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Othering and Solidarity in 20th Century Agrarian California

*What Can We Learn About Efforts to Create Cross-Sector
Alliances for Progressive Political Change?*

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Abstract

In the context of multiple and converging political, economic, and environmental crises, agrarian and rural movements in the United States continue to contest elite power and their own marginalization. Black agrarians, indigenous people, and migrant farmworkers are groups that have historically been “Othered” – undermined in their humanity in order to maintain group-based social stratification, and this “Othering” continues to shape US politics nationally. This paper seeks to understand through historical research and conceptualization how movements composed of Others have sought to counter Othering. In focusing on acts of solidarity as key features of movement success, the paper outlines three major strategies movements have taken: assimilation, valorization, and differencing. Through historical vignettes from 20th century California involving the aforementioned and related groups, the paper unpacks how assimilation, valorization, and differencing have intersected with Othering and solidarity, and from this what lessons might help researchers and activists better grasp the dynamics of change over time. It finds that assimilation and valorization are helpful but insufficient to ensure change, as they do not enlarge the circle of “we” as is necessary to mount successful challenges to elite power. Differencing, in contrast, is the pivotal strategy to counter Othering amongst various Others and overcome lines of difference between them.

Keywords

Othering; solidarity; California; United States; social movements

Bio

Antonio Roman-Alcalá is a PhD researcher with the International Institute of Social Studies (The Hague), focusing on the political ecologies of US rural, agrarian, and food movements. As a scholar-activist, he focuses on participatory methods and strategic considerations for change-making, as seen in recent publications for *Local Environment: The International Journal of Justice and Sustainability* (Roman-Alcalá 2018) and the book *Land Justice: Re-imagining Land, Food, and the Commons in the United States* (Roman-Alcalá 2017).

Introduction: Crisis and continuity in contemporary United States context

In the contemporary United States of America (US), many people experience a sense of crisis. A sampling of these crises might include: addiction and eviction epidemics, climate change induced droughts and floods, heightened conflicts over resource extraction (particularly fossil fuels), racism as a central component of everyday life and in matters of life and death (as seen in recent upheaval about policing and prisons), increasing unaffordability of healthcare, the desiccation of rural communities, and an extraction of wealth upward to the 1 percent. The sense of crisis can be seen as reflecting continuity in the country's life and politics, as existing crises – economic, social, political, environmental, and so on – can be seen as emerging from previous social developments of inequality, oppression, and environmental exploitation and degradation.

In similar ways, the rise and election of Donald Trump to the presidency should come as no surprise. In contrast to those who would argue Trump as a break with the past, it is more fruitful to see how his politics have extended neoliberal assaults on the poor, the working class, and the environment. Rather than a completely new policy agenda, the Trump administration has brought new lows and frightening extremity to an existing neoliberal playbook. That playbook combines rhetoric against the state and elites with policies that leverage or strengthen the state in key areas (e.g. security, borders, surveillance, bailing out industry, deregulation as regulation), while enhancing the extractive resource gains of elites. Similarly to tracing the continuity of Trump with previous policy trajectories, we also must acknowledge the uncomfortable continuity of non-elite politics in the racism, sexism, and xenophobia that have long characterized domestic US politics. Trump's authoritarian political agenda relies on this regressive non-elite lineage which, combined with the crises engendered in part by neoliberalism, works to build resentment among and rally consent of an ostensible populist majority behind a strong man to protect them.

This is not to say that the US electoral populace is irredeemably reactionary. We cannot easily divorce out racial resentment and economic degeneration as motivating factors for individual vote choices (Edelman 2018). However, we can say with certainty that a long history of social inequalities and racialized thinking provides an essential backdrop to understanding the current political moment of Trumpism. That is because Trumpism, like other regressive political movements before it, has utilized "Othering" to divide an already-stratified populace and build power. "Othering", as defined by Powell and Menendian (2016:17) is "a set of dynamics, processes, and structures that engender marginality and persistent inequality across any of the full range of human differences based on group identities." Trump's common scapegoats – immigrants, Muslims, Black people, and feminists – are constructed to be "Others" and threats to the social order. To accomplish this Othering, Trumpian politics must enroll many non-elites into a political project to vilify these out-groups in the name of "the people", thus relying on the synergy of top-down and bottom-up forces. Additionally, Othering is a process found in various forms of oppression, marginalization, and inequality, but it is neither about one particular axis of these (e.g. race, gender, class), nor is it a concept which gives preference to one or the other forms.

