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Deep Roots, Open Skies: The Quotidian Life of Ethnic Studies Outside of Academia

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Abstract

This essay brings together four Chicana/Latina scholar-activists whose lives span the El Paso borderlands, San Francisco's Mission District, San Ysidro, and California's Central Valley to show how Ethnic Studies lives beyond the academy in the everyday praxis of those navigating colluding systems of power. Through auto/collective ethnographic vignettes across diverse geographies, we show how Ethnic Studies emerges not through textbooks, but through the survival strategies, collective memory, and community praxis of those long excluded from the Ivory Tower. We center community as a site of rigorous theorizing and transformative praxis—where the poor, undocumented, criminalized, and forgotten engage critical analysis through care, resistance, and mutual aid. Against racial capitalism and settler colonialism, we uplift five core practices: Accompaniment, Barrio Mothering as Mutual Aid, Bridge Building, Popular Education, and Centering Those Often Forgotten. We reflect on our individual and collective work—across juvenile and immigration detention centers, county jails, prisons, afterschool programs, and through our mentoring and mothering relationships as we center collectivity and community engagement as a locus of theorizing and transformative praxis. This chapter is a call to push Ethnic Studies beyond the academy and to prioritize the places and partners with whom it will be the most impactful.

Keywords: Ethnic studies, radical accompaniment, critical consciousness, activist-scholars, and popular education

Introduction

Ethnic Studies looks like the power of prophecy when done right. When Trump likened Mexican immigrants to "criminals," undermined Black achievement, and scrubbed our histories from public memory, scholars of color warned that these were not isolated acts but steps toward white supremacist repression (Burden-Stelly, 2025; Canizales & Vallejo, 2021; Molina, 2014; Rodríguez, 2020). However, when you lack historical memory and strip cultura from consciousness, it's easy for history to repeat itself and make genocides and racially motivated attacks appear as exceptions as opposed to the rule. Ethnic Studies has long warned this is the making of a fascist regime (Kelley, 2025). However, while the people *in* and *from* the proverbial streets have been ringing the alarm, the ivory tower has sat in relative silence—manufacturing consent by way of intimidation by

enforcing neoliberal policies that punish democratic dissent (e.g., the imposition of Time, Place, Manner [TPM] disciplinary infractions on pro-Palestinian student encampments; caving into federal pressure to shut down DEI programming and offices; and handing over to the federal government the personal information of faculty, staff, and students involved in activism on campus) (Kelley, 2025).

As institutions sit back and watch aggrieved communities hunted for deportation by violent state sanctioned entities, it is the "working poor living in the shadow of the ever-growing master's house" who resist (Gilmore, 1993, p. 73). In Los Angeles, the booms of tear gas echo those deployed in Guatemala; protestors cover their mouths with the same paños farmworkers used against pesticides in the San Joaquin Valley. In San Diego and across digital spaces, communities organize patrols and use multilinguistic slang to warn each other of Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) checkpoints. This barrio-rooted praxis is informed by the diasporic experiences of struggle in solidarity of marginalized communities.

Despite most of our community(ies) not having accessed academia, these practices are Ethnic Studies in motion. Akin to the Black Radical Tradition (Robinson, 2000), communities resist not in *spite* of struggle, but *because* of it. These experiences have cultivated epistemological and ontological prowess that exist beyond the walls of the ivory tower (Kelley, 2002, p. 9). This social formation, rooted in and sustained by community, cultivates a critical consciousness (Freire, 2000) that challenges the hierarchical power relations pervasive in academia—relations shaped by white supremacy and driven by extractive individualism at the expense of community. This is knowledge rooted in survival, struggle, and community—knowledge academia often exploits but rarely honors (Simpson, 2017; Smith, 2021). As Unangax̂ scholar Eve Tuck (2009) asserts, "It looks to historical exploitation, domination, and colonization to explain contemporary brokenness, such as poverty, poor health, and low literacy . . . a pathologizing approach in which the oppression singularly defines a community" (p. 413).

