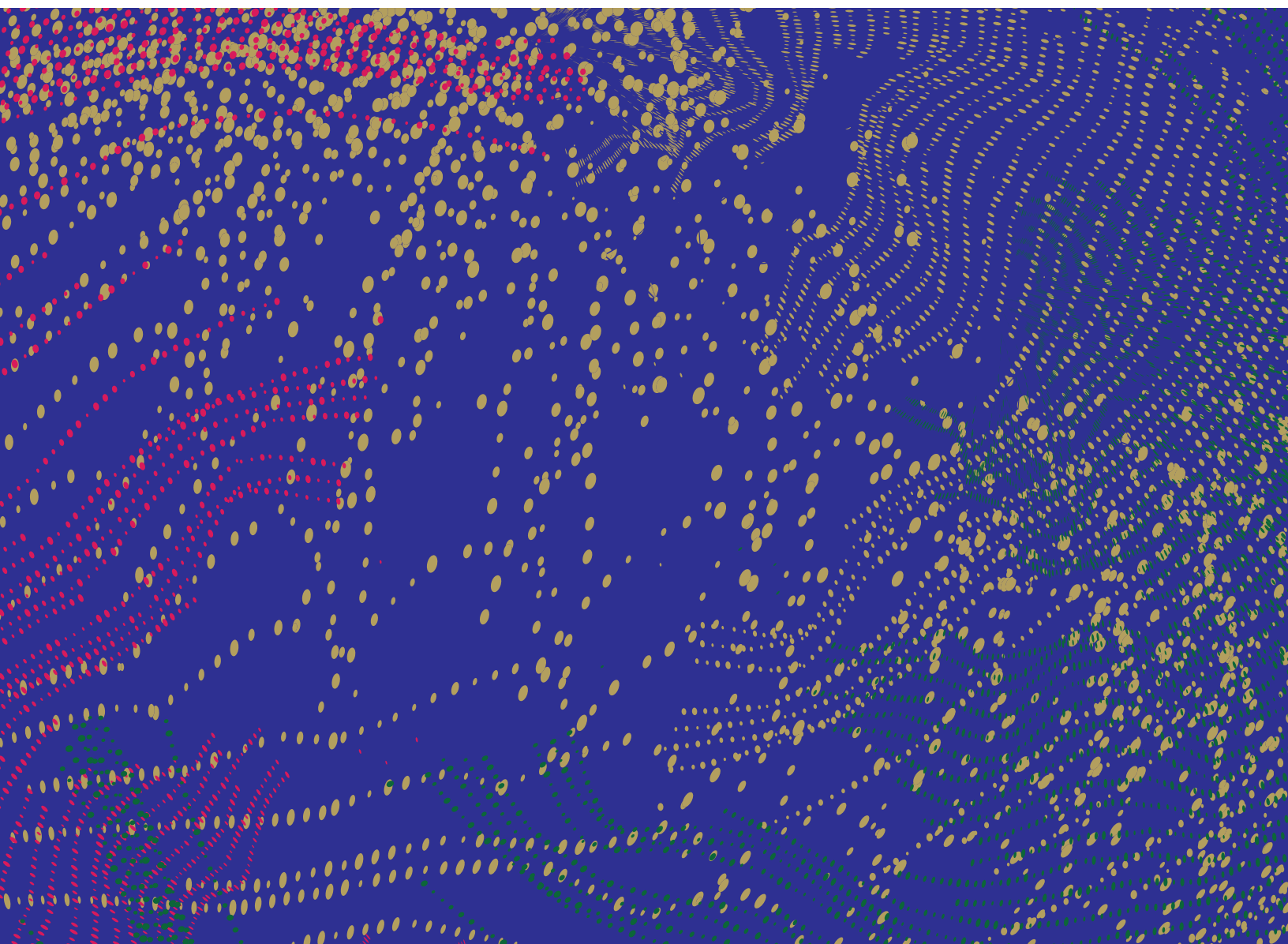


The World Humanities Report

Transgressing Settler Borders: Grounded Relationalities in Abiayala

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Transgressing Settler Borders: Grounded Relationalities in Abiyala

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There was a time when the land was an open space without settler colonial borders, a historical time in which Native peoples were able to journey across lands, waters, mountains, and plains to trade, to dialogue, to meet. Then came the borders of settler colonial nation-states, the geopolitics of colonialism, occupying not only the land but the minds and the spirits of many people in what today is called the Americas—these lands that some of our peoples call Turtle Island or Abiyala, among many other Indigenous ways of naming the continent.¹ In spite of the colonial history that has scattered, fragmented, and divided the lands and the peoples of this continent, there have been counter-currents against colonial borders. That is what we discuss in this roundtable, which was originally convened as part of the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association (NAISA) 2021 annual conference. The conversation weaves personal stories and appraisals of the field of hemispheric Indigenous studies. We focus on these countercurrents since our personal experiences and intellectual practices as American Indian scholars challenge and transgress those hegemonic borders, particularly the North-South divide in the colonial geopolitics of our times. This roundtable is about challenging, questioning, and/or transgressing dominant borders. It is about a collective calling to dismantle walls and fences and reestablish good relations across lands and waters, across peoples, communities, and languages. This discussion has been edited for clarity, but the oral nature of the text is maintained throughout. Luis Cárcamo-Huechante (Mapuche) moderated the panel and provided the introductory remarks that begin this paragraph. Although in order to streamline the conversation we have eliminated his gentle prompting, we wish to thank him for holding space with and for us.

