Can the Undocumented Immigrant Speak?
Exploring Decolonial Thinking in Latinx Literature and Cinema

María Teresa DePaoli, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas, United States

Keywords: undocumented immigrants, Latinx culture, ‘dreamers’, identity, DACA (The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals)

Mots-clés : immigrants en situation irrégulière, culture latino-américaine, ‘dreamers’ (migrants sans papiers arrivés aux Etats-Unis pendant leur enfance), identité, la loi DACA sur la protection des immigrants arrivés sur le territoire des États-Unis en tant que mineurs

The undocumented immigrant has historically been marginal and voiceless in Latinx literature and culture until the last fifteen years (Caminero-Santangelo), *Documenting the Undocumented: Latino/a Narratives and Social Justice in the Era of Operation Gatekeeper*) when more authors began to focus on the topic. Alberto Ledesma portrayed undocumented immigration as “not an experience that I have seen widely addressed in the pages of Chicano literary criticism.” For example, two of the most canonical Chicanx novels—Tomás Rivera’s *And the Earth Did not Devour him* (1971), and Sandra Cisneros’s *The House on Mango Street* (1984)—present an undocumented immigrant character who dies in the end (“la mano en la bolsa” in *And the Earth Did not Devour him* and “Geraldo, no last name” in *The House on Mango Street*). Such death not only embodies the devastating circumstances that actual undocumented people confront on a daily basis, but it also symbolizes their invisibility in creative writing and in the fabric of U.S. society before the twenty-first century.

Studying the undocumented immigrant is particularly relevant during the uncertainty of Donald Trump’s administration, as sanctuary cities are under attack. These are cities where the Immigrant Rights Movement has established projects that built decent homes for immigrant farm workers and provide help with translation of documents, tax

and health services, ESL and computer classes, and endless other services. Moreover, the president appears to be sanctioning neo-Nazi and white-supremacist groups, and has pardoned convicted sheriff Joe Arpaio (found guilty of criminal contempt after illegally targeting Latinx in the state of Arizona), and he has also issued racist comments about immigrants coming to the U.S. from African countries and Haiti. On January 12, 2018, *The Washington Post* reported that Trump allegedly asked lawmakers during a meeting in the Oval Office: "Why are we having all these people from shithole countries come here? Why people from countries like Norway don't migrate as much to the U.S?" (Johnson, Williams, and Fisher). Despite their significant contributions, undocumented immigrants today are among the most vulnerable people in U.S. society. According to Jeffrey Passel, over eleven millions of undocumented people reside in the U.S. They represent roughly one third of all immigrants in the country. The majority are low-wage workers in the construction, service, agricultural, and food processing industries. Thus, they form an integral part of the U.S. economy and labor force. One of the most sympathetic undocumented immigrant groups is the so-called "DREAMers," due to their support of the DREAM Act. The DREAM Act (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors)—introduced in the US senate in August of 2001—as a path to offer legal relief for undocumented young people, brought to the U.S. by their parents as children. While the DREAM Act has changed since its initial drafting, the essential provisions include a pathway toward legalization for individuals who entered the country before the age of 16, have been in the country for over at least five years, have good moral character, have graduated from a U.S. high school or received a GED, and have been accepted to a four-year university or completed two years of military service. The DREAMers are young adults who were brought to the U.S. as children by their parents. They have grown up in U.S. society, and very often don't even remember their countries of origin. Many of them speak little or none of their parent's native language, and have been educated in public and private U.S. schools. Although they consider the U.S. their home, their lives are uncertain because they haven't been able to adjust their immigration status, living in constant fear of deportation. Trump ended DACA (The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) on September 5th, 2017. DACA is a policy founded during the Obama administration in June of 2012. It allows certain undocumented immigrants—who entered the country as minors—to receive a renewable two-year period of deferred action from deportation

and eligibility for a work permit. Since the end of DACA no agreement has been reached in Congress, thus the future of DREAMers remains bleak.

