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Re-Rhetoricizing Global Souths Contrapuntally: Borderless Transnational Feminist Design Justice

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RE-RHETORICIZING GLOBAL SOUTHS CONTRAPUNTALLY: BORDERLESS

TRANSNATIONAL FEMINIST DESIGN JUSTICE

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Dedication

Udeep Khadka

You are, therefore, I am.

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TRANSNATIONAL FEMINIST DESIGN JUSTICE

by

BIBHUSHANA POUDYAL, MPhil

DISSERTATION

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The UTEP Land Acknowledgement Statement

As members of the University of Texas at El Paso community, we acknowledge that we are meeting on unceded Indigenous land. We would like to recognize and pay our respects to the Indigenous people with long ties to the immediate region: the Lipan, Mescalero, and Chiricahua Apache; Piro; Manso; Suma; Jumano; Ysleta del Sur Pueblo; Piro/Manso/Tiwa Indian Tribe of the Pueblo of San Juan de Guadalupe; and Tortugas Pueblo. We also acknowledge the nations whose territories include present day Texas: the Carrizo & Comecrudo, Miakan-Garza Band, Caddo, Tonkawa, Comanche, Alabama-Coushatta, Kickapoo, and the peoples of Chihuahua and northern Mexico from whom many of our students descend, such as the Rarámuri, Tepehuan, Wixarrika and Nahuatlaca peoples. Finally, we recognize all of the Indigenous Peoples and communities who have been or have become a part of these lands and territories here in the Paso del Norte region. The University of Texas at El Paso honors your history and cultures and we seek greater awareness of the many ways in which your legacy can guide us in fruitful partnerships and mutually fulfilling relationships.

Acknowledgements

Let me begin by mentioning a word, a name, a phenomenon, actually: Udeep. Now, everything is beautiful. I'm ready now. Acknowledgment, what a marvelous opportunity to remember those moments and the people who helped me bring this dissertation into being. The only sad thing about writing an acknowledgement section is the time-space limitation that is inevitably a part of this genre. The presence of these two pages means the unfathomable absence of those phenomena that made this research possible. First of all, I would like to humbly acknowledge that absence.

Secondly, many thanks to all the communities and individuals around the world who are working to make this planet a better and equitable place for everyone, who are risking so many things on a personal level to fight against unjust systems and structures for the sake of our collective liberation.

I want to thank my dissertation chair Dr. Lucía Durá for being my collaborator in creating numberless intellectual and creative implosions in my dissertation. Finally, we saw everything was coming together and becoming a dissertation. I once thanked her for trusting the process. She, quite accurately, described, "Many times, it was a free fall." That is the kind of researcher and writer I am, and I got a dissertation chair who let me be that and guided me. It was a pleasure and quite an intellectual journey working with Dr. Durá. I am forever grateful to her.

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Michael Norricks has been my Sisyphean twin for six years from "Shall we dissert" to "We must dissertate" to "How would I journey these six PhD years without you!" I did not know I would find a friend on the very first day in the program. Corina Lerma, Michael, and I are, what we call, an AD (of FYC) package. We three are often "tripletting," and I will miss that a lot. I also thank my friends Cheyanne Lozano for your kindness, for all the long trips, for A.R.I.S.E., and for Moral Orel; Karla Martinez for memes, gifs, reels, encouragements, conversations, and our Squid Game time together; and Mayra Martinez for hyping me up when things were not going great with my previous chair. It is beyond words how lucky I am to find friends with such brilliantly critical minds and kind hearts. I extend my sincere thanks to my friend-*bhaisaab* Jagadish Paudel, such a hard-working and helpful human. At this moment, I am reminiscing the moments I spent with my friend JD (Jaime Desantiago). We were a cohort for a year, but what a precious PhD year it was because of the friendship we shared. I am also recollecting all the fun times I had with my friend Veronica Cruz and her mother Ruth Cruz, and I thank them for their helpful hearts. Jennifer Wilhite, I always recall the time when you surprised me with the collection of Julia Kristeva's works on the very first day of the fourth semester. The class had already started, and I could not shout with joy. And last but not least, I thank Joy Urbina, a very helpful librarian at UTEP, for spending hours of your precious time with me during those first years of building my digital archive.

Mamu-Baba, I can't wait to to be there and have momo with you in Nepal. It must be from a local momo place (yumm). It has been four years now. The wait must end soon. It must. And Udeep, what do I say about/to you? My being-becoming is intertwined with yours. What do I thank you for? For being, for existing! Everything is better because of that. *You are, therefore, I am.*

Abstract

I intend this multimodal dissertation to function as a hypertextual and intertextual documentation of theories, practices, examples, methods, digital, and multimodal techniques for re-writing and re-rhetoricizing the differently situated Global Souths from the ground-up. I acknowledge the Global South as not only those geographies previously known as the Third World but also those spaces and communities within the Global North undergoing various forms of colonial, racist, neoliberal, and heteropatriarchal exploitations. Transnational feminist solidarities put the intersectional analysis of gender construction at the heart of its bottom-up resistance against global capitalism, environmental injustice, corporate violence, and imperialism. My dissertation includes several examples from South Asia, the Middle East, the Americas, Africa, and Turtle Island to demonstrate the vicious continuum between rhetorical violence and material violence and what the field and subfields of rhetoric and writing studies can do to turn the tables and build communities based on love, care, kindness, relationality, reciprocity, and dignity. While documenting the journey and effects of the digital archive and multimodal documentation system I am building through feminist design justice frameworks, I bring examples of community-led multimodal storytelling and archiving practices from the Global South to demonstrate that communities have always been practicing resistance writing in the most creative and radical ways with the available resources and all we need to do is humbly listen and learn. Furthermore, I list a range of open-access digital, multimodal, and computational tools and techniques employed by universities, institutions, and digital humanities projects for the communities, community members, researchers, students, and teachers with no to little institutional-infrastructural support for digital projects.

Preface

The only book that is worth writing is the one we don't have the courage or strength to write. The book that hurts us (we who are writing), that makes us tremble, redden, bleed.

— Hélène Cixous

This dissertation is one of the hardest things I have ever written so far. It has been an intense, emotionally, and mentally draining journey. The horrors I witnessed while conducting research to understand the other side of the story not only exhausted me, but changed me as a person. While compassionate fatigue is present, this dissertation journey has given me courage too. I came across so many brilliant and kind works and people who seem to have decided that the world needs to be just and equitable and they too are responsible for making it so. I owe my dissertation largely to them, and I hope in the upcoming chapters this will be visible. These works and people helped me understand what ethos is and what it means to acknowledge the dignity of the other, to see humanity in the stranger. They made me realize that kindness and solidarity have no borders. Because of their works, I am learning to distinguish between the language that dignifies the story of another human and the language that might pretend to do so without actually doing it. I do not know where I stand in this distinction, but I am learning that world systems are inequitable and only kindness will heal them. I am learning that kindness is the most radical act. Kindness is at the core of every anti-oppressive revolution. Kindness should be at the heart of everything we do as academics. Without that, no social justice work is possible. My dissertation has been that learning journey for me on both intellectual and emotional levels.

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Chapter 1: The Military-Industrial-Tech-Media Complex and Dehumanization of Global Souths

> *In fact, the lands of Asia, Africa, and Latin America have long produced great treasures of foods, minerals and other natural resources. That is why the Europeans went through all the trouble to steal and plunder them. One does not go to poor places for self-enrichment. The Third World is rich. Only its people are poor—and it is because of the pillage they have endured.*
>
> — Michael Parenti, "Myths of Underdevelopment"

> *My final prayer:*
>
> *O my body, make of me always a man who questions!*
>
> — Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*

> *Fortunately power has a shelf life… Another world is not only possible, she's on her way. Maybe many of us won't be here to greet her, but on a quiet day, if I listen very carefully, I can hear her breathing.*
>
> — Arundhati Roy, "Not Again"

Figure 1 Image credited to Calum Ford. The source palestineaction.org gives permission to use the image.[1]

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[1] The reason for beginning the dissertation with this image will become clearer later in the chapter.

FIRST THINGS FIRST, WHY THIS RESEARCH?

A few hours before Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, the US carried out the first airstrike in Somalia since August 2021, which claimed the lives of 60 Somalians. The armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine began in 2014 and has killed around 15,000 people (International Crisis Group). On January 21, 2022, the Saudi-led coalition "used a precision-guided munition made in the United States in last week's air strike on a detention centre in Sa'adah, north-western Yemen, which, according to Doctors without Borders, killed at least 80 people and injured over 200" (Amnesty International, 2022, para. 1). According to an academic and journalist Alan MacLeod (2022), who specializes in propaganda, fake news, media criticism and Latin America:

> In total, in the week between Monday, February 21 and Sunday, February 27, *Fox News*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *CNN* and *MSNBC* ran almost 1,300 separate stories on the Ukraine invasion, two stories on the Syria attack, one on Somalia, and none at all on the Saudi-led war on Yemen. (para. 3)

In June 2022, a couple of months after Russia's invasion in Ukraine, the Conference on College Composition and Communication (4Cs) issued a statement against war crimes. Here I present two sentences from that powerful statement:

> Today, we stand in solidarity with our colleagues and students in and from Ukraine. We also stand in solidarity with students and scholars in and from places affected by war and violence, including Ethiopia, Myanmar, Haiti, Afghanistan, Palestine, Cameroon, and Yemen. (National Council of Teachers of English, 2022, para. 4)

This anti-war statement is truly a commendable initiative. However, as a scholar of rhetoric and composition, I cannot stop myself from asking the questions: Why issue an anti-war statement

now? Why not before? Why are a few Global South countries all crammed in one sentence? Why only those few countries and not others? We know why Ukraine is in the statement. Or let me rephrase it, we know this statement exists because of our solidarity with Ukrainian people. But what is the rationale behind the other seven countries? Let me rephrase this question again: What is the rationale behind the exclusion of other Global South countries? To emphasize on the urgency of this question, I will present what kind of war terror is being unleashed upon Global Souths by the Global North very briefly. Only very briefly. Because can one dissertation and one section in the dissertation truly encapsulate the magnitude of that horror? While going through the following paragraphs and paragraphs like them throughout the dissertation, I invite our field to brainstorm on the following questions: Why issue an anti-war statement now? Why not before? What is the rationale behind the exclusion of other countries? What kind of message will it send to the Global South and to the students, community members, staff, and faculty from the Global South? What kind of message will it communicate to the participants of our field in the Global North? I will bring one more instance to give a sense of why I am asking all these questions.

Right after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Western media outlets, from politicians to celebrities to people from different walks of life expressed sympathy and solidarity with the Ukrainian people, as they should, and as we all should. They announced their compassion and rage publicly. But some of the sympathy toward Ukrainian people exposed the open and hidden dehumanization of the Global South. I will present a few such statements among many and many and many of them. MacLeod (2022) collected some in his tweet thread:

1. The BBC - "It's very emotional for me because I see European people with blue eyes and blonde hair being killed" - Ukraine's Deputy Chief Prosecutor, David Sakvarelidze

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2. CBS foreign correspondent Charlie D'Agata: "This isn't Iraq or Afghanistan...This is a relatively civilized, relatively European city."

3. Al-Jazeera: "What's compelling is looking at them, the way they are dressed. These are prosperous, middle-class people. These are not obviously refugees trying to get away from the Middle East...or North Africa. They look like any European family that you'd live next door to."

4. BFM TV (France): "We are in the 21st century, we are in a European city and we have cruise missile fire as though we were in Iraq or Afghanistan, can you imagine!?"

5. Daniel Hannan with The Daily Telegraph: "This time, war is wrong because the people look like us and have Instagram and Netflix accounts. It's not in a poor, remote country anymore."

6. ITV (UK): "The unthinkable has happened...This is not a developing, third world nation; this is Europe!"

7. BFM TV (France) (again): "It's an important question. We're not talking here about Syrians fleeing...We're talking about Europeans."

8. If you speak French, sample from the racism buffet on offer. [Here Macleod takes us to the tweet thread by @caissesdegreve "50 nuances de racisme" (50 shades of racism)]

9. Guy on Spanish TV news channel La Sexta: "These aren't like the other children that we've become accustomed to see suffer on TV, these children are blond with blue eyes, [so] this is very important."

10. Star UK media personality Matthew Wright on ITV's flagship show, "This Morning": "The US has used [a thermobaric bomb] before in Afghanistan. But the idea of it being used in Europe is stomach-churning."

11. The New York Times. On US veterans going to Ukraine, it not-so-subtly suggests that Middle Easterners love dictatorships. "After years of serving in smoldering operations, trying to spread democracy IN PLACES THAT ONLY HAD A TEPID INTEREST IN IT".

12. Julia Ioffe with CNN: "It's one thing for sarin gas to be used on people in far away Syria who are Muslim and of a different culture. What is Europe going to do when it is on European soil, done to Europeans?"

As a field and as participants of this field and academia, we have to ask ourselves the hardest of questions: Can we really say there is absolutely no resemblance between the underlying ideology of these comments and the timing of the 4Cs statement and stuffing of the seven Global South countries in one sentence while excluding the rest? If we are to humanize Global Souths and de-normalize and acknowledge the exploitations of Global Souths, we must ask these questions which will force us out of our self-congratulatory comfort zone. This dissertation is that very attempt.

Some of the reasons behind this research are personal-political. Some of them have to do with my existence as a brown South Asian woman in the US. Some of them also have to do with my presence as a brown South Asian anti-colonial, anti-racist, anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist, anti-elitist, and feminist teacher in the US classrooms. Not always have I felt safe or comfortable talking or dialoguing about the anti-racist discourses the way I do. But when has anti-racist praxis ever been "comfortable"?

I remember one of my teaching experiences at UTEP. It was my second semester in the US and the first semester of teaching in the US. It was a First-Year Composition (FYC) class, and that day the students were presenting on a community issue that they care about by situating

that issue within the larger, global context. One of my students' topics was on the necessity of raising awareness about the mental health of soldiers. During his presentation, I got to know that he had fought the US war in Afghanistan and was undergoing a counselling for PTSD. He shared one episode of crossfire in Afghanistan where, he said, he had come close to death. Then, he called Afghans infidels and a few other names. I was just sitting there sympathizing with what he had gone through and what he was still going through. Not only as a South Asian it was so hard to listen to those words, but by that time, I had already started working on my monograph where I talk about the Western imperialist project in Afghanistan. His words got to me deep inside. I knew where his emotions and expressions were coming from. But I could not stop thinking about the atrocities that were unleashed upon Afghans by both Western imperialist powers and by the Taliban. How were Afghans infidels?

In another FYC class (a few semesters after the first episode), my students had to draft two to three research questions to get some idea about what and why they wanted to explore that semester. One of my students who had fought in Afghanistan came up with the following question: What can the US do to educate Afghan women? Another student's research question was: What can Islamic feminists learn from Western feminists? I asked my students about the Muslim feminists or Muslim women educators they have studied about which made them want to do this research. They replied, None. I asked them, then why not the other way round too? Why can't Afghan women help educate the US or why can't Western feminists learn from Islamic feminists? There was no answer. I could tell where they were getting the information that was guiding their research questions. We spent a lot of time discussing how these questions, unintentionally and with all good intentions, can be problematic and a hurdle to justice-driven research. We talked about, how we were beginning the research by depriving people and

communities of their agency and assuming that the West is a savior of brown women. I shared

some resources with them saying, "Let's listen to them first." We talked about these things a lot.

There is another interesting fact that I would like to state here. The first student who

called Afghans infidels identified as Mexican American. The second student who wanted to

explore the way the US can teach Afghan women was African American. The third student who

wanted to see what Islamic feminists can learn from Western feminists was Latina. And I am

South Asian. All four of us are the Others in the larger white supremacist structure. Yet, we all

were looking at one another through that rhetorical lens constructed by the Western matrix of

exploitation. We were and are suffering in our own ways because of that structural and systemic

exploitation. But we were able to neither recognize that nor extend any solidarity in a meaningful

way. Therefore, all of the things I have learned from Global Souths, I try sharing that with my

students. My "borderless transnational feminist design justice" project extends to my

pedagogical praxis as well. Or at least, I am trying to create this dialogue between my

performance as a researcher and my performance a teacher.
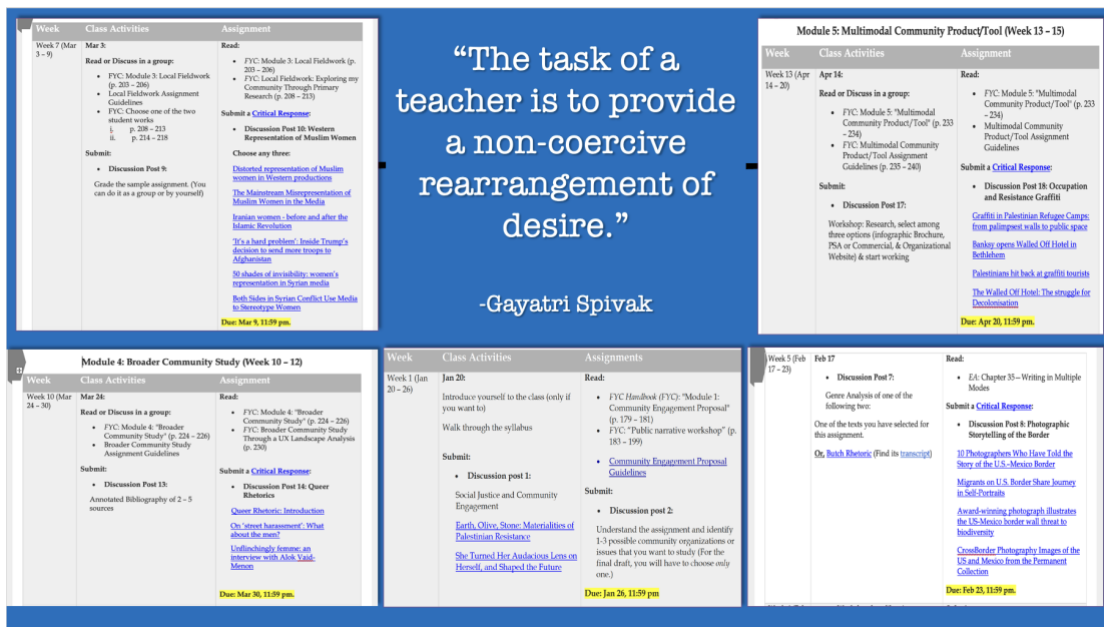
Figure 2 An image of various parts of my FYC course calendar.

As can be seen in Figure 2, I include transnational and transcultural materials from the Global South in my FYC courses. I try to include their art, their music, their scholarly works, or anything that makes us collectively listen to the Global Souths. Our discussions, class activities, reflective reading, critical writing, and contextual reading revolve around these issues. The hyperlinks (blue fonts) in Figure 2 are the materials from differently situated Global Souths which begin to reclaim the agency of these worlds and humanize their existence through their own storytelling and from their own interpretive lens.

Before moving ahead, I will present one more personal anecdote. Being in the US and discussing my research topic, I do not always feel safe except among most trusted friends and communities. It has been hard trusting folks beyond that not because I think people are evil but because the US is the most propagandized country in terms of it being a hub of giant tech companies and mainstream media working in proximity with the state, corporate giants, and the military industrial complex. We cannot separate one from another in terms of the alliance they have in maintaining and propagating certain rhetorics and narratives about the countries and communities in the Global Souths that the US does not agree with or invades. Therefore, when I voice my anti-war rhetoric and talk about Iraq, Libya, Syria, Afghanistan, and Global Souths accordingly, it is not always well received. It is like I am talking against America's most revered belief and values. It is not well received when I ask, "But how about other countries, communities, and people who are being bombed, killed, raped, plundered…?" And I do not always feel safe. To say that Afghan women do not need the US to help them with their education, and all the US just needs to do is mind its own business, leave Afghanistan alone and not create Taliban and not invade their country in the name of liberating women from Taliban is, in fact, not a safe thing to say. I was able to recognize where that anti-Afghan utterances were

coming from for my student with PTSD. It was from the space of pain turning into Islamophobia.

But what gave birth to that pain and Islamophobic comments has roots in racism, imperialism, and capitalism. Like I have said before, we are all victims of this system in our own ways. The only difference is who is bearing the brunt. So, I am not sure why I did not say anything in that class to that student. I do/did not know if it was entirely because of the compassion toward my student who was himself struggling, or if it was also that feeling of being unsafe in the space of US classrooms.

Hence, for every reason I stated and for the reasons I am still to learn, this research was necessary. For everyone's right to feel safe, secure, and dignified and for the role our fields and subfields can and should play to turn the tables, this research was necessary. My research is a desperate attempt to draw attention of the field. This dissertation is the voices coming from that space of unsafety, risk, and precarity. During my research, I realized and experienced that contrapuntal rhetoric, reading, and composition is not possible without making a journey to and from that precarious realm.

In Yemen, "17.4 million people— the majority of the population— are food insecure…20 million people live in extreme poverty" (Medhurst, "Silent Killer," 2022, para. 2). A war has been going on in Yemen for eight years and "both Britain and US are deeply deeply involved… the poorest people in the entire Middle East, one of the poorest people in the world in Yemen who have been pulverized and slaughtered by high-intensity bombing for all these years" (Galloway, 2022). One lie from people like Colin Powell and the ridiculous slideshow (C-Span, n.d.) about weapons of mass destruction (WMD) at UN Security Council (CheneyWatch1, 2009; The White House, 2003) during George W. Bush's presidency in 2003 became a preamble to the destruction of Iraq, and no one was/is held accountable for those lies and war crimes. To

understand why I call Powell's UN presentation ridiculous or absurd, I encourage readers to visit Powell's UN slideshow presentation and remember that the killing of 2.4 million Iraqis was begun with that slideshow. But can we imagine any Global South politician – let's say an Iraqi politician – giving such a presentation at UN and based on that presentation and a vial of saltlike white powder (Roberts, 2021), the whole world justifying the invasion of a Global North country and killing of 2.4 million people?