Mapping the Terrain

Instead, the unique optic that is Ethnic Studies is oriented towards connecting the specificities of the local to the structural and destabilizing power imbalances in favor of the collective. This may look like refuting the types of "performance culture" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 84) that the neoliberal reorder of things (Ferguson, 2012) favors. Whereas success is determined by an institutional legibility that is achieved through securing grants and visibility for university stakeholders, Ethnic Studies in praxis isn't contingent on institutional constraints or 501(c)(3) status, but on shapeshifting to meet the needs and conditions of everyday people. As Fred Hampton eloquently said, "You can jail a revolutionary, but you can't jail the revolution."

Rooted in an Ethnic Studies praxis that is not constrained by the boundaries of academia, we offer a glimpse into the ways that we, four Ethnic Studies practitioners from diverse geopolitical spaces and positionalities, reflect the ethos and liberatory pedagogies of Ethnic Studies in our lives outside of academia. This approach is significant because it leans into Angela Davis' assertion that to be "radical simply means 'grasping things at the root'" (1989/2012); as the roots of Ethnic Studies have always been in community, not in the ivory tower. By situating theory in lived struggle, it honors our diverse communities as the original and enduring site of theory, praxis, and purpose.

The five themes that surfaced—Identifying Accompaniment as Radical Solidarity through El Hilo, Barrio Mothering as Mutual Aid, Bridge Building as Liberation Pedagogy, Popular Education, Centering Those Often Forgotten—emerged organically from our lived experiences. We did not select these themes; rather, they revealed themselves through the contours of our practice. As critical elements of our praxis, we compel those concerned with the political project that is Ethnic Studies to not only consider taking Ethnic Studies to the streets, but also to reimagine the terrain and population(s) that Ethnic Studies can grow most abundantly.

From these emergent themes, we invite you to move with us through a journey that traces how Ethnic Studies lives and moves beyond the classroom. As we see it, the quotidian life of Ethnic Studies is always in motion. It must be so, as life is not stagnant, but an ever-flowing river making valleys and shaping land over time. In this paper, we follow this river, making four stops along the way. These "stops" are what we consider essential movements in movement building. Each of us from distinct social geographies have gathered, through time and space, important lessons carried from place to place, impacting and being impacted by community, culture, and collectives. Andrea, scholar of immigration and movement-building, reimagines how accompaniment as an act of radical solidarity reshapes the landscape of migration research. Andrea draws from the Zapatistas (Marcos & de Leon, 2002; Simonelli et al., 2004) and liberation psychology rooted in Latin America's liberation theology, accompaniment (acompañar) as a practice of mutual learning, presence, and solidarity guided by communities' own goals (Farmer, 2012). Historically used in resistance movements during the Guatemalan and Salvadoran civil wars (Berryman, 1987), accompaniment resists charity and saviorism by centering witness, co-resistance, and convivencia, or living and struggling together.

Building on this lineage, Abrego (2024) frames research as accompaniment, while Andrea's theory of El Hilo extends this tradition as a decolonial and abolitionist method. El Hilo is both theory and praxis, a way of being-with, knowing-with, and walking-with others across the ruptures of migration, violence and systemic abandonment. Reflecting on the deep well of barrio mothering as an original source of life-sustaining practices, Marisa, scholar of carceral geographies, institutional inequality, and intersectionality illuminates its role as the foundation of what we now call mutual aid. In conversation with the Chicana M(other)work Collective (Caballero et al., 2019), Marisa draws from the idea that barrio mothering is a praxis, and not simply an identity. This politicized praxis is oriented to solidarity, community sustenance, and collective survival, whereby the institutions they traverse best serve the needs of marginalized communities when repurposed as community-based institutions that couple resources with their primary functions so that the holistic needs of community members are met (Maier et al., 2017). Like Kelley (2002), she demonstrates that "in the poetics of struggle and lived experience, in the utterances of ordinary folks . . . we discover the many different cognitive maps of the future, of the world not yet born" (p. 10), as she extends the innovative configurations of community self-determination methods cultivated out of the lived experiences of working-class Latina mothers as cunningly insightful insurgent pedagogies for community care and social movement praxis.