This essay focuses on young undocumented immigrant students by primarily analyzing nonfiction texts: Joshua Davis's *Spare Parts*: *Four Undocumented Teenagers, One Ugly Robot, and the Battle for the American Dream*, and Julissa Arce's *My Underground American Dream* memoir. I also discuss the *Spare Parts* film, and Jose Antonio Vargas's documentary, *Documented.* As migration theory has largely failed to recognize the importance of race and racism in the process of migrant integration, my analysis incorporates theories that center on dismantling western binaries to create hybrid, new non-linear, third spaces of subaltern enunciation. Therefore, decolonial theory is useful in the examination of the always fluid notion of undocumented immigration. Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano's concept of "coloniality of power," Argentinian-Mexican philosopher Enrique Dussel's "principle of solidarity," and Latina theorist Gloria Anzaldúa's notion of "Nepantla," provide essential thinking to my analysis.

In *Spare Parts*, Joshua Davis directly addresses the obstacles that undocumented young people confront in the U.S. After coming across this story through an email, he first published an article at *Wired* in 2005. He then conducted interviews, and subsequently published his book in 2014. Davis's text tells the story of a high school robotics team of four kids—born in Mexico and brought to the US without documents by their parents. Under the direction of two teachers, the teens from Carl Hayden Community High School in Phoenix, Arizona, achieved the impossible. They won a national underwater robotics competition against universities such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Cornell in 2004. Despite Davis's best intentions, however, the narration is, at times, punctuated by stereotypes. The story opens with the robotics team standing before a panel of judges from top governmental and industrial engineering agencies. On the one hand, the narrator describes the extraordinary expertise of the team when they explain the science behind their robot. On the other hand, he also focuses on their appearance and the (presumed) reaction of one of the judges: "Tom Swean developed million-dollar autonomous, underwater robots for the SEALs. He was not used to dealing with Mexican American kids sporting gold chains, faked diamond rings, and patchy adolescent mustaches." Perhaps this description is meant to confront prejudicial assumptions that Davis (in turn) assumes that Swean was having during the competition interview. However, the fact is that

unsolicited explanations such as these only serve to perpetuate stereotypes as that type of attire is linked to gangs. Recalling Gayatri Spivak's seminal essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" it is essential to recognize that having an intellectual attempting to speak for the subaltern, may only keep the other—the undocumented immigrant in this case—in his/her disenfranchised position. The essential significance of Spivak's essay is located in the first part, which presents the ethical problems of investigating a different culture based on "universal" concepts and frameworks. Spivak examines the validity of the western representation of the other, and proposes that the discursive institutions that regulate writing about the Other are closed to postcolonial scrutiny. She underscores that this limitation is due to the fact that critical thinking about the Other tends to articulate its relation to the Other within the hegemonic system. Also problematic is Davis's use of the words *illegal* and *undocumented* interchangeably, which complicates his role at trying to articulate a case for the undocumented students with whom he sympathizes.

Anibal Quijano describes "coloniality of power" as the structures of control and hegemony that were established since the colonial period. These structures stretch from the conquest of the Americas to the present, and have remained, more or less, intact through time. These hegemonic structures stay in place through racist/sexist colonial discourses that date back 450 years when western colonial administrations articulated the relationship between European/Euro-American metropolises and non-European margins. It is essential to understand the importance of "coloniality" in the transnational process of migrant incorporation into metropolitan societies:

> Migrants do not arrive in an empty or neutral space, but in metropolitan spaces that are already 'polluted' by racial power relations with a long colonial history, colonial imaginary, colonial knowledge and racial/ethnic hierarchies linking to a history of empire; in other words, migrants arrive in a space of power relations that is already informed and constituted by coloniality. (Grosfoguel, Oso and Chistou 641)

When Davis assigns a traditional description of gang members to the high school students, he is in fact, reaffirming this "Latino," racist image. Such stereotypes are always constructed in a power relation that reinforces colonial hierarchies, only to keep the other (the undocumented Latino students) on the margins. The biological racism of centuries past, however, has been substituted by cultural racism (Grosfoguel, Oso and Chistou 645). New racist discourses deny their own racism. The current belief is that racism and the colonial hierarchies it produces is a thing of the past. An example can be seen in this recent Trump campaign speech:

> When Democratic policies fail, they are left with only this one tired argument: "You're racist. You're racist. You're racist…" They keep saying it: "You're racist." It's a tired, disgusting argument and it's so totally predictable." (Speech at Manchester, New Hampshire, Rally)

By simply avoiding the word "race," cultural racism proclaims to be non-racist, yet racism endures. Also problematic is Davis's occasional use of the word "illegal"—to refer to the high school students—which inevitably criminalizes the undocumented youth. Therefore, the narrator in *Spare Parts* continues to operate within a coloniality of power structure-discourse that reinstates the students as unlawful others.

Interestingly enough, the *Spare Parts* movie, released in 2015, doesn't portray the high school students wearing gold chains and/or fake diamond rings, and seldom mentions the word "illegal," and of course, in keeping with cultural racism, there is not even one mention of the word "race." Nevertheless, it grossly simplifies the original story. The Hollywood-like film opts for a happy ending, concluding at the climatic announcement of the winners, and the father of one of the team members—who has a damaged relationship with his son in the original story—showing up at the award ceremony to embrace his son, Lorenzo. Davis offers the actual reaction of Lorenzo after watching the filming of the emotional scene: "My father would never do that."

Unlike the movie, Davis does offer a sensible update of the lives of the robotic team winners; a sharp contrast to the film's ending. Because of their undocumented status, two of the four high school students (Cristian and Luis) found it difficult to complete university degrees. Lorenzo completed an associate degree in culinary arts. Oscar completed a bachelor degree in mechanical engineering and was recognized by President Obama during his graduation. Nevertheless, and despite having been married to an American citizen, Oscar had to return to Mexico for some time and work low-paying jobs while others advocated for his permanent residency. Davis juxtaposes all of the undocumented students' struggles with the considerable success, after college, of the MIT white students, who lost to the undocumented high school Latino students. One of the most symbolic scenes in the film is when the high school principal (played by Jamie Lee Curtis) announces the underwater robotic team's win over the school's intercom. Unfortunately, the school is almost empty; no one listens to her exciting news with the exception of a Latino janitor. No one listens; an emblematic part of the movie, since in reality nothing has been done in Washington concerning the pressing, desperate situation that talented, young undocumented students continue to confront without immigration reform.

Evidently, both *Spare Parts* text and film fail to articulate real decolonial propositions for the undocumented high schoolers. On the one hand, the text frequently reaffirms stereotypes and "illegal" discourses from the political right that keep the students in their marginal position. The film, on the other hand, dims the harsh reality that undocumented youth currently confront. While the film ends in a happy and hopeful note, the reality is that after the high school students won the robotics competition, serious problems began for them. In other words, that extraordinary winning (praised in classic hollywoodesque style) did not solve their migratory status, nor were their lives improved as a result. Perhaps Davis's major achievement is positioning the struggles of the robotics team within the bigger struggle of undocumented students in the U.S., including a discussion on the impact that anti-immigrant laws, such as Arizona S.B. 1070 (2010, the broadest and strictest anti-illegal Immigration provision passed in Arizona; it has received worldwide attention, and was extremely controversial), and the defeats that the DREAM Act has faced. Always racialized, DREAMers have been the focus of national anxiety about the changing demographics of the U.S., as Ronald R. Sundstrom describes it in *The Browning of America and the Evasion of Social Justice*. There is no other reason why the DREAM Act has remained in Congress for over a decade, not being able to pass even with sporadic bipartisan support.