How many of us know about the Haditha massacre (November 19, 2005) and Mahmudiyah rape and killings (March 12, 2006) by United States Army soldiers in Iraq? How many of us know that white phosphorus was used as a chemical weapon by US forces on Fallujah, Iraq in 2004 (Iraq Body Count, n.d.)? Do we know that catastrophic levels of birth defects in Fallujah's newborns amount to "a rate of 14.7 per cent of all babies born in Fallujah, more than 14 times the rate in the effected areas of Japan?" (Jamail, 2013, para 34). But that really did not matter to many of us when "[t]he Navy's America-class amphibious assault ship LHA-9… receive[s] the name "Fallujah" to remember the first and second Battles of Fallujah in the Sunni Muslim province of al-Anbar during the Iraq War" (ibid). This is a US war in Iraq that *The Military Times* dubbed as "a battle in the Global War on Terror" (Loewenson, 2022, para. 12).

For over a week in May 2021, "Israel has pounded the Gaza Strip with bombs, claiming it is targeting Hamas 'terrorists,'" while "residential buildings, book stores, hospitals and the main Covid-19 testing labs have also been flattened" (Andrews, 2021, para. 1). Yet, the US administration approved a $735 million weapons sale to Israel in May 2021 amidst continuing ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. According to the 71-page Human Rights Watch (2009) report, Israel Defense Forces (IDF) indiscriminately repeated "firing of air-burst white phosphorus

shells from 155mm artillery into densely populated areas" (p. 1) and "[a]ll of the white phosphorus shells… came from the same lot manufactured in the United States in 1989 by Thiokol Aerospace, which was running the Louisiana Army Ammunition Plant at the time" (p. 6). Indigenous Palestinians have been undergoing ethnic cleansing since 1948.

The Global South has been bleeding for way too long. Brown University (2021) released a report on human costs of war:

At least 929,000 people have been killed by direct war violence in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, and Pakistan… Millions of people living in the war zones have also been displaced by war. The U.S. post-9/11 wars have forcibly displaced at least 38 million people in and from Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, the Philippines, Libya, and Syria. This number exceeds the total displaced by every war since 1900, except World War II.

More than 387,000 civilians have been killed in the fighting since 2001….
The U.S. post-9/11 wars have forcibly displaced at least 38 million people in and from Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, the Philippines, Libya, and Syria. This number exceeds the total displaced by every war since 1900, except World War II….

[T]he U.S. invasion of Iraq turned the country into a laboratory in which militant groups such as Islamic State have been able to hone their techniques of recruitment and violence. The formation of Islamist militant groups spreading throughout the region counts among the many human costs of that war. (Para. 1, 4, 5)

According to a study by the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), in 2015 alone, the US dropped "an estimated total of 23,144 bombs in six countries" out of which, 22,110 were dropped in Iraq and Syria (Zenko, 2016, para. 6). The US alone had "conducted 77 percent of all airstrikes in

Iraq and Syria, while there were 28,714 U.S.-led coalition munitions dropped in 2015" (ibid). In 2016, 26,171 bombs were dropped (Benjamin, 2017) in seven countries when Barack Obama was finishing up his presidency that had begun with promises to withdraw from international conflicts (Brinley, 2017). That year, "[t]he U.S. dropped an average of 72 bombs every day — the equivalent of three an hour" (ibid). And the interesting part of this report is that CFR had warned that its estimates were "undoubtedly low, considering reliable data is only available for airstrikes in Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, and Libya, and a single 'strike,' according to the Pentagon's definition, can involve multiple bombs or munitions" (ibid). After all this, no mainstream media or voices powerfully questioned the Nobel prize for peace Obama had received in 2009. Even if there were some resisting voices emerging from within these corporate spaces, unsurprisingly, they were not given any substantial platform for debate. Is it because the lives that were taken during his presidency are *expendable lives*, which were not only not worth remembering but were collateral damage whose worth is unquestionably insignificantly less than 'blonde hair and blue eyes'? As Judith Butler (2004) in *Precarious Life* writes,

> Whether or not we continue to enforce a universal conception of human rights at moments of outrage and incomprehension, precisely when we think that others have taken themselves out of the human community as we know it, is a test of our very humanity. (pp. 89-90)

With this quote in mind, let us briefly look at the number of people killed in the Global North's humanitarian intervention (actually, U.S.'s counterrevolutionary wars) in the Global South post-World War II:

> In pursuit of counterrevolution and in the name of freedom, U.S. forces or U.S.-supported surrogate forces slaughtered 2,000,000 North Koreans in a three-year war; 3,000,000

Vietnamese; over 500,000 in aerial wars over Laos and Cambodia; over 1,500,000 in

Angola; over 1,000,000 in Mozambique; over 500,000 in Afghanistan; 500,000 to

1,000,000 in Indonesia; 200,000 in East Timor; 100,000 in Nicaragua (combining the

Somoza and. Reagan eras); over 100,000 in Guatemala (plus an additional 40,000

disappeared); over 700,000 in Iraq;[3] over 60,000 in El Salvador; 30,000 in the "dirty war"

of Argentina (though the government admits to only 9,000); 35,000 in Taiwan, when the

Kuomintang military arrived from China; 20,000 in Chile; and many thousands in Haiti,

Panama, Grenada, Brazil, South Africa, Western Sahara, Zaire, Turkey, and dozens of

other countries, in what amounts to a free-market world holocaust. (Parenti, *Blackshirts*

and Reds, p. 25-6)

All lives squashed like ants.[2] All lives and deaths pushed into oblivion and unacknowledged. All

lives and deaths wrapped and trapped in the rhetoric of "collateral damage". The purpose of this

quote is to draw attention to the numbers of lives obliterated without war criminals or atrocious

states ever being held accountable. But for the detailed contextualization of the U.S. atrocities in

the Global South, I highly recommend reading Michael Parenti's *Black Shirts and Reds*.

Now, let me jump to the next question: What do we remember when we say 9/11? I am

pretty sure that it is not the following 9/11s of Global Souths of which Arundhati Roy reminds

us:

…in Chile, on the September 11, 1973, General Pinochet overthrew the democratically

elected government of Salvador Allende in a CIA-backed coup. 'Chile shouldn't be

allowed to go Marxist just because its people are irresponsible', said Henry Kissinger,

then President Nixon's national security adviser.

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[2] Chapter 3 will make the reference 'squashed like ants' clear.

After the coup President Allende was found dead inside the presidential palace. Whether he was killed or whether he killed himself, we'll never know. In the regime of terror that ensued, thousands of people were killed. Many more simply 'disappeared'. Firing squads conducted public executions. Concentration camps and torture chambers were opened across the country. The dead were buried in mine shafts and unmarked graves. For 17 years the people of Chile lived in dread of the midnight knock, of routine 'disappearances', of sudden arrest and torture. Chileans tell the story of how the musician Victor Jara had his hands cut off in front of a crowd in the Santiago stadium. Before they shot him, Pinochet's soldiers threw his guitar at him and mockingly ordered him to play. ("Not Again," 2002)

Aside from the Latin American 9/11, history has witnessed a Middle Eastern 9/11 as well:

On September 11, 1922, ignoring Arab outrage, the British government proclaimed a mandate in Palestine, a follow-up to the 1917 Balfour declaration, which imperial Britain issued, with its army massed outside the gates of the city of Gaza. The Balfour declaration promised European zionists a national home for Jewish people…

The world is called upon to condemn suicide bombers. But can we ignore the long road they have journeyed on before they arrived at this destination? September 11, 1922 to September 11, 2002 -- 80 years is a long long time to have been waging war…

It was on September 11, 1990 that George W Bush Sr, then president of the U.S., made a speech to a joint session of Congress announcing his government's decision to go to war against Iraq. (Ibid)

In this context of normalization and uncommemoration of the dehumanization of Global Souths, I write this dissertation with so much pain and yet with so much hope inviting all the fields and

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subfields of Rhetoric and Writing Studies (RWS), Technical and Professional Communication (TPC), and Digital Humanities (DH) to discuss what we can do, as academics with all our resources, to turn the tables. This dissertation is also an invitation to all of us to brainstorm: What normalized the issuance of 4Cs statement now and not before? What does that say about "Black Lives Matter," "Asian Lives Matter," "Muslim Lives Matter," "Indigenous Lives Matter," "Brown Lives Matter"? Also, who is manufacturing our consent and who conditions our rage and compassion (or lack thereof), and how? This dissertation is an urgent call to critically think about these questions, make equitable this inequitably disseminated rage and compassion, and to do something so that our students and faculty and staff and community members from these parts of the Global South really feel safe here with the unfaltering sense of dignity. We really can do it. Collectively, we must do it because **Global Souths Matter**.

This chapter continues by introducing the theories and methodologies in this dissertation. It is a slightly unconventional dissertation in terms of many sources I bring which not only go beyond the fields of RWS, TPC, and DH but also beyond academia. This is both an organic and a strategic move. However, the four frameworks I rely upon are grounded in a transdisciplinary element of the three disciplines, and from there, I am trying to push the potentiality of those frameworks with examples from Global Souths and so many kinds of sources. After that, I unravel some of those ideas that have the potential to give away the un/conscious of the dissertation, the purpose, and the reason. Next, I present the architecture of this dissertation with a brief overview of all six chapters.

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL PARADIGMS AND FRAMEWORKS

As noted in the preface, I intend my multimodal dissertation to function as hypertextual and intertextual documentation of theories, practices, examples, methods, and digital and

multimodal techniques of re-writing and re-rhetoricizing the differently situated Global Souths from a ground-up transnational feminist approach. I acknowledge the Global South as not only those geographies previously known as the Third World but also those spaces and communities within the Global North undergoing various forms of colonial, racist, neoliberal, and heteropatriarchal exploitations. To entail the nuanced nature of the Global South and to hint at the necessary solidarities among differently situated Global Souths, my dissertation uses the following three phrases or concepts interchangeably: Global Souths; the Global South; and Global Souths within the Global South and the Global North. The reason I use the Global North in a singular form is not to entail that it is a singular entity sharing same qualities and same level of power. This singular form is to entail their partnership in maintaining the global power like military-tech-media industrial complex. I think the example of Elbit system, which I bring late in the dissertation, will clarify this more.

Furthermore, the framework of transnational feminism puts the intersectional analysis of gender construction at the heart of its bottom-up resistance against global capitalism, environmental injustice, corporate violence, and imperialism. My dissertation puts forth several examples from South Asia, the Middle East, the Americas, Africa, and Turtle Island to demonstrate the vicious continuum between epistemic violence, rhetorical violence, and material violence and what the field and subfields of rhetoric and writing studies can do to turn the tables and build communities based on love, care, kindness, relationality, reciprocity, and dignity. I also bring examples of community-led multimodal storytelling and archiving practices from the Global South. The idea is to demonstrate that grassroots communities have always been practicing resistance writing in the most creative and radical ways with the available resources and all we need to do is humbly listen and learn and let that knowledge transform our research

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and pedagogical practices.

To practice some of these theories or arguments, as a part of my dissertation, since 2018, I have been building an open-access digital archive (http://cassacda.com) of my street photography through participatory design frameworks with South Asian communities largely consisting of Nepalis (Figure 3). And since early 2021, I also started experimenting with multimodal documentation systems, creative and engaging design decisions, and public writing to reach out to communities in Global Souths. Since then, I have been in contact with a few Nepali, other South Asian, Palestinian, Latin American, Native American, and Chicanx activist individuals and organizations. I share many examples and arguments from my dissertation and almost every example and analysis I am presenting here today in my social media posts, for instance, in my Instagram stories at @bibhushanaa (Figure 4), hoping to make these communities my first audiences. These posts are also linked to my dissertation. I want my dissertation to function as a hypertextual, intertextual, and interactive documentation system and archive in itself.
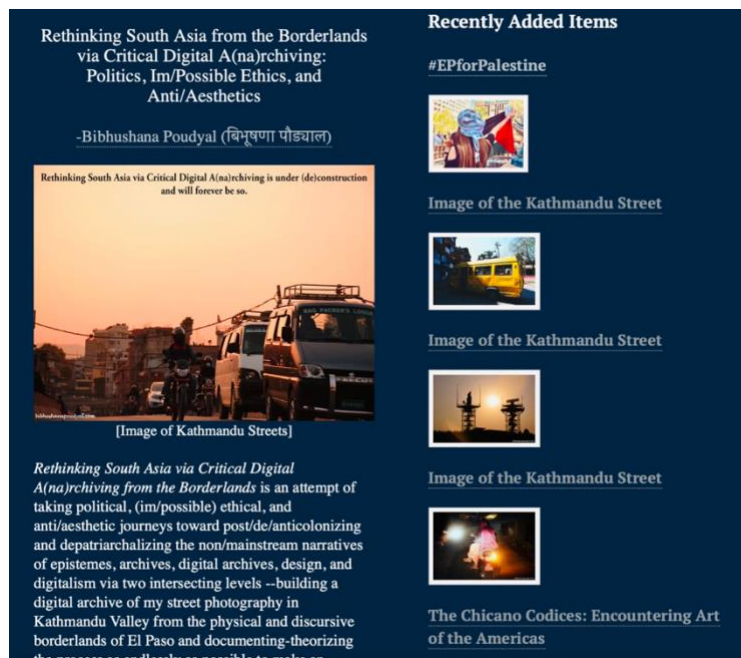
Figure 3 Screenshot of the digital archive I am building: cassacda.com
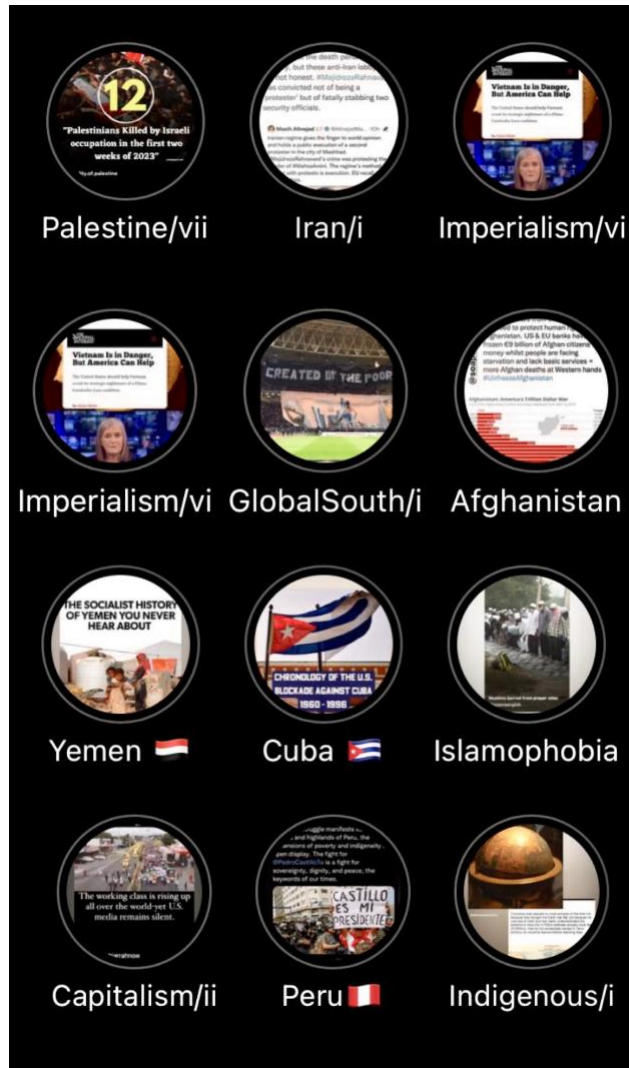
Figure 4 Arranged screenshots of the highlights of my Instagram @bibhushanaa

Furthermore, my dissertation lists a range of open-access digital, multimodal, and computational tools and techniques employed by universities, institutions, and digital humanities projects for the communities, community members, researchers, students, and teachers with little to no institutional-infrastructural support for digital projects. In short, my dissertation calls for contrapuntal transnational feminist solidarities with and among communities from differently situated Global Souths using digital and multimodal tools and design justice practices.

If I were to put it succinctly, my dissertation exemplifies and theorizes the following five points:

i. There is a vicious relationship between epistemic violence, rhetorical violence, and material violence. There is no racist material violence without racist epistemic and rhetorical violence.

ii. If we are not careful about the distinction between the top-down model of community engagement & ground-up model of community engagement, even if our intentions are all benevolent, we might end of committing epistemic violence.

iii. We must start transforming the rhetorics and definitions of expertise, credibility, and ethos and start centering the works and knowledges of transnational grassroots communities in our research, teaching, and curricula.

iv. We must make Global South Rhetorics, African American Rhetorics, Indigenous Rhetorics, Chicanx and Latinx Rhetorics, and Anti-Islamophobic Rhetorics the active frameworks to reflect upon, access, and revise our programs, curricula, and our academic and administrative goals and visions.

v. How we do rhetoric and writing in the Global North cannot be guided by the neoliberal commodification of identity[3] or multicultural participation within the existing political economy of racism, colonialism, imperialism, capitalism, and heteropatriarchy.

To make these points, I try my best to bring examples from Global Souths by discussing them through the frameworks and analyses that help me acknowledge and dignify the full humanity of Global Souths. As I go further into the dissertation, this very statement starts getting clearer, and I hope the four frameworks I present below will give a glimpse of this. I deliberately try my best

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[3] When I am saying neoliberal in my dissertation, I usually mean neoliberalism and the commodification of identity or neoliberal identity politics. By that, I mean when the identity of marginalized communities is commodified for the personal benefits of the individuals perpetuating the same system instead of political representation of that community for just policy changes. The neoliberal identity politics tokenizes the marginalized identities and presents itself as illusion of representation, diversity, inclusion, and equity. In neoliberal identity politics, the exploitative core of the system remains the same only the faces change.

not to differentiate among my sources depending on conventional definition of what counts or does not count as academic, scholarly, or disciplinary. I bring a few of Diane Davis's (2000) words about her book *Breaking Up [at] Totality*:

> Though I-write for my colleagues and students in the field of rhetoric and composition, this text will not police/protect the borders of what we like to call "our *discipline*"; indeed, in the name of writing, this text will challenge the boundaries of the home field. The goal is a "crack up" we will attempt here to do for "composition" what Victor J. Vitanza does for "The" history of Rhetoric: to jimmy its libidinal lock, to shatter its boundaries by inviting in everybody. We will, more specifically, break up what is called "composition" by engaging in third sophistic rereadings of the grounds upon which this "discipline" has been built.
>
> Might as well admit it: it's time. (p. 7)

That's it. It's about time to do something about Global South rhetorics, and to do so, we need to play with methodologies a lot. As LuMing Mao (2007) writes, "The methods one deploys will inevitably influence the outcomes of such an undertaking, and these outcomes in turn are often perceived, if not directly cited, as evidence justifying or validating the methods chosen" (p. 216). Methods are instrumental and they also decide the epistemological process and product. Therefore, they are to be built, used, experimented with, questioned, challenged, and rebuilt. Methodologies are always situated in certain structure and after a while, they become a norm. There is nothing entirely wrong with that. But as an activist researcher pushing the boundaries and working through the spaces of gaps, lack, and absence, how can the structurally unconventional knowledge be heard and reciprocated "if we content ourselves with the slumber of conventional knowledge" (Bataille, 1991, p. 11)? This dissertation is open to conventional and

unconventional knowledge and methodologies non-binarily. Hence, my approach to

methodologies is very similar to the following words of Paul Karl Feyerabend (1993) from

Against Method:

> My intention is not to replace one set of general rules by another such set: my intention
>
> is, rather, to convince the reader that all methodologies, even the most obvious ones, have
>
> their limits. The best way to show this is to demonstrate the limits and even the
>
> irrationality of some rules which she, or he, is likely to regard as basic. (p. 23)

Thus, while instrumentalizing various methodologies, this study also reflects upon

methodologies. To understand the "reciprocal relationship between the "how" and the "what" [of

knowledge]," as Mao (2007) writes, "we rhetoricians and writing professionals […] must reflect

regularly on our methodologies, including their intrinsic connections to our objects of study, to

our understanding of the Other, and to our understanding of ourselves" (p. 216). And besides,

when research is conducted from/as a location of resistance and meanings are deconstructed

from gaps, lack, and absence, methodologies become more like a bricoleur activity (Lévi Strauss,

1962; Derrida, 1978), creatively, strategically, and out of necessity, borrowing, making with, and

putting together whatever tools, methods, and texts are at hand. Sometimes, methodologies

become more like a mimicry, "*almost the same, but not quite*" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 89). This

mimicry is pragmatic, inevitable, desirable, and strategic. As Spivak says, "I am not erudite

enough to be interdisciplinary, but I can break rules" (Spivak, 1999, xiii).

