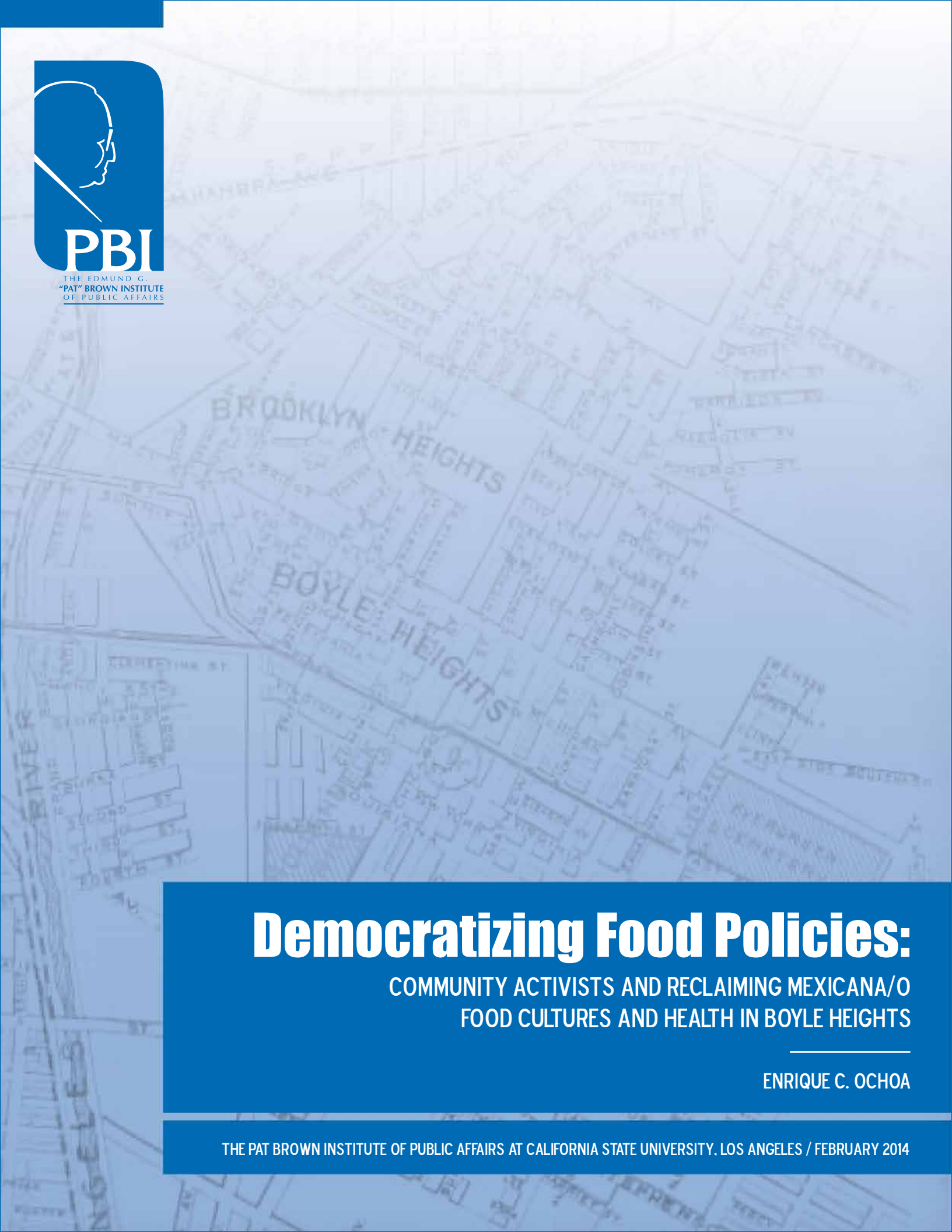

Democratizing Food Policies:

COMMUNITY ACTIVISTS AND RECLAIMING MEXICANA/O FOOD CULTURES AND HEALTH IN BOYLE HEIGHTS

ENRIQUE C. OCHOA

THE PAT BROWN INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AT CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LOS ANGELES / FEBRUARY 2014

The Pat Brown Institute is located in close vicinity to the historic community of Boyle Heights. Beginning in 2013, the Institute commissioned a series of studies on community health in Boyle Heights, conducted by faculty at Cal State Los Angeles and funded by The California Endowment.

Dr. Enrique C. Ochoa, Professor of History and Latin American Studies, examines how community activists in Boyle Heights are developing alternative, and often challenging approaches to the food crisis in a working class community of color. Dr. Ochoa indicates that mainstream discussions of food and health in such communities focus on defining the food crisis "biometrically" and make recommendations for diet and exercise. While these guidelines are valuable, they miss the importance of culture in both identifying problems in the food system and in devising solutions. In his words, "culture heals."