Another case of undocumented immigration is Julissa Arce, who published her memoir in 2016, entitled *My Underground American Dream: My True Story as an Undocumented Immigrant Who Became a Wall Street Executive*. Arce tells her story as an undocumented young woman who was able to work and succeed on Wall Street with fake documents. Just as the students in *Spare Parts,* Arce was brought to San Antonio, Texas by her parents under a tourist visa that they let expire. She expresses her frustration at realizing the gravity of her situation at age fourteen: "I was no longer just a 'Mexican,' which seemed to be bad enough in certain people's eyes. I was an 'illegal,' or worse, 'an illegal alien'—like some thing from another planet that wasn't even human" (Arce 60). Once she graduated from high school in the top 5 % of her class, Arce was struggling to get accepted at any university for lacking a social security card number. In addition, her family was not able to afford international student tuition. Fortunately, she benefited from House Bill 1403 that passed in June of 2001, widely known as the Texas DREAM Act. This bill provides in-state tuition rates at Texas public colleges and universities for Texas residents without legal status. Because of her excellent grades, Arce also qualified for the Texas grant, which covered a good portion

of her tuition at UT Austin, where she entered the school of business. In desperate need to pay for the remainder of her college expenses, Arce found a person who supplied her with fake documents: a green card and social security card. Shortly after graduation, using these fake documents, she was able to secure a position as an analyst in the Markets Coverage Group at Goldman Sachs in NYC. On Wall Street, Arce continued evolving as a successful professional but she was very unhappy. Living in the shadows, and always keeping secret that she was an undocumented immigrant came at a high cost; since her freshman year at UT, she developed chronic pain in several parts of her body. In addition, since she was not able to travel abroad, she missed attending her father's and grandmother's funerals in Mexico, and she wasn't able to visit with her Mexican family for several years. Her narrative expresses the deep levels of stress, anxiety, and depression that she was experiencing. She worked at Goldman Sachs for over six years, achieving the position of vice president at age twenty-seven, with compensation of over $340,000 per year by the time that she decided to resign. She emphasizes that despite having achieved professional success, this was not making her happy: "I couldn't understand why I felt so empty… so alone… over the course of that year my back pain, joint pain, and stomach problems all grew worse" (Arce 248). After taking some time off, Arce worked for Merryl Lynch for two unhappy years until the company laid her off in 2014. Inspired by Jose Antonio Vargas—an undocumented Filipino and Pulitzer-Prize-winning journalist, who came out of the shadows by publishing an article in the *New York Times*, and later releasing a documentary—Arce decided to come out as well by writing her own undocumented experience in a memoir. She was particularly impressed by Vargas's use of the word *undocumented* instead of *illegal*, and the fact that he had highlighted that he was not an *alien* but a human being. She wrote about Vargas**:**

> [Vargas] a kid who'd been caught in a system that didn't allow him to fix his undocumented status, through no fault of his own. It had never occurred to me just how much shame and humiliation I'd felt…That dehumanizing phrase [*illegal alien*] had seared itself in my mind when I'd first heard it used in San Antonio at the age of fourteen. I believe those words were responsible for one part of the immense fear I felt every time I faced an ID check. *Illegal Alien* is dehumanizing. *Undocumented Immigrant* is not. A piece of paper does not define the entirety of who I am. (Arce 226)

It is important to emphasize how detrimental and dehumanizing the word "Illegal alien" is to undocumented immigrants. In *Documenting the Undocumented: Life Narratives of Unauthorized Immigrants*, Marta Caminero-Santangelo analyzes Peter Orner's

Underground America, which is a collection of narratives of undocumented lives. Caminero-Santangelo focuses on the undocumented right to human rights that, in theory, go beyond the limitations of citizenship rights. She emphasizes that "the narrators of *Underground America* repeatedly insist on calling attention to their own bodies, as a trope for insisting on claims both to a common humanity and—albeit more subtly—to American Belonging" (Caminero-Santangelo 462, emphasis added). However, Trump launched his presidential campaign by promising to build a wall on the border between the U.S. and Mexico. He blamed "illegal" immigrants—specifically Mexicans—for bringing drugs and crime into the U.S., as well as for taking American jobs. He did not mention the fact that the disappearing jobs were mostly held by blue-collar white males and that they have been delocalized to other countries, where companies are able to hire cheaper labor, or that they disappeared like coal mining or due to automation and clean energy production. Once again, undocumented immigrants, the most vulnerable and exploited members of society are the scapegoats for U.S. economic troubles.

