughter of immigrants I (Marlene) grew up on the East Side of Bakersfield. I grew up hearing jokes about avoiding the East Side (the majority Latinx part of Bakersfield) made by my white classmates. My teachers never addressed these comments, but instead encouraged them with a laugh. I was never taught the history of Kern County, and how the segregation of our city was literally designed by White supremacy (Cruz, 2020). It makes me grow more resentful toward the school districts that raised me. Our pláticas have provided a space to feel comfortable sharing (and rejecting) these truths, discussing them with my family, and dreaming of what could be different. It also pushes me to work in the same schools surrounded by students who come from the communities I do. (Marlene)

[5] Moreover, the concept of weaving was a central way the Aztec/Mexica understood the (re)creation of the world. In his description and analysis of Aztec/Mexica philosophy, Maffie (2014) describes the import of the self-generating and regenerating sacred energy called *Teotl*. *Teotl* is ultimately the process of the universe weaving itself, as the cosmos is a grand weaving always already in progress, and "*Teotl* is simultaneously weaver of the cosmos, the weaving of the cosmos, and woven cosmic product" (Maffie, 2014, p. 403; see also Monreal & Tirado, 2023).

Bakersfield is the metropolitan center of Kern County, which comprises the southern tip of California's agricultural rich San Joaquin Valley. The San Joaquin Valley is a geographically and socially distinct region of California. Guarded by mountain ranges in all directions, the San Joaquin Valley – populated by numerous small, but largely Latinx rural farming towns – is sometimes called 'the other California.' Despite a deep history of activism, civil rights, and farm labor organizing by Black, Asian, and Latinx communities, the area is firmly controlled by a white, conservative political structure and many of its residents live below the poverty line and struggle to access basic necessities (see also Del Real 2019a, b, c; Sawyer et al., 2021; Weisman, 2023). Thus, writer Nicholas Belardes (2020b) describes Bakersfield: "An oppressive political shadow drips onto the landscape, one seemingly intertwined with excessive smog and decaying apartment rentals. The power structure is Trump happy; a lust-filled fervor infects them…" (para. 5).

This ongoing shadow and specter of White supremacy links directly back to history, infrastructure, and policing. Belardes (2020a, b) argues that racism is literally built into the landscape of Bakersfield, a subtle indoctrination that works to enable, and at times overlook, how White supremacy is upheld in Kern County. Belardes (2020b) reflects back to his time at *South* High, a school awash with imagery of the Confederacy. Until recently,[6] the school featured blue and gray colors and a rebel mascot complementing nearby street names such as White Lane, Sumter Drive, and Plantation Avenue. Racist names and symbols match a geography haunted by (continuing) segregation, past histories of redlining and racially restrictive covenants, and present practices of racial boundary making encouraged by the actions of local real estate agents, public officials, and residents (Cruz, 2020). Law 'enforcement,' too has traditionally worked as a tool to advance local white power structures as corruption is prevalent and officials target people of color based (Schwaller, 2018). To put this into perspective in April of 2018, (still) Sheriff Youngblood was caught on video stating that it was better, from a financial standpoint, to kill a suspect than "cripple" them, "because if you cripple them you have to take care of them for life, and that cost goes way up" (para. 12). This surveillance of, and violence toward Black and Latinx populations was a normative part of school discipline as the city's high school district agreed to a settlement in 2017 resulting from a racial discrimination lawsuit alleging disproportionate and excessive suspicions and expulsion. In sum, (school) monuments that honor White supremacy, geographies of segregation, and education/law enforcement actions (continue to) create a hostile environment for people of color in Bakersfield, Kern County, and the larger San Joaquin Valley.[7] Understanding this foundation of White supremacy in Kern County helps contextualize the difficulty of teaching for ethnic studies and social justice, but also highlights how actions of resistance and agency have always been necessary in the area. In other words, the common visual of Kevin McCarthy sitting next to Dolores Huerta (for example at a high school or college graduation) speaks to the (im)possibilities of ethnic studies in Kern County. Whilst we live within this violent tension of White supremacy and (Latinx)

[6] Despite a 2021 change of South High's mascot to 'Spartans,' the street names remain, and Belardes (2020b) explains, "[South High School and Kern High School District] continue to prop up a system of indoctrination that values a racist past over the lives of people of color" (para. 14).