Assisted by a Cal State L.A. undergraduate, and drawing on feedback from his upper-division undergraduate class "Mexico and the Chicana/o People", Dr. Ochoa surveyed and interviewed members of community-based organizations in Boyle Heights. He found numerous efforts to "decolonize" food, to get in touch with deep cultural roots that are both Mexican and Indigenous. A key element of this challenge to the prevailing view is to refocus on maize, which is in the process of being made more homogenous and separate from its cultural roots by corporate enterprises. Others in the community seek to return to a plant-based diet that was more widely used for many generations.

Professor Ochoa argues that by learning from history and by unearthing and preserving cultural values in food, social transformation will be possible to the benefit of the Boyle Heights community. He calls for these organizations to find venues to share their work with each other; for a greater emphasis on food workers and unions; for greater involvement by public schools; for stronger interfaces with health educators and nutritionists; and for an emphasis on sustainable economic growth.

The Pat Brown Institute of Public Affairs was established at Cal State Los Angeles in 1987. The PBI is a nonpartisan, applied public policy center dedicated to the quest for social justice and equality of opportunity, enlightened civic engagement, and an enhanced quality of life for all Californians. It sustains the vision and legacy of the former governor through convening public policy forums, engaging multi-sector stakeholders and diverse communities, and conducting timely policy research and community-driven initiatives. To learn more about the Institute, see www.patbrowninstitute.org

With best regards,

Raphael Sonenshein
Executive Director

TABLE OF CONTENTS

This report is made possible by generous funding from
The California Endowment.

Democratizing Food Policies: Community Activists and Reclaiming Mexicana/o Food Cultures and Health in Boyle Heights

SUMMARY

For too long, policymakers, public health officials, and researchers have ignored or belittled the diverse attempts by community activists to come up with alternative food policies. In the process, food and social policy has been short-sighted and driven by misperceptions, thus fostering greater social inequalities and health disparities. This study examines how community activists in Boyle Heights are developing alternative approaches to addressing the food crisis in working class communities of color. Organizers and activists, using the cultural wealth and resources of their communities, are providing a broader critique of food systems. They are drawing on Mexican and Central American rural histories and cultures to reframe the issues of health, thus arguing that culture heals. This project uses ethnographic and oral history methods to examine how activists and artists are reclaiming maize and indigenous Mexican foodways to construct an alternative approach to individual and community health.

This initial survey of food justice activism in Boyle Heights underscores the wealth of community and cultural resources in Boyle Heights and the greater eastside that addresses food justice through a critical lens. I highlight some of the conceptual innovations that Mexicana/o Latina/o food justice activists bring to the table, including decolonizing diets, holistic community building, and building sustainable power. These long-term systemic issues are crucial starting points for any discussion about the lack of nutritional access and its solutions.

> "Escasez Alimentaria: Food Desert or Food Swamp? Limited Options for Affordable Fresh Fare in Boyle Heights."
>
> —Boyle Height Beat (December/January 2013)

> "We have to work from reality up."
>
> —Carlos Ortez, proprietor of Un Solo Sol Kitchen

> "Our whole process provides an opportunity to understand the larger food system that's impacting our health and economy and todo."
>
> —Irene Peña, Executive Director of El Proyecto Jardin

In line with a growing food sovereignty movement throughout the world, activists in Los Angeles are developing alternative approaches to addressing the food crisis in working class communities of color. Organizers and activists are drawing upon the cultural wealth and resources of their communities to address nutritional and health disparities. As the above quotes suggest, grassroots organizers are developing their own analyses of the crisis that includes a multipronged approach that addresses structural inequalities as well as popular education. These groups see food poverty and health-related diseases as symptoms of broader societal ills and they are working for social transformation.

This asset-based approach contrasts markedly with the traditional science-based frameworks. While public discussions about hunger, obesity, and health disparities in Mexican American communities abound, they are limited in both diagnosis and cure. Often, public officials and scholars measure the "problem" biometrically and seek immediate solutions that include education about diet and exercise. While advocating exercise and healthy eating has made some strides in improving the health of individuals, it often ignores the larger causes of poor nutrition and declining health.[1] Instead,

as many have argued that U.S. health and nutrition needs to be rooted in the broader economic and social system that has exacerbated inequality within the U.S. and in Los Angeles in particular.[2] Conventional researchers and policymakers often point to individual and cultural arguments, implying that Mexican American and Latino/a communities are culturally ignorant of basic nutrition.