Enrique Dussel's philosophy of liberation could be applied to discuss the options available for DREAMers, specifically the principle of solidarity. According to Dussell, the principle of solidarity could be summarized as follows:

> We must produce and reproduce the lives of the oppressed and excluded, the victims, discovering the causes of their negativity and adequately transforming systems/institutions to suit them, which will, as a result, improve the life of the community as a whole. (Dussel 86)

Dussel implies that in order to comprehend the failures of the system/institution (or the structures of power discussed above), its victims need to be located first, those who suffer the most from its exclusion and oppression. Then, it is essential to address the failure from the perspective of the oppressed instead of from the perspective of the privileged group.

Departing from Dussel's perspective, José Jorge Mendoza argues that focusing on the system-failures from the perspective of the oppressed, provides an account from the bottom of the immigration debate: an account of liberation as opposed to an account of domination. An account of liberation is primarily concerned with "transforming the current system of injustice by empowering those who are currently the most victimized and therefore the most disempowered" (Mendoza 5). This requires understanding the difference between political reform and what Dussel calls "Political Transformation." The former means any action that, although it provides change,

leaves the system/institution essentially intact. The latter, on the contrary, starts inside social movements that embody an initiation of previously formed social networks (family, [church] friends, coworkers, neighbors, etc). These social networks have the potential of transcending civil society and producing a crisis of legitimacy at the political level. Mendoza states:

> In other words, beyond serving a counter-hegemonic purpose, social justice movements, in respecting and representing the alterity of the oppressed and excluded, also serve an "analectical" purpose. Analectical [in Dusselian terms] implies a novel or utopic moment that comes from outside the system, as opposed to dialectical criticism, which is merely an internal critique and is devoid of a utopic moment. (e.g. the immanent critique of the Frankfurt school) (Mendoza 6)

Social justice movements and the political part they play, directly pertain to the Immigrant Rights Movement. Moreover, they not only react to politics, but social justice movements also have an essential political role. For example, helping to outline and disseminate progressive legislation, such as the DREAM Act. The DREAM Act is an example of counter-strategy that can be designated as empowerment through "solidarity." This happens because several, if not the majority of the people who form the Immigrant Rights Movement—marchers, protesters, and those who volunteer their time and energy to help and protect undocumented immigrants—are not DREAMers, or even immigrants themselves. These people stand in solidarity with the undocumented because they respect their humanity, and the fact that as humans, they should have human rights. They see DREAMers, and all undocumented immigrants, as valuable members of their communities. Although the DREAM Act has not passed, the battle remains through community resistance.

To be part of the community that forms the Immigration Movement, no membership is required. Thus, another element that needs decolonization is the concept of citizenship, as it keeps the structures of power in place. While DREAMers may consider themselves American culturally, traditional legal definitions of citizenship refuse to recognize them, essentially violating their human rights. The DREAMers' exclusion from U.S. citizenship and the refusal of the U.S. government to imagine a U.S. community that may include these migrant others, underscores that, regardless of more humane and dynamic theorizations of national belonging, citizenship is fundamentally built on exclusions that are largely based on racialized identities. The U.S. national imaginary calls for racial homogeneity. White nationalists and supremacy groups feel that they have to protect the country from what they see as the Latinization

of America, which would create a bilingual nation where Latinxs exert influence on a daily basis. Through discourses and practices meant to position racialized undocumented immigrants as the binary other to the white, hetero-patriarchal normalized citizen, the decision of who gets to claim normative belonging, and the rights that such belonging allegedly entails, is made along racialized lines meant to create a seemingly homogenous U.S. population. Indeed, citizenship is one of the main pillars supporting and reifying the coloniality of power over subaltern-racialized knowledges, as Walter Mignolo has pointed out in his essay "Delinking." Although in the U.S., citizenship has traditionally been approached as a juridical position dependent on birthright or naturalization, this construct does not account for the DREAMers. These are young people such as the high school robotics team, Arce, and Vargas who—despite having been born abroad—were brought to the U.S. without their consent, lived in the country most of their lives, consider the country their home, and feel national allegiance to the U.S.

