

## **Antiracism Book Club Discussion Guide**

Fall/Winter 2023/24 (Blocks 4 and 5)

*We Are Not Dreamers: Undocumented Scholars Theorize Undocumented Life in the United States*

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### Chapter 1

#### “Other” Borders: The Illegal as Normative Metaphor by Joel Sati

In the first chapter authored by Dr. Joel Sati, we dive into exploring the metaphors and cognitive structures that shape narratives around immigration, undocumented people, legality and political violence. “Metaphors play a critical role in making meanings for that group that use them; those who oppose immigration have an interest in propagating metaphors that emphasize the undesirable aspects of immigration and hide other aspects. The metaphor ‘immigration as a wave’ will emphasize the destructive force of migration while hiding the fact that immigrants are human beings” (Santa Ana, 2002). Cognitive structures are mental representations of the world you create to make sense of it. They allow you to process and understand information. They provide meaning and organization to experiences. They help you learn and acquire competency, and on the other hand, they are also the result of learning.

- Dr. Sati discusses how metaphors structure our thinking at a fundamental level and how metaphors shape how we think about policy. He highlights how metaphors make certain policies palatable in political discourse. Would you agree with his analysis and how have you seen this shape your view and understanding of laws and policies in the United States?
- How has the “Illegal Immigrant as Alien” metaphor shaped the public perception of undocumented people when thinking about their humanity and existence in the United States?
- How has the “Immigrant as Dreamer” metaphor shaped the public perception of undocumented people when thinking about their humanity and existence in the United States?
- How have cognitive structures of “Illegal Immigrant as Alien” and “Illegal Immigrant as Criminal” shaped the perceptions of undocumented people as they view themselves (p. 39)?
- Why is it important for undocumented scholars to be on the forefront of changing the Dreamer narrative (p. 40 & 41)

### Chapter 2

#### “I felt like an embarrassment to the undocumented community: Undocumented Student Navigating Academic Probation and Unrealistic Expectations by Grecia Mondragón

This chapter discusses the mainstream narrative that depicts undocumented students as high achievers and valedictorians that justifies their worthiness and humanity based on their academic excellence. Mondragón argues that these unrealistic expectations make it difficult for

undocumented students to live their lives as they navigate the complexities of their immigration status, finances, mental health and family life.

- Why did Mondragón feel it was important to explore this topic as it relates to challenging the Dreamer narrative?
- What factors lead undocumented students to experience academic probation?
- In what other ways did academic probation impact the lives of undocumented students (p. 51)?

### Chapter 3

#### *Disrupting Diversity: Undocumented Students in the Neoliberal University by Gabrielle Cabrera*

Cabrera examines how diversity discourse about undocumented students uses diversity as a commodity and how universities iconize undocumented students as “diverse” subjects who add value to the institution of higher education through their experiences of marginalization. Cabrera further argues that her institution (University of California Merced) sells undocumented student stories of migration and trauma as a method of cultivating an image of an altruistic, progressive institution.

- In 2015, the University of California Office of the President hosted “The National Summit on Undocumented Students.” What were some of the concerns and critiques from undocumented students who attended the summit? And what were some of the recommendations from those students to the UC President (p. 72 and 73)?
- Going back to Sati’s analysis of metaphors and cognitive structures, how were “Safe Spaces” weaponized as a means to justify publicizing full names and room numbers in the New York Times article “Creating Safe Spaces for California Dreamers? (p. 77)”
- Cabrera explores how institutions that utilize diversity as capital and use it in a way that makes the institution more attractive to consumers (paying students). How does this show up at Colorado College (p. 80)?
- How does the Dreamer identity create a narrative that certain types of undocumented people are more acceptable and more “American” than other undocumented people (p. 81)?