¹ For a good explanation of the use of Abiyala (also spelled Abya Yala), see Emil Keme, “For Abiyala to Live, the Americas Must Die: Toward a Transhemispheric Indigeneity,” trans. Adam Coon, *Native American and Indigenous Studies* 5, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 42–68.

Anne Lambright: I'll start with just a brief introduction to my work as a scholar before turning to what I consider the more intimate, though of course increasingly interconnected, past family history. My research centers on Andean literature and culture, human rights studies, and translation theory and practice. I've published two monographs that are informed by or framed within critical Indigenous studies. The first is *Creating the Hybrid Intellectual: Subjects, Space, and the Feminine in the Narrative of José María Arguedas*. For those of you who don't know, Arguedas, a Peruvian anthropologist and creative writer, is considered one of the most important voices of *Indigenismo* (Indigenism) in Latin America in the twentieth century. And then my second monograph, *Andean Truths: Transitional Justice, Ethnicity, and Cultural Production in Post-Shining Path Peru*, looks at questions of ethnicity in the transition from the Peruvian civil war (1980–2000) to the post–Civil War seemingly democratic state and the role of Indigenous peoples and cultures in that transition. I'm currently starting a project on transnational Quechua cultural production, and I'm completing a critical anthology and translations of selected plays by the renowned Peruvian theatre troupe Grupo Cultural Yuyachkani. Many of their works are bilingual in Spanish and Quechua; I'm working on translations into English.

I was born and raised in Dallas, as what my tribe considers a “Chickasaw ‘at large,’” outside the Chickasaw and Choctaw lands of Oklahoma where my mother was born and where my maternal family still lives. Belying state-imposed blood quantum statistics, being Chickasaw was always the greatest part of my identity. It was a part of my heritage about which I knew the most. But it was a knowledge that was always framed by a great sense of loss and nostalgia. When I was growing up, Indigeneity, to me, was the language that my great-grandfather spoke, but did not teach his children so that they wouldn't suffer the same prejudice that he had suffered. It was family stories of displacement and stolen land, of sadness and anger over the extreme abuses and prejudices suffered that I always found and still find oddly accompanied by a rather conservative patriotic fervor, which is a kind of contradiction that I'm still trying to wrap my head around. It was the songs and dances that my aunts and uncles shared at family reunions, but that I generally watched from afar because I was the city girl who didn't know how to do these things. It was the *Chickasaw Times* (with which Shannon, I'm sure, is quite familiar) that arrived by the mail monthly. It also was summer vacations and what at that time seemed like excruciatingly long family trips in the back of the station wagon (for those of you who remember those kinds of things) back east in Mississippi to discover ancestral outposts along the Natchez Trace or to walk the Trail of Tears. I did not come to Latin

American studies, this field, intent on connecting with my Indigenous identity. First, to me at the time, being Native American, or really “Indian” as we said in my family, was deeply personal, very intimate. It was a family thing. At the time, it was not something I even knew that one could study as an academic or approach as a scholarly endeavor. I wish I had known that because I might have followed a different path. I began studying Latin America because I was in love with languages and literature and particularly Spanish. I ended up in Ecuador, fresh out of college on a Fulbright that I had earned after I applied at the urging of one of my undergraduate professors who seemed to see some kind of academic promise in this first-generation student. Now, I still vividly remember my first walk down the streets of Quito in 1989, in part because I was about a head taller than everybody else on the streets, and it was the most visible I had ever felt in my life. This was something that was odd for me because my mother would always talk about how tall Indians were. All my uncles were over six feet four inches.

And so, it just was a shock to me to be physically present on those streets. I had no idea that contemporary Indigeneity could look and sound and feel like what I experienced at that moment, surrounded by the resilience of the Indigenous peoples of Ecuador. The persistence of their cultures, languages, music, dances, epistemologies. I admit that it’s hard not to look back on my discovery of contemporary Andean Indigeneity without sounding overly romantic or perhaps even blind to the very real material and symbolic marginalization of Andean Indigenous peoples: what they have suffered throughout the past five centuries and continue to endure today. But my encounter with “what could have been” of the Chickasaw people, as I saw it in that moment, was greatly impactful, and motivated a scholarly journey that introduced me to el Inca Garcilaso de la Vega and Guaman Poma, Gamaliel Churata and José María Arguedas, Domitila Barrios de Chúnigara and Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui.² Today, my Quechua is much stronger than my Chickasaw, though I continue to study both. And I would say that my condition as a Chickasaw citizen informs my scholarship

² Garcilaso de la Vega, also known as El Inca (1539–1616), was the son of a Spanish conquistador and an Inca noblewoman, and a prolific historian and chronicler of Inca culture. Gamaliel Churata (1897–1969) was a Peruvian literary and cultural critic affiliated with Andean Indigenous movements in the first half of the twentieth century. José María Arguedas (1911–1969) was a Peruvian novelist, poet, and anthropologist, a bilingual Quechua and Spanish speaker whose work examined the social and economic exclusion of Peru’s Indigenous peoples. Domitila Barrios de Chúnigara (1937–2012) was a Bolivian community organizer and feminist labor activist. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (b. 1949) is a Bolivian scholar, activist, and filmmaker, known for engaging with community-based decolonial thinking and practice including the *Taller de historia oral andina* (Andean Oral History Workshop).

on Indigeneity to the same extent that my continued learning about and from Andean Indigenous peoples and cultures informs my understanding of myself, my family, and the Chickasaw Nation, in deep, rich, constantly evolving and constantly surprising ways.

