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DAIANA SANCHEZ, 2024, *The Children of Solaga: Indigenous Belonging across the U.S.-Mexico Border*: Stanford University Press, 202pp., ISBN 9781503641389

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How does one belong to a community in an epoch of multiple colonialities and highly militarized borders, where bodies are highly surveilled, analyzed, and hegemonized? In *The Children of Solaga: Indigenous Belonging across the U.S.-Mexico Border* (2024), Dr. Daina Sanchez offers a deeply personal monograph demonstrating how the descendants of Zapotec migrants from San Juan Solaga, Oaxaca, transcend borders, lineages, and kinship networks to maintain their Indigenous identity, community practices, and relational sense of belonging, while navigating life in diaspora. As the first book-length ethnographic text written by a Native woman from the community being studied (5), Sanchez explores how Indigenous epistemologies, and communal values, such as *comunalidad* and practices of *convivencia* are sustained and fortified across borders and multiple settler-states. By emphasizing the voices and lived experiences of Indigenous migrants, who through creative forms of multisensorial resistance refuse to be erased or assimilated by national and colonial structures, this work makes an important contribution to Indigenous studies, migration scholarship, and identity politics.

Chapter one, “The Cargo System and Indigenous Belonging,” challenges conventional anthropological interpretations of the cargo system in Mesoamerica by reframing it not as a punitive or hierarchical system but one centered on membership and belonging. Sanchez offers the Solagueño term *comunalidad* to describe this dynamic, emphasizing an Indigenous way of knowing and being through which individuals demonstrate belonging and are inducted into *el goce comunal*, the feeling of communal joy through collective contribution and participation (4). This intervention is significant because it centers Indigenous cosmologies in defining the function and importance of communal systems, resisting Eurocentric frameworks that have

historically pathologized Indigenous governance structures. Patron Saint Celebrations, or *fiestas*, exemplify this paradigm shift as Solagueños transform Spanish colonization and missionization histories into dynamic, embodied spaces where they affirm collective identity and community belonging, transcending geographic and generational barriers. Specifically, diasporic Solagueños transcend the highly militarized U.S.-Mexico border by capitalizing on modern technology and contributing monetarily as *mayordomías* (fiesta sponsors), granting them the opportunity to participate in *el goce comunal*, affirming their community connection. In doing so, Solagueños reject settler-state notions of Indigeneity that seek to invalidate identity claims for Indigenous peoples outside their ancestral homelands (42), demonstrating how identity and belonging are affirmed through communal participation.

In chapter 2, “Home of the Oaxacans,” Sanchez examines how hybrid hegemonies, formed by the intersecting colonial structures of the U.S. and Mexico, work to exclude diasporic Solagueños through practices like enclavisation. These structures confine Indigenous migrants to marginalized social and geographic enclaves, marked by limited access to resources and heightened exposure to structural violence, including the prevalence of gangs, which further complicates notions of collective belonging and safety. This analysis is vital as it challenges ideas that promote Los Angeles as a multicultural mecca, and exposes how deeply embedded ideas centered around race and place continue to inform racial logics and neighborhood demographics. Through the hybrid hegemony framework, ethnic solidarity is also problematized, as Solagueño living in Los Angeles confront social exclusion from both Anglo and Latinx communities.

Although this dual exclusion informs how Solagueño youth regard themselves and the relationships they have to their ancestral homeland (66), these enclaves become sites of cultural production, as adversity produces a desire for many youths to be actively engaged in the traditions of their parents’ hometown. Music, in particular, becomes an ontology of care, manifesting from its powerful history as a tool of refusal against colonial imposition. Oaxacan brass bands have emerged as powerful symbols of identity, belonging, and cultural pride, reshaping how Oaxacan communities are imagined within Los Angeles. They serve as an auditory affirmation of Solagueño lifeways, sustaining generational knowledge, and fostering communal values across geographic and diasporic divides.