The Boyle Heights neighborhood of Los Angeles is an important site for seeing how communities are addressing health in a holistic manner. The 6.52 square mile neighborhood on the eastside of the City of Los Angeles has a rich multicultural history. In 2000, the census recorded Boyle Heights as predominantly Latina/o (94 Percent of its nearly 100,000 residents) the majority of whom are of Mexican descent. Boyle Heights is a largely working class area where approximately 70 percent of its households earn less than 40,000 dollars a year.[3] In this region, access to affordable fresh foods is more difficult than in more affluent areas of the city, contributing to diet-based diseases. The relative lack of access to fresh foods leads many to term the region as a "food swamp or desert," or as product of "food apartheid," as the Community Coalition has recently labeled the phenomenon in reference to South Los Angeles.[4] This study examines how community activists in Boyle Heights, in the face of this structural inequality, are addressing these issues. Community activists are providing a broader critique of food systems and drawing on Mexican and Central American rural histories and cultures to reframe the issues of health, thus arguing that culture heals. Using an asset-based approach, this study explores the ways that grassroots Mexicana/o communities are reclaiming maize as a key symbol of Mexican and indigenous identity at a time when the policies, technologies and practices of advanced capitalism seek new methods for colonizing maize and de-linking it from Mexican culture and history. This project uses ethnographic and oral history methods to examine how activists and artists are reclaiming maize and indigenous Mexican foodways to construct an alternative approach to individual and community health.

In Fall 2012, with CSULA student and food justice activist in Boyle Heights Fernando Mejia, I surveyed the academic and periodical literature on food, culture and power in the eastside of Los Angeles, interviewed artists and activists, researched past exhibits and performances, and attended community events. We conducted four interviews with 8 people. These included interviews with Irene Peña of Proyecto Jardin, Carlos Ortez of Un Solo Sol Kitchen, the artist Victoria Delgadillo, and a community collective working for food justice and against gentrification. Additionally, we linked this project to my course on "Mexico and the Chicana/o People" (History/CHS 467) in Winter 2013 to engage students in a community-based project on food and community issues. As part of this class, several students conducted food history interviews with local community and family members, worked with the American Friends Service Project's Roots for Peace at Lincoln High School and conducted a workshop for fourth graders at First Street School on food justice and traditional Mexican foodways.

COMMUNITY MOVEMENTS TO RECLAIM TRADITIONAL MEXICANA/O FOODWAYS IN BOYLE HEIGHTS

In Boyle Heights and in the greater Eastside, communities have long challenged years of colonialism, Americanization, and have worked to reclaim traditional Mexican foodways. These holistic culture-based approaches that take into consideration the macro-economic factors have taken numerous forms. This section lays out some of the ways that community activists employ community cultural wealth in the face of colonialism, capitalist growth, and efforts of cultural erasure. Here I construct a preliminary inventory of many of these contemporary movements. While by no means is this a definitive list, it takes into account several examples of community-based, private, non-profit, and collective efforts. After briefly discussing each, I then summarize some of the major contributions of these efforts to demonstrate how they are building on the community's cultural wealth.

COMMUNITY GARDEN EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Boyle Heights and the greater eastside have several prominent community garden education programs that are sponsored by non-profits, community-based

groups, and local schools. These are generally small plots with programming on healthy eating, growing traditional foods, and food justice. Over the past year, I met with, collaborated with and/or interviewed members of several of these garden projects.

- Proyecto Jardin in Boyle Heights Proyecto Jardin which operates on land donated by White Memorial Hospital since 1999. The garden's model is based on collective farming and aims to foster sustainable alternatives, drawing on the knowledge and experience of community farmers with deep ties to the land. Several activists, including executive director Irene Peña, have been influenced by experiences of the South Central Farm which was in operation from 1994-2006. As a community resource, Proyecto Jardin works closely with neighbors and local schools to teach a holistic approach to countering obesity through a food justice approach.[5]
- American Friends Service Committee-Los Angeles's Roots (AFSC) for Peace Program focuses on community gardens and food justice. Since 2009 AFSC operates a community garden at Lincoln High School. Students participate in the garden and learn about food justice and health education.[6]
- The Environmental Garden Club in Bell Gardens was established in 1993 at Bell Gardens Intermediate School. With the support of the Campaign for a Healthier Bell Gardens, it has expanded to have community gardens at nine schools in the Montebello Unified School District.[7]
- Los Angeles Unified School District has recently started a Garden Clubs program in collaboration with ENRICHLA, an Environmental Non-profit focused on adding edible school gardens to public schools.[8] While they have helped establish several gardens across the city, there is one at El Sereno Middle School and another at Glassell Park Elementary and more are being planned.[9]

COMMUNITY RESTAURANTS

A number of area restaurants use a holistic approach to food preparation and justice. The focus here is on community-based restaurants that are interested in sustainability, community development, and Mexicana/o and Latino/a cultural traditions.