In her memoir, Arce articulates emotional feelings of marginalization after learning that she is one of those referred to as an *illegal alien* at the age of fourteen. These feelings escalated and transformed into physical symptoms of bodily pain since obtaining fake documents to hide her "illegality." Citizenship as currently construed, cannot escape the discriminatory discourses that constitute it. The discursive and legislative criminalization that frames undocumented immigrants and other people of color as threats to the nation, also underscores the dialectic relationship between those who will always remain excluded from the U.S. community—no matter where they were born—and those who would fit the standard. Margaret Somers has emphasized that citizenship

> is the cold instrument of exclusion to those outside its borders, both internal borders based on race and gender exclusion, as well as nation-state ones based on xenophobia and nationalism. Market fundamentalism has by no means been the cause of today's social exclusion. Yet since the 1970s, it has served to radically exacerbate the exclusions of race and class…The outcome has been an ever-growing superfluous population [that] makes up America's socially excluded and internally stateless who have lost the rights to have rights. (Somers 5)

The citizen-noncitizen binary is mainly (re)created by immigration policies that result in the category of *illegal alien*, a group of marginal subjects for whom the opportunity of adjusting their immigration status is denied. Ana Ribero emphasizes that this perpetual illegality of undocumented immigrants "ensures a cheap labor force for capital, and convenes an Orwellian common enemy against whom to unite the nation"

(Ribero 37). Citizenship, with its constrained foundations, encourages discourses of fear and patriotism that support the nation—an essential structure of the coloniality of power—that depends on a racialized and dehumanized labor force to safeguard the production of capital and the reproduction of racist hegemonies.

Consequently, to articulate the failures of the system, as Dussel suggests, can the undocumented immigrant speak? So far, it has been shown that Davis's—well intentioned—text, as well as the *Spare Parts* movie, largely fail to accurately express the voice and experiences of the undocumented high school students. As a DREAMer, Arce should be able to speak for herself, and she does to a certain extent. However, although powerful at articulating her feelings of exclusion at age fourteen and beyond, there is a limitation. Arce came out and spoke by publishing her text when she was no longer undocumented. When she published her memoir in 2016, she was a citizen of the U.S. since 2014. When Arce was about to quit everything to go back to Mexico, the opportunity of marriage presented another chance to overcome her "illegality." While waiting at her USCIS interview, holding hands with her husband she thinks:

> Why did I have to get married? [...] Why couldn't my accomplishments be enough to make it in this country? Why was it that a man had to rescue me from my situation? […] We came to America so I could grow up to be successful, independently from any man. The irony of my situation stung deep in my soul. (Arce 228)

Arce finally got a real green card through marriage. Nevertheless, marriage—as the concept of citizenship—is an institution sanctioned by the hegemonic system that supports the continuation of the coloniality of power. Therefore, on the one hand, Arce's memoir cannot technically be considered an example of decolonial literature. On the other hand, however, she is still part of the Immigration Movement who keep fighting, protecting, and advocating for undocumented immigrants. In Dusselian terms, she is part of the social movement that advances "Political Transformation." Decolonial critique must examine how—through racialized coloniality—citizenship maintains Euro-American hegemony globally and white hetero-patriarchy locally. Locating the racialized features of citizenship underlines the unavoidable exclusionary bases of this structure. A decolonial analysis acknowledges as well that, for people of color, citizenship is an oppositional practice that mimics the desire for recognition and the rights that supposedly come with it. Citizenship is founded by exclusion and cannot be reclaimed in a decolonial project since the objective of decoloniality is equality.