Julissa, scholar of education, carceral studies, and abolition remembers the bridge-building at the heart of ethnic studies education, made possible by bordertown teachers who helped her reconnect with her past to make way for her future as an Ethnic Studies teacher and scholar. Drawing from Casar and Noguera's (2025) powerful call to honor the "right to the word, " whereby marginalized students and communities should be able to narrate their own (hi)stories without

institutional actors speaking for, erasing, or distorting their experiences, Julissa demonstrates the powerful role of Ethnic Studies in creating intellectual and spatial bridges that lead students to reclaim their histories and engage in knowledge production. Recalling moments of humanization within one of the most dehumanizing spaces—a county jail—Marlene, scholar of Chicana/x Carework and critical carceral studies, highlights how popular education was mobilized to uplift a community of knowledge keepers. Drawing from Gloria Anzaldúa's (2002) theorization of *mindbodyspirit*, Francesca López's (2018) work on confianza, Tara Yosso's (2005) framework of cultural wealth, and Rosie Bermudez's (2020) articulation of Chicana militant dignity, Marlene illuminates how popular education and Chicana Carework emerge from the lived experiences, challenging colonial curricula and affirming the knowledge-making practices of those often left at the margins. Together, these movements remind us that Ethnic Studies is not confined to classrooms or institutions, but lives in the everyday practices of struggle, care, and radical collective imagination.

El Hilo: Accompaniment as Radical Solidarity—Andrea

I was 17 years old, in my final year of a rigorous college-prep high school, deeply resistant to the idea of more schooling. Having grown up as an immigrant, I was not foreign to feeling different, but there was something especially isolating about my schooling. Instead of feeling supported and welcomed, school felt empty and hostile, so I often slipped away to places that felt safer. One day senior year, my counselor told me I was close to failing a class required for graduation and would have to attend night school. This meant missing the choir performance and play I'd been cast in. I was devastated.

When I cut class, I often went to City Lights Bookstore in San Francisco to be silent, get lost in the aisles, and learn. That day, adrift, I sat staring at the book stacks. The faded yellow and black cover contrasted with bold red letters. Then I saw her eyes. Assata. Without hesitation, I stuffed it into my backpack. That night I stayed up reading, captivated by her story, her philosophy. Filled with rage, sadness, and fear, I cried, believing the tears were a spiritual desahogo. Turning the final page of Assata Shakur's autobiography, I closed a chapter of educational deception and began one of curiosity and consciousness raising, accompanied by Assata toward liberation.

Years later, I received a degree in Ethnic Studies. Yet, as Assata (1987) wrote, "Before going back to college, I knew I didn't want to be an intellectual, spending my life in books and libraries without knowing what the hell is going on in the streets" (p. 196). So I spent over a decade unlearning what institutions had instilled in me and reclaiming an education in my community as a youth-worker and organizer. Those lessons remain at the core of my praxis as an activist-scholar and breathe life into my research in a way no formal training could. This was the Ethnic Studies education that preceded academic knowledge.

Twenty years after picking up Assata's autobiography, I embarked on an accompaniment of words of my own. As a graduate student volunteering with a social-legal team, I traveled to ICE detention centers and border cities as an interpreter for asylum seekers. I remember sitting in a frigid courtroom, listening as a young man was stripped of dignity before a judge determining "credible fear," then denied asylum and deported. I recall a mother in detention, clutching her toddler with a distended belly, whispering "no quiere comer" as I held her hand. I think back to drawing pictures

with children in a church shelter, recently released from detention, sketching superheroes, broken chains, and open skies after crossing the treacherous Darien Gap.