Hence, while working on this dissertation, I have heavily relied upon anti-imperialist,

anti-capitalist, feminist social media pages, organizations, scholars, activists, grassroots

communities who humanize Global Souths. To put it briefly, humanizing Global Souths means

doing contrapuntal reading (Said, 1993) of the dominant narratives and rhetorics of Global

Souths, which means digging out the information and viewpoints that have been marginalized by the dominant part of academia, media, and institutions. That is what is a step toward a radical paradigm shift with the sole purpose of humanizing Global Souths. We cannot use the same dominant strategy, paradigm, conventions, ways of doing research, understanding of ethos and credibility, and expect a completely different result. Hence, a contrapuntal reading with the help of the sources which do their best to see and articulate systemic exploitations behind the stories of poverty.

However, I also want to be honest about the fact that I have not entirely suppressed the range of emotions I have experienced while doing this research. Many times, in my tone they become apparent, and I did not numb out those emotions under the pretense of neutrality. I very much relate the tone of my dissertation writing style to Frantz Fanon's dissertation writing style. Fanon's dissertation "Essay on the Disalienation of the Black" was a response to racism he experienced while studying at Lyon. The dissertation got rejected, and Fanon later published it as *Black Skin, White Masks.* In the book, when Fanon is angry, we can sense that. When he is profoundly hurt, one can feel that too. It does not feel like he tries to pretend a non-existing Cartesian binary between mind and body in the book. We can see Fanon in the book. In my dissertation, I keep on emerging in front of my audiences. I do not control the palpability of my presence to invite my audiences to journey through my dissertation and sources I have relied upon and form their opinions. We are not free of our opinions and baggage. I admit it. I want the readers to know that I do not claim any neutrality, and hence, they must deeply interrogate their own positionality and baggage, do their own research very carefully, and allow new information to transform their way of rhetoricizing Global Souths ethically and justly. As my attempt to find ethical and justice-driven alternatives to re-rhetoricize Global Souths, the four theoretical and

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methodological paradigms, strategies, and frameworks I largely rely on are:

- Transnational Feminist Rhetorics

- Decolonial Border Rhetoric

- Contrapuntal Reading, Writing, and Narrativizing

- Design Justice and Data Feminism

Transnational Feminism

To elaborate on transnational feminist rhetorics, I am going to take help from *Capire*, a grassroots feminist organization and media tool "to echo the voices of women in movement, to publicize the struggles and organizational processes from different territories, and to strengthen local and international references of anti-capitalist, anti-racist, grassroots feminism" (n.d.). *Capire* means 'to understand' in Italian, and the philosophy and purpose of *Capire* is to understand and change the world through and with the voices and eyes of women. The way *Capire* crosses neoliberal boundaries to fight for justice is what I identify with when I propose anti-imperial feminist rhetoric and writing practices. When we look at these kinds of works, we can see that the activists around the world are already building that solidarity that we academics need to learn a lot from. Let's just observe the following words co-written by the three anti-imperialist organizations *Capire*, International Peoples Assembly (IPA), and International Week of Anti-imperialist Struggle for their virtual poster gallery themed, "Anti-Imperialist Feminism to Change the World":

> Women are on the frontlines resisting against imperialism, war, violence, blockades,
> invasions, occupations. From Cuba to Lebanon, from Chile to Turkey, and around the
> world, working women oppose neoliberalism, corporate power, and the commodification
> of life and nature. They defend land, decent work, life, communities, the commons,

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freedom, and people's sovereignty.

> Feminism creates and recreates symbols and alternatives for a society where there is equality, solidarity, freedom, justice, and peace. It breaks the shackles that try to abuse and control women's bodies and sexuality. It stands up for life and the right to health. It feeds communities and fights hunger, fences, plantations, and racism. It occupies spaces and challenges the sexual division of labor. It keeps the memory of old sister fighters alive and the flame of rebelliousness alive. It practices revolutionary affection and organizes unity in diversity. (n.d.)

Wendy S. Hesford and Eileen E. Schell (2008) tell us that the transnational feminist rhetorical analytical framework challenges the disciplinary defining of rhetoric and composition around "U.S.-centric narratives of nation, nationalism, and citizenship, including its focus on feminist and women's rhetorics only within the borders of the United States or Western Europe, and explores its potential complicity in reproducing institutional hierarchies" (463). The transnational feminist rhetoricians like Bo Wang (2013) and Masha Al-Khateeb (2021) have emphasized the institutional, disciplinary, and geopolitical aspect of the transnational feminist rhetoric as an analytical tool. They say that transnational feminism helps us understand, analyze, articulate, challenge, and subvert both the institutional and geopolitical hierarchies in the U.S. academic institutions and beyond. Very powerfully, Al-Khateeb (2021) talks about the ethical and intellectual necessity of transnational rhetorical framework. She writes how this framework "demonstrate[s] how certain modes of reading, writing, and analysis that (un)intentionally idealize, tokenize, commodify, romanticize, or pathologize others can be considered violent encounters" (18). She adds, "Such violent encounters call for new epistemological and ontological orientations that not only name these violences but also offer ethical modes of

encounter with texts, contexts, bodies, places, identities, and subjectivities" (18). Regarding transnational feminism, *Capire* says,

> To understand wars and armed conflicts through a feminist lens, it is necessary to overcome obstacles of misinformation raised by people who try to silence women. Once these obstacles are overcome, it is necessary to listen to women from several territories of the Global South where the conflicts have been developing over years without being appropriately addressed on an international level. (2022)

I understand transnational feminism as a rhetorical tool which puts the intersectional analysis of gender construction at the heart of its intersectional bottom-up resistance against global capitalism, environmental injustice, corporate violence, settler colonialism – or as Anna Johnston and Alan Lawson puts it, settler-invader colonialism to "emphasize the violence that the single, ostensibly benign, term "settler" concealed (2000, p. 362) – global racism, and imperialism by making colonial borders irrelevant when it comes to building solidarities for our collective liberation. This solidarity is inessential – I am remembering Diane Davis's *Inessential Solidarity* – as in the Global Souths do not share any essential features that define them all. But it is important to understand the following words by an anticolonial-anticapitalist transnational feminist Chandra Talpade Mohanty:

> Third World women workers have a potential identity in common, an identity as workers in a particular division of labor at this historical moment. And I believe that exploring and analyzing this potential commonality across geographical and cultural divides provides both a way of reading and understanding the world and an explanation of the consolidation of inequities of gender, race, class, and (hetero)sexuality, which are necessary to envision and enact transnational feminist solidarity.

A transnational feminist practice depends on building feminist solidarities across the divisions of place, identity, class, work, belief, and so on. In these very fragmented times it is both very difficult to build these alliances and also never more important to do so. Global capitalism both destroys the possibilities and also offers up new ones. (p. 144, 250)

Transnational feminism acknowledges the differences among differently situated Global Souths and the similarities against the continuing exploitation of global capitalism, colonialism, imperialism, environmental injustice, and heteropatriarchy.

Decolonial Border Rhetoric

Decolonial border rhetoric profoundly intersects with my understanding and practice of transnational feminism. Yet, I will emphasize one thing here: colonialism, imperialism, capitalism, racism, and patriarchy are borderless. They linger *on* the colonial and imperial borders. They haunt those borders. They travel within & beyond those colonial-imperial borders. These various forms of violence are imported and exported. Borders do not exist for the matrix of exploitation. The following passage by Kent A Ono (2012) establishes the point:

Whereas transnational capitalism may benefit from policies such as the North American free Trade Agreement (NAfTA)—hence giving the appearance of borders having been eliminated or made invisible and as creating what Masao Miyoshi has called a "borderless world"—for those on the flip side of transnational capitalism's privileges and pleasures (predominantly the working class transnational labor force) the world is far from borderless. Rather than experiencing the borderless world of cosmopolitan capitalism, workers face borders to inclusion, employment, housing, health, education, and welfare not because of a literal border but because there is a figural divide seemingly

immanent between contiguous nations. As such, a border acts as a separator or divider of

people with different social, economic, and political affiliations, as a signifier of

inclusion and exclusion, and as a way of determining one's worthiness as a living being,

what foucault [sic] might call one's "biopower" (*Power/Knowledge*). (22)

Hence, these borders should not exist for our fight and solidarity against the matrix of

exploitation either. I say that the fight against that violence begins by recognizing that

border(ed)lands are incommensurable pluriverses. Border(ed)lands are time and space where

memories, stories, and experiences of woes, struggles, deaths, survivals, oppressions,

surveillance, dissent, resistances, arts, philosophies, knowledge are both leaking and contained.

These narratives are impossible to write, tell, and hear and yet, they must be humbly and

critically written, told, and heard. Over and over again. Border, in this dissertation, is both the

material condition and the metaphor of pluri-narratives, pluri-logues, and pluri-verses and

solidarity among these heterogeneities. I use the study of border as a theoretical and

methodological framework in this dissertation to de-normalize and de-naturalize both the

geographical and metaphorical borderlands. And I propose archives to function as portals of

those impossible yet necessary narratives, and archivists to acknowledge the impossibility

through solidarity. As stated in the heading above, that solidarity requires crossing of those

boundaries set by neoliberal identity politics, colonialism, racism, classism, casteism, genderism.

In this dissertation, to envision borders, b/ordering, border(ed)lands, and borderlessness

the way I do, I have had a great deal of help from RWS scholars. And this was one of the hardest

chapters to start writing because of how difficult it was to put this vision into comprehensible

words that make sense to the readers as well. To be able to articulate this, I participated in the

workshop, "Bordering Rhetorics: Mobility, Containment, & the Boundaries of Critical Rhetoric"

at the *RSA Summer Institute 2021*. I quote the description of the workshop, which complicates

the notions of borders, stating, "[B]orders are both spaces of mobility as well as places of

containment… borders also move[and] change over time and mean different things for different

people" (Cisneros, Flores, Lechuga, 2021). Complicating "the notion of border as a static object

of study," they call rhetoricians to theorize bordering studies and the processes of bordering

more broadly and "expand the notion of bordering, such as social bordering practices, bordering

spatio-temporalities, bordering as settler logic, b/ordering gender, archival bordering, and

disciplinary bordering" (ibid). Kent A. Ono and John M. Sloop (2002) write, "Rhetoric shapes

understandings of how the border functions; taken further, because of its increasingly powerful

role, rhetoric at times even determines where, and what, the border is" (p. 5). Decolonial border

rhetoric studies, fights, and makes irrelevant colonial and imperial borders for transnational

feminist solidarities. As Walter Mignolo (2009) theorizes border thinking and epistemic

disobedience, he says that epistemic delinking denounces the "pretended universality of a

particular ethnicity, located in a specific part of the planet" (p. 453) and shifts the "geography of

reason [from the West] and enacting geo-politics of knowledge" based on local

histories/knowledges" ("Epistemic Disobedience" 173; refer to García and Baca, 2019).

Contrapuntal Reading, Writing, and Narrativizing

      I begin this section quoting a Palestinian-American cultural critic Edward Said from

whom I have borrowed the concept of contrapuntal reading, writing, and narrativizing, which is

one of the major tools of this dissertation:

      The power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very

      important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections

      between them. Most important, the grand narratives of emancipation and enlightenment

mobilized people in the colonial world to rise up and throw off imperial subjection; in the

process, many Europeans and Americans were also stirred by these stories and their

protagonists, and they too fought for new narratives of equality and human community.

(1993, xiii)

Said's *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) is a very important work to understand contrapuntal

reading in the context of imperialism and colonialism. I use this concept to hint at the rigorous

digging out, searching, and daring to say the things that are not said enough for ethically re-

rhetoricizing Global Souths. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said proposes and theorizes a new way

of reading literary texts "with an effort to draw out, extend, give emphasis and voice to what is

silent or marginally present or ideologically represented in such works" (78). He adds, "The

contrapuntal reading must take account of both processes – that of imperialism and that of

resistance to it, which can be done by extending our reading of the texts to include what was

once forcibly excluded" (ibid). Contrapuntal reading makes apparent the buried and

unacknowledged colonial foundation from where the Western literary canon and "canonical"

narratives emerge. Contrapuntal reading for me is the first step toward holding oppressors

accountable. Said (1993) writes,

It is more rewarding - and more difficult - to think concretely and sympathetically,

contrapuntally, about others than only about "us." But this also means not trying to rule

others, not trying to classify them or put them in hierarchies, above all, not constantly

reiterating how "our" culture or country is number one (or not number one, for that

matter). (336)

It is also a recommendation of the need to do contrapuntal reading of digital-archival practices.

Therefore, to clarify, I will quote Ghaddar and Caswell (2019) here who connect Said's concepts

to archives:

> We need, in Edward Said's terms, a contrapuntal re-reading of our history and discourse that uncovers their complicities and involvement in the colonial process while revealing new and alternative narratives or voices through an exploration of their social and cultural realities (Said 1994, p. 59). A contrapuntal re-reading acknowledges that for every theme sounded by an imperial power, there were a multiplicity of answers and counter-themes sounded by subalterns. As Said recommends, we need to look back at the cultural archive to "reread it not univocally but contrapuntally" (1994, p. 51). (2019, p. 78).

To exemplify this framework further, I bring an example of the title of the book *How Europe underdeveloped Africa* by a Guyanese political activist and scholar Walter Rodney. If we do a careful close reading of the title, we can see that it uses underdeveloped as a verb and not an adjective. This is what paradigm shift is. Africa or the Global South is not essentially poor or underdeveloped, but they have been massively exploited for generations after generation. What might that exploitation have done to the country, to peoples living there? Michael Parenti says that these countries are not underdeveloped or poor. Otherwise, why would colonial and imperial powers keep on invading these lands. The countries are very, very rich. But lands and people are exploited and that's why people are poor. Contrapuntal reading provides the other side of the story.

       To understand and practice contrapuntal rhetoric, we need to get out of an easy binary of true and false. If we are to resist the oppressor's rhetoric about the oppressed, our approach to verifiable knowledge, fact, and information must go beyond the rhetorics of "fake news" or disinformation that we come across in the mainstream media. Because if we are trapped in that

binary, we will not see how oppressors use and have used the "verifiable facts" to oppress people. I will present one example. Yes, Yemen is undergoing a major humanitarian crisis, Afghanistan has the Taliban who are fundamentalists, Russia invaded Ukraine. These are all verifiable facts. But what imperialist chauvinists have rhetorically done with these "verifiable facts" to manufacture our consent and to colonize the Global South or create havoc in Ukraine is horrendous. Their rhetoric does not provide context, or what they do is conveniently skip details that are inconvenient for them. Who is putting Yemen under brutal sanctions? Who is funding and sending weapons to the Saudi-led coalition to bomb and attack Yemen? Who created Taliban? What happened after twenty-years of occupation in Afghanistan besides the profit the weapons industry and the U.S. made through military industrial complex? Who is freezing Afghanistan's money in the U.S. banks, which is causing another humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan? Who is benefitting from all the money and weapons sent to Ukraine, who is replacing old weapons with new ones, and who is receiving all that money and weapons in Ukraine? What are the consequences of all this on people? So, this is where contrapuntal rhetorics can help to contextualize all the knowledge created by the oppressive power centers. We will suspect, we will doubt, we will question, we will do research, we will find ways to listen to Global Souths. By discarding the interpretative lens provided by the Global North imperialism, we will try to see each other and build solidarity. Contrapuntal rhetorics demand a lot of work on our part. It is about ditching the rhetoric of "Africa is underdeveloped" and going to "How Europe underdeveloped Africa."

Design Justice and Data Feminism

On March 8-11, 2018, the Vatican held a conference or hackathon, co-sponsored by tech giants such as Google and Microsoft, bringing together over 120 students (engineers and

scientists) "aiming to find solutions to social problems including migrant and refugee issue" (Madianou, 2019). The participants, fueled with "pasta, pastries, and lots of caffè—brainstormed and coded during a 36-hour sprint," while "many of them pulling all-nighters to complete their projects" (Valdez, 2018). The participants "received consultation from 40 on-site mentors, many of whom represented Microsoft, Google, and other corporate sponsors of the event who taught the participants how to use their company's tools and technologies" (ibid). As per VHacks (2018), participants are "the world's brightest students with diverse academic, ethnic and religious backgrounds" and chosen based on "academic accomplishments, innovative thinking, and *alignment with our mission statement*" (emphasis added). About the event, undersecretary of the Migrants and Refugee Section of the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development Jesuit Father Michael Czerny said, "When we talk about migrants and refugees, we tend to talk about it in vast terms as if it were a huge problem or a so-call global problem… But in fact, it's a collection of very individual problems, particular problems of persons and families" (*The Catholic Leader*, 2018, p. 8). One unavoidable thing about this interpretation of refugees and migrants is by calling it a collection of very individual problems, particular problems of persons and families, he is absolutely denying the systemic and structural violence that causes this "crisis". With this rhetoric, now, we will be focusing on "saving" a handful of individuals and families, while being forced into complete oblivion of the systemic reasons that gave birth to it. Quoting Pope Francis's words to Catholic leaders who were working on refugee and migration issues, *The Catholic Leader* writes,

> In order to set free those who today are oppressed, rejected and enslaved", Catholics must promote dialogue with government leaders, "a dialogue that takes into account people's actual experiences, sufferings and aspirations, in order to remind everyone once more of

his or her responsibilities. (ibid)

I wonder whether this mutual flirtation between the Vatican and Silicon Valley (Samuel and McKenna, 2018), with their self-proclaimed goal of promoting "a dialogue that takes into account people's actual experiences, sufferings and aspirations" (*The Catholic Leader*), would ever talk about the effects of Western imperialism, ongoing settler-invader colonialism, white supremacy, racism, coup d'état of other governments, exploitation of native peoples and peoples, and theft of native resources? Does this mean that because this hackathon is held as a partnership with Silicon Valley, everyone involved is driven by the "evilness" of tech giants? Definitely not. But will it ever be in any interest of the victims of the systems? The winning proposal was a mobile app for refugees, one of over 1500 mobile apps (outcomes of hundreds of hackathons like VHacks) produced as a response to the refugee crisis which are hardly used by refugees (Leurs and Smets, 2018).

Nevertheless, there is one lesson these hackathons teach us, which is that our definition of expertise must change. The ones who have the lived experiences are the problem solvers. The rest of us are here to use our resources to make space for the problem solvers and work with them to solve the problems on local to global levels.

To fill this massive gap between our design process and products and the lived experiences of people, especially those who are the victims of matrix of exploitation, Sasha Costanza-Chock (2020) states that, "[d]esign justice practitioners are working to rethink extractive design processes and to replace them with approaches that produce community ownership, profit, credit, and visibility" (p. 90). Design Justice and Data feminism approaches subvert the hetero-patriarchal, imperialist, colonial, capitalist, neoliberal understanding and practice of design, technology, knowledge building, and meaning making. Feminist design and

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data justice practitioners know the need to disrupt the top-down model of community engagement where the designers – silently or articulately – stay at the top of a design process and decision-making hierarchy.

UNRAVELING SOME OF THE REITERATED IDEAS

Global Souths Solidarity

There is no unanimously agreed upon definition of Global South, and perhaps, rightfully so as the definition might reduce its irreducibility and erase the diversity existing within the phenomena that we call the Global South. Yet, the term Global South has been useful "to understand overlaps and divergences in regions shaped by histories of the appropriation, colonization, and extraction of their knowledges, resources, and ways of life" (Bigelow and Miller Klubock, 2018, p. 574). I like how a Latin-Americanist historian Pablo Palomino puts it, "More than just a transnational geography, "global south" would be a conceptual tool to question "northern" perspectives" (2019, p. 22). He points to the necessity of an intellectual task that can "reconsider Latin America within a global history of subjugation, and to do it beyond Eurocentric epistemologies" (p. 23). I find these takes on Global South very helpful to make my take on it more conceivable and articulate.

> The "global south" is for its proponents, to the contrary, a transnational space, encompassing "Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Oceania," and named after the conjunction of a geo-political marker of inequality (south) and a mainstream term in our age of globalization (global). It is also a question, since it "references an entire history of colonialism, neo-imperialism, and differential economic and social change through which large inequalities in living standards, life expectancy, and access to resources are maintained. (Dados and Connell, 2012, p. 13).

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On-the-ground activists and academics are already building solidarity among differently situated Global Souths (the Other), which can be witnessed when "[t]he Red Nation urges all Native people and Nations to respect the Palestinian call for BDS by pledging NOT to collaborate with universities, institutions, or organizations that promote and normalize the occupation" (The Red Nation, 2019). This is the solidarity of indigenous peoples in different parts of the world against the ongoing brutality of settler-invader colonialism. This recognition of similar struggles (Amara and Hawari, 2019) is evident in an interview of the Palestinian author Elias Sanbar, founder of the Journal of Palestine Studies (La Revue d'Études Palestiniennes) by the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze. Sanbar insists on the similarities between American Indians and Palestinians:

> We are also the American Indians of the Jewish settlers in Palestine. In their eyes our one and only role consisted in disappearing. In this it is certain that the history of the establishment of Israel reproduces the process which gave birth to the United States of America. (Skinner, 2014)

In 2016, several Palestinians expressed solidarity with the NoDAPL Native American-led resistance against the Dakota Access pipeline saying, "We stand with Standing Rock" (Norton, 2016; We Are Not Numbers, 2016). Israa Suliman, a young student and writer in Gaza, wrote an open letter that accompanied the video:

> Although we are of different color, religion, culture and place, I have learned, as I read about the protests at Standing Rock, that we have much more in common than differences… When I read your history, I can see myself and my people reflected in yours. I feel in my core that your fight is my fight, and that I am not alone in the battle against injustice. (Norton, 2016)

Building upon Nour Dados and Raewyn Connell's (2021) notion of the Global South being "a

transnational space," Pablo Palomino (2019) writes, "either celebrated by its neoliberal apologists or lamented by critical thinkers, there is no "south" any longer in the all-encompassing global empire of capital" (p. 25). Here, geography, countries, states matter not because there is something essential that bind them all together but to build a solidarity against imperialist and global capitalist oppression. I will bring Harsh Walia's words on global violence experienced through borders and bordering to highlight that need of understanding and practice of solidarity. She (2013) says that "[b]order controls most severely deployed by those Western regimes… against those whose very recourse to migration results from the ravages of capital and military occupations," and therefore, "We are all, therefore, simultaneously separated by and bound together by the violences of border imperialism" (p. 5). Hence, in this struggle and solidarity, having an "accurate" definition of the Global South does not matter. Diane Davis (2010) might call it inessential solidarity and Gayatri Spivak would call strategic essentialism (Eide, 2016). My dissertation closely relates to the following approach by Alina Sajed:

> Global South thus incorporates not only spaces that used to be referred to before as Third World, but also spaces in the North that are characterized by exploitation, oppression and neocolonial relations, such as indigenous and black communities (and immigrant communities) in Western societies; and vice versa, some spaces that used to be part of the Third World now inhabit an ambiguous political and economic space because of rapid processes of modernization and integration into the global economy. (Sajed, 2020)

To entail the nuanced nature of the Global South and to hint at the necessary solidarities among differently situated Global Souths, my dissertation uses the following three phrases or concepts interchangeably: Global Souths; the Global South; and Global Souths within the Global South and the Global North.