As has been previously mentioned above—for inspiring Arce to publish her memoir—the case of 2008 Pulitzer Prize awardee, Vargas, is very interesting. After the journalist came out as an undocumented immigrant in 2011 through a *New York Times* article entitled "My Life as an Undocumented Immigrant," he released a multi-awarded autobiographical documentary in 2014 entitled, *Documented,* illustrating through his own story, the desperate situation that undocumented immigrants—specifically those who arrived to the U.S. as minors—confront. As stated above, he categorically rejects the term "illegal," because he considers the word not only dehumanizing, but erroneous to define him as an immigrant. He arrived to the U.S. without comprehending why, much less agreeing to, his mother sending him (with a tourist visa) from the Philippines to the U.S. to live permanently with his grandparents as a twelve-year-old in California. When Vargas affirms in his documentary: "I am an American without papers," this statement emphasizes the noncitizen's desire of belonging to the country by (re)configuring citizenship in ways not yet endorsed by dominant discourses. Perhaps the idea of an "American without papers" is a start in a discussion concerning a decolonial approach, as long as becoming "American" is not defined in terms that inexorably exclude other oppressed groups.

Vargas does remain undocumented. He is the founder and CEO of *Define America*, a non-profit media advocacy organization that uses storytelling to humanize the conversation around immigration, citizenship, and identity. He is a gay man of color-undocumented immigrant, who has articulated his own story. Therefore, the undocumented immigrant has spoken, right? Well, not quite. Vargas is highly educated, and so in the eyes of many, he holds a status of privilege that prevents him to be equal to the regular, more oppressed undocumented person, such as an unauthorized immigrant working in construction, or in the fields for substandard wages. At the very least, Vargas, just as Arce, is part of the Immigration Movement—the social movement that advances "Political Transformation" to comply with the principle of solidarity that Dussell discusses in his Philosophy of Liberation.

It is essential to embark in decolonial projects that reveal the inadequacy, the failures in the system that keep the "illegal" other subjugated by maintaining in place the structures that support the coloniality of power. This requires the dismantling and eliminating of the chimera of homogeneity that citizenship, or even (heterosexual) marriage entail. For example, that feeling of oppression at getting married to obtain a green card that Arce so movingly articulates. Gloria Anzaldúa´s concept of

"Borderlands" underscores the epistemic condition that she defines as "la facultad." According to Anzaldúa, "la facultad" is shaped "in between space," where boundaries breakdown, identity categories dissolve, and new ways of thinking originate. Nepantla for Anzaldúa is the liminal state between worlds, realities, and systems of knowledge. This is the space inhabited by subjects at the borderlands, such as the DREAMers, who are in the U.S. but at the same time don't belong to it, nor do they belong to their countries of origin. They are from neither here nor there: "Because I, a mestiza, continually walk out of one culture and into another, because I am in all cultures at the same time, *alma entre dos mundos, tres, cuatro, me zumba la cabeza con lo contradictorio. Estoy norteada por todas las voces que me hablan simultaneamente*" (Anzaldúa 99.) This is the state of consciousness that Anzaldúa defines as the condition of the borderlands. An awareness trapped in the contradictions of the border—as a space of inflexible boundaries, and the trespassing of those boundaries at the same time. While "la facultad" is permeated with the experience of deprivation, oppression, persecution and violence, living in the borderlands also ensures novel strategies of coping and transgressing boundaries. Undocumented immigrants resist and transgress the dominant culture by learning to take advantage of the inconsistencies (the border contradictions) of the system, such as the country's economic and political aims—its economic dependence on undocumented immigrants and their political exclusion.

Indeed, Undocumented Immigrants are what Gloria Anzaldúa calls *atravesados*, people living in-between cultures, inhabiting a third space, where possibilities of decoloniality can arise. Latinx's literature, cinema, and scholarship have the essential duty of imagining alternate, decolonial realities for the DREAMers, and the undocumented immigrant in general, and finding ways to resist and transcend concepts such as citizenship—which is reproduced by, and continues to produce, the illusion of equality, which is not true. To achieve decoloniality, Anzaldúa suggests to "disengage from the dominant culture, write off altogether as a lost cause, and cross the border into a wholly new territory" (Anzaldúa 101). Undocumented Immigrants resist their invisibility, and their position as disposable labor force by establishing interethnic families, and multicultural communities in the largest U.S. cities, and by organizing to form movements that include a majority who is not undocumented, such as the Immigration Movement. The DREAMers are the hope of unauthorized immigrants, who deserve to be truly part of the country they love, in the land that they

have also helped shape with their hard work, their economic contributions, and their rich history and culture.