- Homeboy Industries started in 1992 with a bakery and by 2012 had expanded to a multi-million dollar business producing bakery goods, tortilla chips and operating Homegirl Café and Homeboy Diner. It was started by Father Gregory Boyle of Mission Dolores Parish in Boyle Heights to help gang members and formerly incarcerated youth find employment. Its food operations emphasize healthy traditional foods and work in conjunction with local business owners and sell their products at farmers markets throughout the city.[10]
- Un Solo Sol Kitchen on First Street in Boyle Heights is another important example of a small business focusing on socially responsible and culturally relevant foods. Carlos Ortez, the restaurant owner, is a long time community activist and restauranteur, grew up in El Salvador and Los Angeles, studied environmental engineering and is a naturopathic practioner who seeks to build community and peace in a holistic manner. Un Solo Sol Kitchen provides a range of healthy and diverse Latina/o cuisine including several vegetarian and vegan options.[11]

COMMUNITY COLLABORATIONS

In Boyle Heights and in the surrounding areas, there are a number of community based organizations, partnerships, and popular educators addressing food justice and working to provide alternative models of social organization, ideas, and practical solutions. While their ideological and political approaches differ, they tend to work in concert with community members in an inclusive manner that builds upon community strengths.

- Building a Healthy Community, Boyle Heights collaborative is a project of the California Endowment to build healthy communities in collaboration with the local nonprofit community. It has an active working group on food justice that has held several community meetings including "Sembrando la Justicia" (Sowing Justice) on July 11, 2013 at the Mendez Learning Center.
- UCLA-USC Center for the Study of Population and Health Disparities and funded by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute is working with Eastside markets and schools to help markets stock healthy

and fresh produce as part of a broader effort to reduce heart disease in the area. By helping market-owners stock healthy foods, the project strengthens local businesses which often serve as a cultural hub and provide credit to local consumers.[12]

- Corazón del Pueblo is a community space on First Street in Boyle Heights. It operates as a collective that allows community members and organizations to use its space to host workshops, meetings, and classes on a number of topics, including Nahautl classes, Zumba classes, and a men's circle.[13] It has also provided space for organizations to emerge such as the collective Ovarian Psychos, a collective of women of color who "envision a world where women of color are change agents who create and maintain holistic health within themselves and their respective communities for present and future generations."[14] Con Alma Xin Armas (CAXA) emerged out of Corazón del Pueblo in early 2011 to gauge community feelings and protest the announcement of a chain pharmacy stores to replace a long-time food store without community consultation. The group's demands included greater accessibility to fresh food in the area.[15]
- The Eastside Café in El Serrano has been an important autonomous community-based space serving the eastside and the city for over a decade. With its origins in the farm worker struggles as well as in solidarity movements connected to the Zapatista uprising, it sees itself as a collective space to foster autonomy and holistic community development.[16] Through its extensive work with Zapatista communities it has hosted a number of workshops on autonomy and food justice in the Zapatista communities and has worked closely with the Committee of Immokalee Workers.

Among the food justice work that has emerged from the Eastside Café collective members is Decolonial Food, a site that has published papers on Zapatista food systems emphasizing decolonizing the diets in Mexico and Aztlán.[17] The work of eastside resident and activist Sirena Pellarolo is another example of a Zapatista inspired activist-intellectual who has focused on food justice, raw food education, and holistic liberation. Since 2009, through her Viva la Vida! Live Foods for Life project she conducts workshops on raw food preparation, cleanses and detoxification. According to her website, it is a "project committed to spread the basics of a raw food diet in working class communities of color as a means to decolonize our bodies from commercial food and foster the remembering of healthy lifestyles."[18]

PUBLIC ART

The arts, public art in particular, have been important forms of resistance by marginalized communities and a way of (re)claiming space and cultural identity. Chicana/o artists have long been working to "flip the script" on aspects of culture and community that have been subject to disparagement and erasure by colonial culture. Since the Zapatista uprising in 1994, maize has been a growing subject (and medium) in the eastside art communities.

- Much of this work has focused on cultural symbolism and the reclaiming of maize and tortillas as key symbols of Mexican and indigenous identity. For example, the artist Joe Bravo uses tortillas as the canvas of his paintings of a wide variety of Chicana/o cultural icons, thus literally centering tortillas.[19]
- There is also a growing body of work linking capitalism, colonialism, patriarchy and their impacts on traditional diets and cultures. For example, many Chicana feminist artists, such as members of the artist collective Mujeres de Maíz, are engaged in visual and performance art that examines, class, gender, and cultural resistance. The exhibit, "100 years of Mexican Food and Revolution" curated by Victoria Delgadillo and Leslie Saiz at Self-Help Graphics in September and October 2010 captured the dynamics of food, culture, gender and revolution in Mexicana/o communities.[20]

FOOD CULTURES AND COMMUNITY CULTURAL WEALTH

As the previous section makes clear, there is a wealth of community and cultural resources in Boyle Heights and the greater eastside that address food justice through a critical lens. Here I underscore some of the assets that Mexicana/o Latina/o food justice activists bring to the

table, focusing on decolonizing diets, holistic community building, and building sustainable power.