### Chapter 4

#### *American’t: Redefining Citizenship in the U.S Undocumented Immigrant Youth Movement by Gabriela Monico*

Monico highlights the recognition within the DREAM Act movement as well as the larger immigrant rights movements, that mainstream views that have defined the “ideal” undocumented immigrant as exclusionary. Activists, in particular, youth activists are challenging these views and calling for a vision of immigration reform that includes ALL 11 million undocumented people.

- How has proposed legislation in support of undocumented people like the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minor (DREAM) Act created exclusion within the undocumented community in the fight for immigration reform?

- Monico provides a brief overview of immigration policies in the United States that depict the exclusionary practices of immigration law. How have these practices promoted the ideal of U.S homogeneity?
- What is market citizenship and how has immigrant labor been used as a means to justify the belonging and existence of undocumented people in the United States (p. 91 & 92)? How does this show up in media and political discourse?
- How do politicians like U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) rely on the myth of meritocracy to advocate for undocumented immigrants? Why is this harmful?
- In the section titled “Moving Away from a Definition of ‘American’ that Excludes,” Monico describes conversations with members of The Collective about what it means to be an American. How does exclusion shape how people with citizenship (but come from a mixed-immigration status family) view themselves as Americans?

### Chapter 5

#### Contesting “Citizenship:” The Testimonies of Undocumented Immigrant Activist Women by Gabriela Garcia Cruz

Garcia Cruz highlights the ways in which undocumented women have deconstructed their identity as “illegals” and developed as powerful, active members of their communities. Through their activism, undocumented women have learned to advocate for themselves regardless of their immigration status. Garcia Cruz recalls that within the debate of immigrant rights, the stories of exceptional undocumented youth were more visible but the stories of other undocumented people like parents were not. Undocumented women who are not “dreamers” are changing the political landscape around illegality, citizenship and belonging.

- Although migration is common around the world, as Garcia Cruz points out there are millions of border crossings every day around the world, why do you believe the United States has framed immigration as a national security issue (p. 111).
- How is fear weaponized against undocumented workers when it comes to employer abuse? How does this minimize the understanding of rights among undocumented workers - in particular, undocumented women? How does this further perpetuate more violence and fear?
- How has community engagement, sharing testimonies and speaking helped undocumented women become activists in the immigrant rights movements (p. 121)?

### Chapter 6

#### Undocumented Young Adults’ Heightened Vulnerability in the Trump Era by Carolina Valdivia

Valdivia discusses the ways in which the Trump era increased fear and anxieties among undocumented and mixed-immigration status families. Recognizing that the Obama administration executed mass deportations of undocumented people, under the Trump administration changes in immigration policy and enforcement yielded a different experience of what it means to be undocumented in the United States.

- Valdivia shares how communication via social media, text message and emails about possible raids were used to warn undocumented communities about possible ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) raids. Although these messages were intended

to be a precautionary measure, how did they impact the daily lives of undocumented communities (p. 134)?

- In what ways did families prepare for the possibility of deportation after the election of Donald Trump in 2016 (p. 136 & p 137)?
- How was the mental health of undocumented, DACA recipients and/or people from mixed-immigration status families impacted by the political landscape of 2016?

### Chapter 7

#### *Beyond Identity: Coming Out as UndocuQueer by Maria Liliana Ramirez*

Ramirez interrogates scholarship on undocumented immigration as largely dominated by heterosexual focus and further positions queer immigrants in the category of bad immigrants. Being rendered invisible in academic scholarship perpetuates a heteronormative portrayal of who undocumented are. Through interviews with ten undocumented queer people, Ramirez explores their identities and fears as they navigate love, family and politics.