Kelly McDonough: My primary area of research is Nahua intellectual history, and I work from Spanish colonialism through the present. For those of you who don't know, Nahuas are native speakers of the Nahuatl language. It was the common language of the Aztec empire, but it's also the native language of at least three million people today. I wrote a book called *The Learned Ones: Nahua Intellectuals in Post-Conquest Mexico*, and I'm working on another one right now called *Indigenous Science and Technologies of Mexico Past and Present: Nahuas and the World around Them*. I serve as the coeditor, with K. Tsianina Lomawaima, of the journal *Native American and Indigenous Studies*. Through my work with the journal, I've learned so much about our field, and I'm really honored to be able to do that kind of service.

I grew up in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and I spent a lot of time with my grandmother—my paternal grandmother—who was Anishinaabe. She was my very best friend and the steadiest person in my life. I miss her terribly. The recent discovery of the hundreds of unmarked graves of Native students at former residential schools in Canada has made things a little tender. It wasn't a big surprise to me (or us) like it was to a lot of non-Native folks because we know about what happened at the boarding schools. My great-grandparents went to Carlisle Indian Industrial School, and with the mass grave discovery I started rereading their school files (Carlisle has very robust documentation, a great deal of which is available online). I've been overwhelmed with a sense of sadness but also a sense of being really lucky. They made it out alive, right? They made it, but there are so many who didn't.

I was like Anne. I didn't think that studying American Indian experience or history or literature or anything like that was even possible. I never had exposure to that in K-12. It wasn't until graduate school when things started to click. I was originally interested in studying science and technology and contemporary Mexican literature, but two experiences were pivotal in my shift to studying Nahua intellectual history. In one seminar on colonialism with my dear advisor René Jara, we read *Visión de los vencidos* (published in English as *The Broken Spears*), a compilation of Native voices about the conquest of Mexico. At the time, if and when you heard about Indigenous people in these kinds of courses, it always stopped at conquest. So, my question was, "OK, then what happened?" And I thought that that was a normal question. For me, I thought, "Well, we

know that Indian people are still here and that this continued.” And everybody just looked at me like I had two heads. Around that same time, I was in another seminar with White Earth Ojibwe historian Jean M. O’Brien, in which we were reading all of this extraordinary literature by and from the Native North. And I was like, “Where is this literature in Latin America?” René said “*hija, vete a México con esas preguntas*” (get to Mexico with these questions). So I went.

We all carry around baggage. Part of my baggage that I took to Mexico was that legacy of boarding schools and land dispossession. I wanted to read colonial Nahuatl-language petitions and community histories, so I began to study Nahuatl with native speakers. Nahuatl is the best-documented Indigenous language in the Americas. There’s so much to be read, and I really wanted to start to learn about how they went about trying to protect and acquire lands. One of the things that I learned when I started studying these documents was that I had super easy access to this archival material, and Indigenous people in Mexico did not. Something that I’ve been trying to do with my work is make that material available freely to the people because, well, it’s their cultural patrimony. They deserve access to it. So that’s kind of a long story about how I get from point A to B. The shorter story would be that my trajectory has been the result of serendipitous confluences of personal experience, a deep dive into scholarship from the Native North, conversations with my Nahuatl teachers, and study of Nahuatl archival materials.

Joseph M. Pierce: Many of us are connected through the University of Texas at Austin, so I want to share a memory from when I was a graduate student there. I was writing my dissertation, and Circe Sturm came to give a talk about her work *Becoming Indian: The Struggle over Cherokee Identity in the Twenty-First Century*. And I remember sitting in a lecture hall and listening to this person describe my life to me. I had no understanding of how common it was for Cherokee people to be displaced, and to be disconnected, and to live diasporic lives that at times lead to an emergent identity that comes later in life. Sturm calls this “race shifting,” and I felt like I was race shifting at that time. I’ve come to understand that it’s more complicated than I originally thought. And my own personal story bears this out, but I felt this sort of interpolation in that moment of not having the vocabulary to describe my own experience. And that’s something that I’m grateful for. Not the lack, but the possibility now of being able to narrate this complex history. This memory leads me to think that a “tell me about yourself” is also a question of care and of relations. “Tell me about yourself” is always a “tell me about us. Tell us about us.” But that part is