DECOLONIZING DIETS

Foremost among the approaches that community activists have been pursuing has been the recovery of Indigenous-based diets. Many of these approaches emphasize the rich plant-based diet of most indigenous communities that was sparingly supplemented by local fish and fowl and remind us that meat from cows and pigs were introduced with the European conquest after 1492.[21] According to Chris Rodriguez from Decolonial Food for Thought,

> the Zapatistas say, 'the most precious thing you can give to a movement is health.' We say health, autonomous and self-determined, is constructed through maintaining and promoting a plant-based diet--an ecological, economic, culturally sustainable way of eating; rejecting the colonial traditions of the familia's structure by (re)membering the ways of our ancestors; and walking in solidarity with all our relations in rebellion towards a decolonial future.[22]

A crucial aspect of decolonizing diets has been the reclaiming of maíz as a central aspect of a healthy, nutritious, and culturally relevant diet. First cultivated around eight thousand years ago in Mesoamerica, maize is an integral part of Meso-American life and culture. According to the Mayan book of life, after searching for a good material to make humans, they settled on maize dough. "…the making, the modeling of our first mother-father with yellow corn, white corn along for the flesh, food alone for the human legs and arms, for our first fathers… It was staples along that made up their flesh." In the Mexica creation story, humans were created five different times. On the fifth attempt, humans were nourished with maize which helps explain why the world has lasted so long. Variants of Mexica lore explain that maize was introduced by the god Quetzalcoatl and served as the basic building block of Mexican civilization.[23] Other creation stories center women as corn mothers, responsible for giving life and the origins of maize. Women have been central to the process of maize cultivation and its daily transformation into nixtamal and then tortillas or tamales. Hence, maize is central to the culture and identity of Mesoamericans and especially of Mesoamerican women. Chicana/o Mexicana/o artists have increasingly centered maiz in art and paintings. Marisol Torres's figurines of corn mother and Jose Bravo's use of tortillas as the "canvas" of his paintings are two prime examples of this recentering of maiz as central to life and culture. In addition, several artists have been vocal in their critique on the impact of genetic modification of maíz and the role played by corporate giants such as Monsanto and Syngenta. Proyecto Jardín has planted its maíz section of the garden with nongenetically modified seeds, something that took much time to find, given the rapid loss of traditional seed saving. These practices reinforce what scholars Teresa Mares and Devon G. Peña argue, "Through the farming activities of indigenous migrants, urban community gardens can promote the in situ conservation of genetic diversity of heirloom varieties and landraces and the environmental knowledge that is intertwined with this conservation."[24]

Activists and community members are reminding us of the central importance of maize and other indigenous foods to Mesoamerican history and culture and are using it as the basis for a decolonial diet.

HOLISTIC COMMUNITY AND SOLIDARITY BUILDING

Boyle Heights food justice activists are deeply influenced by holistic-community based approaches. This entails several components including building strong local communities that value each others' strengths and work together to organize and address community issues. This process-oriented work seeks to repair selves and communities damaged by colonialism, capitalist growth, and the alienation that they bring.

Many community activists then are working from a systemic position that seeks to address larger community needs. For example, influenced by Liberation Theology and his Jesuit education in El Salvador, social movements, and naturopathic medicine, Carlos Ortez argues that society's problems must be addressed from a holistic perspective and not merely with bandage reforms. In this context, he argues,

Un Solo Sol Kitchen has three lines of action:

1. To promote unity of the community. Strengthening communities, at the grassroots community level, will safeguard against the external and internal abuses.
2. The promotion of art and culture of the community.
3. To serve the community an alternative healthy food, having full respect for the traditions of the community. [25]

The effort to view history and community in a holistic manner over the course of centuries is a way of reminding us that this corporate dominated food system is a recent development in human history and that we must learn to draw from history in order to forge a more collective society that centers the earth and eschews material growth for growth's sake. The breadth of this perspective is captured in the mural displayed at Un Solo Sol Kitchen that was the result of nine months of conversation between Carlos Ortez and artist Rafael Escamilla. The mural emphasizes the planet's history and "the harmony of an expanding universe."[26] It underscores "the nourishment of both the soil and humanity (to include body, mind, and soul), and 'points the way toward the utopia we must consider toward the sustainability of life on Earth.'"[27]

In several places throughout the area, private and public entities work to open up their spaces for multiple community uses to build community and engage a broad membership. For example, Un Solo Sol Kitchen and Proyecto Jardin are often used for Tango classes, to display local art, for exercise classes, as well as for local talks, films, and community forums. At Corazón del Pueblo, where the CAXA collective began organizing its "No Walgreens" campaign, a number of other classes and community groups also meet. This helps introduce a variety of community groups and residents to these spaces, many who become active participants.