Bibliography

ANZALDÚA, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza.* San Francisco: Aunt Lutte, 2012.

ARCE, Julissa. *My Underground American Dream: My True Story as an Undocumented Immigrant Who Became a Wall Street Executive.* New York: Center Street, 2016.

CAMINERO-SANTANGELO, Marta. "Documenting the Undocumented: Life Narratives of Unauthorized Immigrants." *Biography* 35, no. 3, 2012, pp. 449–471.

————. *Documenting the Undocumented: Latino/a Narratives and Social Justice in the Era of Operation Gatekeeper.* Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2016.

CISNEROS, Sandra. *The House on Mango Street.* Arte Público Press, 1984.

DAVIS, Joshua. *Spare Parts: Four Undocumented Teenagers, One Ugly Robot, and the Battle for the American Dream.* New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2014.

DUSSEl, Enrique. *Twenty Theses in Politics.* Translated by George Ciccariello-Maher. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.

GROSFOGUEL, Ramón, Laura Oso and Anastasia Chistou. "'Racism,' intersectionality and Migration Studies: framing Some Theoretical Reflections." *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 22, no. 6, 2015, pp. 635–652.

JOHNSON, Jenna; Williams, Vanessa, and Fisher, Marc. "Trump's vulgarity: Overt Racism or a President Who Says What Many Think?" In *The Washington Post.* Washington, D.C., January 12, 2018.

LEDESMA, Alberto. "Narratives of Undocumented Mexican Immigration as Chicana/o Acts of Intellectual and political Responsibility." In *Decolonial Voices: Chicana and Chicano Cultural Studies in the 21st Century*. Edited by Aruro J. Aldama and Naomi H. Quiñonez. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002, pp. 33—354

MENDOZA, José J. "The Political Philosophy of Unauthorized Immigration." *APA Newsletters* 10, no. 2 (2011): pp. 2-6.

MIGNOLO, Walter. "Delinking." In *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2 (2007): pp. 449–514.

ORNER, Peter. *Underground America: Narratives of Undocumented Lives.* San Francisco: McSweenye's Books, 2008.

PASSEL, Jeffrey. "Unauthorized Migrants: Numbers and Characteristics." Washington DC: Pew Hispanic Center, 2005. http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/reports/46.pdf.

QUIJANO, Aníbal. "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America." *Nepantla* 1. No. 3 (2000): pp. 522–580.

RIBERO, Ana. "Citizenship." In *Decolonizing Rethoric and Composition Studies*. Edited by Iris D. Ruiz and Raúl Sánchez. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, *pp.* 31–45

RIVERA, Tomás. *And the Earth Did not Devour Him*. Quinto Sol,1971, new edition 1987.

SOMERS, Margaret R. *Genealogies of Citizenship: Markets, Statelessness, and the Right to Have Rights*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

SPIVAK, Gayatri. “Can the Subaltern Speak?” In *Marxism and Interpretation of Culture*, 271–313.Edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998.

SUNDSTROM, Ronald R. *The Browning of America and the Evasion of Social Justice.* New York: State University of New York Press, 2008.

TRUMP, Donald. “Remarks Announcing Candidacy for President in New York City.” In *The American Presidency Project*. New York City, New York. June 16, 2015.

————. “Speech at Manchester, New Hampshire, Rally.” In *CNN Transcripts.* Manchester, New Hampshire. August 25, 2016.

VARGAS, Antonio. “My Life as an Undocumented Immigrant.” *The New York Times Magazine,* 22 (June 2011): pp. 1–10. http://www.nyts.com/2011/06/26/magazine/my-life-as-an-undocumented-immigrant.html?_r=0.

Filmography

Spare Parts. Directed by Sean McNamara. 2015. Santa Monica, CA: Lionsgate Films, 2015. DVD.

Documented. Directed by Jose Antonio Vargas and Ann Raffaela Lupo. 2014. New York City, NY: Bond/360 Films, 2014. DVD.