hard for me because though I am a citizen of the Cherokee Nation now, I did not always know that that was possible for me. This is because my father, my Cherokee father, was adopted by a white family as a newborn and raised away from the Cherokee community. And when I was starting graduate school, we went through the process of opening my father's adoption records and realizing that his mother, my Cherokee grandmother, was still alive. And we were able to contact her. And my dad was in his fifties, and I was in my twenties. My father met his mother for the first time when he was fifty-two. And I was in graduate school working on Latin American studies. There was this sort of shift in my life that was happening as I was navigating a reorientation of identity, which was also about reconnection or rebuilding kinship. So, for me, the relationship between Indigeneity and Turtle Island and Abiyala is both personal and professional, but my sense of relating as a Cherokee person happened in tandem with my early work in queer studies and Latin American studies. These things are inextricably linked for me, which is also to say I relate to bodies of scholarship like Native American and Indigenous studies, as well as material bodies. I relate to kin who I did not know I had, but now I do have, in ways that are ongoing and emergent. So, I've always been a person interested in kinship and in analyzing what kinship can mean. My first book, *Argentine Intimacies*, was a study of kinship in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries among an elite white family in Argentina. And yet I was interested in probing what forms of kinship were possible despite settler norms. Even though I don't use that terminology, the book is about laying bare the questions that normative kinship asks without saying so. I wanted to know what kinship announces in its practices (which are constantly shifting over time) rather than what it idealized in literature and through cultural norms. So that interest has propelled me through that first book and links to my current interests and my current work as a curator and as a writer. I'm currently With S. J. Norman, I'm co-curating a performance series called *Knowledge of Wounds*, which is an Indigenous-led container for queer and two-spirit Indigenous relations. I'm a scholar invested in exploring forms of embodiment, sexuality, gender, and care in the expressive arts, but also in more intimate and personal ways. So my trajectory is about learning to be a good relative and learning what that means in the Cherokee context. It's crucial for me to recognize myself in relation to other Cherokee people and across multiple forms of difference that constitute my own life experience.

I've been engaged as a scholar of Latin America who is also a Cherokee citizen,

and this allows me to sort of toggle back and forth between different political, economic, and social forms. And I think that is something that we share and that is what this type of hemispheric approach can offer. It means learning to relate to Indigenous epistemologies in an always evolving and perhaps incomplete way. It means foregrounding praxis rather than mastery of any form of being, language, relating, ceremony, or culture. These will always be incomplete, and yet that's also fine. And I've tried to write about myself and to be self-reflective in my writing about authenticity and about critiquing what

A hemispheric approach ... means learning to relate to Indigenous epistemologies in an always evolving and perhaps incomplete way.

that means. I've tried to write about this process of belonging as a Cherokee person. And one of the things that I'm doing now is linking some of these ongoing artistic practices to what Cree scholar Karyn Recollet calls "kinstillatory praxis." So "kinstillation" is a combination of kin and constellation. And one of the things that I've learned over the years is to make sense of these ruptures of self, these contradictions, through the conviction of upholding the sovereignty of Native Nations as a collective form of resistance to dispossession and colonialism. That's what a kinstillation offers as a process of relating. That's what I'm working on now.

Shannon Speed: It's really an honor to be in dialogue with you and to hear your stories and your reflections on your own personal experience, which are beautiful and at times painful. And so much of what we experience is shared. So, taking up Joseph's call to "tell me about yourself" is always about care and about relation, I'll start by saying that my Chickasaw grandfather and my Choctaw grandmother were Dawes enrollees.³ Until the 1930s, they lived on allotment land outside of Wynnewood, Oklahoma, which is south of Norman in Chickasaw Territory. I don't know whether my grandparents lost their land or whether they sold it, but along with their allotment papers was a stack of tax bills, some of them overdue (this is not an unfamiliar story to many). My grandfather took a job in the budding aerospace industry in Los Angeles when my father was

³ The General Allotment Act of 1887, commonly known as the Dawes Act, authorized the federal government of the United States to divide and privatize land previously held in common by Indian nations. This method of dispossession and assimilation was imposed on tribes over several decades and depended on the enrollment of individuals on a federally managed census or allotment roll, which recorded individual family members, as well as racial characteristics (i.e., blood quantum).

fourteen, and I was born and raised here on Tongva lands. Growing up, of course, we knew we were Indian, but in the context of Los Angeles, it wasn't 100 percent clear what that meant.

When I was two, my grandfather died in a car wreck, returning from a road trip to Oklahoma, and my grandmother did her best to impart cultural knowledge and a sense of identity and pride in us. But even she had little Choctaw language, and so many of our cultural ways had already been lost or suppressed in that difficult era following Oklahoma statehood, when our sovereignty was all but eliminated, before they ever even undertook the journey to Los Angeles. But she kept notes in a small lined notebook. She believed that we would need this information later in the future when our tribe was restored. I still have that little notebook. And I just wish she could have lived to see how far the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations have come in terms of restoring our sovereignty, languages, and cultures. She would have been really happy. But what being Native back then gave me was sort of an odd sense of belonging to a place and a community that I didn't know, was, more than anything, like Anne expressed, like Kelly expressed, a sense of outrage about all that we had lost. It also gave me a profound distrust of the US government, along the lines of Anne's confusion about a lot of people's embrace of patriotism, and really a healthy understanding of the predatory ways of the settler state. This served me well when I made my way to San Francisco as an undergraduate at San Francisco State. In the mid-1980s, during Ronald Reagan's administration, the US was deeply embroiled in multiple instances of imperialistic violence in Central America, and two friends and I rather ill-advisedly jumped in a truck and drove through Mexico and Central America, witnessing a newly independent Belize that had just thrown off the yoke of British colonial rule.⁴ Guatemala was still reeling from the genocidal scorched earth campaigns that killed hundreds of thousands of Mayan people; Honduras was essentially a country-sized US military base; and Nicaragua was struggling to be free of dictatorship and US imperialism as manifest in the Contras war. And obviously, these were impactful experiences that changed my life forever. And since that time, I've always remained engaged in some way with work or research or relations in Mexico and Central America. Of course, I interpreted all that I saw on that trip and later through a lens of what I knew about US history, about my tribe's history. And I very much saw US actions in the region as an extension of the colonial impulse to dispossess and to dominate. My bond with Mexico and Central America came through that relationship. And I think that's what led me over the many intervening years to tend toward