- How has the exclusion of LGBT people showed up in immigration laws in the United States (p. 146 & 147)?
- Ramirez describes “shorthand terms” as a means for undocumented students to describe their identity without bluntly stating their undocumented status. Other shorthand terms like “AB 540,” “dreamers” and “DACAdmented” have evolved as a result of policy changes and identity formation for undocumented youth. Why does Ramirez state that this is dangerous for the undocumented community (p. 150)?
- What is the concept of “double coming out” (p. 150)?
- As Ramirez conducted interviews with UndocuQueer individuals, what are some ways they had to establish trust with the interviewees? What were some of the perceptions of non-undocumented researchers conducting research about undocumented people (p. 152). How is it problematic that scholars who are U.S citizens produce research and scholarship about undocumented communities?
- As UndocuQueer folks came out to their families and loved ones, what were some of their fears?
- What were the sentiments and reservations of using the term “UndocuQueer” among interviewees?

### Chapter 8

#### *Me Vesti De Reina: Trans and Queer Sonic Spatial Entitlement by Audrey Silvestre*

Silvestre centers the lives and deaths of undocumented trans women in the analysis of immigrant rights movements through Gaye Theresa Johnson’s (2013) notion of “sonic expressions of spatial entitlement” as a means to transform and reclaim space. Spatial entitlement is helpful for those who are systematically marginalized because technology serves as the medium to build communities when people are able to reclaim both physical and imaginary spaces. Silvestre focuses on Zoraida Reyes, a transgendered undocumented activist who was murdered and the vigil that took place to commemorate her life and a civil disobedience that took place in Santa Ana, California to trace the impact and contributions of undocumented trans women of color to the immigrant rights movement.

- How does Silvestre connect Lisa Cacho's (2012) notion of the continual state of rightlessness of marginalized people to the mainstream media coverage (or lack thereof) of Zoraida's death (p. 170)? How does centering marginalized communities' struggles change our understanding of who is deserving and undeserving?
- How do immigration laws criminalize, sanction and systematically marginalize queer and trans people (p. 174/176)?
- What was the significance of the song "Todo Me Miran" (Everyone looks at me) at the protest and how does this represent joy and empowerment among the undocumented, queer and trans communities (p. 181)?
- What are other ways in which you have witnessed sonic expressions of entitlement in your life or in the lives of others?

### Chapter 9

#### Legalization through Marriage: When Love and Papers Converge by Lucía Leon

Leon discusses the experiences of undocumented people when it comes to romantic relationships with their partners and the possibility of legalization (adjusting immigration status) through marriage. Through a series of interviews, Leon focuses on social and cultural notions of "marriage for love *and* papers" as for many undocumented immigrants, marriage continues to be the only viable option for adjustment of their prolonged immigration status.

- What "supportive evidence" does USCIS require to "substantiate the relationship" of a married couple seeking to petition through marriage (p. 195)?
- How does legal consciousness show up in the lives of undocumented people throughout this book and how does it show up among undocumented young adults' understanding of immigration laws in conjunction with social and cultural expectations of marriage to make decisions rooted in both love and a need for legalization?
- How does the uncertainty of DACA impact undocumented peoples perception of marrying for love and papers (p. 201)?
- In the "Navigating the Legalization Process" section, what were some ways in which couples "documented their love" and created a separate process for themselves to keep their love and intimacy centered through their process (p. 205/206)?

### Chapter 10

#### Undocumented Queer Parenting: Navigating External and Internal Threats to Family by Katy Joseline Maldonado Dominguez

In this final chapter, Maldonado Dominguez examines the experiences of queer and undocumented parents in mixed-immigration status families through two forms of threat to family formations: 1) undocumented parents face the external threat of a xenophobic country that deports and separates families and 2) as queer parents they must navigate the internal threats of homophobia and heteronormativity that similarly and more immediately disrupt their families.

- How do undocumented, queer and queer undocumented families challenge the heteronormative nuclear family?
- Who are middlewomen in undocumented families and what role do they serve (p. 219)?

- Through Ana's experiences, how did familial rejection and homophobia within her family impact her (p. 222)?
- Why do you feel it's important to dive deeper into the realities of undocumented queer parents and their families? Did the narratives of Sergio, Ana and Kasandra change your perception of how undocumented families navigate life in the United States and across the world?