The emphasis of several groups is on community building and finding ways of using the community's resources to create sustainable societies. For Irene Peña at Proyecto Jardin, community building is a necessary process:

> The community building happens almost by default but it has to be done intentionally too. By default it needs to take place because of the garden design and the garden design is intentionally communal to create those opportunities to build community, and community building for us means creating spaces and opportunities for folks to work together and identify themselves with that garden community. That's where the challenges come up because building community is not romantic. The real community building occurs as conflicts happen and in the ways that you resolve your differences.[28]

Another key element of many of these groups is using an inclusive process-oriented model that builds on community knowledge and wealth. This often takes various forms and is influenced by different philosophies. However among the values that many of these groups sustain is a horizontal inclusive leadership process where multiple views are heard and discussed. For Con Alma Xin Armas (CAXA), the collective of students and activists working to expand fresh produce markets, it was essential to assess the community needs even though the collective saw the dwindling number of produce markets and the impact that corporate pharmacies would have on local businesses. CAXA designed and carried out a survey of community residents and of businesses as a way of engaging the community and learning about the issues that it deemed important. This process lead CAXA to focus its efforts on food justice in conjunction with threats of gentrification that might beset the area with the rise of corporate chains.[29] For Proyecto Jardin, the open planning process included several meetings of its members to design the garden structure to decide what the land would be used for and how it would be distributed.

BUILDING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY POWER

An essential feature of these various groups is a grounding in the need to build sustainable community power. This is a recognition that food inequality and poverty are the result of systemic inequalities that are perpetuated in economic and government policies and practices. The CAXA collective targeted

Walgreen's as it was one of the few large corporate chains to go into a relatively "chain free" region. As such, it had the potential for harming local farmacias and their family-owned businesses. Carlos Ortez notes that the marginalization of Boyle Heights and the Eastside occurs within the larger context of Los Angeles political and economic power. Ortez argues that this inequality is reinforced by the many strings between the Westside and the Eastside that while sometimes support change, constrain the development of an autonomous "…movement that will turn things upside down for the benefit of the populace."

Ortez and Un Solo Sol Kitchen have taken the lead in promoting the creation of a community Boyle Heights festival, Noches de Serenata, which would use the cultural and creative resources of the community to attract people citywide as well as international tourists to Boyle Heights for periodic festivals that would be centered around Mariachi Plaza but also attract people to local businesses and cultural centers in the area. According to Ortez,

> "Noches de Serenata in Mariachi Plaza would allow the community to use the resources it has—music, art, and culture—which are the means of production that the community controls. Our own means of production could be used to attract outside resources and create a financial plasma for the community that would circulate through local businesses. Attracting outside resources is bringing funds that in essence were taken from us, in one way or another. The ultimate challenge for the community would be to remain united. It seems very simple, but it is not, when you start thinking of the levels of alienation that exist, how many power strings there are from outside the community, but it is not impossible either.

In a similar manner, Proyecto Jardin hopes to expand the amount of land that the community farms and hopes one day to connect gardening to larger community economic development projects that can lead to sustainability. For the CAXA group this means developing another garden or farmers market that includes more stalls with fresh fruits and vegetables coming from local community bounty.

CONSIDERATIONS

Boyle Heights has a deep and rich history with community-based knowledge that draws on numerous traditions. While much of this history has been marginalized by years of colonialism and efforts to assimilate people to dominating cultures and erase their histories and ways of knowing, it is still present throughout the community. Years of resistance at multiple levels have preserved this knowledge and have led many to seek to remember and develop food justice and sustainable traditions. This study has emphasized the importance of including local communities and their knowledge in the creation of food justice programs and how such programs need to be locally controlled and used to build sustainable economic and political power. Based on the interviews and research of this study, there are at least five ways that activists can further continue to strengthen the goals and visions of transformative food justice on the eastside of Los Angeles.