[7] These particulars also speak explicitly to how anti-Blackness and attempts of Indigenous erasure/dispossession are integral parts of Kern County's structured white supremacy. Although outside the scope of this paper, Felisa's upcoming doctoral research seeks to engage directly with (anti)Blackness and Latinidad through qualitative research with Afro-Latinx *folklórico* dancers in Kern County. This future research will undoubtedly contribute toward the 'living archive' we engage with and build toward in this manuscript.

resistance, and know it to be a defining feature of our region, we also understand the need to make our navigation of such contradictions explicit and part of a living archive.

Creating Counterspaces in Kern County

> My parents were high school educators, now retired. They tirelessly taught students the subject matter they were experts in and an immense amount of cultura through the Spanish language, M.E.Ch.A. club activities, Mexican and Chicanx arts and crafts, and through folklórico dance. Currently those students are now elementary and high school teachers, administrators, local university CAMP Directors, nurses, and lawyers. My parents protested unfair propositions, marched in picket lines, knocked on doors for voter registration drives, and always advocated for Chicanx student rights. (Felisa)

Felisa looks to her parents as models who "tirelessly" center(ed) Latinx and Chicanx culture in their home and community to create counter spaces and counter stories (Arango et al., 2016; Hidalgo, 2015; Yosso, 2005) of resistance and agency. Despite calling conversative Kern County home, Felisa's parents spent their careers paving paths and forging roads of equity that remain open for others to build upon. Felisa continued her parents' work by cultivating a 20+ year career sharing her own experiential knowledge, those pedagogies of the home (Delgado Bernal, 2001; Garcia & Delgado Bernal, 2021) she was raised with, to instruct cultural performing arts, specifically folklórico dance to Kern County students in first through twelfth grade. Felisa credits her parents for explicitly demonstrating an ethnic studies praxis, even when such classes, knowledges, and pedagogies were not sanctioned by local schools. Thus, even as Kern County school districts and school boards stymie and/or ignore local attempts[8] to make transformative ethnic studies a part of the official curriculum, Felisa looks back to (familial) histories of everyday political agency and organization to inspire her work within such spaces. Thinking back to the many pláticas she shared with her parents and their educator friends/comadres, Felisa knows the importance of passing these culturally specific ways of teaching and learning to future generations (of educators) "to survive [and thrive in] everyday life…[by] engaging in subtle acts of resistance" (Delgado Bernal, 2001, p. 625). It is within this spirit of generational resistance, that we explain our own (intergenerational) pláticas to continue a legacy of subversive ethnic studies praxis within conservative spaces.

Pláticas: Theory and Method

> Pláticas allow for growth and understanding of what we all go through being Latino/a and Chicano/a in Bakersfield. Pláticas brings us closer together as descendants of Aztec warriors, now of Kern County fighting for recognition of our existence and freedom dreaming for our future generations. (Felisa)

I (Tim) too grew up in California's San Joaquin Valley near Fresno, a bit north of Kern County. My grandparents and their families followed the seasons up and down the Valley as migrant farmworkers before finding other jobs that allowed them to stay rooted in one place. Attending schools as a child (in the midst of California propositions 187 and 227; see Bishop & Arellano,

[8] In particular, we reference the work of the colectiva, *Kern County Educators for Ethnic Studies*.

2019), Latinx and Chicanx culture was explicitly discouraged in my formal education. College, middle school teaching jobs, and eventually doctoral studies sent me away from the San Joaquin Valley, but my first tenure track professorship brought me back. Teaching a summer class about foundations of education, I met a brilliant student, Marlene, who powerfully expressed the realities of an education not all that different from my own. After the class, and equipped with language and insight to name the White supremacist schooling systems she endured, Marlene and I regularly met to discuss her senior year, her future, and various ways to continue collaborating and learning from each other.