⁴ Belize gained independence in 1982.

embracing what I see as the shared aspects of the experience of settler capitalism, an Indigenous experience, rather than focusing on the divergences.

So, half a decade after the Central America trip, as I was poised to enter graduate school with a proposal to work on Chickasaw tribal identity at a time when the Chickasaw Nation was beginning a transformational period of sovereignty building and cultural revitalization, the Zapatista uprising began in southern Mexico. It was 1994 when I began my doctoral program, the year the uprising began. And a shout-out to UC Davis Hemispheric-Native Studies Program here, which gave me the opportunity to kind of merge my Latin American studies, my interest in Latin America, and my MA and PhD in anthropology through their designated emphasis program that itself was path-breaking in transgressing settler boundaries in academia and Native studies specifically.⁵ Fascinated with this predominantly Mayan movement (the Zapatista movement) that declared that another world was possible, for the first time in my lifetime, I saw Native peoples openly declaring war on the settler capitalist state. I would spend the next decade in Chiapas working through complex issues of relationality and ethical accountability in the context of a counterinsurgency war not unlike those I had experienced in Central America years before. And as others have said, those relations also shaped my understanding of my Nativeness in some sense, with its relative privilege and power in relation to the impoverished folks in southern Mexico. I had to work through precisely what Joseph signaled: the relationality not across settler lines, but from Chickasaw to Mayan and what that meant. And I've written about this in my first book, which was on the Zapatista uprising and the fact that I didn't, for a number of years, even talk to my friends and interlocutors in Indigenous communities in Mexico about my own Nativeness. Because from their perspective, I enjoyed just about every privilege possible as a *gringa* (foreigner, i.e., US citizen), as a *güera* (white person), as a university student, in every way. To try to pull some "I'm here, your Indigenous sister thing" was really not going to fly in that context. It was only after we had relations of trust that I could even broach the topic with people. My own tribe at that time was on the rise in a different way, which gave me the opportunity as an adult to broaden and extend my engagements with my Chickasaw family and community in Oklahoma. And this was a world away from Chiapas, but also a world away from Native California, what I'd grown up with. So, as I broadened my knowledge with a focus on Native studies in my

⁵ At UC Davis, a designated emphasis program is "an area of specialization, such as a new method of inquiry, important field of application, or focus that maps near the edges or overlaps with the traditional disciplinary boundaries that define existing PhD programs," <https://gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/designated-emphases>.

doctoral program, I began to really see Native diversity within the US to be just as significant as diversity between the US and elsewhere. Right? You know, I built relationality with Maya in Chiapas, but I also build relationality today with the Tongva and Tataviam people in Los Angeles.

I hear people say a lot that the terms “Indigenous” and “Indigeneity” erase the specificity of particular Native experiences. And I know a lot of people feel this way. But building strong relations with Native folks in the South and in the North, I came to understand that it is not that we are all in the same amorphous category of Indigenous peoples, but rather that we are vastly diverse peoples within and across settler borders, unified by shared experience of colonial occupation and exploitation by the settler capitalist state. And those relations shaped not only my understanding of Indigenous peoples and myself as an Indigenous person, but also what the different settler states and their logics have in common, even when at first glance they look very different, which is what I was looking at in my second monograph, which followed Indigenous women migrants as they cross multiple national settler borders. And so, I want to make an argument for the value of such transgressions. And I’ll just say as a final note that I’ve spent the last six to eight years, if you count hosting the conference, involved with NAISA (Native American and Indigenous Studies Association). Part of the reason why I wanted to be involved is that I think NAISA as an organization and as an intellectual community has embodied that transgression, built itself on the belief that vast insights can be gained when Indigenous people are in dialogue, across difference and in good relations. I really believe that that’s the value of NAISA. That’s why we all come to NAISA and why we’re happy to be here today.

Kelly McDonough: Everybody already alluded in some way to the question I have. I’d like to hear more about how your personal experience has influenced how you’re engaging the Indigenous South and then how that work may (or may not) shift (or have shifted) how you understand yourself as an Indigenous person in this context. Joseph called it toggling back and forth. I’m also curious about how your personal experience or training or exposure to scholarship in the Native North influenced your work in the South and then vice versa. And then the doozy of a question is what are some of the challenges and benefits you see in terms of this cross-cultural work in Native American and Indigenous studies? And how do we meet some of those challenges?