1. While there are many organizations and activists working on these issues, there are relatively few opportunities for people to share their work. The convening of working groups of community residents, activists, workers, and other stakeholders engaged in food justice work in Boyle Heights and the greater eastside could be used to develop joint projects, explore various alternative models, create a sense of solidarity, and build political and economic power. Several other cities have created food councils such as the Oakland Food Policy Council.[30]
2. While food justice organizations are engaged in holistic models of culture, community building, land, and consumer, food workers tend to be less emphasized. Although class and labor have generally been deemphasized in food justice movements, there are several movements working in conjunction with organized labor to address these issues. The Food Chain Workers Alliance, "a coalition of worker-based organizations whose members plant, harvest, process, pack, transport, prepare, serve, and sell food, organizing to improve wages and working conditions for all workers along the food chain," and the work of the Restaurant Opportunities Center United, and of UC Berkeley's new center for Food Labor Research highlights

the importance of unifying worker rights and food justice.[31] The transformative potential of including food workers in food justice movement and drawing on the work of local unions seems great.

3. While critics have long argued that public schools need to draw on community wealth, LAUSD's initiation of the Breakfast in the Classroom Program provides a unique opportunity for food justice to be discussed and practiced. This could be done in a number of ways, through discussion of food culture and traditions and through the creation of a basic curriculum. Students and their families have deep knowledge of food and culture. For examples CSULA students doing a workshop on food justice in Julie Kaup's fourth grade class at First Street Elementary were impressed by the level of knowledge that students had of medicinal herbs as well as their awareness of the limited availability of inexpensive fresh foods in their neighborhoods.[32] In addition, the development of school gardens has the potential for helping to make the school an important community center. Both the Breakfast in the Classroom Program and school garden programs are potential sites for school-community collaboration.
4. The significant knowledge in the community about food and culture needs to be communicated to health educators and nutritionists in the myriad of agencies, schools, and non-profits in the region. A series of workshops led by local food justice activists would go far in raising the nutritional and cultural consciousness in the community. This effort to work to incorporate culturally based knowledge into the repertoire of public health and nutrition workers in the community, however, needs to be community driven to avoid the repetition of the ways that community knowledge and traditions have been co-opted and commodified.
5. Sustainable economic growth that provides community-based jobs is a crucial aspect of food justice. Numerous activists have discussed the need to develop community gardens into a link with the local food complex. While this is ambitious, given the resources and knowledge in the community, it is reasonable and should be incorporated in the several plans for the community that are being developed by the city and local organizations. Such a discussion and implementation of a plan to expand community gardens and access to lands to foster sustainable economic development in Boyle Heights must be inclusive of community members.

ENDNOTES

1 UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, "Building Healthy Communities: Boyle Heights Fact Sheet." http://www.calendow.org/uploadedFiles/Health_Happends_Here/Communities/Our_Places/BHC%20Fact_Sheet_Boyle%20Heights.pdf (consulted 10/2/2012).

2 See Marion Nestle, *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health* (Berkeley: UC Press, 2002); Enrique C. Ochoa, "The Political History of Food," in *The Oxford Handbook of Food History*, Jeffrey Pilcher ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); George J. Sánchez. "'Go After the Women': Americanization and the Mexican Immigrant Woman, 1915-1929," in Vicki L. Ruiz and Ellen Carol Dubois eds. *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History* (New York: Routledge, 1994); and Victor M. Valle and Rodolfo D. Torres, *Latino Metropolis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), chapter 3.

3 *Los Angeles Times* Project "Mapping Los Angeles: Boyle Heights," http://maps.latimes.com/neighborhoods/neighborhood/boyle-heights/ (consulted 7/12/13).

4 "Escasez Alimentaria: Food Desert or Food Swamp? Limited Options for Affordable Fresh Fare in Boyle Heights." *Boyle Height Beat* (December/January 2013); *The Movement/El Movimiento* (June/July 2013).

5 "At Proyecto Jardín, Gardening without Fences," *Los Angeles Times* (March 2, 2011).

6 http://rootsforpeace.blogspot.com/ (consulted November 5, 2012).

7 Titania Kumeh, "School Gardens Feed a Community," *Los Angeles Times* (July 7, 2013); Lani Cup-Choy, "The Campaign for a Healthy Bell Gardens,"

Community Greening Review vol. 16 (2011) www.communitygarden.org.

8 http://enrichla.org/about-2/ (consulted 7/10/13).

9 http://enrichla.org/2013/06/huge-vegetable-garden-at-el-sereno-middle-school-thriving/ (consulted 7/7/13).

10 James Flannigan, "Small Businesses offer Alternatives to Gang Life," *New York Times* (March 20, 2008); http://www.homeboyindustries.org/what-we-do/homeboy-farmers-markets/ (consulted 7/10/13).

11 http://www.meltingpottours.com/melting-pot-tours-blog/96-merchants-we-love-carlos-ortez-of-un-solo-sol-kitchen (consulted 11/4/12); http://www.unsolosol.com/ (consulted 7/1/13).