At the same time, after participating in local ethnic studies organizing and events, Felisa reached out to me for mentorship and guidance in completing her doctoral degree, especially since her program lacked both Latinx faculty and coursework. While I continue to provide support to Felisa's studies and research, I have learned invaluable histories and local knowledge from Felisa, her family, and her (folklórico) work. Thus, throughout my informal conversations with Felisa and Marlene, we contributed and co-constructed knowledge from our everyday teaching and lived experiences; and we "cultivated critical perspectives regarding enduring structures of racism, sexism, classism, and linguicism…and we examined, explored, and reimagined" (Fránquiz & Salinas, 2022, pp. 418, 421). In short, these two-way conversations, these "stories of pain and trauma, current negotiations, and future hopes" (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016, p. 114) were pláticas.

Inspired by my individual pláticas with Felisa and Marlene, I invited the three of us to pláticar about our experiences fighting for, learning about, and teaching toward ethnic studies in the specific context of Kern County. Key to this triad was the cross-generational conversations across a spectrum and continuum of educational lives and careers. The dynamic and honest conversations rooted in our myriad classroom experiences were meant to open a (counter)space where we could learn from (each other's) histories, improve our pedagogies, and theorize from our intersectional identities. Speaking directly to this power of cross-generational pláticas, Fránquiz and Salinas (2022) write:

> [Our] experiences are exchanged and validated as a means to further pedagogies. The exchanges…are riddled with remnants of the past and present, celebrations and failures, identity buildups and breakdowns, defiance and compliance…[we share] for the purpose of furthering [our] sense of cultural guardianship, a social responsibility that is intimately linked to furthering [our] pedagogies. Thus, opportunities for Latina[x] teachers to participate in pláticas across a professional continuum incite personal and collective hope. (p 426)

Our use of pláticas, particularly in "inciting personal and collective hope" for ethnic studies futures (in conservative spaces) was thus a collaborative method to "water the soil" and "stop the bleeding" (Marlene's opening poem). We looked to Fierros and Delgado Bernal's (2016) five principles of pláticas to drive our conversations. In particular, we started with an epistemological viewpoint, grounded in Chicana/Latina Feminist theory, that all of us were valid contributors who can and do create knowledge from our personal and familial experiences. We centered the importance of creating a safe place, one of cariño, trust, and reciprocity to learn and to heal, to "defang the cactus," (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 134) and to nurture the "weeds" and "sunflowers" (Herrera, 2020, p. 41) in this desolate, yet bountiful Valley of scorching sun, numbing fog, White supremacy, and Latinx resistance. Pláticas allowed for us to share the hurt, the pride, the resilience, and the possibility of

being Latinx in Bakersfield and Kern County as a location to center our freedom dreams for ethnic studies. Drawing upon, theorizing from, and connecting our experiences together as descendants of warrior peoples of the sun are thus contributions for and toward a local "living archive" of (our) ethnic study praxis. We saw our pláticas as the physical manifestation of *In Lak'ech:Tu eres mi otro yo*, a concept that emphasizes collectivity and relationships as the way to move forward and build knowledge.