The third chapter, “Returning to the Land of the Fallen Leaves,” addresses how Solagueño families, with mixed citizenship status mobilize settler-created legal identities to maintain relations with Sagara, their pueblos, and affirm *convivencia*, or the practice of living and engaging with community, fortifying communal belonging (83). Increasingly restrictive immigration policies combined with racial, social, and economic marginalization force many Indigenous peoples to migrate to the United States without authorization. This reality manifests as legal violence, where the responsibility to maintain kinship, or *convivir*, across borders falls to diasporic children whose citizenship status allow them to traverse transnationally without contestation.

This legal maneuvering resists the settler state’s attempts to limit Indigenous movement, addressing larger structures of colonial erasure. Solagueño being is rooted in experiential, embodied knowledge where place, community, and collective responsibility are integral to identity. Although language and gender expectations occasionally create tensions between locals and returnees, the moral ethos of *convivencia* transcends these differences, fostering a shared appreciation for their pueblo and culture. By leveraging the legal status of U.S.-born individuals to sustain kinships and collectives across borders, Solagueños transgress state control and practice *convivencia* in diaspora, strengthening ties to their homeland, Indigenous identity, and the vitality of their community.

In chapter four, “Music Follows Serranos,” autochthonous modalities of communication, such as voice, music, and dance, allow Solagueños living in Los Angeles to transcend geographic and generation lines and form webs of relations that facilitate Indigenous place-making practices connecting those living in diaspora to their pueblos. These sonic spaces cultivate an auditory culture through which Solagueños affirm their Indigenous distinctiveness and strengthen communal belonging, transforming any place where community and music converge into a site of home-making and cultural continuity.

Bands composed of diaspora youth leverage their unique lived experiences, family histories, and collective cultural affiliations to create an amalgamation of audio histories, eliciting memories and feelings of being in Solaga, connecting generations regardless of linguistic ability. As not all Solagueños can return to their homeland, music becomes an

embodied experience that allows individuals to feel life in Solaga again. These bands operate as auditory sites of decolonial praxis, offering a culturally embedded modality to sustain communal lifeways and enact belonging. By contributing to an auditory epistemology that transmits memory and identity, Oaxacan brass bands facilitate intergenerational relations and produce counter-hegemonic spaces where Indigenous presence endures across colonial borders and temporalities.

Drawing on work by Chicana feminists, Critical Latinx Indigenous frameworks, and scholars like Shannon Speed, Maylei Blackwell, and Patrick Wolfe, Sanchez extends conversations on the transborder lives and practices of Indigenous migrants. Yet by emphasizing joy, or *el goce comunal*, she illustrates how youth are active agents in fortifying and cultivating diasporic Solagueño personhood and community life. For these youth, music represents a powerful tool of refusal as they reclaim a colonial method of evangelization to affirm communal futurities through continued marginalization. These sensorial spaces are dynamic, vibrant, and unapologetically Oaxaqueña forms of resistance against colonial erasure (121).

Circling back to the posed question, in an era of colonial borders and surveillance, *The Children of Solaga* shows that belonging endures through embodied practices of *comunalidad*, multisensory resistance, and the relational care of *convivencia*. Sanchez demonstrates what it means to conduct engaged, relational research. She acknowledges her positionality and leverages her embodied memory to create lush sensorial descriptions, inviting readers to experience *convivencia* and Solagueño ontologies of care. Sanchez illustrates that decolonization is an embodied, relational practice transcending settler-imposed borders, socioeconomic barriers, and generational divides. By refusing static conceptions of identity and rejecting the treatment of Indigenous peoples as passive “ethnographic others,” Sanchez instead centers them as theorists, speakers, and agents of their own experience. This monograph offers an insightful lens for those interested in decolonizing ethnography, illuminating the possibilities of community-rooted scholarship and Indigenous epistemologies in unpacking transnational and intergenerational identity formation.

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