Considering that Trumpism relies on Othering, it seems insightful to inquire into how social movements have sought – successfully or not – to counter their own Othering. This includes

asking how and if these movements have acted with solidarity. Solidarity can be thought of in two senses. The first more simple sense is of working together: solidifying internal group ties through mutual support. The second sense is of working across difference, and this latter definition is my focal interest in this paper. Many movements and theorists have posited working together across lines of difference (e.g. race, class, gender, etc.) as a key factor in movement success against injustice.¹ Accordingly, it is key to understand how and why movements do or do not act in solidarity to counter Othering.

Hence we need to see how Othering/solidarity dialectic is at work in the US and its movements of Others. I use food and agrarian movements as a lens to see this process for a number of reasons. First, food and agriculture movements are inherently linked to issues of the interface of human beings and the rest of non-human nature. This makes ecological questions as present and unavoidable as social questions. Second, food and agricultural movements are linked to many social sectors – especially those who have been so often Othered in society, such as immigrant workers, people of colour, and indigenous inhabitants. Finally, as an engaged researcher with roots in food movements, I seek to produce scholarship that is actionable, and insights from these cases will be valuable to both future organizing and research efforts.

Outline and method: Case histories

Unpacking this dynamic of Othering and solidarity requires a historical view. There is no way to understand how oppression works in the moment, or how countering current forms of power *might* work, without tracing a long arc of struggle. As such, I focus here on a handful of sectors – indigenous people, farmworkers, Black agrarians, and agrarian environmentalists – whose struggles are emblematic, yet also often under-examined. The sectors should be seen in their full and rich histories, and relationally (less as separate sectors and more as overlapping and co-constituted). However, due to space limitations, I can only provide basic outlines of these histories, offering vignettes upon which theorizing about Othering and solidarity may be based. To make the project more manageable, I have focused only upon California, which offers movement histories from all of the above sectors.

My selection of cases is directed by “strategic sampling” and “illustrative/evocative sampling” considerations (Mason 2002:123-125, 126-127). As a subset of strategic sampling, “theoretical” sampling

means selecting groups or categories to study on the basis of their relevance to your research questions, your theoretical position and analytical framework, your analytical practice, and most importantly the argument or explanation that you are developing. Theoretical sampling is concerned with constructing a sample ... which is meaningful theoretically and empirically, because it builds in certain characteristics or criteria which help to develop and test your theory or your argument. (Ibid.:124)

Hence, whether and how historical agrarian and rural movement exhibit “certain contexts or phenomena [that] have a special or pivotal significance in relation to [my] research question” (ibid.) has driven my case selection. These contexts encompass the diverse social positions and histories of multiple kinds of Others. These factors “will enable [me] to make key comparisons

¹ Barber 2014; Brent et al. 2015; Constance et al. 2014; Gray and Hertel 2009.

and to develop and test [my] argument” (ibid.:125). Meanwhile, cases are selected based on their evoking or illustrating key themes or relationships or processes in a particularly compelling way: to “provide a flavour – sometimes a very vivid or illuminating one” without necessarily making claims of representativeness of the larger sample (ibid.:126). The vignettes thus offer a sense of the deep diversity in people, processes, and outcomes. Instead of endeavouring a trans-historical and over-deterministic reading of one or the other group’s histories, this approach can appreciate the contingencies and nuances attending to the processes of countering Othering and acting in solidarity.

In the sections that follow, I first provide some historical background at both US and California levels. Then, through 20th century vignettes involving the aforementioned sectors, I show how the sectors have responded to Othering through three overall strategies: *assimilation*, *valorization*, and *differencing*. Finally, I conclude with lessons about these strategies, and their relations to dynamics of Othering and solidarity.

Histories of relevant sectors of Others

Contrary to the view that the United States has always had an identity as a “white” society, whiteness was created over a long and fraught period of history during which racial inventions helped to solidify and maintain property relations, including chattel enslavement of Blacks and the continued expropriation of indigenous people from their lands (Omi and Winant 1986; Roediger 2017). In a sense, matters of landscape have long been racialized, but not always in the same ways (Mitchell 1996:83-109). From indigenous people who have maintained traditional land management practices against all odds, to those migrant settlers whose ethnic identity transitioned from specific (e.g. Irish, Italian, Polish) to generic (“white”) as they “pioneered” new landscapes, to escaped or otherwise freed formally enslaved people: many ethnic groups have been and continue to be active in rural and agrarian issues. These histories are not anomalies or irrelevant, as farmers not identified (at the time) as white have continually shaped US agrarian development through contributions of labour, culture, values, and biocultural knowledge (e.g. Bandele and Myers 2017; Carney 2002).