In each instance, I drew not from training but from the deepest well of my humanity. I was present with rage, grief, love, and imagination, as I had been in healing circles, mutual-aid meetings, and kitchen tables in my community. Accompaniment was not just advocacy, but a spiritually aligned commitment to walk with people, a concept I have come to describe as El Hilo. Not ahead as a leader, nor behind as a witness, but alongside, like kin. El Hilo is the unbreakable thread of accompaniment and life-affirming practices, a living weave that carries memory, care, and collective struggle across migration, loss, and the everyday work of creating worlds together. Perhaps the academy will never fully be a place for El Hilo's vision for accompaniment as radical solidarity, yet despite bureaucratic borders that keep us from our communities, it is our duty as activist-scholars in the Ethnic Studies tradition to fight for freedom. It is the difference between merely documenting pain and joy, and instead, offering a warm hand that says, "I am with you," as we walk together toward liberation.

Barrio Mothering as Mutual Aid—Marisa

"Mother" is less a noun than a verb.

As a working-class origin, multigeneration Chicana from the San Joaquin Valley, I reflect on the contradictions. We grew up being told of the vitality of our tierra that birthed life that fed the world, yet California's prison alley (Gilmore, 2007) being home meant that the social death that filled carceral cages around us also closed in on us as we experienced the symptomology of intergenerational concentrated rural poverty. Despite growing up down the street from grape fields that began a boycott that spawned into a movement felt around the world, our primarily poor and working-class, heavily migrant, communities of color didn't learn of the virtues of Ethnic Studies in classrooms, but in community trying to survive (Garcia, 2012).

What is now called "mutual aid" was our way of being (Caballero et al., 2019). Our material conditions necessitated infrastructures of care. Most came from poor, mixed legal status, families of color without health insurance, steady medical care, and under hypersurveillance. This required crowd-sourced resources that incorporated family and avoided shame. I got a front seat to barrio mothering as mutual aid because my mother was the "Parent Coordinator" of our under-resourced Title 1 school. Responsible for bridging the community and school, my mother was a community organizer.

This barrio mothering, rooted in a social justice praxis, took many forms. This looked like covertly defying orders requiring summer school cafeteria workers throw away perfectly good food. Knowing the hunger in the community, she discretely instructed families on where to find wrapped boxes of food hidden for them near the dumpster once the school day concluded.

Centering the most marginalized wasn't an ideological aspiration, but a practical imperative. She mobilized school as an institution that reflected the community by grounding it in providing resources catered to their needs (Maier et al., 2017). Immunizations were administered at school so parents could walk to access them. Her annual carnival, "Dia de la Familia," featured $1.25 meals with a modest number of free tickets that could be increased by contributing to the community

event. This public space served the collective in needed ways as booths invited community members to learn more about public resources like SNAP, WIC, and MediCal. Families happily commenced the single family outing they could afford by breaking down the set-up, taking home frozen hamburger patties and chips that stretched food reserves by a week—a tremendous gift when living paycheck to paycheck.

Her ability to cultivate spaces where aggrieved communities could congregate, love one another, and get exactly the resources they need within community was significant (Camp & Heatherton, 2016). There's a knowing there that can't come from outside; an approach not taught in most books (Kelley, 2002). She conceived of the campus community broadly, including señoras that lived around the school and abuelitas that walked their grandkids to school daily. Rather than forcing faux relationships, she created "Coffee Club," a gathering of community members that could platicar and discuss issues over cafecito and pan dulce. This space allowed those who felt unseen to commune and discuss issues from domestic violence to classroom advocacy.

I carry the ethos of barrio mothering as mutual aid with me. In a conversation with my 6-year-old, he was devastated by the state sanctioned violence inflicted on our people. His righteous anger erupted into wanting to confront ICE like protestors. I affirmed his anger but told him that while many are righteously focusing on ICE, we needed to make sure that those directly impacted aren't neglected. I explained how many were in hiding and how our resistance must include helping impacted folks pay rent, get groceries, access safe transport and medication. My barrio mothering-lessons learned in community and affirmed in Ethnic Studies, centers ecologies of care grounded in a deep knowing that *solo el pueblo salva al pueblo* (Kelley, 2002). While this praxis of self-preservation and autonomy may not be legible to institutions nor sensationalized as noteworthy by scholars in traditional disciplines, they remain critical intergenerational pedagogies.