Military-Industrial-Tech-Media Complex

"Big Tech Sells War" is a report prepared by Crescendo, a joint project of the Action

Center on Race & the Economy (ACRE), MPower Change, and LittleSis. "Big Tech Sells War"

focuses on "research and campaigns against corporations complicit in and profiting from

Islamophobia and anti-Muslim violence" (ACRE, MPower Change, and Little Sis, n.d.). "Big

Tech Sells War" shows the connection between the "Global War on Terror (GWoT)" and the rise

of giant tech. Not only that GWoT has been a profitable venture for many US Big Tech

corporations, but the report demonstrates that "Big Tech has benefitted from a revolving door of

hundreds of former US government employees that have moved into the tech private sector and

continue to build their careers on "counterterrorism"" (munira, 2021). Figure 5 demonstrates

some of the biggest revolvers.
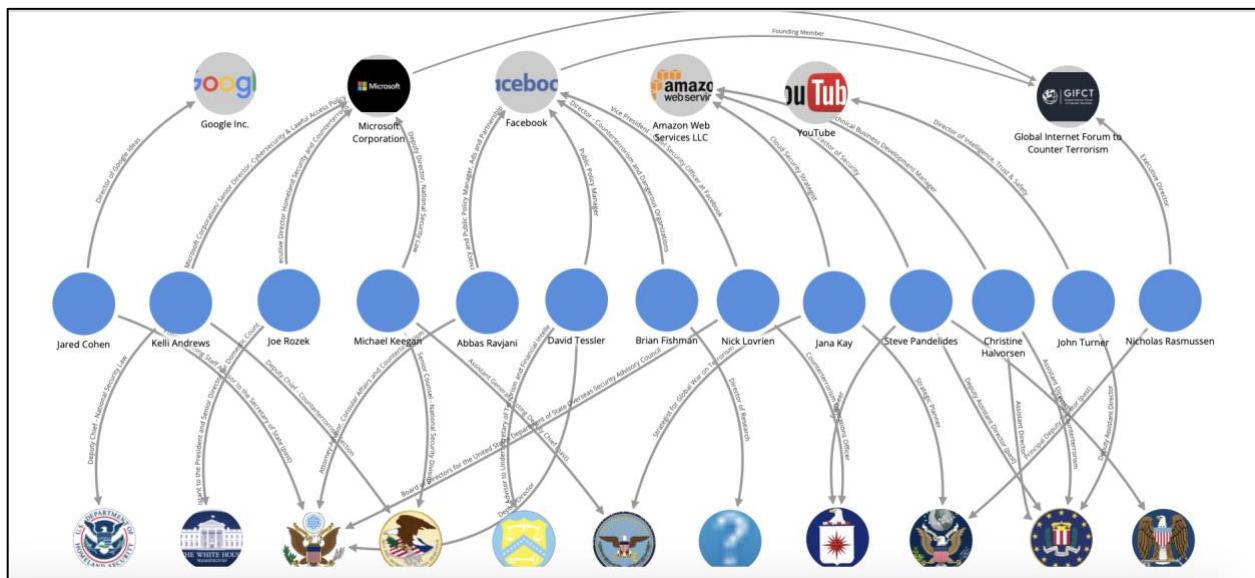
Figure 3 The above image, "Big Tech Sells War: A Revolving Door," is hyperlinked. It will take to the main page where this image is borrowed from. The image can be zoomed in/out, each name and circle will take to a page with information about that person, organization, and company. (munira, 2021)

The report "Big Tech Sells War" shows that the complicity among media corporations, Big Tech

companies, and the war and weapons industry is deeper and fouler than we can imagine. The

harm this complicity has done on the peoples who are already victims of the global colonial-

imperial-racist systems is inconceivable. "Big Tech Sells War" reports:

> The GWoT has done less to keep people safe from terror as it has to grow the reach of
>
> US militarism and imperialism and terrorize people across Southwest Asia to Africa,
>
> throughout the Global South, and here in the United States. The terrorizing of Black,
>
> Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities in the US by police is another
>
> expression of this ideological war that shares the same tools and strategies of surveillance
>
> and control. (ACRE, MPower Change, and Little Sis, n.d.)

Databases and drones coming together, GWoT is supposed to be one of the most violent

campaigns against humans, especially targeting Muslims, brown and black people. Going back

to the question I am persistently asking: Where is the anti-war statement that loudly and

powerfully shows solidarity with these Global Souths? The absence of that statement is not

because we chose not to care about Global Souths, but because we are not trained by the

Military-Industrial-Tech-Media Complex to care about Global Souths.

In *Manufacturing Consent* (1998), Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky explore how

the mainstream Western media – specifically the US corporate media – selects events, creates

narratives, rhetoricizes our understanding of the political, economic, social, and environmental

phenomenon. In doing so, they say that the corporate media needs to distract publics from the

issues that matter to the latter and manufacture our consent in such a way that serves the interests

of the political, economic, and social elites and global power centers. Herman and Chomsky

(1998) write,

> The mass media serve as a system for communicating messages and symbols to the
>
> general populace. It is their function to amuse, entertain, and inform, and to inculcate
>
> individuals with the values, beliefs, and codes of behavior that will integrate them into

the institutional structures of the larger society. In a world of concentrated wealth and

major conflicts of class interest, to fulfil this role requires systematic propaganda… It

should also be noted that in the case of the largesse of the Pentagon and the State

Department's Office of Public Diplomacy, the subsidy is at the taxpayers' expense, so

that, in effect, the citizenry pays to be propagandized in the interest of powerful groups

such as military contractors and other sponsors of state terrorism. (p. 1, 22)

Before going ahead, let us also look at an extract from a piece, "Silicon Valley Can't Escape the

Business of War," written for *The New York Times* by Margaret O'Mara, a professor of history at

the University of Washington who remarks:

The Pentagon has been part of the Silicon Valley story all along. Defense contracts

during and after World War II turned Silicon Valley from a somnolent landscape of fruit

orchards into a hub of electronics production and innovations ranging from mainframes

to microprocessors to the internet. The American tech economy rests on the foundations

of the military-industrial complex… Whether their employees realize it or not, today's

tech giants all contain some defense-industry DNA. (O'Mara, 2018)

O'Mara continues, "As the GWoT progressed and Big Tech corporations grew in usership and

scale, the federal government increasingly turned to Big Tech to assist in carrying out their

GWoT policies and strategies" (ibid). Hence, when we are talking about humanizing Global

Souths, it is necessary to understand who and what we are up against. When we are talking about

manufacturing dissent against colonialism, imperialism, racism, we have to know who is

manufacturing our consent, our rage, our compassion or lack thereof. The people and

communities in Global Souths are enveloped in horrifying pain and terror inflicted by the

colonial and imperial powers in the Global North. But why don't we get to hear about them

often? Or even when we hear about them, why do we often dismiss it as collateral damage? Why did the 4Cs issue the anti-war statement now and not before? Why are there hardly any flags of African, Middle Eastern, or South Asian countries attached to our social media profile pictures or bios? Where is that social media outrage? Again, who is manufacturing our consent, our rage and compassion or lack thereof? My dissertation is wishing to invite all of us to think through these questions first.

Technical Architecture of Classic Colonialism and Digital Colonialism

Michael Kwet states in a 2019 *Al Jazeera* piece that "Silicon Valley corporations are taking over the digital economy in the Global South, and nobody is paying attention" (2019). Kwet, then, goes on to show us the continuum between classic colonialism to digital colonialism. He writes,

> Similar to the technical architecture of classic colonialism, digital colonialism is rooted in the design of the tech ecosystem for the purposes of profit and plunder. If the railways and maritime trade routes were the "open veins" of the Global South back then, today, digital infrastructure takes on the same role: Big Tech corporations use proprietary software, corporate clouds, and centralised Internet services to spy on users, process their data, and spit back manufactured services to subjects of their data fiefdoms. Poorer countries are overwhelmed by readily available services and technology, and cannot develop their own industries and products that compete with Western corporations. They are also left unable to protect their people from exploitation. (ibid)

Similarly, Kwet's "Digital Colonialism: US Empire and the New Imperialism in the Global South" draws on South Africa as a case example to argue that "US multinationals exercise imperial control at the architecture level of the digital ecosystem: software, hardware, and

network connectivity [in the Global South]" (ibid). He writes that this digital dominance is translated into five forms:

- Economic domination

- Imperial control

- A system of global surveillance capitalism

- Imperial state surveillance

- Tech hegemony

At this moment, it is overwhelming to even think about it, isn't it? How can our multimodal composition or grassroots communities' rhetorical and writing practices with little to no resources and trainings fight against tech giants, military-media-tech complex and their epistemic-leading-to-material violence? Given the magnitude of epistemic-rhetorical-material violence, it is not difficult to lose hope about the future. But let me remind us of one event of resistance. Remembering this resistance can help us continue hoping and resisting. In April 2022, activists from Extinction Rebellion Youth taking action under the Palestine Action banner, "shut down the London headquarters of Israel's largest arms firm: Elbit Systems" (Palestine Action, 2022). All they did was use fire extinguishers to spray the premises in blood-red paint and were "locked-on to the entrance, preventing access or operations at the building" (ibid) as shown in the image at the beginning of this chapter. This was done in solidarity with the victims of Israeli brutal forces using Elbit products in Occupied Palestine against worshippers and civilians. No effort or achievement is insignificant when the hope and fight is justice driven. We need hope. We have hope. Let's hold onto it.

Epistemic Violence

In "Can the Subaltern Speak?", Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988) offers us a phrase,

"white men saving brown women from brown men" (p. 297), to describe how the British abolition of *sati* (widow sacrifice) in India in the 19th century was generally understood. And then, adding to that she says, there is this "Indian nativist argument, a parody of the nostalgia for lost origins," which says, "The women actually wanted to die" (p. 297). Now is the time for the contrapuntal reading of the rhetorics of these two attitudes. The first one snatches away agency in the portrayal of the Other to "save" that Other, while the latter attaches the agency in the portrayal of the Other to save (the face of) the *sati* system. Therefore, when we uncritically advocate "representation matters," we also need to concede our complicity in the perpetuation of silencing the Other. Representation as in just "diverse" faces or representation as in justice-oriented policy transformation aiming for the end of systemic and structural violence? Our "representation matters" celebration must be mindful of this difference. Rajan (1993) qualifies, "by foregrounding Hindu women as passive and unresisting victims of Hindu patriarchy... it could be established beyond argument that the women were in need of saving" (p. 45). For the continuation of all these forms of violence, the binary of hero and victim, savior and saved, civilized and barbaric (brown men), civilized and civilizable (brown women) was necessary. "Saving brown women from brown men" is necessary to rationalize the civilizing mission of colonial imperialism (Morton, 2003, p. 63; Donaldson and Kwok, 2002). Women had to be represented with the portrayal as passive victims to be spoken for and saved. Or how else to invade, colonize, and destroy. There goes the complicity between material violence and 'speaking for' (*Vertretung*) and 'portraying' (*Darstellung*). The following paragraph interrogates the concepts of *Vertretung* and *Darstellung*, which is extremely necessary to understand epistemic violence.

Analyzing Marx's notion of representation through Derrida, Spivak makes a distinction

between *Vertretung* and *Darstellung*. *Vertretung*, which she calls "political representation," is "stepping in someone's place … to tread in someone's shoes" and *Darstellung*, which is aesthetic or theatrical sense of representation, is re-presentation, "placing there" (as cited in Harasym, 1990, p. 108). In this sense, representing is "proxy and portrait" (ibid). Spivak insists, the shifting distinctions between these two (*Vertretung* as speaking for and *Darstellung* as re-staging or portraying) must not be obliterated and she adds, "Unless the complicity between these two things is kept in mind, there can be a great deal of political harm" (as cited in Harasym, 1990, p. 109; refer to Spivak, 1988). There is a great deal of harm in mistaking aesthetic, re-staged, or imaginative substitution and displacement for a real someone-in-someone's-shoes. *Vertretung* (representation) is not possible without *Darstellung* (re-presentation). 'Speaking for' is always conflated with re-staged displacement of the Other. So, it is dangerous to simply claim to be an anti-essentialist because this claim might just end up reproducing an imperialist agenda of silencing the Other. Because the claim, 'I am anti-essentialist' can also translate into 'As I am an anti-essentialist, what I present is who you are and I know what you desire and what's best for you'. Therefore, as Spivak says, "[S]ince it is not possible not to be an essentialist, one can self-consciously use this irreducible moment of essentialism as part of one's strategy" (ibid). And that's when she introduces the idea of strategic essentialism. So, even if not representing is not possible, what must be made possible, especially as an academic, is the interrogation of representation. That should be mandatory intellectual labor of any academic and pedagogical practices. Therefore, for anyone who claims to engage in an intellectual/scholarly activity, there is no excuse to do "representation of diversity" without critical self-reflexivity. That is impermissible. I talk about this in detail in Chapter 5.

Though not the same thing as epistemic violence, I believe understanding the concept of

orientalism, as theorized by Edward Said, is helpful to understand epistemic violence more effectively. Said (1978) defines Orientalism in the following manner:

> The most readily accepted designation for Orientalism is an academic one … Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient – and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist … is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism…
>
> Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident." Thus a very large mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, "mind," destiny and so on. This Orientalism can accommodate Aeschylus, say, and Victor Hugo, Dante and Karl Marx…
>
> Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. (p. 2-3)

Though Said's theorization of Orientalism has been critiqued for its conceptualization of West and East as binary oppositions, it is still very crucial to understand Orientalism in terms of the differences between Global North and Global Souths and the continuum of epistemic-rhetoric-material violence. Although I complicate the concept of Global Souths in a way that goes beyond any simplistic binary of West and East, Said's theory of orientalism is palpable throughout this

dissertation.

Orientalism and epistemic violence are daunting phenomena, ubiquitous events in academia but barely explored which make them even scarier and stronger. The more we think we are moving toward social justice with an uncritical celebration of phrases like "representation matters," the more violence we are unbridling upon the victims of the system. This uncritical celebration mainly stems from our failure to recognize or denial of the difference between representation politics or neoliberal identity politics and the bottom-up political representation which brings about policy level systemic changes. Epistemic violence is deeply ingrained in the (neoliberal) representation that only commodifies diversity and inclusion. How many of us realize that academics' access to the "right" kind of language of social justice makes us even more dangerous because we can fool ourselves and others as well into believing that we are working for communities? In fact, when using these terms uncritically, all we are doing is climbing the neoliberal ladder stepping on the backs of the shoulders, sufferings, struggles, resistances, and knowledges of the same communities. The understanding of epistemic violence unpacks these – witting or otherwise – dangerous practices stemming from neoliberal identity politics un/intentionally masquerading as social justice and justice-driven representation by connecting them to the philosophies and practices of participatory design frameworks and participatory research (Alfrey, 2022).

In her seminal essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," Spivak (1988) introduces and defines epistemic violence as "the remotely orchestrated, far-flung, and heterogeneous project to constitute the colonial subject as Other" and this project is also "the asymmetrical obliteration of the trace of that Other in its precarious Subjectivity" (p. 280-1). Before presenting my take on epistemic violence, especially when it comes to archival projects, I would like to present Martín

Savransky's words on it:

> [Epistemic violence] is almost a play on words, since we could say that the characteristic of epistemic violence is that it does not 'exclude', for which it is necessary to 'in-clude' first, but rather 'pre-cludes': it mutes, silences, renders invisible, before the debate about inclusion even takes place. (2011, p. 117)

Savransky's point on the "absence" of exclusion in epistemic violence must be paid attention to (by once again remembering Spivak's phrase, "white men saving brown women from brown men"). Epistemic violence precedes any debates on exclusion or inclusion. For something to be considered excluded or included, first, its existence must be acknowledged. Epistemic violence precludes all that. It assumes or portrays the victims of the system as voiceless and takes upon itself to be their voice calling it a representation. Therefore, countering "representation matters," I say, critical understanding and praxes of representation is important as it directly counters the neoliberal identity politics and works toward systemic and structural changes rather than changing the faces of the players consolidating the same system and structure.

Feminist Ethic of Love, Care, Kindness, Dialogue, Response-ability, Accountability…

Frankly speaking, I am aware how abstract 'love, care, and kindness' sound when we have not built any solid frameworks to palpate these experiences in scholarly works. And I say, that's why, for instance, epistemic violence is perpetuating through our works. We need to build more and more frameworks to recognize and practice accountability, love, care, and kindness. To discuss this further, I will use Spivak's theory of ethical singularity or ethical responsibility. Spivak (1999) remarks,

> One word on ethical singularity, not a fancy name for mass contact or for engagement with the common sense of the people… We all know that when we engage profoundly

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with one person, the responses—answers—come from all sides. Let us call this

responsibility, as well as "answer"ability or accountability… yet on both sides there is

always a sense that something has not got across. This is what we call the secret, not

something that one wants to conceal, but something that one wants desperately to reveal

in this relationship of singularity and accountability. (p. 384)

Spivak says, "[E]thics are not just a problem of knowledge but a call to a relationship" and in

this relationship, "[t]he object of ethical action is not an object of benevolence, for here

responses flow from both sides" (Spivak, 1995). She defines ethics in terms of "ethical

singularity" where there is an engagement with the Other in dialogic, intimate, individual, and

non-essential terms, where there is a deconstructive embrace, an (impossible) act of love (ibid).

Highlighting an aporetic (Spivak, 1999) nature of any ethical and political engagement, Spivak

(2003) emphasizes on "an impossible social justice glimpsed through the remote and secret

encounters with singular figures" (p. 197).

Anti-imperialist transnational feminist scholars have realized the need of the ethics of

love and care, and Dawn Rae Davis (2002) is one of them. In "(Love Is) The Ability of Not

Knowing: Feminist Experience of the Impossible in Ethical Singularity," she writes,

A feminist ethic of love is potentially viable in relation to one critical site of intervention

often entailed by feminist work, exchanges of knowledge between women situated in

radically different global locations… love is the impossible experience of knowing across

radical difference, and simultaneously, that which requires ethical choice and action even

in the face of the impossible. Love is an ethics of the political that grasps the

epistemological consequences of singularity, a uniqueness in the human interface that can

neither be expressed in the positive sense of disclosure nor be appropriated by knowledge

(p. 146-7)

My dissertation talks about the need to do something (having our works guided toward the social and global justice) and the need to acknowledge the impossibility of doing that something and yet working toward that something. As Davis puts it, "[M]ine is a deconstructionist position that does not give up the possibility of knowledge-a knowledge constituted by its own limitations and transgressions" (p. 146). The love is the recognition of that impossibility and yet working toward that impossibility. Davis (2002) states:

"[D]ifferences between feminist locations must constitute knowledges applicable to global feminist work; therefore, we cannot give up on knowledge altogether, but we must give considerable attention to what knowledge cannot make available… a cultivated capacity, that which I call "the ability of not knowing," offers the revolutionizing possibility of love to feminist practices freed from the humanist (imperialist, romanticist) impulse so dangerous to our" (p. 147).

Furthermore, how can I talk about (the impossibility of) love and not mention Frantz Fanon? In *Black Skin, White Masks*, he declares, "Today we believe in the possibility of love, and that is the reason why we are endeavoring to trace its imperfections and perversions" (1986, p. 28). Fanon thinks love is not possible in a racialized structure yet wants to believe that it is possible but only by accepting the lack of it. He writes (1986), "If it is true that consciousness is a process of transcendence, we have to see too that this transcendence is haunted by the problems of love and understanding. Man is a yes that vibrates to cosmic harmonies" and adds,

The black is a black man; that is, as the result of a series of aberrations of affect, he is rooted at the core of a universe from which he must be extricated.

The problem is important. I propose nothing short of the liberation of the man of

color from himself. We shall go very slowly, for there are two camps: the white and the black. Stubbornly we shall investigate both metaphysics and we shall find that they are often quite fluid. (p. 2)

Hence, "whatever grand empathies are proposed by humanist understanding and love ultimately fail in view of their intimate relation to the epistemic violence of colonization" (Davis, p. 147). Building upon this very Frantz Fanon's (1986) critique of the "colonizing effects of humanism and a brief genealogy of historical associations between knowledge, love, benevolence, and romanticism," Davis (2002) identifies "love as a problem for feminist postcolonial theory and philosophy" and states, "love aligned with benevolence cannot be saved from reason and histories of domination" (p. 146).

ARCHITECTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

In this dissertation, the way chapters move has a thematic rationale. Instead of centering only one community or geography, each chapter travels across Global Souths to show the pattern behind exploitation and the need for solidarity. The dissertation starts with exemplifying the vicious continuum between rhetorical/epistemic violence and material violence and how digital technologies have been used to heighten this atrocity. It resonates with the following statement of Audre Lorde: "*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" (Lorde, 1984, p. 112, emphasis added). Then, I show how Global South communities are fighting rhetorical/epistemic injustices with digital-multimodal tools available to them. This fight can teach our field about the decolonial feminist rhetoric and writing, something like Maria Cotera's (2018) reimagination of Audre Lorde: "[B]ut we can build a new home—however temporary and ephemeral—for fugitive scholars inside and outside the

academy" (Cotera, p. 502). Exemplifying this reimagination, I give several examples of social-justice-driven community-based digital projects from the Global North. But not to take this optimism for granted, I present heuristics that show the distinction between a ground-up model and a top-down model of community engagement.

Chapter 1: The Military-Industrial-Tech-Media Complex and Dehumanization of Global Souths

A few hours before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the US carried out the first airstrike (since August) in Somalia, which claimed the lives of 60 Somalians. A week before that, Israel launched a wave of deadly missile attacks against Syria and the Saudi-led coalition used a precision-guided munition made in the US to carry out dozens of strikes on Yemen. The Indigenous Palestine is undergoing ethnic cleansing since 1948. But each of these lives-deaths, with our consent, continues being "collateral damage." So, who manufactures our consent and conditions our rage and compassion (or lack thereof), and how? Why are not there any institutional anti-war sentiments and statements against these wars unleashed upon the Global South? The chapter revolves around these questions showing examples of how corporate media, tech giants, and the military-industrial complex manufacture our consent to continue exploiting and destroying lives in the Global South to serve global imperialist capitalism. The chapter also displays the technical architecture of classic colonialism and digital colonialism and the de facto extraterritorial governance of Silicon Valley. To exemplify the consequence and continuum of epistemic-rhetorical-material violence, I bring several examples from the first-year composition (FYC) classes I taught at the University of Texas, El Paso (UTEP).Through these examples, questions, attempted answers, I invite the field and subfields of RWS, TPC, and DH to learn from grassroots communities, to manufacture dissent in the face of the matrix of exploitation,

and to call for global south solidarity. This introductory chapter sets the mood for the entire dissertation and unravels theoretical and methodological frameworks that are birthing this research.

Chapter 2: Border(ed)lands, Incommensurable Pluriverses, and an Indigenous Feminist Calling

To theorize decolonial border thinking, this chapter traces back to two of the most violent events/dates in history: 1492's four voyages of Christopher Columbus and the 1648 Peace of Westphalia. I connect these dates with (i) the current jurisdictional loopholes, the generational violence against indigenous women, and the missing and murdered indigenous women (MMIW), and (ii) the Trumpian rhetoric of the border and the Biden administration's recently revealed *deadly digital border wall*. This chapter brings instances of the rhetorical-epistemic-material violence caused by the U.S.-Mexico border(ed) wall and by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Next, I discuss the works of activists like Lisa Brunner, Amy Casselman, Sarah Deer, and the plaintiff of Lavetta Elk, an Oglala Sioux teenager, and to argue that decolonial border rhetoric is a call for solidarity among differently situated Global Souths. In this chapter, border(ed)lands are incommensurable pluriverses, a time-space where memories, stories, and experiences of woes, struggles, deaths, survivals, oppressions, surveillance, dissent, resistances, arts, philosophies, knowledges are both leaking and contained. Hence, our knowledge systems must function as portals of those impossible yet necessary narratives, and rhetoricians-storytellers must acknowledge the impossibility through solidarity. This chapter functions as a theoretical and methodological framework and a thematic resemblance of the architecture of the dissertation. It starts with documentation of unbearable pain and ends with a simmering hope of an indigenous feminist calling.

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Chapter 3: (Unforgetting) Uncommemorated Lives, Colonial Information War, and the Rhetoric of "Collateral Damage"

In March 2006, five U.S. soldiers gang-raped and murdered a 14-year-old Iraqi child Abeer Qassim Hamza al-Janabi and murdered her family. After being arrested, Steven Green, one of those five soldiers, said in an exclusive telephone interview from federal prison in Tucson, Arizona, that he had stopped seeing Iraqi civilians as human beings. The chapter documents events of unimaginable violence led by the Western "feminist" imperialist project of spreading democracy, nation-building, and liberating "poor" women in the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia. By unforgetting uncommemorated lives, this chapter makes us witness the monstrous relationship between rhetorical/epistemic violence and material violence. Why must our field witness and understand this? It is because the effect of what we learn and teach is larger than we can fathom. This chapter is mostly set in Afghanistan but also visits Iraq, Libya, Sudan, and Bolivia. While the power centers are waging an information war and rhetorical violence to manufacture our consent, we are uncritically surrendering to it. We are listening to these colonial-capitalist centers as if the people from the Global South are not able to speak and liberate themselves, as if there is nothing to learn from the Global South but only to teach them. Thus, we are committing rhetorical/epistemic violence. And unbeknownst to us, we are playing our parts in the deaths and displacement of millions in the Global South who just end up becoming uncommemorated collateral damage. While establishing the momentousness of our role as rhetoricians, writers, and teachers, I bring examples of grassroots organizations like the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) to tell, "Global South *is* speaking. Listen to what *they* have to say."

Chapter 4: Community-led Multimodal Bricoleur Archiving and a Demand for

Accountability and Rematriation

This chapter starts and ends with the message with which I wrapped up the previous chapter. Despite the weight of institutional, historical, and infra-structural violence and inequities, people write back and re-script the oppressive narrative demanding accountability and rematriation. Communities have always practiced resistance writing in the most creative and radical ways with the available resources, and all we need to do is humbly listen and learn from those practices and philosophies to design our community-student-centered pedagogical practices, curricula, programs, services, documents, and institutions. This chapter draws upon Mignolo's (2009) concept of epistemic delinking and disobedience to ask questions such as: Is hospitality and justice still possible through archival performances? If there is a possibility, then what does that possibility and hospitality look/feel like? Can archives still have medicinal effects? Can archives still be instrumental in curing social and global injustices? If it's impossible, why does finding possibility in that impossibility or demanding for the impossible feel like a decolonial feminist option? To find answers to these questions, I turn to grassroots organizations and individual activists from Nepal, India, Sri Lanka, Palestine, and Mexico as these works help us in doing contrapuntal reading and re-rhetoricizing the Global South. I study their decolonial, anti-oppressive, and feminist recordkeeping and narrativizing works such as *the Tamil Archive project*, Gauri Gill's photography, *the Dalit Queer Project*, *Dalit Camera: Through Un-Touchable Eyes*, *Dalit: A Quest for Dignity*, and *Los feminicidios en México*.

Chapter 5: Design Justice and Data Feminism with and for Global Souths

This chapter proposes a feminist design justice approach with and for the Global South to subvert the hetero-patriarchal, imperialist, capitalist, neoliberal understanding and practice of design, technology, and knowledge making. Feminist design and data justice practitioners know

the need to disrupt the top-down model of community engagement where the designers – silently or articulately – stay at the top of a design process and decision-making hierarchy. I bring examples of social-justice-driven digital works from institutional settings in the Global North with infra/structural backing and resources such as *Gender Shades*, *Algorithmic Justice League*, *Design Justice Network*, *Labor Tech Research Network*, and *Data Feminism*. However, I also insist that if we are not actively careful, there is a chance that our works can be dominantly propelled by the project of neoliberal globalization and in the name of social justice, our community engagement might end up resembling a colonial data retrieval project. To exemplify and unpack these statements, I do a brief self-reflexive deconstructive analysis of my experiences of building a digital archive of my street photography (http://cassacda.com), conducting three UX research with the South Asian community, and experimenting with other documentation and storytelling systems with grassroots communities as primary audiences. Then, I present heuristics for us while working with communities to hold ourselves accountable. Finally, I wrap up the chapter with a vast range of open-access digital, multimodal, and computational tools and techniques employed by universities, institutions, and User Experience (UX) and digital humanities projects. Simultaneously, I am also building a repository of these resources hoping to make them accessible to the communities, community members, researchers, students, and teachers with little-to-no institutional-infrastructural support for digital projects.

Chapter 6: A Call for Ground-Up Solidarity to Design "A World Where Many Worlds Fit In"

The world is already many worlds, but we tend to think of the world as singular/universe only because dominant capitalist, imperialist, heteropatriarchal power centers have been imposing the idea of one version of the world upon the rest of the worlds through rhetorical-

epistemic-material violence. This suffocatingly oppressive version of the world is the "one world" project of neoliberal globalization that has been robbing us of the sense of community, belonging, and healing. I wrap up the dissertation with a call for ground-up solidarity and with a note of hope on (i) what the field and subfields of RWS, TPC, and DH can do to turn the tables and build communities based on love, care, kindness, relationality, reciprocity, and dignity and (ii) what difference we can make despite our institutional situatedness in the Global North. This dissertation is an acknowledgment of the material realities of being situated in inequitable systems and a stubborn desire and demand for utopia.

Chapter 2: Border(ed)lands, Incommensurable Pluriverses, and an Indigenous Feminist Calling

What she say it be law.[4]

[T]his border, inscribed as a state of exception and therefore the ground of nonidentity as such, is instead now the site of the irreducibly and irrevocably heterogeneous amassment of itinerant "bare life" that displaces all — dominant and resistant — claims of origins, foundation, and belonging, a predicament that prompts a fundamental reevaluation of conventional political strategies used to challenge these laws.

– Abraham Acosta, *Hinging on Exclusion and Exception*

it is time to remember
Time to summon our voices from the belly of the earth
Time to feel, cry, rage, heal, and to truly live life instead
it is time to tell ourselves and our daughters
the things that should have been said

– Helen Knott (Dane Zaa/Cree), *The Things We Taught Our Daughters*[5]

"DO NOT CROSS THE BORDER OR GO TO JUÁREZ."

When I got accepted for the PhD program at UTEP in 2017, my relatives, friends, and colleagues started checking where my university is located. The one thing that was repeatedly advised to me was "do the cross the border or go to Juárez." Why so? Because, for us, the university was definitely not on the borderless decolonial lands that I began this dissertation by acknowledging but on the colonially created border(ed)land with Ciudad Juárez on the Rio Grande, just south of El Paso. Even if we were not the supporters of then President Donald Trump, we were already buying into an anti-immigrant rhetoric of the Mexico/U.S. border.

Let me just say a few things on an anti-immigrant rhetoric before continuing with my personal experience. During his presidency, Trump made that hatred toward the other side of the border more visible, but he was definitely not an architect of that venomous rhetoric as some

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[4] According to Sarah Deer, it can be said the first written Mvskoke rape law.
[5] Refer to Leatherdale and Charleyboy. (2017).

might like to believe. If we fixatedly attach this rhetoric to that one person, we will fail to see the noxious structure that has been fertile to that rhetoric for over a century. It cannot be understood through the lens of partisan politics. If we investigate the history of the Mexico-U.S. border, the physical and epistemic oppression has not been any different depending on which party is ruling at the moment. The only difference can be which party or politician is more explicitly articulating their racism, capitalism, and imperialism and who is better at hiding it or sugarcoating it. These things are connected to a larger structure beyond two parties as we can see the seamlessness in the way the U.S. policymakers treated border and wall in the following paragraph:

> In 2005 the US Congress began enacting legislation for building a physical fence along the US-Mexico border. The proposed "border wall" sought to fence a total of 700 out of the 1,954 miles of the international boundary between Mexico and the United States. As of January 8, 2010 the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) deemed the construction of the border fence complete, after erecting a seemingly arbitrary barrier spanning some 651 miles, at a taxpayer cost of roughly $2.8 million per mile (Guzman 2008:2-4). By and large the metrics for its efficiency remain political in a psychological and symbolic sense, with little data supporting its intended purpose to slow down illegal immigration, drug trafficking, terrorist activities, or organized crime. (Resendiz, Resendiz, & Klaver, 2017, n.p.)

I will bring a more recent example of that seamlessness. Most recently revealed, the Biden administration's border wall exposes the continuation of Trump's border wall plan. The Biden administration has planned "to replace the San Diego border fence at Friendship Park would block access to the space people used for decades to meet loved ones separated by the border"

(Solis, 2022). U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officials have informed advocates from Friends of Friendship Park that the existing two fences are going to be replaced with 300-foot walls. But in 2020, when Joe Biden was a presumptive Democrat nominee, he had said, "There will not be another foot of wall constructed on my administration, No. 1" (as cited in Lulu, 2020). He could not stay true to his own words for too long. And not only that, but let us take a look at his rhetoric of the border:

> I'm going to make sure that we have border protection, but it's going to be based on making sure that we use high-tech capacity to deal with it. And at the ports of entry — that's where *all the bad stuff is happening*. (Sprunt, 2020, emphasis added)

The only difference is Trump would have said the same thing differently, without much censorship in his hatred. But, when I propose the contrapuntal rhetoric and reading in this dissertation, I am not talking about what appears on the surface but what lies beneath, what lies behind, what lies on the other side of the story. We can see that the policy remains the same and the policymakers remain the same. It is just that some are better than others at playing neoliberal identity politics.

For decades, Friendship Park has been "the only place along the southern border where people in the United States could see, talk to, and even touch relatives in Mexico" (Solis, 2022). It is also a space where, as activists call them, "mixed-status families," meet (ibid). Mixed-status families mean the families in which everyone does not share the same immigration status, while some are even barred from crossing the border legally. Rev. John Fanestil of the Border Church has called Biden's border plan "a slap in the face to the bi-national community" (ibid). U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) did not consult with advocates from Friends of Friendship Park while designing the new border wall. Despite the Border Patrol saying that they are only

"replacing walls," the communities who know that space show a major suspicion and say, "the proposed construction amounts to a permanent closure of the U.S. side of this historic location" (Patteson, 2022). The Biden administration is filling in the gap that the Trump administration wanted to fill in despite the threat it will pose to communities and the environment (ibid). We need to understand that the rhetoric about borders that we are being fed goes a long way back than before 2016, and it will not be put to an end by bipartisan politics. Hence, the advice I was getting from my loved ones has a deep-rooted history than just 2016. The former President Trump just said it out loud.

So, going back to the concerns of my safety as expressed by my loved ones, I was firmly alerted by some folks back home and in the U.S. to never go to the other side of the border. The funny thing is that none of them had the first-hand experience of living on the Mexico/U.S. border or in Juárez. Yet, we all had rhetorically lived on these borders through the discourses constructed through and by various mainstream Western media. Our *ignorance* already *knew* these borders must not be crossed. The border divided those who were more human and those who were the Other. But what we did not realize was that the Mexican side was the Other to both the U.S. and us, and at the same time, we (who were insisting on not crossing the border to Juárez) were also the Other to both sides of the Mexico/U.S. border. That's what Western imperialism has done. It's not an easy West versus Non-West binary. We (Global Souths) have consumed the rhetoric produced and disseminated by the power centers that there are a lot of divisions among differently situated Global Souths. The danger of this division is that we fail to humanize one another and the potential alliance among the Others and against matrix of domination (such as global capitalism, environmental injustice, corporate violence, settler-invader colonialism, global racism, and imperialism) are delayed. I use border rhetorics also as a

possibility of the solidarity among all borderlanders, border-crossers, potential border-crossers, and ones blocked at borders.

THE DEADLIER HIGH TECH BORDER WALL

What does border protection mean for the local communities? A state of militarization. High-tech border protection means a high-tech state of deportations, detention, and militarization. Militarization, as per Timothy J. Dunn (2021), is "police acting like the military and the military acting like police as well as their mutual collaboration and integration, particularly military involvement in domestic law enforcement and security matters" (p. 36). National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (NNIRR), an organization working for the rights of all immigrants and refugees, looks "at the colossal spike in funding for border security over the years":

> The funding for border enforcement agencies surpasses the funding of all other federal law-enforcement agencies (FBI, DEA, ATF, Secret Service and U.S. Marshals Service). The American Immigration Council estimates that $263 billion dollars have been spent on immigration enforcement since 1986. ("Border Militarization Policy," n.d.)

Inviting people to envisage "New Border Vision that expands public safety, upholds human rights and welcomes all people to our borders," the Southern Border Communities Coalition, a program of Alliance San Diego, gives us a glimpse at border militarization in the Southern Border region:

> Border militarization, which has turned the Southern Border into a mock war zone — complete with border agents masquerading as soldiers toting assault rifles and donning tactical gear, the violent and deadly border wall, and the policies that allow this to happen — has ravaged our communities for decades. ("Border militarization," Report updated in

2023)[6]

Federal Funding for ICE & CBP 2005-2022
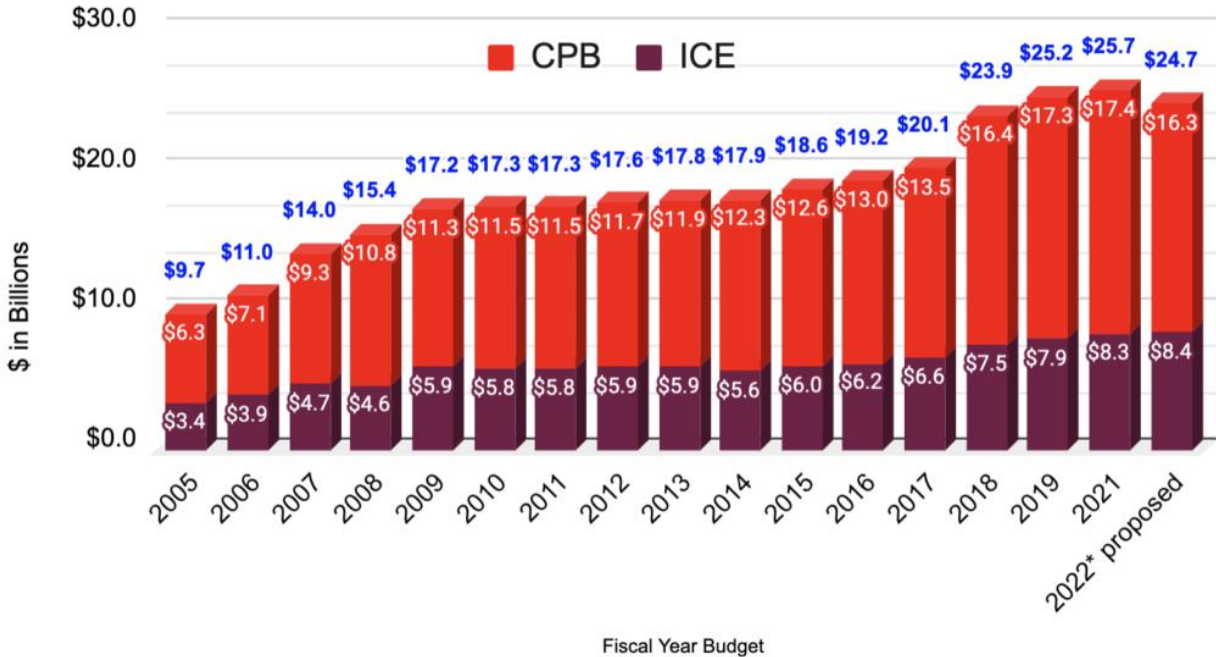
Figure 4 Data Source: American Immigration Council (Jan. 20, 2021) "The Cost of Immigration Enforcement and Border Security" | Source: NNIRR

So, we can imagine that with high technologies, the militarization has only intensified. And one more thing about these technologies is that they are not static object of surveillance. They travel along with the border rhetoric created by the state. As Lisa Flores (2003) suggests, "[Latina/o immigrants] suspect bodies carry the border on them" and "[t]hese bodies, even when present at physical locations quite distant from the geopolitical border, are susceptible targets" (p. 381). Border travels. Because the rhetorics that have drawn lines on the planet travel.

For this section, I will take help from *The Deadly Digital Border Wall*, a 2021 report

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[6] https://www.southernborder.org/border_lens_border_militarization

prepared in close partnership among Mijente,[7] Just Futures Law,[8] and the Rio Grande No Border

Wall Coalition[9]. The report informs that the digital border wall has been "steadily built along the

U.S.-Mexico border for the last four presidential administrations and it has been overseen by the

Department of Homeland Security (DHS)," and the report also adds that this digital border wall

has been "supported by Democrats and Republicans alike" (Mijente, Just Futures Law, and the

Rio Grande No Border Wall Coalition, 2021). The Biden administration is planning to fund this

digital wall calling it "a "gentler" or "smarter" alternative to Trump's border wall (refer also to

U.S. Customs and Border Protection, n.d.). But the *Deadly Digital Border Wall* report says that

these technologies are still the continuation of Trump's border wall and not the end of it or the

discontinuation or ending of the previous one. The report puts this continuation succinctly: "It is

the same anti-immigrant logic we saw under Trump, repackaged with silicon, but dangerously

and deadly just the same" (Mijente, Just Futures Law, and the Rio Grande No Border Wall

Coalition). Actually, it is even more dangerous and deadlier. The scary thing about this

technological surveillance is it is not only going to continue but increase "the massive and

unchecked expansion of government surveillance on immigrants and communities along the

Southwest border and far into the interior" (ibid). The report uses government data and

interviews with migrants and border communities and breaks down the Southern border tech's

infrastructure into the following three categories: the digital wall, biometrics, and hacking and

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[7] Mijente is "a national organizing hub and political home for Latinx and Chicanx people" that "leads the #NoTechForICE campaign, organizing against the surveillance machinery supplied by Silicon Valley for immigration and border policing" (*The Deadly Digital Border Wall,* 3).