Our (ongoing) pláticas started in late summer of 2022 over Zoom video conferencing technology. In our first meeting, we shared about our families, our personal educational journeys in the San Joaquin Valley, and our experiences with ethnic studies. Our goal was to build relationships and share with each other how our journeys–nuestros caminos–were our assets, our starting points for making sense of the world. We found inspiration from each other, and started to identify strengths and narratives to discuss further in a second meeting. In our second meeting, we shared specific experiences that spoke to the (im)possibilities of ethnic studies in our region. For Marlene, this was her poetry, her teaching, and her educational perseverance. For Felisa, this was her family history, her decades of folklórico experience, and her work creating space for Latinx cultural programs inside and outside schools. For Tim, this was an ongoing research project with K-12 Latinx teachers in Kern County. We took notes about each other's stories and wrote points of connection, potential, and insight in a collaborative document. For the third plática, we prepared a short vignette or brief narrative based on our experiences. Parts of these vignettes are shared below as part of the 'living archive' of dreaming for ethnic studies in Kern County. During this plática, we centered our conversions on these narratives, using them as a starting point to build knowledge about ethnic studies (praxis) in Kern County (see Appendix A for example). We wrote an additional layer of notes based on our shared meaning-making, key understandings, and important resonates. In a fourth plática, we returned to our previous conversations and notes to discuss our body of knowledge as a whole and create a representation (this manuscript) of our talks. Importantly, this was an emergent process in which planning, and analysis came from our shared relationships with each other rather than a specific methodological structure and/or reductive attempts at 'coding' data. For example, we didn't even think to record and/or transcribe our pláticas as such conventional research practice did not align with the spaces of conversation we aimed to create. In this way, our pláticas were also pedagogical avenues not only for future K-12 teaching, but also as aspiring researchers (re)learning what it means to do research (differently) and contribute academic knowledge (Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002). Next, as findings, we share excerpts of our vignettes and narratives followed by key points of our analysis and meaning making in order to *create* a living archive (of ethnic studies praxis) for social justice, resistance, and transformation (in Kern County).

A Living Archive

Only a Few Feet Away

At sunrise we line up across one another,
Only a few feet away
Not far enough to break a sweat
But burdensome enough
        To keep her from coming to me.
With feet sinking into the pit of wallowing sand,

And past the crowded and lanky weeds
To stop me from bleeding
On the same soil she waters every day,
Granting the weeds and sunflowers to grow side by side
To keep me from leaving
She asks me to save leftover fertilizer,
Keep a handful in my pocket to hide on the side of the road
Where both plants continue to grow despite concrete
And we'll meet at sunset
(Herrera, 2020, p. 41)

Marlene's poetry (featured above) speaks to her freedom dream, her first-gen (college) persistence, to finish university as the youngest of a multigenerational, immigrant family, and her dare to use her education toward ethnic studies futures. Marlene explained that the other day she substituted for a first-grade class. She read her own poems to the class – poems about picking grapes in the fields – during their reading time. Then, she encouraged her students to speak in Spanish to help each other during math time, despite their teacher's "No Spanish Rule." Marlene has also been invited back to her high school to read and discuss her poetry with students in English Language Arts classes. As a result of these class visits, she explained how engaged the students were, how they treated her like a celebrity, how they connected her words to their lives, and how they "made it [her poetry] their own." While substitute teaching at her former high school, current students sought Marlene out, telling Marlene they bought the new anthology (where she published), and asking her to sign copies. Marlene went on to explain how she didn't have these opportunities growing up – chances to discuss poetry about issues that mattered to her, with people that shared similar experiences with her. Thus, Marlene's dreaming of ethnic studies is reflected in the acknowledgement that no system she encounters was designed for her/us, and in a (ethnic studies) pedagogy that centers art, narrative, resistance, and complexity.

This connection to art, creativity, and cultura is something that connected with all three of us, especially Felisa. We found this as evidence (in line with what Felisa has witnessed over her long career) that such an arts-based ethnic studies praxis was impactful for and desired by Latinx students. As inspired as we were with Marlene's palabra, we also realized how rare such praxis was, something reflected in Marlene's story and Felisa's relentless passion to make space for this learning inside all schools. In fact, while Marlene explained how poetry is her avenue to learn about, teach for, and dream toward social justice, she also found it difficult to share her poetry with her sisters, a disconnect fostered by local spaces and structures of subtractive schooling, grueling working conditions, and marginalization. As a teenager, Marlene, as the youngest of nine siblings, would rush home from school to help take care of nieces and nephews. In the summers, she would meet her sisters at 4:00 AM to work in the fields, a place that fostered more commonalities than school. She shared:

> I wanted them [my sisters] to understand school was not only a government-imposed obligation on me as a result of being de aqui, but instead, something I cared deeply about and was slowly becoming passionate about. Having my sisters and my parents be more involved in my upbringing and education could have possibly helped them understand me similarly like I did while working with them. Likewise, if my experiences had been validated and normalized as part of my identity early on, instead of discouraged and brushed aside

> by school counselors and class material, I would have been more inclined to understand my identity and embrace it.