Bridge Building as Liberation Pedagogy—Julissa

My relationship to Ethnic Studies began in the Borderlands, in my ninth-grade geography course with Mr. Ramirez in a room of Mexican, Filipinx, and Cambodian heritage students. Mr. Ramirez was one of few Mexican heritage, cisgender male teachers at our high school and like many of our teachers he was from our community. Well before the passage of AB 101, in which now all California high schools must offer Ethnic Studies courses, Mr. Ramirez brought an Ethnic Studies pedagogy, practice, and commitment to San Ysidro. It was in his class that I first learned about the genocides that occurred in Guatemala and El Salvador, and its anti-Indigenous, colonial roots. It was also in his class that I first learned to question what it meant for the U.S. to be a "world leader" and the blood that was ruthlessly shed for it to rise as an imperial power. Mr. Ramirez taught us that it was not enough to be well-versed in U.S. history and that it was our responsibility to always understand the interconnected struggles and histories of what we face on these lands and how it connects to struggles and resistance on other lands. Mr. Ramirez did not limit our learning to our state issued textbooks, he wove in the arts, music, documentaries, creative writing, fiction, and invited us to share our experiences along the way. As an educator, I can now fully receive the gift that was his teaching. Mr. Ramirez planted the first of many seeds that led to me becoming an educator, researcher, and abolitionist.

Years later, I was invited to teach Ethnic Studies for the Summer Bears Program, a TRIO sponsored program, for first-generation, low-income students of color from the Bay Area hosted at UC

Berkeley. Most of the students were from Oakland, Richmond, Pinole, and other East Bay cities, but most had never stepped foot onto UC Berkeley's campus. That summer, students read and learned alongside Gloria Anzaldúa, Ronald Takaki, James Baldwin, Tupac Shakur, bell hooks, and others. Few knew their names and far less had engaged their thinking and teachings. Yet, that summer they grappled with the material and the feelings that arose in the process. Many felt frustrated, angry, sad, but simultaneously energized, inspired, and uplifted by the material they were finally learning. Ethnic Studies can sometimes feel like the opening of a wound that is then tenderly attended to and healed by a *curandera*, but when healed can provide the clarity and strength needed to resist. I have always seen and understood Ethnic Studies as a lens by which you come to see and read the world (Casar & Noguera, 2025). A lens that helps you understand how systems and institutions work to systematically oppress nondominant groups—an ever-shifting group of people and communities. Ethnic Studies is also the purposeful reclaiming of our histories, recentering of our knowledge systems and ways of knowing, and collective commitment to coalition building. That summer, miles away from the Borderlands, I witnessed as my students came to see the world anew via an Ethnic Studies lens much like I had experienced in Mr. Ramirez's class.

Popular Education: Centering the Forgotten / Those at the Margins—Marlene

I'm embarrassed to admit that I didn't truly learn how to read until community college at 20. I could read words, but my comprehension was below average. I wasn't one of the Chicana "exceptionals." No adult saw me as destined for un futuro brillante. I was one of the students who quietly slipped through the cracks—one of the forgotten ones. Before I had language to name my critical consciousness, I had a gut feeling—an inner knowing I now recognize as mindbodyspirit (Anzaldúa, 2002). Growing up poor as a Chicana in the carceral borderlands of El Paso, I was living a political life, without the language to name it. Still, I consider myself lucky. I avoided situations that often trap border youth—teen pregnancy, gang involvement, incarceration, even death. But many of my friends, familia, and community members weren't as fortunate. Even though I dodged visible dangers, I felt disconnected—from myself, my culture, and any sense of belonging.