[8] Just Futures Law is "a transformative legal organization that defends and builds the power of immigrants' rights and criminal justice activists, organizers, and base- building community groups working to disrupt and dismantle our deportation and mass incarceration systems" (*The Deadly Digital Border Wall,* 3).

[9] Rio Grande Valley No Border Wall Coalition is "a multilingual and multi-generational collective of communities and partner organizations across the Rio Grande Valley who fight for a liberated region free of border walls and militarization (*The Deadly Digital Border Wall,* 3).

tracking:

> The digital border wall is made up of aerial drones, underground sensors, and surveillance towers amassed across hundreds of miles and capable of detecting humans, vehicles, and animals in all directions… the license plate scanners… the forensic kits… the facial recognition, location tracking, and phone hacking tools… It is an attempt at total surveillance along the border and far into the interior, an effort by DHS to monitor and control everything that happens between the United States and Mexico under the justification of border enforcement…
>
> Biometrics are physical characteristics used to identify people, such as fingerprints, DNA, facial recognition, voice recognition, and iris scans. DHS is rapidly expanding the types of biometrics it collects and the places it collects them, often without permission. CBP has run pilot programs of iris scans at pedestrian border crossings and facial recognition of car passengers. Facial recognition is now a widespread practice at airports. Since 2020, ICE and CBP have begun collecting DNA samples, with no consent required, from all non- U.S. citizens apprehended by the two agencies, and storing their DNA profiles in the FBI's Combined DNA Index System (CODIS)…
>
> Hacking technologies are used by CBP to obtain personal information for investigation or immigration policing purposes, often sharing it with other government entities including state, local and foreign agencies. Earlier this year, a federal appeals court ruled that CBP does not need a warrant to search people's mobile devices who are entering the country, whether or not they are U.S. citizens.47 Agents have the legal authority to go through any device within 100 miles of the border and to take devices away from travelers for up to five days without providing justification. (ibid, p. 5, 14, 19)

Admittedly, this is a long quote but a necessary one to demonstrate the ubiquity of the

surveillance and potential threat from the state on the othered bodies. This quote is also

reinforcing my previous statement about how border travels. It is an important report to

understand the ubiquity of surveillance and threat, and I highly recommend visiting this report

for a more detailed understanding of these technologies and their effects on the peoples who are

othered by the system (Global Souths within the Global South and the Global North). These

traveling technologies that precede and follow the traveling borders very strongly capture the

major argument about re-rhetoricizing Global Souths to build solidarity. Many of these

technologies are developed by Israeli military contractor Elbit Systems (Dawson and Schivone,

2018), which is the same contractor supplying tools and equipment to Israeli occupational force

in Occupied Palestine to brutally suppress and exploit indigenous Palestinians. Elbit Systems is

just one example of how the colonial power centers are connected beyond borders, and, hence,

our solidarities with and among Global Souths, through our academic, administrative, and

pedagogical performances, should cross the colonial-imperial borders too.

The use of technology by colonial powers has only intensified the persecutions that are

anything but "gentler" or "smarter," only crueler and more technologically advanced. To make

us understand the consequence of this intensification, I will use the analogy of many feminists'

and pro-choice activists' interpretation of the overturning of Roe v Wade. They say the banning

of abortion is not going to stop abortion, it will only make abortion risky and unsafe, and the

already othered populations are going to be harmed by it further. These border wall technologies

are doing the same. *The Deadly Digital Border Wall* report draws our attention to the fact that

"border surveillance and increased enforcement pushes people into more remote and more

dangerous crossings, leading them through areas where they are more likely to suffer heat stroke,

dehydration, and death" and this smarter and gentler technology "is costing people their lives" (ibid). The report also warns us about the borderless traveling of these technologies and surveillance: "Border communities have become a legitimate target for surveillance and enforcement—a taste of what may await the rest of the country as these technologies are rolled out nationwide" (ibid).

One thing I always say is that those who construct borders are not affected by borders. The borders that exist for the rest do not exist for them. It must be understood both literally and metaphorically. Borders cannot be drawn, imposed, maintained, insisted upon by the ones who cannot cross, manipulate, and exploit the border. Global capitalism can cross the border. Patriarchy can. Imperialism and colonialism can. Neoliberalism can. Racism can. The Global North can. Billionaires can. The Global North within Global Souths can. Wall Street can. Silicon Valley can. The Military Industrial Complex can. Wars can. It's just Global Souths and Have-Nots who cannot cross the border. Only the victims of the systems cannot. Therefore, decolonial border rhetorics, borderless transnational feminist design justice, and how I am approaching Global Souths are very closely related. It's very much about who can and who cannot cross the border. Or, to put it even more precisely, it is about who can decide who can cross the border and who cannot. Those who cannot move, cannot impose borders. That is the characteristic of colonial, imperial, racist, patriarchal, and capitalist borders.

However, border-crossing restrictions cannot restrict the formations of narratives. At local and community levels, different narratives keep on forming and contrapuntally narrated memories keep on being ported to the future. Contrapuntally kept records are leaking across borders and to the future. Contrapuntally documented stories. Contrapuntally used technologies. Contrapuntally digitized. Contrapuntally archived. This is what this chapter is about, as is this

dissertation.

RADICAL ACT OF LOVE, RESISTANCE, AND JUSTICE

In a 2021 talk, "Digital Humanities and the Radical Act of Humanizing," organized by the University of Kansas, a UTEP professor and Chicano scholar, historian, and oral history archivist Yolanda Chavez Leyva called for *netlacaneco*, "humanizing our love for others" and calls for the radical act of humanizing the border (University of Kansas IDRH, 2021):

> Since the beginning of the current borderland, which we can trace back to the US-Mexico war in the creation of this new border, there has been an increasing othering of people on the Mexican side. You can read newspapers here in [El Paso] going back to 1880 talking about the aliens crossing the border. The border has been connected with disease… criminality. (ibid)[10]

Presenting an early 2019 image of asylum seekers corralled under the international bridge in El Paso, Leyva described the condition of asylum seekers coming mostly from Central America and summoned us to contemplate the naturalization of dehumanization:

> Under the previous administration, the policies were all intended to deter future migration, future asylum seekers through the use of cruelty… Hundreds of asylum seekers were corralled in under the international bridge by barbed wire. If you were walking to Juarez on the international bridge, you could hear the people below and they slept on the gravel. We have an oral history with an attorney that talks about the babies, the toddlers, the children of clients who came out of this with small round bruises all over bodies because they were asleep on the gravel. So, this to me corralling people on dirt in

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[10] Here, Leyva references Covid and the border control (disease) and the previous U.S. president Donald Trump talking about Mexicans as rapists and drug dealers.

a very unsanitary place because it's under the bridge and you have pigeons and all the

droppings. So, that is dehumanizing. And, on the border, sometimes, dehumanizing

almost seems naturalized. (ibid)

And the gullible dependance of the rest of the world, away from the border, on the mainstream

Western media to know borders and borderlanders plays along in naturalizing the

dehumanization of border and borderlanders by uncritically surrendering to that representation.

One such example of radical act of love and humanization of the border is Andrea

Ferraris and Renato Chiocca's *The Scar: Graphic Reportage from the U.S.-Mexico Border*. It

starts on October 10, 2012, 11:30 pm in Nogales, "a city split in two, on the north, Nogales

Arizona, on the south, Nogales Sonora, a single urban area in the middle of the desert, divided by

the wall" (Chiocca, 2019, p. 8). José Antonio Elena Rodríguez—Toñito, as his family calls

him— was returning home after playing basketball and got shot and killed by a Border Patrol

agent Lonnie Ray Swartz. Swartz reloaded and fired a total of 16 shots and José was hit 10 times

in the back (Fischer, 2019). While his death seems like the innocent and unarmed boy was in the

wrong place at the wrong time, it says a lot about the militarized border at the same time. But

what this brief and intensely emotional account of his killing also does is humanize the boy; it

compels us to see him as a person and not just data. José Antonio was a real boy killed by a

border patrol agent, and Swartz was the first agent to be tried by the US justice department for a

murder across national lines (Carranza, 2019).

However, the case of José Antonio is not a singular incident. The North American

Congress on Latin America (NALA) tells us that the border often functions as "a sort of free-fire

zone for the Border Patrol" and "[t]hose who are gunned down, often shot in the back—as was

José Antonio several times—are collateral damage" (Boren, 2013). Sergio Adrian Hernandez

Guereca is one such case among many others. In 2010, 15-year-old Sergio Adrian Hernandez Guereca, who was playing chicken, was shot twice (once in his face) and killed by Jesus Mesa Jr., a Border Patrol agent while the former was on the Mexico side of the border and the latter was on the US side (Romo, 2020). The Supreme Court decided that Border Patrol cannot be sued for the boy's death, making it one of the grotesque examples of "the brutal, unaccountable violence that is the norm along the US-Mexican border" (Uhlmann, 2020). The agency accused Sergio and Jesus Mesa claimed that he "feared for his life" (cited in Uhlmann) as he was "surrounded" (Barajas, 2018; refer to Frey, 2012), and Sergio was throwing rocks in their direction. Video footage soon emerged that contradicted this accusation. Sergio was trying to flee and had his back turned to the agents.

In his 20-page opinion, Justice Samuel Alito wrote:

A crossborder shooting affects the interests of two countries and, as happened here, may lead to disagreement. It is not for this Court to arbitrate between the United States and Mexico, which both have legitimate and important interests at stake and have sought to reconcile those interests through diplomacy. (Romo, 2020)

As reported on *NPR*, "Justices Clarence Thomas, Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh and Chief Justice Roberts agreed…. The Obama administration also denied Mexico's request for Mesa to be extradited to face criminal charges in Mexico" (Romo, 2020). Encapsulating the dehumanization of the humans on the othered side of the border, Natascha Elena Uhlmann writes, "Had Sergio been born just a few steps north, his family would have had legal recourse through the protections of US citizenship" (Uhlmann, 2020). Uhlmann adds, "Sergio's humanity (or lack thereof, in the eyes of the United States) was determined by the span of a few feet"

(ibid).[11]

Whilst activist groups and some local media continued fighting for justice, some of the mainstream media were forming a different rhetoric around this young boy's death which can be witnessed in the CNN headline "Youth fatally shot by border agent had smuggling ties, official says" (CNN, 2010). The report starts with the following paragraph:

> The 15-year-old Mexican youth who was shot and killed by a Border Patrol agent had a history of involvement with human smuggling and was on a list of repeat juvenile offenders, U.S. Customs and Border Protection spokesman Mark Qualia told CNN Thursday. (ibid)

So, again, what reaches the other parts of the world (such as my home country Nepal) is rhetoric constructed by corporate media like CNN. The rhetoric that is largely funded and circulated is: *On the other side of the border, there are criminals, and hence, their death is justified!* Sergio is not the first or the last who is, was, and will be criminalized to have their death not only justified but also rhetorically necessitated for the "national security."

DEATH, RESISTANCE, AND UNARCHIVABLE BORDERS

When immigrants and borderlanders, especially the ones on the othered side of the borders, are transfixed or synonymized as disease and criminality, their deaths are not only normalized but also required. Perhaps that is what counts as "national security." Thanks to the corporate media, to the world, the dead are often remembered only as criminals, their death justified, reduced to numbers and data, or completely forgotten as if they never existed.

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[11] This legal recourse, on the document, looks like the following:
> Undocumented people do not have the full panoply of constitutional rights—they cannot vote, for example. But undocumented people do have the right to equal protection under the law and due process of law before they can be deprived of life, liberty, or property. And that's because the due process and equal protection clauses in the Fifth and 14th Amendments apply to "persons." Not "citizens." Not "Americans." Not "people we like." (Gandy, 2018)

Amidst all this, there are some souls adamantly resisting and rewriting narratives differently. Alvaro Enciso, a Columbian-born and Arizona-based artist, is one of them. For over eight years, Enciso has been going into the Sonoran Desert once a week "to place a cross in each place where the remains of migrants who died in the desert after illegally crossing the border into Arizona were found by the border patrol" (Green Valley-Sahuarita Samaritans, n.d.). Enciso works with volunteers known as Tucson Samaritans and they are provided with "updated maps that lists the exact location of nearly 3,000 human remains, found in the Arizona desert since 2001" (ibid). And since 2001, more than 10,000 migrants have been estimated to have died while crossing the Sonoran Desert alone (El Inde, 2021). Enciso has already placed 1,100 crosses, and the number of dead migrants who leave their homes in the hope of living the "American dream" is only growing. It became worse under the Trump administration due to the changes to asylum proceedings. Enciso calls it "the desert's secret, where dreams die" (ibid). He "does not accept any financial donations for his work," but at times "he receives free paint for the crosses" (Green Valley-Sahuarita Samaritans, n.d.). On each cross, he draws "a round red circle [representing migrant death] on the death map that Humane Borders maintains in partnership with the Pima County Medical Examiner's Office" (Living Rootless, 2019; refer to Humane Borders Fronteras Compasivas, n.d.). Through art, he is honoring the dead. That is how he is paying attention to the dead, humanizing them, and trying to draw the attention of the world to them. And his art and the heart-wrenching story behind each of his artworks has a profound effect on the visitors:

> The thought that the remains of about 3,000 people have been found here already and the knowledge that there are many hiding out there right now in a 110 degree heat, walking the 60 miles from the border to the nearest city through this unforgiving desert only at night in fear of being detected...The despair lies over the (incredibly beautiful) desert like

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a blanket. (Living Rootless, 2019)

While the world sees the dead on the border – without ever knowing or attempting to know the dead ones – as illegals or criminals (again, thanks to the much-disseminated rhetoric of immigrants and border-crossers constructed by corporate media), people like Enciso view them as humans who lived once like us; they are the heroes, who dared to dream of a better life than what was possible in their home countries and took this journey to make that dream come true like Enciso himself 50 years ago. They are the dreamers whose dreams collapsed in the desert, leaving "individual collections of bone, sinew, skin, empty clothing, shoes, bags, papers… plastic baggies with garlic, dissolved in putrescence, to protect one from rattlesnake bites" (Living Rootless, 2019).

Gurupreet Kaur, a six-year-old Sikh girl from India, is one of those journeyers who left the world in Sonoran Desert in 2019. She was traveling with her mother and an eight-year-old sister to join her father who has been in the U.S. since 2013 seeking asylum. The heat had reached the temperature of 108 degrees. As reported by Democracy Now (2019), "She died of heatstroke after she became separated from her mother who was desperately looking for water." The mother finally saw her daughter when she noticed vultures circling overhead. The Sikh community in Tucson, Arizona, reached out to Enciso to ask him "to create a special marking with an ancient Sikh symbol to honor her and make visible the exact area where the little girl lost her life" (ibid). About painting that symbol on the cross, Enciso, choking back tears, said to Democracy Now:

> That death bugs the hell out of me… I cannot get this out of my system. I guess the only
>
> way I can do it is to go there and put a cross and to spend time and think about this
>
> death… this poor girl who died there, who did not come on her own. She was brought up

by her family and she never made it out of the desert. So, this is the big time death for me

to deal with. (ibid)

To the world living in the bubble created by the corporate media, this child traveling from South

Asia might be yet another illegal alien or a criminal whose death is all justified in the name of

"national security." To the ones who are determined to rewrite borders, unlearn what has been

taught about borders before, and re-listen to borders, Kaur was a child who could never meet her

father again; she was a prey of an unjust system and its asylum proceedings and policies. People

like Enciso are archiving her existence and stories differently. Kaur's life and demise are

humanized, and that humanization is being ported over to the future. This dissertation itself is a

testimony of that. I characterize archiving more in Chapter 4.

Before going further, I recommend that readers watch this video by Democracy Now

(2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DNVLoWemnU8) about Enciso's project to know

some details of migrants' approximately seven days' journey through this desert in the darkness

of night, through the unbearable heat of 130 degrees, water in a black gallon container, cactus,

rattlesnakes, wounds, fractures, blisters that can lead to the death, remnants of migrants, missing

migrants, border patrol's surveillance and its jurisdiction, and U.S. Immigration and Customs

Enforcement's (ICE) that keeps on haunting the dreams of these migrants, extortion from

organized crime. I recommend watching this video to know about a pregnant woman who gave

birth to a baby on American soil, got deported somewhere, and the baby died as an American

and their cross became a shrine, a symbol of this ironic tragedy. Watch this video to know it is

only a very tiny fraction of unknowable stories of tragedy and death that can never be told and

heard in their entirety yet necessary to be told and heard with utmost humility and responsibility.

"Where dreams die" is an ongoing project, which, Enciso says, will never finish. Lisa DeJong

(n.d.) documents more about this project and many individual stories of the crosses.

BORDERED AMERICAS, CONSTRUCTION OF THE NATIVE OTHER, AND INDIGENOUS FEMINIST CALLING[12]

I begin this section with a jurisdictional mess that looks like the following:

In a 1978 decision, the U-S Supreme Court said Indian tribes with their own tribal justice systems and courts were not allowed to charge non-Indians — unless Congress changed the law. Congress didn't act for 35 years. Then, two years ago, when Congress reauthorized the Violence Against Women Act — the VAWA — lawmakers granted tribal courts jurisdiction over a limited number of domestic and dating violence crimes committed by non-Indians on reservations. That change took effect in March. (PBS, 2015)

Another form of border violence that we do not seem to talk about much is jurisdictional border violence. I will take us to *Wind River*, a murder mystery feature film written and directed by Taylor Sheridan. The movie begins with the discovery of the body of an 18-year-old Native American woman in the middle of the forest in Wind River, Wyoming. The movie raises the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women (MMIW) and touches on the complexities and hurdles that tribal communities and tribal law enforcement face when seeking justice for victims. The movie has a non-native man working at an oil-drilling rig near the reservations who is the young woman's boyfriend. It is equally important to know about these oil-extraction sites as these sites, referred to as "man camps," are "common hot spot[s] for increased activities of abuse and sexual violence toward Native women and Native youth" (RedCorn, n.d.). These

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[12] I am starting to write this section on November 25, 2021, The International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

temporary dwelling communities on or near reservations house short-term workers with high-paying wages exploiting natural resources often threaten the safety of communities, especially women and youth living in reservations. Reviewing the movie and specifically the scene where the woman and her boyfriend are murdered, the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center (NIWRC) answers the question, "Was it necessary to show [the rape and murder of the Native woman on screen]?" in the following way:

> [Y]es, it is a necessary evil to show, if taking into account the wide scope of the potential audience who will watch this film and see an entertaining entryway into the issues, and if the film succeeds at holding a mirror up to perpetrators of violence and to citizens of a country that has had a policy of genocide of Native people and culture… The rape scene manifests the uncomfortable reality of sexual assaults that Native women and youth have endured at substantially higher rates than any other minority group across the United States. (ibid)

I am bringing forth this example of the portrayal of the death of the Native woman further caused by the complex jurisdictional border to draw our attention to the humanization of the deaths in borders within the Americas. As per NIRWC, "one in three Native women will be raped in their lifetime, and three in five will be physically assaulted" (ibid) and it's normalized as the death on the borders or of the immigrants. The movie ends with the statement, "While missing person statistics are compiled for every other demographic, none exist for Native American women. No one knows how many are missing" (ibid). NIRWC also pointed out what is missing from this narrative: "the heart and healing power of Native women's voice, the tireless, all-inclusive, and solution-driven work" (ibid). And it optimistically hopes, "This side of the story is ready to be addressed in future stories from and by Native women writers and directors who can materialize

their voice, vision, and truth on film" (ibid). It is a call for indigenous feminist filmmaking, documenting, and storytelling from indigenous women themselves.

The loopholes at the legislative boundaries of reservations not only make it difficult to seek justice for Native American women but also make them rape targets. While "[t]ribal courts can't try non-Native individuals, which means white people can commit crimes on Native American land—including sexual assault—with virtually zero repercussions" (Rizzo, 2015), according to the Government Accountability Office, the U.S. Attorneys often decline to prosecute 67% of Indian Country (the legal term used by the federal government) crimes (Erdrich, n.d.). *Vice* reports, "Eighty percent of the reported sexual violence against Native women is committed by white men, who do so with virtual criminal impunity because, with very few exceptions, they cannot be tried in tribal courts" (Rizzo 2015; refer to Erdrich, 2013). Due to these legislative loopholes around colonially imposed borders within the Americas, Louis Gray writes, "Indian country" is viewed as "feeding grounds" by white sexual predators (Gray, 2005; refer to Le May, 2018). The question is not "if she was raped," the question is "when was she raped." Andy Ternay calls this situation "rape tourism" and tells us that it exists "in any place where the confusing mess of jurisdictional issues allow perpetrators to hide" (Native American Netroots, 2008). Lisa Brunner, a rape survivor advocate was "sexually abused throughout her childhood by multiple people" (Chekuru, 2013). Brunnen's daughter was raped in 2012 by four men from outside of the reservation. Both of Brunnen's daughters are rape survivors. Al Jazeera quotes Lisa Brunnen, "I call it hunting – non-natives come here hunting. They know they can come onto our lands and rape us with impunity because they know that we can't touch them… The U.S. government has created that atmosphere" (ibid). Emphasizing the precarity of the situation expressed by Brunnen, Deborah Blossom, an acting director of the Great Basin

Women's Coalition Against Violence stated, "Our women are open game. So many are violated and they tell us no one will do anything" (cited in Casselman, 2016, p. 4).