Indigenous people in the United States are one such non-white group, although they should not be seen as monolithic. For instance, though associated with rurality, over half of indigenous people have led urban lives for generations (Fixico 2000:4). In a critique of the overuse of the term genocide to define the effects of colonization on indigenous people, one scholar argues for recognizing differences within original indigenous experiences of encounter, and therefore that one narrative cannot define them all:

[T]he Americas were and are home to a great many different nations and tribes who have often had dissimilar experiences depending upon their location, the period of contact, who they had contact with, and the various strategies of confrontation and/or accommodation each group adopted. ... [N]ative responses to contact varied and evolved over time based on previous experience, contingent circumstances, and individual actors. (Alvarez 2016:4,5)

We know, for instance, that some tribes allied with colonists to subjugate other tribes, and this occasionally provided the crucial resources for colonization’s success (e.g. Taraval 2015:86).

Acknowledging heterogeneity, we might justifiably describe California's post-colonization indigenous history as one of violence, displacement, forced assimilation, and ongoing invisibilisation and marginalization (Lindsay 2015). As the state came into being, California policy specifically targeted tribes, as seen in the notorious scalping payments offered by governments to vigilante settlers (Johnston-Dodds 2002). Languages have been lost or nearly lost, and with them much of the knowledge of human interaction with nonhuman relations in specific places. Luckily, science continues to develop understanding of historical management by indigenous tribes of the California landscape. One quote suffices to describe this history:

First, we stress that California is blessed with Indigenous populations who generated many unique cultural traditions centering around pyrodiversity economies – specific kinds of practices employed by complex hunter-gatherers that emphasize diversity and flexibility in their engagement with food and nonfood resources. ... Second, we need to stress the close interaction that California Indians maintained with the natural world. ... The basic principle of pyrodiversity economies is not to transform the natural world into a humanly constructed artifact, but rather to enhance the diversity, productivity, and availability of the wild resource base by complementing and working with ongoing natural ecological processes. (Lightfoot and Parrish 2009:143-145)

This approach contrasts with agriculture, and capitalist agriculture in the modern era in particular, as the latter is guided by a focus on productivity and profit. Much of agricultural production (aside from commodity crops such as corn and soybeans) requires heavy amounts of hand labour, particularly the harvesting of seasonal and quickly-ripening fruits and vegetables which form a large part of California's cropping patterns, and this labour tends to fall to those who will accept or can be forced into accepting low rates of pay (Daniel 1981). Indigenous, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, and other ethnic groups have played this important role as agricultural labourers at various points in California (and US) history. In fact, scholars of Californian agrarian development have pegged exploitable migrant labour as indispensable to that development (Mitchell 1996); unlike areas of the US with a substantial "family farming" sector, Californian agriculture was capitalist from its early years (Walker 2004). Latinos (ethnic groups coming from Central and South America), and especially migrant Latinos are now the dominant source of wage labour in agriculture. This dominance is not incidental: the "Bracero program" was a US policy that from 1942 to 1964 enabled farm owners to import a pliable labour force from Mexico, deportable once no longer needed (see Cohen 2011; Galarza 1964).

The program's false promises to workers of fair pay and decent working conditions, along with its overtly racialized structure and enormous profitability, did not *create* – but certainly reinforced – the grower class' expectation that they would be entitled to low-paid waged labourers indefinitely. Before, during, and since the program, farm owners stoked racial divisions between workers, sometimes successfully, though not always. Filipinos were successfully convinced to break Latino based strikes (Mitchell 1996:125), while in 1903 Mexican American beet thinners stood up for Japanese co-workers, when bosses tried (unsuccessfully) to exclude the latter from labour contract negotiations (Street 1998). Farm owners used many methods to undermine labour agitation, including stoking multiple intra-working class divisions (through Othering), collaborating with state officials and agencies, and deploying their identity as "farmers" to gain public sympathy despite their obviously dominant class position (Olmsted 2015).