El Paso has a rich history of Pachuco and Chicano culture—rooted in pride and resistance but these spaces often felt out of reach. Dominant narratives demonize Chicano culture, pushing some to distance themselves from la cultura, while others get drawn into gang politics. For those of us who didn't fit either category, we were left in limbo, fading into the background. That liminal space is where many Borderland youth still find themselves today. What happens to the ones left out? How do we, as Ethnic Studies practitioners, engage youth beyond the academy? The answer lies in community-responsive pedagogy—grounded in relationships, relevance, and responsibility (Duncan-Andrade, 2022). My own pedagogy, rooted in Chicana Carework, emphasizes cultivating reciprocal relationships that meet young people where they are—mentally, emotionally, and physically.

Building confianza and critical consciousness must also address students' material realities (López, 2018). We cannot talk about Ethnic Studies while students face food or housing insecurity or experience criminalization in schools. A pedagogy that centers students' lived experiences, cultural capital, and histories (Yosso, 2005) is not just effective—it's necessary and it requires accountability. Too often, academia enters community spaces with short-term projects and stipends but lacks genuine palabra. Youth are trucha—they know when outsiders show up for their

own gain. I first practiced student-centered pedagogy as an undergraduate, working as a teacher at a county detention facility where I helped launch the first GED program in the women's unit. We began with reading, writing, and math, but quickly the classroom became a space to humanize, dignify, and spark critical consciousness. I didn't yet know the term "popular education," but I was already practicing it—supporting the building of collective knowledge from lived experience.

In my attempts to sustain this space, I had to shapeshift. I stayed polite with administrators and officers, but in the classroom my energy shifted. I refused to teach only the colonial curriculum. I remember one moment clearly: a Black student said enslaved folks in the house were there "by choice," and my white male colleague stayed silent. I couldn't. I made it clear—enslavement was never a choice, period. I also honored students' languages, speaking Spanish with bilingual and monolingual students, resisting English-only norms. Over time, these small acts of resistance built powerful bonds. Some students even wrote me letters from inside, disguising my name to bypass mail restrictions. These quiet rebellions were rooted in an abolitionist ethic and Chicana militant dignity work (Bermudez, 2020).

Now, as an Assistant Professor, I still identify with those outside the academy—because I was one of them. I remain in community with people navigating life beyond academic institutions. Ironically, so much of what the academy calls "expertise" comes from the lived experience of marginalized communities—yet that knowledge is rarely recognized. If we are serious about Ethnic Studies, we must honor community-situated knowledge, stay accountable, and imagine futures rooted in care and collective liberation that center those often forgotten.

Conclusion

As we navigate the ever-changing infrastructure of neoliberalism—same problems, just different packaging—we are reminded that the struggles we face today as oppressed people, and Ethnic Studies practitioners are not new. We must look back to the critical lessons that previous generations, both within and beyond the academy, have generously laid out; these lessons have meaningfully served oppressed communities. At the same time, we must look ahead to insurgent futurities: visions that stretch beyond the limitations of the present and toward liberatory possibilities we've yet to fully imagine.

This two-pronged approach—honoring the past while building toward expansive futures—allows us to remain grounded in our roots, our histories of resistance, and the community-based practices that have sustained us. Ethnic Studies has long done the important work of documenting historical memories of resilience across Black, Indigenous, Latina/o/x, Asian and Arab communities, tracing both the violent systems of oppression they've faced and the creative, courageous ways they've resisted. By centering the structural roots of poverty, racial capitalism, and settler colonialism/colonization, the field has sharpened our collective understanding of what we are up against, as well as what it takes to challenge these forces.

Crucially, Ethnic Studies has also worked to include youth by institutionalizing itself within K-12 public education, despite growing attempts to whitewash and suppress the field. This effort, though complicated, reflects an ongoing commitment to reach beyond the university and into communities. One of the most powerful legacies of Ethnic Studies remains its ability to engage those at the margins—young people and community members who exist outside the purview of

the academy—and to center them as knowledge producers, organizers, and visionaries. Yet, despite the field's intentions and ongoing efforts, there remains critical work to be done in engaging young people and community members who are either excluded from or disinterested in formal educational spaces. Their knowledge remains vital and worthy of recognition, and not necessarily by the institution but perhaps instead within communities.