After Marlene's words, Felisa's dreams (and professional work) shined through. Felisa was adamant that schools should be a place where families should partake in, even practice, cultural joy. The job of ethnic studies in Felisa's mind is to bring these disconnected worlds together, to build our schools from (rather than devoid of) our intergenerational knowledge, the knowledge of the elders, the knowledge of the civil rights leaders and the abuelas (see Gonzales, 2015) in Kern County. As Felisa said, "Our young students of color and their families deserve to see themselves reflected in the curriculum and a part of the educational system, not as an add on or special holiday, but as a legitimate source of education within the system. What if the school tiene mariachis y folklórico, what if the parents, Marlene's parents and family, felt welcome…" Despite being "only a few feet away," we – our families, our students, and our communities – are refused these educational spaces and circumstances to sobrevivir y mucho menos crecer. Yet we continue to grow, and to fight, and to find beauty through cracks and concrete as Felisa describes next.

If Not Us, Then Who?

> Up to California from Mexico you come…
> And what will you be giving to your brown-eyed children of the sun?
> …You're a proud man, you're a free man, and your heritage is won
> And that you can be giving to your brown-eyed children of the sun!
> (Valdez et al., quoted in Farmworker Movement Documentation Project, n.d., p. 8)

> El picket sign, el picket sign
> Lo llevo por todo el día
> El picket sign, el picket sign
> Conmigo toda la vida
> (Valdez, quoted in Farmworker Movement Documentation Project, n.d., p. 2)

Felisa wrote the following lyrics on our shared document and spoke about how organizing, advocacy, and cultura were at the center of her childhood. Felisa remembers singing "el picket sign, el picket sign" with her parents as a little girl and considers herself fortunate to be raised in a household that cherished Latinx/Chicanx dance, song, and history. Similar to the pláticas the three of us shared, Felisa explained how family conversations provided history, guidance, and support. This familial knowledge not only instilled cultural pride (Felisa said "we knew who came before us"), but nurtured Felisa through sometimes hostile school environments, and motivated her to share her wisdom as an educator. She explained the following picture with these words:

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> Three generations of strong Latina women, all college graduates. All having learned from pláticas with each other through generations. First, pláticas between myself and my mother, then myself with my children, and then my children with their abuela and now all three sit at the table or on the dance floor and we sing, platicamos, o bailamos con un entendimiento de fortaleza Latina that brings us together as family. That is where we draw our strength. Our product is bringing forth the beauty of our culture and having it flourish in conservative Kern County. The beauty in diversity must be embraced and taught, especially where we live. If not us, then who?

Figure 1. Felisa and her family. Left to right: Alondra (Felisa's daughter), Eva (Felisa's mother), Citlalli (Felisa's daughter), Felisa. Traje auténtico, Veracruz, México, Región Jarocho. Photo Credit: Raúl Longoria, November 2019.