As thoroughly capitalist in orientation, California's farm owners have for decades relied on agrarian imaginaries of simple family farmers as stalwarts of egalitarian democracy to defend their interests and reap profits. As it has emerged over US history, such agrarianism is in actuality linked to colonization, private property, and white supremacy (Carlisle 2013). This link emerges through the ideal of the male yeoman farmer, owner of his land and head of his patriarchal household. As tamer of the land (and those who used to live on it), this figure was the indispensable vanguard of westward expansion. To this day, the ideal of the propertied agrarian steward of land is used to defend existing private property relations, which are extremely unequal, with whites owning around 98 percent of farmland (and men owning most farms). Critiques of this agrarianism legacy are brought into the present through critiques of contemporary food movements (Bradley and Herrera 2015). Today's food movements, it seems, are too white (Slocum 2007) and too embedded in neoliberal approaches (Guthman 2008) to make substantial change. Though it would stand to reason that there are many origins to today's critiques (and critics) of the industrial capitalist food system, the food movement has largely been linked to white, consumer, middle class, and reformist aspirations. This, however, seems to be changing more recently, as scholarship and popular attention are increasingly focused on more marginalized sectors: food workers, low-income consumers, indigenous communities, and people of color (e.g. Alkon and Guthman 2017; Sbicca 2018).

Black agrarianism in particular is of paramount importance in the development of alternative ways of being in rural spaces, and in the development of strategies to counter Othering from above and below. Against governmental neglect, outright dehumanization, and state-sanctioned, citizen-driven violence, Black agrarians have developed pioneering methods of cooperative structures for organizing food production, financing, and consumption (Nembhard 2014), and political organizing for defense and social change. Having stood at the bottom of a US racial hierarchy involving many and rotating Others, Black people's forms of struggle – particularly in agrarian contexts – are particularly generative of relevant insights for strategies to counter Othering (see Davy et al. 2017; Penniman and Snipstal 2017). And it is to an early Black-led project to found an agricultural community that we now turn.

Assimilation as liberation?

The town of Allensworth, California was a Black-led land development project, founded by Colonel Allen Allensworth and four close allies in 1908 (Cox 2007). Col. Allensworth agreed with Booker T. Washington's vision of liberation: "that the Negro as an efficient worker could gain wealth and that eventually through his ownership of capital he would be able to achieve a recognized place in American culture" (Du Bois 1940[1967]:61). As an advocate of this vision for Black liberation, Allensworth was committed to education and an entrepreneurial spirit by which Black people might advance themselves into full rights and participation in Western civilization. As a response to Othering, this strategy may be called *assimilation*. According to some accounts, a main reason for founding the town was to influence white society and how it judged Blacks, asserting that Blacks could become an accepted part of society as well (Cox 2007). In theory, creating a new "colony" owned and managed by Blacks would generate autonomous wealth and capacity, while signalling Blacks' ability to participate in the American project at large. An assimilation approach can also assume that building wealth through land ownership and agriculture – "Africans' blueprint for economic independence" (Davy et al.

2017:42) – would provide a foundation upon which to combat oppression by providing a base of support for efforts to make political change.

The history of Allensworth offers lenses into the limits of assimilation as a strategy. For one, the very alliance with a white-owned, urban-based capitalist land development firm, which arranged the original land purchase and was slated to provide irrigation water to the town, was to prove fatal for the effort to found the town:

Allensworth's prosperity peaked in 1925 and after that date the lack of irrigation water begin to plague the town. Irrigation water was never delivered in sufficient supply as promised by the Pacific Farming Company ... As a result, town leaders were engrossed in lengthy and expensive legal battles with Company, expending scarce financial resources on a battle they would not win. (Mikell, n.d.)

Secondly, Allensworth's efforts came up against more integrationist perspectives on Black liberation held by urban Blacks in cities like San Francisco and Los Angeles:

In keeping with Colonel Allensworth's idea of self-help and self-reliance programs, city leaders in 1914 proposed to establish a vocational education school ... Although it received support for a state funding appropriation from Fresno and Tulare County representatives in the California State Senate and Assembly, the proposal was defeated by the entire state legislature. (ibid.)

