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Editorial Commentary
Struggle Builds on Struggle II

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> Adbusters asks Pepe Mujica (ex-president of Uruguay) "Do you think humanity can change?" Pepe Mujica answers: "It could change. But the market is very strong. It has generated a subliminal culture that dominates our instinct. It's subjective. It's unconscious. It has made us voracious buyers. We live to buy; we work to buy. And we live to pay. Credit is a religion. So, we're kind of screwed up." (Adbusters, 2025)
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> It is about learning how to take our differences and make them strengths. For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. And this fact is only threatening to those women who still define the master's house as their only source of support. (Audre Lorde, 2020, pp. 41–42)

Audre Lorde's call in 1979 guides/grounds us, especially those of us working in United States institutions of higher education, an exclusionary and racist system—indeed one of the quintessential "master's houses." We might place Lorde's call alongside Mujica's lament about capitalism's hidden, violent forces to fortify us as we keep building toward the possibility of liberation within our work- work that emerges from the academy but is not guided by it. Using our subversive tools within the master's house, we practice liberatory education in public institutions, asserting that their funds are the peoples' monies and, at the same time, subverting their "secret" policing practices that expel, exclude, and mostly omit most students from public education. Liberatory and subversive practices like these expose the bluntness of authoritative regimes within U.S. institutions—and it is increasingly evident that some so-called leaders are willing to comply or capitulate to the regime. Therefore, now is a crucial moment to expose the violent academic systems in which we live and labor while remaining guided/grounded by the calls and wisdoms put forward by the refusers and resistors, those of us who are not seduced by institutional dressings that attempt to veil colonial underpinnings.

In the California State University system, there is a "time, place, and manner" rule that enables policing and surveillance of university students' protests. Such policies and practices contradict the right to freedom of speech and the fundamental purpose of public protest (Maldonado-Torres, 2016). We are seeing students protest university policies and administrators' decisions and orders that uphold U.S. empire's hegemony enabling research and teachings that support wars, the prison industrial complex, land theft, and exploitation. These students are being punished for "disrupting learning," although they are often practicing what they learn at universities when their consciousness is heightened, and eyes and hearts opened.

Surveillance and punishment—arresting students—supplants the purpose of "higher learning" as students' mounting calls to stop the genocidal war against the Palestinians since 2023 gain visibility, efficacy, and power on university campuses across the U.S. As we write, the first student political prisoner, also a Palestinian U.S. resident and student at Columbia University, Mahmoud Khalil, has been abducted by "secret" police without charges and detained at an ICE site. Faculty continue to be castigated and even fired for teaching Palestine, all activities that violate the basic credo of institutions of higher learning—to profess and enhance higher knowing. As part of this resistance, we call for collective action that obligates us to envision and create new ways of being in solidarity and thinking together to imagine freedom anew and craft our vision of abolitionist spaces and practices, in this moment.

Although, as Ethnic Studies scholars and liberatory-minded peoples, we have always named and exposed these colonial violences and traced their histories—the "newness" of this moment is that the democratically veiled facade has been arrogantly ripped off and now we can see clearly what we are up against—or rather, what has antagonized covertly is now carrying out its intention overtly and arrogantly. We assert that under these new/old colonial adjustments and productions (Maldonado-Torres, 2016), education is itself a continuous act of resistance and liberation.

Newly emerging authoritative control over our speech, ideas, pedagogies, and literal movements is foundational to buttress the "master's house" Audre Lorde wrote about, and we see it so clearly today as policies are exercised that fire, abduct and disappear, imprison, threaten, and silence our colleagues and students. U.S. universities are becoming part of the prison/military and ICE industrial complex by reproducing coloniality within the teachings and research efforts of higher education. If we are going to continue building struggles on past struggles, as a way of honoring and engaging the trajectory of Ethnic Studies, we must build a world of solidarity and liberatory movements with nourishing and loving communities inside and outside of these institutions. Simultaneously, as infiltrators within the "master's house," we must refuse addictions to colonial "bait" that results in complicity and instead utilize public funds to do the struggle work, based on our fierce liberatory pedagogies and co-created knowledge/meaning-making in/with our communities. Also, as part of an abolitionist morality in the current struggle, our obligation is to reclaim liberatory public learning spaces within the "master's house," inviting students to a decolonial praxis to co-build and co-imagine living around and outside the "master's house." This decolonial liberatory praxis requires building with communities, locally and internationally.

In our lifetimes, we have borne witness to cyclical distractions issued by the so-called democratic U.S. government vis-a-vis never-ending policy reforms that trick us into believing that there are "two sides" and there can be no other way—a "third way," let's say, except to watch the pendulum sway. This call for another way, a third way, is demonstrated by the struggles and demands by the Puerto Rican movement, Black Panther, Black Berets, Third World Liberation Front, Chicanos Unidios Por la justicia, Chicanos Communication Center, etc. . . . All of the grassroots movements that called for a "third way" in the 1960s and '70s in the U.S. taught us that at the start of their struggles, they opened fissures in the dominant colonial U.S. system, created liberatory opportunities, and simply implemented what they wanted and desired. They did not ask for a permit to protest, recall a corrupt politician, or open new educational programs- the calls were not reformist or cautious of upending violent structures and systems that purportedly cared for people. They were calls to self-sustainability and solidarity toward healthier and happier ways of living. We wonder if these calls from decades ago are what we should revive and what those calls sound like

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today as we consider a struggle-on-struggle approach. To refuse the rules, to upend the terms of the nationalist game, and to just do what we desire and deserve, does this seem radical? Or does this sound like what the current fascist administration is doing as it works to destroy decades of working peoples' gains so the elites, the 1% of this nation, can thrive?

We feel in our gut the urgency to look at the old "wisebooks" as guides for future action, return to basics, and refuse the seduction that we've "made it" and instead, disobey, refuse, and not seek permission from anyone. Our will to re-imagine and re-create strategies while being guided by tried tools, like grassroots local media groups such as El Grito del Norte and El Grito Newsletter in New Mexico, El Gallo in Colorado, and other land-based platforms for organizing and encouraging communities through truth-telling. We need to go back to working with/as communities to be self-sufficient, responsive to each other and to ourselves, and work toward building community that, unlike institutions that instill competition and fear, will help us heal and grow trust, solidarity, love, and move us toward the world we want to inhabit—one without a master's colonial house, its logics, and tools.

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