Based on various case studies, Amy Casselman, a former case worker for the Washoe Tribe of California and Nevada, writes,

> [T]he complicated system of jurisdictional authority in Indian country not only specifically privileges non-Native identity, but it also specifically marginalizes Native identity in cases of sexual violence. While jurisdiction over the sexual assault of *non-Native* women in Indian country defaults to the state, the involvement of a Native victim signals the interest of three separate sovereigns who may compete for jurisdiction – compromising the investigation of each –or decline to investigate, denying the Native survivor recourse for her assault. (2016, p. 56)

Going back to NIRWC's remark on the lack of women's voices in *Wind River* and looking into Casselman's book through that perspective, the women in her book are, though wounded by the unjust legal system and government policies and continuing colonialism, not passive victims of the system. Native women, in this book, are fighters and writers of their stories, as in their real life, which can be witnessed also in the life story of Lisa Brunner. Brunner runs a group called the Sacred Spirits First Nations Coalition and says, "It was a natural way to be, to become that advocate. What really triggered it was all of the violence that occurred" (Chekuru, 2013). But to say that this violence was caused only because of the jurisdiction loopholes would be a very blinkered understanding of this equation. Sarah Deer, a law professor at William Mitchell College of Law in Minnesota and member of the Muscogee Creek Nation, reminds us about the necessity to go back to a history of racism and colonial oppression of native women to grasp the violence against native women and the legislative black hole. She encapsulates the argument as

follows:

> Native women (traditionally) were always able to exercise political power and social
>
> power in their communities… That has been somewhat tempered by assimilation, where
>
> tribes have taken on some of the patriarchal stereotypes of American culture. When
>
> native men commit these crimes, they're acting out against their cultural values. (Cited in
>
> Chekuru, 2013)

Casselman's argument resonates with Deer's argument. In her book, *Injustice in Indian country: Jurisdiction, American law, and sexual violence against Native women*, she writes, "Sexual violence against Native women, while virtually unheard of prior to European contact, became an immediate reality in the first interactions between American Indians and Europeans" (p. 57; refer to Mihesuah, 2003). This quote has to be understood as sexual violence against native women having been started and continuing along with the construction and distortion of the Native Other. It means the systematic epidemic of sexual violence against native women continuing to happen for centuries with impunity. Casselman continues, "Journal entries by early colonizers and letters from early settlers" demonstrates the normalization of the systematic rape against Native women and how "these assaults were characterized as collateral damage –that in the primary project of seizing Native land, European colonizers were also able to seize Native women" (p. 57). She also adds that "a more nuanced examination" of these journals and letters show that sexual violence against Native women was and is "central to the colonial experience" (p. 57).

As I have been pointing out, there is a complicity between epistemic violence and material violence and if we, the ones who like to believe ourselves as thinking people, fail to or resist understanding of complicity, we will end up becoming –unwittingly, perhaps –complicit in

that violence. We will fail to understand and articulate the history and the structure. We will fail to fight it. Because, as Ann Stoler puts it,

> Racism is not an effect but a tactic in the internal fission of society into binary opposition, a means of creating 'biologized' internal enemies, against whom society must defend itself" and … Racism does not merely arise in moments of crisis, in sporadic cleansings. It is internal to the biopolitical state, woven into the web of the social body, threaded through its fabric. (1997, p. 59)

Aligning with Stoler's conceptualization of racism, I say, racism is not an effect but rather a construction to legitimize, naturalize, necessitate, and moralize violence. What can be another horrific example of this complicity than the realities of residential boarding schools (Fonseca, 2022; Brewer, 2022; Pember, 2019; Smith, n.d.) in North America, New Zealand, and Australia? Symbolic violence begins and continues with material violence. Otherwise, how else to rationalize these arbitrary boundaries within the Americas, jurisdictional loopholes, rape and murder of native women, and the impunity granted to non-native men? How else other than through epistemic and symbolic violence? Casselman helps us go into the colonial construction of the Native Other and Native women and the justification and impunity granted to their rapists and murderers. According to Casselman (2016), if we look into the "[j]ournal entries by early colonizers and letters by early settlers in the Americas," we can witness Native women being "singled out for systematic rape" (p. 57). She gives us some examples. Originally published in 1542, Bartolomé De Las Casas's *The Devastation of the Indies: A Brief Account* (1992/1542) can be taken as one of the examples. Other examples are letters from Columbus's first and second voyages (1492 –1496). These letters are published in Jon Cohen's *The Four Voyages of Christopher Columbus* (1969). Through the contrapuntal reading of the history and documents

produced by colonizers and settlers, Casselman states, "Often, these assaults were characterized as collateral damage… However, a more nuanced examination reveals that sexual violence against Native women was –and continues to be –central to colonial experience" (p. 57). When these colonizers and settler-invaders first arrived in the Americas, they saw that the lands and resources they came for already had Native peoples with their own cultures, traditions, knowledge systems and "distinct social, political, legal rights to these resources" (p. 57). They used legal justifications to legitimize theft and looting. But the legitimization through legality was not a straightforward process. Casselman (2016) explains,

> [A]ppropriating Native land at the expense of Native people had to be naturalized though more than just law. It is in this context that ideological constructions of Native people emerged as a corollary to moralize European conquest itself. By portraying people as savage, barbaric, and sub-human, European colonizers were able to justify their legal actions. (p. 58)

These colonizers and settler-invaders had to rhetorically dehumanize or sub-humanize Natives to moralize their theft and violence (Jimson, 1992). Colonial material violence started and was accompanied by epistemic injustice, the colonially designed and misogynistically gendered narratives of Native lands and Native women, which justified the theft of lands and sexual violence against Native women. What Smith wants us to remember is women in Native communities were "central political actors… who were central political actors in the nations that governed resources that colonizers wanted" (Smith, 2005, p. 58). Furthermore, they were not (expected or portrayed to be) silent victims of sexual violence. The following record illustrates this:

> The Kiowas inflicted such embarrassment and ridicule on a criminal that he reportedly

soon died. The man was a chronic rapist who was finally taught the error of his ways by

the women; they laid an ambush and baited the trap with a beautiful young girl. When he

took the bait, they suddenly appeared and overpowered him. As others held him helpless

on the ground, each woman in turn raised her skirts and sat on his face. The experience

was not in itself fatal, but the loss of status stemming from the derision it inspired was.

The possibility of such drastic punishment was perhaps more chastening in its effect than

the threat of the electric chair in more sophisticated societies. (Richardson, 1940)

Therefore, to subjugate Native peoples and plunder their land and resources, colonizers had to

first bring colonial-heteropatriarchal order into the Native society and naturalize this order. They

had to "subjugate women within in [indigenous] nations" and institute "the value of hierarchy,

the role of physical abuse in maintaining that hierarchy, and the importance of women remaining

submissive to their men (Paula Gunn Allen as cited in Smith, *Conquest*, 71).

Native bodies were portrayed in colonial discourse as being "immanently polluted with

sexual sin… marked by their sexual perversity" (Smith, *Conquest*, p. 10). Written in 1613, the

following words by Alexander Whitaker, a minister in Virginia, illustrate this claim: "They live

naked in bodie, as if their shame of their sinne deserved no covering: Their names are as naked

as their bodie: They esteem it a virtue to lie, deceive and steale as their master the divell

teacheth them" (as cited in Berkhofer, 1978). Furthermore, according to Bernardino de Minaya

(born c. 1489), a Dominican cleric, "Their marriages are not a sacrament but a sacrilege. They

are idolatrous, libidinous, and commit sodomy. Their chief desire is to eat, drink, worship

heathen idols, and commit bestial obscenities" (as cited in Stannard, 1992).

As illustrated in the following testimonies,[13] this epistemological injustice has been used

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[13] I am taking help from Andrea Smith's book *Conquest* and Casselman to provide these examples.

continuously up to the present to justify and legitimize sexual violence and murder and to mark native women "inherently "rapable"" (Smith, 2005):

Two of the best looking of the squaws were lying in such a position, and from the appearance of the genital organs and of their wounds, there can be no doubt that they were first ravished and then shot dead. Nearly all of the dead were mutilated.[14]

One woman, big with child, rushed into the church, clasping the altar and crying for mercy for herself and unborn babe. She was followed, and fell pierced with a dozen lances...The child was torn alive from the yet palpitating body of its mother, first plunged into the holy water to be baptized, and immediately its brains were dashed out against a wall. (p. 3)[15]

The Christians attacked them with buffets and beatings...Then they behaved with such temerity and shamelessness that the most powerful ruler of the island had to see his own wife raped by a Christian officer.[16]

I heard one man say that he had cut a woman's private parts out, and had them for exhibition on a stick. I heard another man say that he had cut the fingers off of an Indian, to get the rings off his hand. I also heard of numerous instances in which men had cut out the private parts of females, and stretched them over their saddle-bows and some of them over their hats.[17]

While I was in the boat, I captured a very beautiful Carib woman, whom said Lord Admiral gave to me, and with whom, having taken her into my cabin, she being

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[14] Originally from Wrone and Nelson, 1982.
[15] Ibid
[16] Originally from Casas, 1992/1954.
[17] Originally from Carroll, 1973).

naked according to their custom, I conceived desire to take pleasure. I wanted to put my desire into execution but she did not want it and treated me with her finger nails I such a manner that I wished I had never begun. But seeing that, (to tell you the end of it all), I took a rope and thrashed her well, for which she raised such unheard of screams that you would not have believed your ears. Finally we came to an agreement in such manner that I can tell you she seemed to have been brought up in a school of harlots. [written by Michele de Cuneo, an Italian nobleman on Columbus's second voyage][18,19]

One Spaniard took a maiden by force to commit the sin of the flesh with her, dragging her away from her mother, finally having to unsheathe his sword to cut off the woman's hand and when the damsel still resisted they stabbed her to death.[20]

When both men and women at the sight of [Spanish soldiers] would take off running […] the soldiers, adept as they are at lassoing cows and mules, would lasso Indian women who then became prey for their unbridled lust. [1773 document on rampant sexual assault] (p. 71)

The reason these discourses continue in different forms –such as jurisdictional loopholes (Le May, 2018)–is that the U.S., as a settler-invader colony "can only exist through the consumption of Native lands and resources" (Casselman, p. 73). Native sovereignty and land back is the only justice and "solution," but this solution would mean an "existential threat" to the United States (ibid). Therefore, the settler-invader state must rely on those strategically designed and willfully unsolved legislative gaps to continue "disempower[ing] entire communities *politically* by attacking women *corporally*" (ibid). Native American scholar Inés Hernández-Ávila (1993)

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[18] Originally from as cited in Stannard, 1993.
[19] Also refer to Deer, 2015.
[20] Originally from De Las Casas, *Devastation* p. 77

draws our attention to another aspect of this violence: "It is *because* of a Native American woman's sex that she is hunted down and slaughtered, in fact, singled out because she has the potential through childbirth to insure the continuance of the people" (1993, p. 98). This horrific violence on Native women's bodies and the profound attack on their emotional-mental-physical health and existence is necessary for the survival of the settler-invader nation-state and hence, the latter "has consistently hunted down Native women to be demoralized, dismembered and disappeared" (ibid). There lies the reality behind the legislative black holes within bordered Americas. This sexual violence by white men is the necessity of colonial violence that the latter continues through epistemic and material violence over time. The existential threat on Native women is directly connected with the settler-invader state's existential threat. As Casselman puts it, "Therefore, when a white man targets Native women for sexual violence in these spaces, he does so with the force of 500 years of colonial history" (p. 74). Deer offers a solution to this problem, "If we can replace the violence with our strong cultural values about women, I think we'll start to stem the tide of violence… We also need cultivation of tribal justice systems, so that tribes aren't depending on the state government or the federal government to take action, but can take action on their own terms" (as cited in Chekuru, 2013).

While writing this, I was listening to and watching the recitation of the poem, "To the Indigenous Woman," by Ryan Red Corn (2012) written, produced, and directed with assistance from the Indian Law Resource Centre & 1491s. Here is an excerpt:

I dare you to protect them Mr. President

I dare you to make laws for them Mr. Senator

I dare you try to stop me Tribal Chairman

I dare you to go look for me Police officer

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…

The war is in the home

Living room battle grounds

bathroom infirmaries

backseat trenches

fists like tanks

sex like a war trophy

under treaties of silence

she whispered to me

Please

Please stop

I am your wife

I am your sister

I am your mother

I am your daughter

You are supposed to protect me

You are supposed to be a warrior

Protect me from you,

from him,

from all of them. (Ryan Red Corn, 2012)

The heaviness of this poem, recitation, and visual elements on one's head-heart is something. It

hurts (as it should). I don't want to write about this anymore, but I also don't think we can afford

to stop writing. While feeling this soul-piercing disquiet, I cannot stop contemplating the

following: colonial male-villains and anticolonial male-heroes! Except for being portrayed as passive victims and passive appealers, where are women here in this narrative of colonial villains and anti-colonial heroes? When we are trying to achieve decolonial sovereignty (because that is what decoloniality is about), what happens to female sovereignty?[21] This is what epistemic violence is: being portrayed and spoken for without acknowledging the agency of the one portrayed and spoken for (I will elaborate on this in Chapter 3 with many other examples from South Asia and other formerly colonized Asian and African countries). While contemplating this poem, I cannot help but conjure NIRWC's call for indigenous feminist voices and fighters that do not passively appeal to be protected by husband, brother, son, and father "from you, from him, from all of them." They are warriors, storytellers, advocates, activists, artists, educators, and composers of their stories. How can we forget about Lavetta Elk, an Oglala Sioux teenager sexually assaulted by her military recruiter Sgt. Joseph Kopf in early 2003 when she was nineteen, sued the United States of America for damages from the assault and make them pay nearly $600,000 (Elk v. United States, 2009; Casselman, 2016; Mermelstein & Horowitz, P.A.,2010)? Although she might be "the first and only plaintiff to take a "bad men among the whites" action through trial and win on the merits," "[s]he is unlikely to remain alone in her success" (as cited in "A Bad Man," 2014, p. 2521).

I wonder how this poem would be re-written by an indigenous feminist poet!

"TIME TO SUMMON OUR VOICES FROM THE BELLY OF THE EARTH."

In September 2021, Mexico City announced that a statue of a 19th century Christopher Columbus that had been taken down for restoration work, would be replaced by a statue

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[21] Even if not directly related to this issue I am raising in this particular section, but Patricia Ingham (2002) has also talked about female sovereignty in her article "Pastoral Histories: Utopia, Conquest, and the Wife of Bath's Tale."

honoring Indigenous women. The decision was made to mark the historic role of Indigenous women in Mexico, about which Mayor Claudia Sheinbaum commented, "To them, we owe … the history of our country, of our fatherland" (Al Jazeera, 2021). This move came when there was a global push to remove the "commemorating" statues of colonizers and slaveholders. It happened just a few months after a statue of Canadian architect Egerton Ryerson was toppled by protestors after a demonstration about the discovery of 215 Indigenous children's remains at Kamloops Indian Residential School in the western province of British Columbia. The protestors demanded commemoration and justice for the children. Egerton Ryerson "helped create the system in which more than 150,000 First Nations, Metis and Inuit children were separated from their families and forced to attend church-run boarding schools," and the residential schools were open from the 1870s to the 1990s (ibid). These schools "were rife with abuse and more than 4,000 Indigenous children are believed to have died there, most often from disease" (ibid). Mohamed Lachemi, president and vice chancellor at Ryerson University, said, "The statue will not be restored or replaced" (cited in Al Jazeera, 2021).

After just embroidering "a figure of "Mictlantecuhtli," the Aztec god of death, to mark the [Mexico City's] huge toll in the coronavirus pandemic" on 13 August 2021, the day that also marked the fall of the Aztec capital 500 years ago on 13 August 1521, Mary Gloria says, "It is up to us rewrite the script" (Verza, 2012). She "wants to redeem Malinche, the indigenous woman who helped the Spaniards as a translator," who "was long considered a traitor" (ibid). But "Malinche ensured the survival of her line" (ibid). On 13 August 2021, "[a]rtists, intellectuals and the government" planned to paint on the streets of Mexico City, the city of 9 million "to show where the boundaries of the ancient city of Tenochtitlan ended" (ibid). These precolonial boundaries that surrounded the city had been erased with the drying up of lakes. Isn't it

interesting that the boundaries are drawn to show the arbitrariness of the colonial boundaries that have carved the lives of peoples now? Boundaries being drawn to erase boundaries! Here, Margarita Cossich, a Guatemalan archaeologist who is working with a team from the National Autonomous University asks a very interesting question and reminds us of the complexity within that precolonial city:

> What really was the Conquest? What have we been told about it? Who were the victors, and who were the defeated?... It is much more complex than simply talking of the good versus the bad, the Spaniards against the Indigenous groups. (As cited in Verza, 2012)

Maria Verza provides an example to demonstrate that complexity and writes, "[E]xpedition leader Hernán Cortés and his 900 Spaniards made up only about one percent of the army of thousands of allies from Indigenous groups oppressed by the Aztecs" (Verza, 2012). So, again, who is good and who is bad when for Indigenous peoples, both Spaniards and the Aztec Empire were oppressors? Are the answers as simple? I am taking these examples and questions to put forth the very important argument of my dissertation that the Global South and the Global North are not about the clear geographical distinction. Instead, there are Global Souths within the Global North and there are Global Norths within the Global South. The examples in this chapter show how we are archiving the rhetorics of the border, like these artists and intellectuals are doing in Mexico City, to understand the past and present differently and take these memories to the future contrapuntally. These artists, activists, storytellers, and rhetoricians are humanizing peoples who have been victims of global and regional systems and whose narratives are deliberately or carelessly obliterated or unacknowledged.

Chapter 3: (Unforgetting) Uncommemorated Lives, Colonial Information War, and the Rhetoric of "Collateral Damage"

Women have been denied access to doctors when they're sick. Life under the Taliban is so hard and repressive, even small displays of joy are outlawed. Children aren't allowed to fly kites. Their mothers face beatings for laughing out loud. Women cannot work outside the home or even leave their homes by themselves.

– Laura Bush, Radio Address to the Nation, 2001, November 17

We're being asked to believe that the U.S. marines are actually on a feminist mission. (If so, will their next stop be America's military ally Saudi Arabia?)… Can we bomb our way to a feminist paradise? Is that how women won the vote in the U.S.? Or how slavery was abolished? Can we win redress for the genocide of the millions of Native Americans upon whose corpses the United States was founded by bombing Santa Fe?

– Arundhati Roy, 2002, "Come September"

"I didn't think of Iraqis as humans," says U.S. soldier who raped 14-year-old girl before killing her and her family.

– *DailyMail*, 2010

"I WASN'T THINKING THESE PEOPLE WERE HUMANS."

In March 2006, five U.S. soldiers (Daily Mail, 2010) gang-raped and murdered a 14-year-old Iraqi child Abeer Qassim Hamza al-Janabi and murdered her family. After being arrested, Steven Green, one of those five soldiers,[22] said in an exclusive telephone interview from federal prison in Tucson, Arizona that he had stopped seeing Iraqi civilians as human beings. For that, he blamed "extreme warzone violence" he was exposed to in Iraq, and added, "If I hadn't ever been in Iraq, I wouldn't be in the kind of trouble I'm in now… I'm not happy about that" (ibid). He kept on blaming the warzone and the circumstances there *for the trouble he was in*. He even challenged "the Military Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Act, which allows the federal government to charge an American in civilian court for alleged crimes committed overseas" (ibid). Before his arrest, in an interview with *The Washington Post*, Green talked about

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[22] Green was sentenced to life in prison, and he died of complications resulting from a suicide attempt in 2014.

his emotional experience, if any, of killing Iraqis.

> I came over here because I wanted to kill people. The truth is, it wasn't all I thought it
> was cracked up to be. I mean, I thought killing somebody would be this life-changing
> experience. And then I did it, and I was like, 'All right, whatever.' I shot a guy who
> wouldn't stop when we were out at a traffic checkpoint and it was like nothing. Over
> here, killing people is like squashing an ant. I mean, you kill somebody and it's like 'All
> right, let's go get some pizza.' (cited in Tilghman, 2006)

As per the affidavit filed by FBI, before raping Abeer, Steven Green was discussing raping her.
Not only Green and the other four who raped Abeer, but the other U.S. soldiers would stare at
her from the checkpoint which was situated only around 200 meters away from where she lived
with her family. Every time they saw her, they would give thumbs up saying, "Very good, very
good." Her mother was already concerned about Abeer's safety. Their neighbors had warned her
parents about it, but her father said that there is nothing to worry about as she is just a child
(MacAskill & Howard, 2007).

> Reporting this horrendous rape and murder on July 09, 2006, *Time* magazine began its
article describing how "ordinary looking" Abeer was: "Family members describe Abeer Qasim
Hamza al-Janabi as tall for her age, skinny, but not eye-catchingly beautiful… "She was an
ordinary girl." So perhaps it was sheer proximity that made the 15-year-old so tantalizing" (Rawe
& Ghosh, 2006). That is where *Time*'s concern was.