Allensworth's efforts to achieve state support for their school failed in part because of opposition from other Blacks, who saw the town's efforts to advance themselves as Blacks separate from white society, but through alliance with white politicians, as a threat to the long-term vision of equal rights within the institutions of white society (Cox 2007:9). This latter politics of integration (rather than self-segregation) might be seen as a form of assimilation, but it is not necessarily so, as integrationist demands do not entail a group disclaiming its own value as different (i.e. "valorization"), nor do they necessarily validate hegemonic society as superior.

Allensworth's example shows that on its own assimilation is an incomplete strategy against Othering. Success is not just a matter of working together across differences, but also *who* works together and *on what terms*. As we see with the town's "development" of stolen indigenous land, in partnership with a colonial enterprise, these latter questions matter for forms and outcomes of solidarity. Also, lack of ideological unity (in this case, regarding education and its relation to the strategy of integration) can reduce the likelihood of solidarity within a sector. There is also the more fundamental question of whether assimilation is worthwhile, given the brokenness of hegemonic society's institutions, as alluded to by Black civil rights icon Martin Luther King Jr., when he said: "We have fought hard and long for integration, as I believe we should have ... But I've come to believe we're integrating into a burning house."² Sectors are not monolithic, nor do they hold the same politics over time, and these differences provide sources of tension in efforts to counter Othering.

² This quote is attributed to King by Harry Belafonte, a close friend of King's, civil rights activist and well-known entertainer, who met with King shortly before his assassination (see SCU 2014).

Valorization: The vital self-worth of the Other

Allensworth sought to improve the image of Blacks, directing this effort towards “changing white sentiment” (Cox 2007:30). “Valorization” *can* result in external recognition, but it is motivated firstly by affect, on personal and intracommunal levels within a sector of Others; that is, it is about “we”. This is the sense by which I mobilize *valorization*. If assimilation could be described by the statement “We (Other) are just like you (in the hegemonic position)”, valorization would claim “We are valuable, *because of who we are, as we are.*”

The creation of the American Indian Movement (AIM) in the 1970s was a pivotal moment in US indigenous peoples’ valorization, in response to centuries of Othering. AIM was active in California, dramatically launching its efforts through the 1969 occupation of Alcatraz Island in the San Francisco Bay. Through AIM, indigenous identity was reclaimed, refashioned, and revitalized. AIM gathered all tribes into a common project of asserting the right to exist, of recognizing and exposing past and present injustices (particularly those perpetuated by the US state), and revalorizing indigenous identity, particularly by revitalizing indigenous traditions: ceremonies, land and resource management practices, and storytelling. Though the movement was largely crushed by federal suppression, its effects were profound:

[B]efore AIM, Indians were dispirited, defeated and culturally dissolving. People were ashamed to be Indian. ... [now] you find young Indians all over the place who understand that they don’t have to accept whatever sort of bullshit the dominant society wants to hand them, that they have the right to fight ... that in fact they have an obligation to stand up on their hind legs and fight for their future generations, the way our ancestors did. (AIM leader Russell Means, quoted in Churchill 2003:181)

Internal valorization is supported by external validation, such as how science has validated indigenous wisdom as it pertains to food systems, as described by Lightfoot and Parrish:

Native Californians were able to maintain strong cultural traditions and successful economies for thousands of years. They handcrafted small-scale economies that were tailor-made to the specific environmental parameters of local places ... This emphasis on local, small-scale enterprises that are ecologically sensitive may be prudent for us to consider in developing sustainable food economies in California today. (Lightfoot and Parrish 2009:147)

Indeed, indigenous people are already acting on the suggestion, working to advance “food sovereignty” throughout the indigenous US, as tribes revitalize old food traditions, re-cultivate old seed varieties, continue (or deepen) practices of wide scale ecological management, and re-integrate tradition and ceremony into ways of gathering, preparing, sharing, and eating food (Coté 2016; Daigle 2017). One example from California is the Karuk tribe (described further in the next section), organizing to regain traditional land and fisheries management rights and practices.