In addition to the women in her family, Felisa shared how her father took up the idea of "if not us, then who?" as a (retired) arts teacher. Felisa's father claimed (the beauty of) art was a pathway to introduce ethnic studies (even in Kern County). During the 1970s, her father's art classroom was a place to practice ethnic studies, teaching the youth about where they came from and how their ancestral history could carry them through, and struggle against, sometimes hostile environments (see also Patrón-Vargas, 2022). Felisa grew up with a belief that art was ethnic studies; and thus connected her decades of learning, teaching, and building folklórico directly to ethnic studies stating, "Folklórico dance and study *is* ethnic studies." Fittingly, her dreams for ethnic studies, reflect her advocacy of folklórico:

> We all have beauty to share. The struggle comes with having cultural arts play a more intentional role in the regular school day at all grade levels. I dream of an educational system that infuses cultural arts, especially folklórico as an option for students of all ages. Specifically, I dream that one day I can walk down a local school campus and hear mariachi class in one classroom, folklórico music on the school stage, budding Judy Baca's painting in the art classroom, and bilingual teatro practicing outside under a quiosco.

Tim and Marlene simultaneously expressed open admiration for Felisa and her family and a tinge of sadness because they didn't have a lifetime of family instruction in the arts. Felisa was quick to remind us (Tim and Marlene) that our families indeed made, and taught through the arts, but that our formal education had not given us the tools to recognize some of these practices. For example, we discussed saving eggshells to create cascarones, the ways we used discarded farm supplies like grape bins as planting boxes, and how our families found joy in shows like Sabado Gigante and Siempre en Domingo. In fact, this conversation opened up a larger conversation on the idea of struggle, and the importance of these intergeneration plácticas for seeing the continuity of culturally sustaining education of the home. At the same time, we grew frustrated that despite the local community's cultural wealth and expertise (Yosso, 2005) in folklórico and other arts, Felisa was still struggling for cultural arts to play "a more intentional role in the regular school day." Felisa

also expressed a belief that many students of color in Kern County struggled academically because curriculum and pedagogy lacked cultural relevance. In other words, current students may struggle to see, and/or appreciate these alternative epistemologies of the home developed through 'everyday' practices like gardening, music, and storytelling.

Picking up on this theme of struggle, Tim tied the notion of political struggle and social justice (those ideas that Felisa learned from family and Tim/Marlene learned at university) to the necessity of ethnic studies. The three of us also agreed that youth, whether our friends, students, and/or classmates, hungered for this knowledge and instruction, but were determined (to struggle) to find it. Marlene's experiences writing and teaching her poetry were direct evidence of this, and complemented the fire, the ganas, Tim and Felisa witnessed in their own students. This desire to struggle toward ethnic studies futures is thus an asset that local teachers could directly engage. *If not us then who? If not ethnic studies then what?*

Teaching as Organizing

Tim found not only hope and resistance in the pláticas with Felisa and Marlene, but also in his research with Latinx K-12 teachers in Kern County. In Tim's (ongoing) research in Kern County he uses interviews and photovoice to examine what it means to be(come) a Latinx teacher in the area. While not every teacher expresses the need for social justice and ethnic studies (praxis), Tim thought it was important to highlight examples of other teachers who have taken up the struggle in their own ways. Such evidence of solidarity and shared values can be encouraging when teaching toward ethnic studies in conservative spaces often feels isolating, if not dangerous. Tim shared the following portion of an interview with an educator who teaches high school U.S. History and an elective "multicultural study"[9] course. Although this particular educator considers, and teaches as if the "multicultural studies" was a Chicanx/ethnic studies course, he has been explicitly told by district officials not to name it such. In the excerpt the teacher discusses some of his approach and pedagogy:

> Tim: So would you consider teaching a type of organizing?
>
> Teacher: …And what happens if you are that neutral teacher, what happens if you don't see teaching as organizing and and the implication of this question is that the consequences are really severe. Other teachers are organizing whether they think they are or not. And in Bakersfield, those are largely conservative organizers…they're organizing their students to become Republicans and, and nobody, nobody calls it that and so, so even if I would be hesitant to call my work as a teacher organizing, I think it is.