Joseph M. Pierce: One of the editorial projects that I've been involved with resulted in a special issue of the journal *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, which just came out.⁶ The issue is about how certain bodies and geographies are privileged in queer, but also *cuir* (as it is now commonly spelled in Spanish), contexts. Through the editorial process we tried to question the primacy of epistemological flows of knowledge from North to South and to disrupt the geographies of academic publication. So, the project itself is multi-sited in that we collaborated with other journals and spread it across *GLQ* in the United States, *El lugar sin límites* in Argentina, and *Periódicus* in Brazil.⁷ We are deliberately triangulating these conversations. And one of the reasons why that made sense to us is because most of the scholarship around queer studies has already realized that the situatedness of queer studies in the United States is lacking. If we start to imagine that queer studies in the United States is just one regional variant of many other types of regional expressions of queer studies, then we can wrest its centrality as *the* theoretical model for queer studies. I learned this from queer studies, but I also think it is important for Native studies. In creating constellations or relationships between positionalities that are rooted in place, we find meaningful comparison, rather than imagining that there is a sort of blanket universal subject against which everyone else gets compared. That always ends up centering European and Euro-American theory or studies as the norm against which everything else, in this case queer or Indigenous, or queer-Indigenous, Indigiqueer, is marked as different. That is one way that I find the productive tensions—or find the tensions productive.

Shannon Speed: Kelly, I have so many answers to your question. I'm trying to choose in my mind which part of that to answer so I don't talk for too long. But I think there are both personal and intellectual aspects of that for me. One of the things that really shifted—it blew my mind, frankly—when I first started working in Mexico was coming to understand that in Mexico, Indigenous or Indigenousness was defined by basically two things: language and dress. The government literally categorized anyone who did not speak an Indigenous language as their primary language or wear Indigenous dress as non-Indigenous people—which effectively, let's face it, would wipe out about half of Native people or more in the United States in a single swipe, right? That changed my

⁶ "Cuir/Queer Américas: Translation, Decoloniality, and the Incommensurable," eds. Joseph M. Pierce, María Amelia Viteri, Diego Falconí Trávez, Salvador Vidal-Ortiz, and Lourdes Martínez-Echazábal, special issue, *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 27, no. 3 (2021).

⁷ *El lugar sin límites* 3, no. 5 (2021), <http://revistas.untref.edu.ar/index.php/ellugar/article/view/1030>; and *Periódicus* 1, no. 15 (2021), <https://periodicos.ufba.br/index.php/revistaperiodicus/issue/view/2189>.

mindset in thinking about Indigeneity and Indigenusness and the ways that settler states impose definitions that people embrace. I had Native people in Mexico tell me, “I used to be Indigenous but then I moved to the city,” like they had internalized those things. And I think Native peoples in the North internalized certain aspects, too. Talk about blood quantum and all these things that are settler-imposed ideologies meant to eliminate us! And in Mexico, explicitly so. The definition was quite different in Mexico, but it also taught me something about the similarity of our experiences. I think you’ve all probably heard me say because I say this almost every time I talk, but I’ve been intellectually very frustrated by the disconnection between literature on Indigenous Latin America and literature on the Native North and by the lack of engagement and the really frustrating gaps that I think come out of that. And in my last book, *Incarcerated Stories: Indigenous Women Migrants and Violence in the Settler-Capitalist State*, I was talking about two gaps that I found to be particularly important. First, in Latin America, we don’t engage with notions of settler colonialism at all. I mean, we’re just starting to now, and it’s mainly people who work hemispherically. And part of that has to do with problems of translation, because *colonialismo de colonos* doesn’t work very well. If any of you have a better translation for

There are many blind spots that we end up with because we’re not in dialogue and we reify distinctions created by a settler-imposed border that shouldn’t be colonizing our minds.

that, that would be great. Second, I think in Latin America, Indigenous studies has a strong analysis of capitalism’s workings and particularly of neoliberalism. But in Native studies in the North, I see very little engagement with capi-

talism, which is such a critical aspect of Native experience. I tried to put the literatures on those two issues in dialogue in that book. But those are just two. There are many other kinds of blind spots that we end up with because we’re not in dialogue and we reify that kind of distinction created by a settler-imposed border that shouldn’t be colonizing our minds.

Anne Lambricht: Shannon, I think you’ve brought up a few of the things that first came to my mind, especially when thinking back to something that Kelly said about how we all have our baggage that we bring to this conversation. As I first encountered Indigeneity in Latin America, I certainly encountered it from a very particular familiar perspective, and questions of sovereignty, questions of

identity that have very particular definitions and resonances here, especially the state-controlled and state-framed or -informed questions of identity that I took with me, were very much turned on their head when I was in Ecuador for two years. And so, it really made me rethink the questions of Native peoples' relationship to the state in a way that just had never occurred to me before. Then, after leaving Ecuador—because when I was still in Ecuador, I had not come to the point where my intuitions were going to become something more scholarly, where I was going to think about these things in deeper way—at the University of Texas at Austin, where we all have a connection, I encountered José María Arguedas and Guaman Poma and began to think of Indigeneity in more theoretical and critical ways. That certainly did inform how I started to understand my own relationship to my citizenship as a Chickasaw, the relationship of the Chickasaw Nation to the state, and the way that Native American experiences are framed. So, there's been a kind of a constant back and forth in my own scholarship and in my own personal experiences. Another thing that I began to think about from the Latin American context, but am contemplating more and more now, is just what it means to be Indigenous or Native in a modern world that really does not want to see Indigeneity or Nativeness as modern. That's something that I have studied extensively in the Peruvian context, but more and more I'm thinking about Indigenous modernity through the lens of literature, through the lens of art and music, and different cultural experiences here in the US. So that's another dialogue that I'm really interested in opening and continuing.