Since the mid-19th century, the many Others composing California’s farm labour workforce struggled in diverse ways for rights, pay, and dignity, but rarely did they make appeals to valorization. These struggles varied in character – some revolutionary, others reformist; some parochial, others interethnic – but ultimately none achieved substantial transformation of the

state's exploitative labour regime. It was not until the 1960s and 1970s – during a period of cultural re-valorization among various ethnic groups, an ascendant and dynamic socialist Left, and an increasing legitimacy for civil and human rights – that something like success was seen (Ganz 2009; Shaw 2008). The United Farmworkers Union (UFW) pioneered a form of union organizing that achieved wage gains and policy changes, and launched their founder Cesar Chavez into prominence as a national figure. Their emphasis on Mexican American culture – seen in their predominate use of Spanish in organizing, the folk songs sung at rallies, their official flag's display of a Mexican Eagle symbol, and description of the union as “La Causa” (the Cause) – shows how UFW utilized a strategy of valorization. But they only succeeded due to working in solidarity with others: students, clergy, multiple ethnic groups of (farm and non-farm) workers, politicians, and Left activists from differing ideological and class positions. Coming up against the entrenched power of farm owners, the UFW mobilized this wide array of allies and used novel tactics of farm product boycott, leveraging consumer and working class power from cities across the country. A prime example of this solidarity work is found in the UFW's relations with Black liberation movement groups of the time, notably the Black Panther Party (BPP), whose nationwide chapters mobilized to support the UFW's boycotts (Araiza 2014). The BPP was an urban-based revolutionary organization founded on internationalist-socialist (rather than ethnic nationalist) principles, but was firmly grounded in an articulation of valorized Black history and identity.

Perhaps ironically given its urban constituency, the BPP's politics, strategy of armed self-defense, name and logo were inspired by Black liberationists in rural Lowndes County, Alabama (Anderson, n.d.). Clearly, in struggles against discrimination and oppression, differences between rural and urban (or between the post-slavery US South and the ostensibly less racist North) are sometimes less important than they seem. These efforts were linked not only through similar experiences of anti-Black Othering, but also lineages of countervailing rural and agrarian identity and practices. To this day, as Bandle and Myers (2017:20) remind us, “Africans in America...are still surviving, struggling to retain their land, agrarian roots, and memory of communal beliefs about land ownership and caring for nature.” These memories and communal ways of being have provided resources for generations of cooperative and resistance movements, both rural (Davy et al. 2017; Penniman and Snipstal 2017) and urban (Akuno and Nangwaya 2017).

Importantly, just because a movement uses valorization does not mean it forecloses possibilities for assimilation. The UFW in particular offers examples of this, in the ways that it (especially in later years) incorporated its leadership into mainstream Democratic Party politics, playing insider politics instead of organizing at the grassroots, and dumping money on candidates while losing grassroots participation as individual activists lost the sense of the union as movement and became disillusioned by its increasingly top-down leadership (Ganz 2009:239-254). The UFW at times also played into anti-communist and anti-undocumented immigrant sentiments – supporting (even if inadvertently) existing forms of ideological and nationalistic Othering (Guthman 2017:28; Shaw 2008:194-198). And as has been pointed out by sociologists (Pulido 2006:57) and farmworker organizers (Bacon 2017:165), Latinos can, like any sector of Others, reproduce unjust social relations as they assimilate, for instance by becoming farm owners who exploit labour to make a profit. For valorization to go beyond assimilation, it must surpass identity politics (Haider 2018) and effectively enroll different groups in a common cause, to build strength in unity beyond (self-)valorization or (relatively) individualistic-capitalistic forms of assimilation. This brings us to the third strategy for countering Othering: “differencing”.

Differencing: An essential complement to solidarity

The bootstraps modality of Allensworth (and the concomitant potential that workers of all sectors pursue only narrow-horizoned assimilation) has long been opposed by more revolutionary Black liberationists like the BPP, whose anti-capitalist perspective linked the liberation of Black workers to the liberation of the entire working-class globally. The BPP's "intercommunal" approach, like that of other internationalist socialists, sought to create a common movement from disconnected struggles, by emphasizing the antagonism between "Us" (workers) and "Them" (the capitalist class). This approach parallels calls for a "Left populism," as in the work of Ernesto Laclau (2005) and Chantal Mouffe (2018). Laclau's formulation of populism relies on a collective antagonism, brought together through a "chain of equivalences" linking diverse demands, against a common enemy that refuses to accommodate them. A key aspect to such Left populism is its creation or re-creation of "the people" around this chain; the act of naming the people being a constitutive act. Clearly, the socialist movement concept of working class struggle fits well, even if not perfectly, in a Left populist strategy that seeks to link disparate struggles. In turn, a Left populist strategy parallels but is not equivalent to the strategy of differencing. Differencing can be thought of as a process by which a new "we" is created, but without obscuring the differences contained within this new "we". It unsettles (and in Left forms, expands) categories of identity and political community, without necessarily displacing the valorization that sustains self-worth in those existing positions or categories of identity. It demands neither that Others become assimilated to hegemonic politics, nor for them to validate their political claims only through existing self-categorization (valorization).