12 Dalina Castellanos, "Markets in East L.A. Get Public Health Makeover," *Los Angles Times* (March 18, 2012).

13 Kris Fortin, "Corazón del Pueblo Pumps Community Life into First Street," *LA.StreetBlogs.org* (December 5, 2012), http://la.streetsblog.org/2012/12/05/corazon-del-pueblo-pumps-community-life-into-first-street/ (consulted 10/5/12).

14 http://ovarianpsycos.com/about/our-mission/vision/ (consulted 7/13/13).

15 Kris Fortin, "As Protestors March Against CVS, Demanding Fresh Food for Boyle Heights, A Walgreens Opens Two Blocks Away," *LA.Streetblog.org* (June 13, 2012), http://la.streetsblog.org/2012/06/13/in-need-of-fresh-food-boyle-heights-gets-chain-pharmacies-even-as-protestors-march-against-cvs-a-walgreens-opens-two-blocks-away/#more-72926 (consulted 11/11/12).

16 http://eastsidecafe.org/ (consulted 7/20/13).

17 http://www.decolonialfoodforthought.com/ (consulted 7/20/13).

18 http://livefoods4life.com/2012/02/26/live-foods-for-all/ (consulted 7/20/13).

19 "He Envisions Beauty, Not Burritos," *Los Angeles Times*, (November 26, 2006) F-3.

20 Enrique C. Ochoa and Fernando Mejia interview with Victoria Delgadillo (November 7, 2012).

21 Sophie D. Coe, *America's First Cuisines* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994).

22 Chris Rodriguez, "La Cocina: A Dignified Occupation," (December 8, 2011) http://www.decolonialfoodforthought.com/2011/12/la-cocina-dignified-occupation-by-chris.html#more (consulted 7/11/13).

23 *Popol Vuh: The Mayan Book of the Dawn of Life*, translated by Dennis Tedlock. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985), pp. 163-164; Arturo Warman, *Corn and Capitalism: How a Botanical Bastard Grew to Global Dominance*, translated by Nancy L. Westrate (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), p. 35.

24 Teresa Mares and Devon Peña. "Urban Agriculture in the making of Insurgent Spaces in Los Angeles and Seattle," in Jeffrey Hou, ed. *Insurgent Public Space: Guerilla Urbanism and the Remaking ofContemporary Cities*. (New York: Routledge Press, 2010).

25 Enrique C. Ochoa and Fernando Mejia interview with Carlos Ortez (November 20, 2012), Un Solo Sol Kitchen in Boyle Heights.

26 Ochoa and Mejia interview with Carlos Ortez (November 20, 2012).

27 Melting Pot Tours, "Fabulous Art in Boyle Heights ,"(August 18, 2011) http://www.meltingpottours.com/melting-pot-tours-blog/78-fabulous-art-boyle-heights (consulted October 7, 2012).

28 Enrique C. Ochoa and Fernando Mejia interview with Irene Peña (December 12, 2012), at the offices of Proyecto Jardin in Boyle Heights.

29 Enrique C. Ochoa discussion and interview with Fernando Mejia, Maryanne Aguirre and Natalie Freire, members of the Con Alma Xin Armas Collective, Corazón de Pueblo (December 12, 2012).

30 http://www.oaklandfood.org/home/mission_goals (consulted 7/1/13).

31 http://foodchainworkers.org/?page_id=38 (consulted 7/1/13); Leah Scrivener, "UC Berkeley Launches First-Ever Food Labor Research Center, *Food First* (December 18, 2012) http://www.food-first.org/en/food+labor+center; Saru Jayaraman, *Behind the Kitchen Door* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).

32 Workshop by students from "Mexico and the Chicana/o People" course (CHS/HIST 467) at CSU-LA to J. Kaup's fourth grade class at First Street Elementary (March 4, 2013).

ENRIQUE C. OCHOA is Professor of Latin American Studies and History at California State University, Los Angeles and the 2013-14 President's Distinguished Professor. From 2006 to 2008, he was the Michi and Walter Weglyn Endowed Chair of Multicultural Studies at Cal Poly Pomona. His publications include Feeding Mexico: The Political Uses of Food Since 1910 (2000); Latina/o Los Angeles: Migrations, Communities, and Political Activism (co-editor, 2005); History and Critical Pedagogies: Transforming Consciousness, Classrooms, and Communities, a special issue of Radical History Review (co-editor, 2008); "The Political History of Food," in The Oxford Handbook of Food History (2012); and Water: History, Power, Crisis, a special issue of Radical History Review (co-editor, 2013). He links his classes and research to social justice organizations to draw on the rich experiences of students and the greater Los Angeles community.