Joseph M. Pierce: I have an ethical question that I try to ask myself but I don't always have the answer. I know that all of us have thought and all of us continue to think very deliberately about what it means to be in ethical relation with other communities. That is a foundational aspect of our own community-based understandings of who we are. And yet there are differential power dynamics, different layers of privilege, like Shannon just mentioned. And I think this also has to do with skin tone and phenotype, even though we know how white supremacy works. But when I travel, I find that in certain places I get read in one way and in other places a different way. And I think that our bodies get interpolated, to use that phrase again, in multiple ways when we cross borders, and that says something about the borders themselves because we don't change. The borders change, but we don't change. And there are some obvious things that we would need to study or to approach in a hemispheric way: linguistic differences, the possibility of translation, epistemological and cultural translation,

historical erasure, colonial violence, the circulation of knowledge. We know we need to contend with these things when traversing settler-imposed borders. But here is the question: how do we construct ethical frameworks for ourselves and for the people with whom we are in dialogue? How do we do this in a way that allows us to be good relatives? What changes or what ethical commitments are required when we start to think of translation not across settler contexts, but from one situated Indigenous context to the next? And I don't know the answer to that. I think that that is something that we need to do. I have an inclination, but I'm not sure how to do it.

Shannon Speed: If you were thinking that any of us have the answer to that, you're crazy! But I feel like it's one of these things that we all just have to work on continually. We are constantly attempting to do that. It's like anti-racism, an ongoing struggle. And I think you're right to highlight it and note that we have to keep it front and center and be paying attention to it. But even if we get it right in one instance, that might not be the right way in another one. So, it's a moving target all the time in terms of what we're doing as we move across relations with different groups. But I just want to circle back to what I said earlier about how for me, in some ways, what's important to note is that I'm creating and attempting to create those kinds of ethical relations with other Native people, whether it is here, or with Mayans in Chiapas, or with a range of Indigenous peoples from Latin America who end up in immigration detention centers in the United States, who have had to move through all these spaces and be interpolated in multiple ways in different spaces. And I think it is the ongoing work of what we do.

Anne Lambright: I agree with Shannon. And I think Shannon's point about just having to keep it constantly at the forefront, keep our positions and our privilege constantly at the forefront in every single interaction is important. I try to maintain or ask, how we can maintain a sense of humility with every encounter and every relationship that we form in a system where there's not a lot of... I don't know if "incentive" for our humility is the right term, but there's a lot that promotes our not being humble. Coming from the US, having the level of education that we have, having the economic privileges that we have, et cetera. So, maintaining that humility, I think it takes work on our part. And the other thing, I think we have all talked about our anger and our sadness. To me, those emotions can be very powerful, and we can aim to constantly mobilize them, in a positive way, as we are doing our work, and use our privilege to

work on behalf of others, or for others, or accompanying others, as well. And that's not an answer. The question is not fully answerable, of course. But it's the question that just has to be the number one, forefront question as we're doing the work that we do.

Kelly McDonough: I have a sort of rule of thumb for myself, and I share this with the graduate students I work with. If I feel comfortable about my interactions in Native communities in Mexico, something is likely off. There is always a power dynamic whether I like it or not. I'm privileged, educated, and white-coded. For me, it has to be this constant question of "What is the discomfort and where is that discomfort coming from, and who do I need to talk to about shifting how I am relating to people?" And Anne hits the nail on the head. In academia, it's not promoted that we walk with humility as sacred witnesses to people's lives. That's not what we're encouraged to do. But I think that it's what we *can* do, and I think that's what makes all of your work so special. The kind of work that you all are doing is extraordinary because you can look your grandparents square in the eye and say, "I did my best to behave like a good relative."

Anne Lambright: This final question is picking up on something that Shannon alluded to earlier. And oddly, I kind of frame it as a question of decolonizing Native American and Indigenous studies in the US academic and scholarly context. This comes from personal experience, personal frustrations with encounters with other scholars of North American Native American studies that have revealed this surprising ignorance of the history and even the current experience of Indigenous peoples and cultures south of the US border. My attempts to incorporate, say, Andean or Central American voices, histories, and experiences into reading groups or course syllabi have been met, or at least it feels like they've been met, with a polite resistance. Maybe a brief opening or accommodation, but kind of "before we get back to the 'real' work," which is US-centric or North American-centric Native American studies. I'm just wondering if this has been your experience, or perhaps it hasn't been as you're in different institutional contexts. If you share my concern that in Native American Indigenous studies in the North American context, US and Canadian perspectives run the risk of dominating these conversations. And if so, what might we be able to do about it?