Differencing unsettles categories, not disclaiming or reifying identity, but reshaping it in relation to both close and distant others. The passion that drove so many people to volunteer years of their life for the UFW was linked to "La Causa" – a defined identity as a movement. During the UFW's heyday, a perception emerged that diverse national (and even international) struggles in actuality constituted *one* capital – "M" Movement, encouraging broad participation and ambitions. Identity as a movement supports acts of solidarity, while acts of solidarity build identity as movement. The BPP's revolutionary internationalism similarly built up collective identity from diverse ethnic groups in the US, crafting a revolutionary movement identity among various marginalized ethnic workers (Tracy and Sonnie 2011). In this intercommunal work, BPP supported the UFW, while the UFW also returned that support as the Party moved into electoral politics. The BPP's successful alliance with UFW can be contrasted with Black Nationalist groups that refused alliances with other ethnic groups; in the 1970s, groups that previously supported UFW withdrew their support as they moved in nationalist directions (Araiza 2014:53-64). That era's movements at times took valorization too far: due to Blacks' position at the bottom of the US racial hierarchy, Black struggle was often given priority, while Asian Americans (who participated widely in some of the most notable struggles of that era) saw their marginalization unappreciated, because they were seen as being higher up on the racial hierarchy (Pulido 2006:156-160).

Differencing can also occur at smaller or less all-encompassing political scales. The Karuk tribe of northern coastal California has been working for decades to remove dams from the Klamath River, which have been profoundly detrimental to the lifecycle of the salmon, upon which the tribe depends (Hormel and Norgaard 2009). Built during California's rush of modernist development, the dams now serve non-indigenous and indigenous communities alike with drinking water and electricity. The Karuk have had to generate Western scientific forms of

knowledge, including by having tribal members trained in Western science programs at reputable universities, in order to validate their traditional methods of land management. In order to reclaim its role in the rural ecology, the tribe has had to negotiate with the federal government, white ranchers, and many other dam resource-related groups, in order to create a common understanding that can lead to the removal of the dams (and has achieved some success; see Kober 2018). The Karuk thus built a new and expanded identity as “watershed stakeholders” that transcended indigenous/nonindigenous boundaries, which simultaneously revalorized their cultural worldview and tangibly improved their base of economic survival. In addition, the tribe has developed alliances with researchers from nonindigenous backgrounds. Considering a history of colonial, extractive, and exploitative forms of research, indigenous people have rightfully been sceptical of researchers interested in researching them. As such, Karuk developed principle-based partnership rules, in order to protect their sovereignty while co-developing new knowledge of service to both social justice and ecological ends (Karuk and UCB Collaborative, n.d.).

At the scale of California, but with larger ramifications, was the story of National Land for People (NLP). Formed through the 1960s and 70s, and led by George and Maia Ballis, the NLP involved farmers, farm workers, consumers, lawyers, and others, in a struggle for democratic reallocation of farmland, against “the Biggies”: large scale agribusiness and its political enablers. NLP acted variously “as a lobby, advocacy group, and community/farm alliance that ran a food coop and organized a network of farm suppliers” (Welch 2017:237). But its main battle was over the Newlands Reclamation Act. The Act was

passed in 1902 to fund large irrigation projects for 16 states in the American west, [and] stipulated that federally funded water could only be used by landholders who owned 160 acres of land or less. However, for decades, large, corporate farming enterprises, as well as the Bureau of Reclamation charged with enforcing the law, were ignoring this restriction. National Land for People used the information they had gathered and maps they had produced to bring a bill to the Senate to force the Bureau to enforce the Reclamation Act’s excess land law and break up the large farms and sell them in small parcels to farm workers. (Ballis and Ballis 2011:3-4)

NLP nearly succeeded in forcing agribusiness to break up its concentrated land ownership of California’s agricultural heartland, using a combination of strategies. They organized tours that brought Californian residents, citizens, and legislators face to face with the Valley’s agrarian dysfunctions, in the process, “lacing together environmental concerns; the anti-Vietnam War movement; criticism of US imperialism; the civil rights struggle; fear of corporate power; and demands for a pesticide-free, unprocessed ‘health food’” (Welch 2017:235).