Looking forward, we must remain committed to building insurgent futurities—visions of liberation that resist co-optation and push beyond the institutional confines of the academy. At the heart of this commitment are the practices we have named: accompaniment as radical solidarity, barrio mothering as mutual aid, bridge building as liberation pedagogy, and popular education with those often forgotten. Each offers a critical pathway for Ethnic Studies. Accompaniment as radical solidarity reminds us that scholarship must walk alongside communities, not stand apart or in front because we are all connected by El Hilo. Barrio Mothering as mutual aid insists that infrastructures of care outside of the state are essential for survival and resistance. Bridge building as liberation pedagogy demonstrates that Ethnic Studies is a collective project, linking classrooms, communities, and movements across so-called borders. Popular education and centering those at the margins ensure that our practices remain accountable to the most impacted and that knowledge is co-created rather than extracted.

To carry these lessons forward, we recommend that Ethnic Studies practitioners deepen our investment in activist scholarship that resists incorporation into the neoliberal university and instead centers the needs of our communities. We must reimagine mutual aid for the conditions of advanced racial capitalism, building sustainable infrastructures that both protect and expand Ethnic Studies in K-12 schools and beyond. We must also remain vigilant about who is missing—those excluded by respectability politics, whether Indigenous, Afro-Latina/o/x/e, incarcerated, undocumented, poor, queer or otherwise marginalized. If we do not, we risk reproducing the very harms we seek to dismantle. Insurgent futures demand that we hold space for those pushed to the margins and that we imagine new worlds where all of our people—not just the "respectable," digestible few—can live full, joyful lives and thrive.

Identifying Accompaniment as Radical Solidarity, Barrio Mothering as Mutual Aid, Bridge Building as Liberation Pedagogy, Popular Education, and Centering Those Often Forgotten are not abstract concepts we randomly selected. They are practices that emerged from our everyday lives—long before we carried the title of "academic." Shaped by our varied positionalities—across class, migration, race, and sexuality—and by the geopolitical contexts of our birth, these practices reflect the quotidian life of Ethnic Studies itself: how communities in their everyday lives have always resisted, survived and created knowledge in face of state repression and violence outside of the ivory tower walls.

While these themes arise from our lived experiences, they also reverberate within oppressed communities throughout Turtle Island and across the globe. This is the same spirit that animated the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) in 1968 and '69. While the strikes at San Francisco State and UC Berkeley are remembered as campus struggles, they were deeply tied to people's movements outside of the academy: Black freedom struggles, Chicana/o/x farmworker organizing, Asian and Pacific Islander anti-imperialist movements, Native resistance to land theft and genocide, and international liberation struggles from Vietnam to Palestine. Students carried the

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voices of their families and communities into the university, demanding not just courses but a transformation of how knowledge itself was defined and who it served.

From this perspective, the TWLF was never only about winning departments or degrees; it was about honoring community struggles and making the university accountable to them. The themes we name—accompaniment, mutual aid, popular education, centering the forgotten—echo those same commitments. They are practices that come from the ground up, from the everyday lives of oppressed peoples who built networks of care, survival, and resistance long before the academy recognized them. Their significance lies in reminding us that Ethnic Studies must always remain tethered to the people: to those outside the institution, to those still fighting for, our work must continue to center the knowledge, struggles, and visions of our communities.

Figure 1. *Viet Nam / Aztlan*, Malaquias Montoya, 1973, offset lithograph on paper, sheet 26 × 19 in.; image 22 1/2 × 17 1/4 in. Smithsonian American Art Museum, museum purchase through the Frank K. Ribelin Endowment (Accession No. 2015.29.3). © 1973 Malaquias Montoya.

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