Joseph M. Pierce: I have found that Latin American Indigenous movements tend to be viewed as case studies rather than the basis of the overarching theoretical

argument. I find this in Native studies. It's also true of most other fields of study, I would say, at least in the US academy. So, it is perhaps comforting to think that

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we're not alone in this. And yet, as I mentioned earlier in relation to queer studies, I think that it is incumbent upon us to ask how we are questioning the circuits, the flows of knowledge production, and that part of

our ethical commitment is to also disrupt those colonial circuitries. I think we do that. But perhaps we need to recognize that any Indigenous studies course is incomplete if it does not include Abiayala as a core part of what it means to be Indigenous.

Shannon Speed: I agree. And as I already kind of expressed, I have the same frustration. And I was fortunate at UC Davis to have a hemispheric program where that was not a problem; but in Native studies, and I talked about this elsewhere, I think there's a parochialism. It's kind of entrenched in media studies, and it doesn't serve us well in terms of our knowledge production or intellectual conversations. To be fair, it goes both ways. Native studies south of the border may not want to incorporate Native North American perspectives. There is definitely a kind of nationalism and anti-imperialism behind that. They don't want the issue to be flowing this way. And that's kind of entrenched as well. And I think it's not tremendously generative or productive. But in the US, I think there are different reasons for it. And one thing I've noted in the past is that people in Native studies in the North are more comfortable embracing Indigenous folks say from New Zealand or Australia or even the Pacific Islands, but not Latin America. And I think there are some unexamined things going on there that we should be examining, and I think it partly goes to the question of relative privilege. That within the US context, Natives are accustomed to being the subaltern. But in relation to Latin America, we're suddenly in a different relation of power to other Native folks. Again, I think that's kind of an unexamined discomfort for a lot of people that plays into this question about Latin America.

Kelly McDonough: I agree with Shannon that it goes both ways. I think it's important to recognize that. I live in a happy little silo at times at UT with my

colleagues in that hemispheric Indigeneity is something that we just normally talk about. So, here, it's not all that unusual. I feel lucky. At the same time, we are siloed. We are so isolated from the rest of the UT population. I have a chapter coming out that I start by saying that North and South conversations have never come easy, and here are some of the reasons. And the big challenge is language. The frustration is that people seem to always think that it's the Latin Americans who should learn English, right? And not that we should try to learn Spanish. Or we should put that effort and money behind translation, like Shannon and the host committee for NAISA in Los Angeles did. In NAISA we've been talking about this divide for a long time. Several folks here were in the very first Abiyala group meetings trying to figure out how we could have these kinds of hemispheric conversations. And what I feel has happened is that the Working Group has now become siloed within NAISA. So, one of the things that I've been committed to at NAISA is if I organize a panel, I try to make it hemispheric. But that's hard too. What, I think, sometimes it comes down to is, to go back to where Joseph was pushing earlier, relationality. Maybe it doesn't have to do with the intellectual questions to start with. Maybe it's just getting to know each other and then seeing where we can go in terms of what we do in the academe.

Anne Lambright: I would just like to thank everybody here. Thank you, Shannon, for organizing this, and Kelly and Joseph and Luis for this powerful conversation. I hope it's the first of many. You know, these are issues that have been very central to my own development as a scholar and as a person. And sometimes it feels very lonely, so being able to discuss this is very powerful for me. It's very enriching. It's very engaging. You've given me a lot to think about. As I continue to grow in my own personal and intellectual path, I really appreciate being accompanied by people like you.

Kelly McDonough: I also want to thank everyone for this honor of hearing what your experiences are and learning from you. I'm inspired. I also want to echo what Anne said. It's really powerful to sit here and think: "I'm not alone." I want to thank you for that. I want to thank you for letting me accompany you and for you accompanying me.

Joseph M. Pierce: I was thinking about some of the personal stories that we were telling. And I was thinking about loss and how it threads through many of our stories. I didn't mention, but I would learn later that my family's allot-

ment land was flooded by a lake project, Lake Eufaula, like many other people's allotment land. And so dispossession is one of these threads, but so is joy and survivance; and so is solidarity; and so is resistance. Those are the things that I find that resonate when I start to talk with other Indigenous people about what my community is dealing with and what their communities are dealing with. And I think that actually provides the road map for relationality. It is in describing that resilience through joy, perhaps, and I'm thinking along with Billy-Ray Belcourt that joy is a thing that we all have and that we can theorize from.⁸ In addition to these, the issues of loss or of negative affect, which are super powerful and crucial. But I find resilience in this conversation and I'm grateful and humbled by that.

Shannon Speed: Beautiful, thanks for that positive note, Joseph. And I want to thank all of you for the sense of not being alone in this experience. I also want to acknowledge Luis for moderating the session and for being one of the few Latin American Indigenous scholars who bridges those divides and engages with literature in the Native North and experience in the Native North. So, we really appreciate you for that, and I feel like you should have been part of this conversation. And I wanted to also acknowledge that this originally was going to be my presidential plenary session as president of NAISA. And of course (back to loss, back to themes of loss) with the COVID-19 pandemic, that never happened. And it's too bad because we are siloed, as we've been saying. The presidential plenary would have brought a lot of people to the discussion, but I appreciate you all hanging in for another year and doing the session anyway. So, Chokma'shki. Thank you, everyone.

⁸ See Billy-Ray Belcourt, *A History of My Brief Body* (Columbus, OH: Two Dollar Radio, 2020), 7–9.

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