...the NLP sought to create a development model for a reimagined Central Valley. Implementation of the 160 acre limit was the strategy for bringing a flood of small-farm properties to the market. To prepare, they collected information on farmworkers and others who might want to farm their own land and generated guides to small scale farming. The main public thrust included gathering information to feed the publication of newspaper articles and production of film documentaries; they also included public speaking appearances, membership growth, and petition drives. To be prepared for winning the battle, the NLP also worked to support existing small farms, to recruit farmers like Berge Bulbulian, an Armenian grape grower with 150 acre farm on the

Valley's east side, and outreach to former farmworkers like UFW organizer Jessie de la Cruz, who belonged to a small cooperative farm. The Board of the NLP was headed by Bulbulian and included representatives not only of Armenian growers and Mexican farmworkers, but also of African American and Asian farmers. (ibid.:237)

From this base of activists, NLP found an attorney willing to take on the Biggies in court. Surprisingly, their 1976 lawsuit against the Federal Government succeeded, forcing the US Interior Department to create new rules in compliance with the Reclamation Act (ibid.:238). Efforts by agribusiness organizations and sympathetic politicians to undermine implementation of the rules, however, continued until the 1980s, when the Reagan Administration passed updated legislation to change the Act. By raising the acreage limit nearly six times and removing the key requirement that farmers reside on their acreage, this law change took away the foundation of NLP's central strategy.

Rallying various sectors against an articulated enemy, NLP addressed the state head-on, where what looked like success quickly turned to defeat. Likewise, UFW's initial successes dissipated in the face of agribusiness power and a state complicit with a low pay, seasonal labour regime. Unequal distribution of land and water resources (as in NLP's case) and exploitable migrant labour (as in UFW's) are necessities for existing systems of agriculture and power in California, and are not easily changed. As this history shows, however, differencing strategies laden with acts of solidarity get closest to something resembling success.

Conclusion: Differencing our way to emancipation?

All the above movements, including even those focused on assimilation, utilized support from groups outside their own: solidarity is ubiquitous, though not always with progressive effects. Efforts by elites to undermine working class solidarity through divide-and-conquer Othering are similarly constant, but non-elite responses vary, failing to follow any apparent determinative mechanism. Considering that the most relatively successful movements surveyed here have encompassed (or at least worked alongside) anti-capitalist elements – which enable an expansive and oppositional formation of “we” – we might at least propose that working against ideological Othering of those holding more radical/anti-capitalist views is a formidable (especially given the weight of anti-communism in US history) but indispensable task for movements of Others. Given that debates between non-elite people of similar interests about *how* to achieve change are a key place where solidarity breaks down, the tension between the obvious need to engage institutions for immediate reform (or to assimilate in order to thrive) and the less obvious need for an expansive vision (of both the horizon of emancipation and “the people” included therein) must be navigated carefully. For instance, to the extent that reform efforts “[take] the present structure of the farming economy in California for granted (Mitchell 1996:181)”, they limit the vision of what new worlds may be possible, and who may be included therein.

Assimilation offers the promise of easy wins and wealth creation, especially when it involves control of land and resources, but can undermine solidarity without a necessary complement of communal and intercommunal tenets. Valorization brings an essential assertion of human value and the right to self-determination, and provides cultural resources through lineages of ancestral strategies for resistance and survival. While it may be readily accessible and generative,

valorization cannot alone build ever-larger movements, and must be combined with differencing in order to avoid undermining cross-sector solidarity. Differencing is the least concrete strategy, regarding immediate needs, and is especially difficult, because working across differences and creating (new) common identities is no easy task. Yet differencing is essential, as it generates new affective and organizational resources for broad ambitions to take root and blossom. Differencing brings the creation of new political communities to the task of countering Othering, and in so doing keeps alive the possibilities of acting in (and experiencing) an ever-enlarging spiral of solidarity. Forces for Othering can absorb tendencies towards assimilation and valorization (elites today celebrate false meritocratic mythologies and anaemic forms of identity politics), but are harder-pressed to divert or subvert energies of differencing, making differencing the pivotal strategy. Movements to counter Othering should thus seek a combination of assimilation, valorization, and differencing strategies, but with emphasis on differencing.

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