Tim had never really considered teaching and ethnic studies praxis as an act of organizing, but the teacher emphasized how important such thinking was in conservative spaces. Yet, it was clear that teachers in Kern County were organizing whether they wanted to or not. The three of us connected this point to why a (white) status quo and curriculum (Felisa) and a continued family-education

[9] We put "multicultural studies" in quotations to show what kind of (neoliberal diversity) language is acceptable in Kern County (see also Monreal & Floyd, 2021). That is, the district eschews transformative ethnic studies by trying to forward ideas of (white) multiculturalism that highlight a hero/heroine approach to race and ethnicity (see also Sleeter et al., 2020). Still, and importantly this teacher resists this notion in subversive ways.

disconnect (Marlene) were normed in a place with such Latinx community and cultural wealth. To *not* value the knowledge (production) and wisdom of (Latinx) families, to *not* highlight (Latinx) legacies of resistance and political agency (in Kern County), to *not* include folklórico and (Latinx) arts in the school day; in sum, to *not* teach toward ethnic studies futures was/is not a neutral act, but it was/is an organizational feature of White supremacy in Kern County. Our praxis must reflect a need to organize (instruction) toward everyday actions and movidas of freedom dreaming, toward cultivating the weeds and bleeding nopales into critical hope (Duncan-Andrade, 2009; Monreal & Floyd, 2021). With this in mind, (our) shared pláticas, and (our) use experiential knowledge to *create and analyze* this living archive (of ethnic studies praxis) are a path to intergenerationally organize. Still, such work is not easy as the aforementioned teacher also explained:

> Tim: Finally, what does it mean to be Latino/Chicano teacher in Kern County?
>
> Teacher: It means I'm in the fight for, that really is what it means, I think that, like being a teacher is fighting for social justice because, because that is unwanted here.

Linking this back to our conversations, it is clear that teaching toward ethnic studies in Kern County is certainly a "fight," but one in which there is a hunger, a desire for change. The three of us thought about how crucial it would have been to have the teacher above in our formal schooling. A teacher who even when told not to teach ethnic studies was doing it anyway, a teacher who found cracks in the pavement like Felisa's dad, or Marlene's substituting, or Tim's mentoring, or Felisa's folklórico. And what might happen if these teachers came together in mutual conversation to regularly plan, think, and organize towards ethnic studies futures?

Concluding Thoughts

We conclude by emphasizing the act of creating a living archive of ethnic studies praxis in Kern County as well as the need and power of (intergenerational) platicando as a way to support the political work of both teaching and fighting for ethnic studies. By bringing together the wisdom of educators across different moments in their teaching journeys, our pláticas not only proved to be fruitful pathways toward learning and collaboration, but also (counter)spaces to reimagine the production of knowledge. This production of knowledge valued our personal experience, our family histories, and our visions for the future. It should not go unsaid that our collaborative pláticas are evidence of the pedagogical value of pláticas (and similar methods like testimonio y palabra; see Blanco, 2022) in and for ethnic studies. As Felisa shared at length, pláticas within her family have always proved to be a source of strength, pride, support, education, and cultural instruction. Pláticas are built on, and avenues toward, foundations of cariño, love, knowledge (production), and mutual respeto. Marlene also pointed out that it modeled a vulnerability that fostered a space of inspiration and healing. Thus, while we doubt (nor desire) that pláticas should (or can) be formulized into a "best practice," it is vital that pedagogies of the home like pláticas that honor (a) specific community cultural wealth be explicitly integrated into (ethnic studies) classrooms. Similar to Felisa's decades-long advocacy to include folklórico in the formal curriculum and school day, we see the incorporation of pláticas as praxis as a necessary connection between culture to classroom. In fact, Marlene wondered how her own family's connection to education (and even each other) would be different if schools created spaces of belonging with and through (the pedagogies of pláticas in) ethnic studies. This raises important questions about who gets to engage in pláticas like the ones we describe, as well as the need to create spaces for pláticas across a variety of

intergenerational and intersectional communities. Yet, the potential of ethnic studies is rooted in pedagogical interventions that bring forth intentional, caring, and critical conversations. Toward such ends we'll keep dancing, writing, learning, struggling, and dreaming.

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