> In another leaked video, a U.S. soldier in Iraq was caught saying,
> You know what, I don't give a f*ck. You know what, as far as I am concerned, they are
> all guilty. They should have kicked Saddam out themselves… We are losing guys. Were
> the people in the World Trade Center guilty? No, [*at this point the person is talking to

also says, "No, they f*cking did not do anything"*] F*ck them. F*ck them, dude. Anyone

with the f*cking rag on their head is a fair game. (Sayed Abdullah, 2022)

After he expressed his vehement disgust, he bragged about the rape he and his teammate

committed of the fifteen year-old Iraqi girls: "Our team used to look for teenage virgin Iraqis

every morning because they were the best breakfast we can have" (ibid). He bragged,

Girl. She was probably like 15 years old… yeah, she was hot too… body on that girl,

really tight. You know it hadn't been touched yet. She was fucking prime… he started

pimping her out for fifty bucks a shot. I think at the end of the day, you know, he made

like five hundred bucks before he hung herself. (ibid)

With a boastful smirk on his face, he also talked about a 15-year-old girl who hanged herself

after that. When the other person asked, "How come she hung herself?" he replied, "I don't

know. She wasn't happy… The culture, it's really shunned upon" (ibid). He smirked. At this

point, others laughed too.

In May 2022, during a speech in Dallas, Former President George W. Bush had a major

Freudian slip. He was condemning Russian President Vladimir Putin for the invasion of Ukraine.

And while doing that he said, "The decision of one man to launch a wholly unjustified and brutal

invasion of Iraq… I mean of Ukraine" (Sahil Kapur, 2022). And under his breath, he muttered,

"Iraq, too." Then, he made his age an excuse for that "gaffe." We could hear the audience

laughing like they were enjoying this stand-up comedy. I wonder if Iraqi people were laughing

too. Are Arabs laughing? Are Muslims laughing? Are Afghans, Yemenis, Libyans, Syrians,

Palestinians laughing? I don't think so. But this "civilized" audience were definitely laughing at

the mass deaths of barbaric people.

This chapter will show the vicious relationship between epistemic violence, rhetorical

violence, and material violence to establish that the former two are no less a horrifying violence than the material violence. There is no material violence without epistemic and rhetorical violence. Hence, the part our fields can and should play is momentous. Rhetorical resistance against rhetorical violence! While the next section of this chapter will mainly talk about Afghanistan, I will also bring up cases from Libya and Bolivia in order to establish that differently situated Global Souths might be experiencing imperialism differently, but these experiences are all connected and not separate. By doing so, I make a case for Global South feminist solidarity against Western chauvinism and imperialism through borderless transnational feminist design justice framework.

However, the chapter ends with glimmers of hope. It had to.

A STORY THEY TOLD TO US ABOUT NATO'S "FEMINIST LIBERATORY" MISSION IN AFGHANISTAN

On May 7, 2022, when the Taliban issued an order requiring women to cover their faces in public, the entire Western world became increasingly concerned about the plight of Afghan women. It seemed that no one cared for Afghan women as much as the West. There was a "worldwide" condemnation of the Taliban for its truly reprehensible anti-women rhetoric. However, no one could beat the Western media on that condemnation. To test this statement, all I did was Google the 'Taliban' and several pages flooded with this sentiment from Western media outlet. But this was not the first time the West has been "concerned" about Afghan women like this.

When the Taliban came to power in 1996 and established the "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan," worries about Afghan women were besetting the West, especially the United States. And in 2001, "concerns" regarding Afghan women's safety and liberation flared up again.

In the wake of September 11, 2001, political players of the Western world suddenly started worrying about the safety and freedom of Afghan women and "their systematic abuse by the Taliban regime drew the attention of major news networks' anchors" (Cooke, 2002, 227). The 'systematic abuse' of Afghan women by the Taliban regime attracted the attention of major Western news networks. With the exception of a few, the entire "international community"[23] felt that the United States needed to invade Afghanistan for the sake of Afghan women. Attacking to save? What a strange argument! The United States and other NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) countries were succeeding in persuading the world that this was an indispensable step towards the emancipation of Afghan women. The Western media did the same thing, and Hollywood made movies about it. We loved those movies. Remember *Zero Dark Thirty*? It is just one of so many propaganda movies made justifying the various forms of invasion of Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan and so on. These were stories of white people teaching democracy and feminism to brown people, and fighting for the feminist liberation of brown women, like me.

After the attack on the Twin Towers, CNN could not stop airing an anti-Taliban film called "Beneath the Veil," which was shot in June 2001 (*News from the Past*, 2021). Coincidentally, the documentary *Twin Towers* was made three months before the attack and aired for the first time in August, a month before the attack. Similarly, immediately after the attack, another documentary was made in November, titled *Unholy War: The Taliban Victims of Beneath the Veil*. Both documentaries were made by British writer, reporter, and filmmaker Saira Shah. The rhetoric of each of these documentaries was the atrocities of the Taliban and the suffering of Afghan women! Giving brown women the one-dimensional subjectivity of passive victimhood has always been rhetorically useful and thus, an obligatory necessity of imperial

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[23] Check the Global North's rhetoric of international community.

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power to continue its invasion in the name of women's liberation and a democratic nation-building project. A study by Carol A. Stabail and Deepa Kumar (2005) shows that there were only 29 U.S. newspaper articles and 37 broadcast TV reports about women's rights in Afghanistan but in the 16 weeks between September 12 and January 1, 2002, there were 93 newspaper articles and 628 television reports on the subject. Once the western corporate media started succeeding in persuading Americans that the war in Afghanistan was what Afghan women needed and that it is Americans' duty to support the "humanitarian and feminist" war, the figure started dropping.

Oh, and that's not all.

After the U.S.'s 9/11, then First Lady Laura Bush made the representation (*Vertretung* and *Darstellung*) of Afghan women a big part of her agenda (Keneally, 2017). On November 17, 2001, Laura Bush "filled in for her husband in his national radio address" and "[i]t was the first time in history that a president's wife had taken over her husband's weekly radio speech" (Cooke, 2002, p. 234). According to Laura Bush, the purpose was "to kick off a worldwide effort to focus on the brutality against women and children by the Al Qaeda terrorist network and the regime it supports in Afghanistan, the Taliban" (Bush, 2001). According to Laura Bush, her main concern was to draw the world's attention to the atrocities committed by the Taliban and Al Qaeda against Afghan women and children and to spread the message among the American people that it is the duty of every American to protect Afghan women and children and to protect their own democracy. She continued, "Civilized people throughout the world are speaking out in horror—not only because our hearts break for the women and children in Afghanistan, but also because in Afghanistan, we see the world the terrorists would like to impose on the rest of us" (ibid).

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She also claimed to know what Afghan women knew. She declared, "Afghan women know through hard experience what the rest of the world is discovering: The brutal oppression of women is a central goal of the terrorists" (ibid). Notice the confidence and assertion of the knowability of these representers. While closing her speech, Bush invited all Americans to save more brown women (and children) beyond the territories of Afghanistan:

> Fighting brutality against women and children is not the expression of a specific culture; it's the acceptance of our common humanity, a commitment shared by people of good will on every continent.
>
> […] the terrorists who helped rule that country now plot and plan in many countries, and they must be stopped. The fight against terrorism is also a fight for the rights and dignity of women… (ibid)

Bush took it upon herself and all the Americans to speak for and save brown women from brown men. These brown women know only one thing and that is: they are not safe because of brown men, they need to be saved from brown men, and the West and the U.S. are their saviors. To act on that knowledge is the responsibility and duty of the American people. The U.S. administration managed to spread compassion and terror in the United States, the West, and the world at once, and was successful at that. This was the strategy of the U.S. administration, and the same rhetoric was repeated by all the corporate media which became the mouthpiece of the U.S. administration and was repeated by others as well. Andrea Smith, in *Conquest*, reminds us that "these sentiments were shared by mainstream feminists" like Eleanor Smeal, former president of the National Organization for Women (NOW) and founder and president of the Fund for a Feminist Majority. Smeal said, "Without 9/11, we could not get the Afghanistan tragedy in focus enough for the world powers to stop the Taliban's atrocities or to remove the Taliban. Tragically, it took

a disaster for them to act definitively enough" (as cited in Smith, 2005). Following this rhetorical

strategy, Time Magazine published an issue in July 2010. Shahnaz Khan writes,

> The cover of the July 2010 issue of Time Magazine presents an image of the oppressed
>
> Muslim woman. She is a violated and mutilated Afghan woman with a hole where her
>
> nose had been. A caption next to the image reads, "What Happens if We Leave
>
> Afghanistan." The accompanying article by Aryn Baker (2009) identifies the woman in
>
> the picture as eighteen-year-old Bibi Aisha, and there is a brief description of her
>
> brutalization and the fact that she had been rescued by U. S forces and was safe now…
>
> (2018, p. 119)

This narrative and rhetoric were repeated, manipulated, spread, and intensified so many times

that most of the world unquestioningly accepted that only the U.S. and NATO could defend the

freedom and independence of Afghan women and that a U.S. military base and attack on

Afghanistan was inevitable. We also liked this narrative very much: The narrative of the attack

of the Global North in the Global South to save the women of the Global South from the men of

the Global South by men (and women) in the Global North. (Please remember Spivak's "White

men saving brown women from brown men" from Chapter 1.) But while doing this saving, they

were creating a fear of veiled women as pointed out by Runions (2004):

> But beyond justifying the war and saving brown women from brown men, the United
>
> States has also "saved" the world from a mode of dress - one which hides women's bodies
>
> from prying eyes - distinct from that prescribed by "universal" values. At a panel in New
>
> York City in March of 2002, sponsored by War Is Not the Answer, feminist academic
>
> and activist Silvia Federici made the point that there may be *a fear of veiled women as*
>
> *the Other* operating in the demand to free Afghan women. Federici derived her argument

from Franz Fanon's suggestion that the French were concerned about Algerian women

unveiling, not because they cared about women's freedom, but because it inhibited their

proprietal gaze. If, on some level, a perceived threat of veiled women influenced the

public's acceptance of the bombing of Afghanistan, it was a perception consistent with

apocalyptic misogyny. (p. 5)

For Runions, it is this "apocalyptic misogyny" against brown women that ironically motivates

the desire to "save" Afghan women by making them the target of hatred and fear. Quite an

interesting way of saving brown women from brown men! Ha!

On August 30, 2021, when the last U.S. and other NATO troops after a 20-year war

against the Afghani people withdrew on August 30, 2021, we witnessed some harrowing

happenings in Kabul airport "as panic-stricken supporters of the U.S. occupation, and other

Afghans who have no desire to live under the rule of the Taliban fled to the airport" (A Critique

of Crisis Theory, n.d.). One incident that shook the world is the one of "Afghans fleeing the

Taliban desperately held on to a U.S. plane" and "[s]howing the real attitude of U.S. imperialism

to those who do its bidding, the plane took off anyway with the Afghans dropping to their

deaths" (ibid). The Western "feminists" took this harrowing situation and scene as an opportunity

to start worrying about Afghan women once again. There was an outcry in the Western

mainstream media about *what is going to happen to Afghan women when we leave Afghanistan*.

The classic concern.

As soon as the military withdrawal process began, current U.S. President Joe Biden

addressed the country, "In my view, we only have one: to make sure Afghanistan can never be

used again to launch an attack on our homeland" (The White House , 2021). When was

Afghanistan ever "used" to launch an attack on the U.S.? Biden continued, "Remember why we

went to Afghanistan in the first place? Because we were attacked by Osama bin Laden and al

Qaeda on September 11th, 2001, and they were based in Afghanistan" (ibid). Where is the

evidence of that? He added, "We delivered justice to bin Laden on May 2nd, 2011 — over a

decade ago. Al Qaeda was decimated" (ibid). Why did they stay for another ten years, then? Oh!

For nation-building and the feminist liberation of Afghan women, that's right. They did quite an

admirable job there. His further words were: "[W]e had no vital national interest in Afghanistan

other than to prevent an attack on America's homeland and their fr- — our friends" (ibid).

Absolutely!

> Biden also took a vow in his address to the nation:
>
> We'll continue to speak out for the basic rights of the Afghan people, of women and girls,
>
> just as we speak out all over the world. I've been clear: human rights must be the center
>
> of our foreign policy, not the periphery. (Mahtani, et al., 2021)

In *The Wall Street Journal* (8/17/21), an op-ed by former George W. Bush staffer Charity

Wallace ran under the headline: "The Nightmare Resumes for Afghan Women: America

Rescued Them 20 Years Ago. How Can We Abandon Them to the Taliban Again" (Stancati &

Donati, 2021). Wolf Blitzer from CNN's Situation Room joined in singing the same rhetoric:

> President Biden saying he stands, and I'm quoting him now, squarely, squarely behind
>
> this decision to withdraw US forces from Afghanistan, despite the shocking scene of
>
> chaos and desperation as the country fell in a matter of only a few hours under Taliban
>
> control, and the group's extremist ideology has tremendous and extremely disturbing
>
> implications for everyone in Afghanistan, but especially the women and girls. (Hollar,
>
> 2021)

After CNN aired a report on Afghan women, Sen. Joni Ernst (R.-Iowa) gave Jake Tapper (CNN

Newsroom, 8/16/21) her take on the situation, "As you mentioned, for women and younger girls, this is also very devastating for them. The humiliation that they will endure at the hands of the Taliban all around this is just a horrible, horrible mar on the United States under President Joe Biden" (CNN, 2021). Opposing the complete withdrawal, Rep. Adam Kinzinger (R.-Illinois) argued:

> Look at the freedom that is being deprived from the Afghan people as the Taliban move into Afghan, or moving into parts of Afghanistan now, and you know how much freedom they had. Look at the number of women that are out there making careers, that are thought leaders, that are academics, that never would have happened under the Taliban leadership…. The devastation you are seeing today is why that small footprint of 2,500 US troops was so important. (CNBC Television, 2021)

This "feminist liberatory" rhetoric and narrative constructed and circulated by imperial power centers in the Global North legitimized the devastation wrought by Western colonialism and imperialism in the Global South and completely colonized the interpretive lens of looking at and analyzing people's geopolitics.

While making these claims about Afghanistan being a land used by terrorists to attack the U.S., President Biden also gave a list of sacrifices the U.S. has made for Afghanistan:

> After more than $2 trillion spent in Afghanistan — a cost that researchers at Brown University estimated would be over $300 million a day for 20 years in Afghanistan — for two decades — yes, the American people should hear this: $300 million a day for two decades…I refused to continue in a war that was no longer in the service of the vital national interest of our people… A lot of our veterans and their families have gone through hell — deployment after deployment, months and years away from their

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families; missed birthdays, anniversaries; empty chairs at holidays; financial struggles;

divorces; loss of limbs; traumatic brain injury; posttraumatic stress. (Biden, 2021)

Biden was absolutely right when he said this war in Afghanistan was in no interest of American

people. The only thing I would like to erase from that statement is "longer" because it was never

in the interest of the American people.

Vox Media reported that Joint Chiefs of Staff chair Gen. Mark Milley made an

"impassioned" and "emotional" plea to Biden that he must stay in Afghanistan, otherwise

women's rights "will go back to the Stone Age" (March 4, 2021). He attempts at persuading

Biden even further, "[Not after] all the blood and treasure spent" (ibid). What would be worth *all*

the blood and treasure spent? More lives? More extraction of treasure? More minerals from

Afghans' land that CNN could not help but cry about right after the evacuation of U.S. troops

began?

Let us remember Laura Bush's celebration of Afghan women's liberation on November

17, 2001 right after the U.S. and British forces launched Operation Enduring Freedom on

October 7, 2001: "Because of our recent military gains, in much of Afghanistan women are no

longer imprisoned in their homes" (2001). *Time* magazine even published another celebratory

piece by Nancy Gibbs (2001), who declared "the greatest pageant of mass liberation since the

fight for suffrage" was occurring, as "female faces, shy and bright, emerged from the dark

cellars… stomp[ing] on their old veil". Gibbs wrapped up with this optimism beyond just a

justification of war: "the sight of jubilation was a holiday gift, a reminder of reasons the war was

worth fighting beyond those of basic self-defense". The piece was headlined, "Blood and Joy."

According to the 2019 Women, Peace and Security Index (GIWPS. n.d.), amidst all these

feminist liberatory concerns, and in 20 years of the U.S. occupation, Afghanistan "ranked

second-to-last in the world on women's well-being and empowerment" (Hollar, 2021). Quite a women's empowerment effort that was.

After a trillion dollars spent, 2,400 American lives lost over 20 years, and "[n]ot to mention all the dead innocent Afghan civilians, and the dead and wounded troops of [the] NATO allies" (Dreher, 2019), many Americans who were fighting in Afghanistan started questioning what and why they were doing. Many felt betrayed, misled, lied to. Douglas Lute (2015), an army general, NATO Permanent Representative, former Deputy National Security Advisor for Iraq and Afghanistan told government interviewers in 2015, "We were devoid of a fundamental understanding of Afghanistan — we didn't know what we were doing… If the American people knew the magnitude of this dysfunction" (*The Washington Post*, 2015). I am not going into it any further, but while doing this contrapuntal reading of the U.S. imperialism and the U.S. administration's South Asian strategies or the strategies regarding the Middle East and the Global South in general, I would definitely want to reiterate Arundhati Roy's words: "American people ought to know that it is not them but their government's policies that are so hated" (2001). This is about what uncritical celebration of representation can do and how epistemic violence can easily lead to material violence. That's why it is not about "representation matters" but about "critical analysis of representation matters." We cannot afford to be gullible. We cannot continue treating the destruction caused by the imperial wars as necessary collateral damage.

INFORMATION WAR AND THE STORY BEHIND NATO'S FEMINIST MISSION IN AFGHANISTAN

When we fear we are on the brink of nuclear war, we are not aware of the no less frightening information war that we are already in, and the violence caused by the construction of knowledge. We have no idea how this information war has contributed to U.S. and NATO war

crimes against black and brown Global Souths. It is no exaggeration to say that the U.S. is the most 'propagandized' country in the world. Hardly any government can build a global consensus with as much organized propaganda as the U.S. administration. This section will try digging a little deeper into the story behind NATO's feminist project in Afghanistan.

The rhetoric of *what happens if we leave Afghanistan* was one of the CIA's PR strategies in 2010 to keep troops in Afghanistan to shut down popular American resistance against the attack on Afghanistan and to persuade Germany and France into continuing the occupation. This was revealed in a 2010 CIA memo titled "A Red Cell Special Memorandum" published by WikiLeaks. This memo was a recipe for the targeted manipulation of public opinion in two NATO ally countries written by the CIA and is classified as Confidential/No Foreign Nationals. The following are the CIA's exact words (Wikileaks, 2010):

> Conversely, messaging that dramatizes the potential adverse consequences of an ISAF defeat for Afghan civilians could leverage French (and other European) guilt for abandoning them. The prospect of the Taliban rolling back hard-won progress on girls' education could provoke French indignation, become a rallying point for France's largely secular public, and give voters a reason to support a good and necessary cause despite casualties.

We know that the U.S. is responsible for the birth of the Taliban. Among the strategies and tactics used against the Soviets during the Cold War, nurturing Islamic military networks was one of the most effective and intimidating strategies. An American investigative journalist Christian Parenti (2001) wrote, "From 1979 to 1992, America channeled at least three billion dollars to the various mujahedeen," and he added,

> Throughout the Reagan years, U.S. funding for the mujahedeen steadily increased.

Facilitated by innocuously named lobbying groups like the Afghan American Educational

Fund, aboveboard appropriations for the largely secret campaign reached $250 million

annually by 1985. Much more issued from the CIA's black budget. The most radically

Islamic groups always received the bulk of the funding. (p. 32)

A significant portion of this investment went to Islamic religious radical education and

textbooks. The United States made it a major weapon in the war against the Soviets and

communism by investing in religious fundamentalist education and textbooks. Ahmed Rashid

(1999), a Pakistani journalist, wrote:

With the active encouragement of the CIA and Pakistan's ISI, who wanted to turn the

Afghan *jihad* into a global war waged by all Muslim states against the Soviet Union,

some 35,000 Muslim radicals from 40 Islamic countries joined Afghanistan's fight

between 1982 and 1992. Tens of thousands more came to study in Pakistani *madrassas*.

Eventually, more than 100,000 foreign Muslim radicals were directly influenced by the

Afghan *jihad*. (p. 31)

The Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) also has very powerfully

described the nature of the war between the U.S. and the Taliban or Al Qaeda, which I would

like to share:

It is no secret that Afghan fundamentalists headed by Burhanuddin Rabbani, Karim

Khalili, Rasul Sayyaf, Ahmad Shah Masoud, Golbuddin Hekmatyar, Yunis Khalis,

Mullah Omar and associates such as Dostum and his like have all been nurtured in the lap

of the CIA. It was the CIA that gave all these nobodies name and fame and supported

them in their power-grabbing and fiefdom-building ploys and plots. Now the U.S. is out

to hunt down Osama bin Laden, an old Arab operative raised and trained by the CIA who

is cohabiting with the Taliban and bankrolling the decimation of our compatriots in the Taliban's dog-fights with their Jihadi brethren-in-creed. The U.S. made maximum use of Arab mercenaries in her dogged determination to undo her superpower rival, the Soviet Union, but now the old myrmidons have become too much of an ungrateful nuisance. The U.S. is the ally [read master] and sponsor of quite a number of anti-democratic fundamentalist states and entities in the world, therefore the United States' quarrel with her protégés, whether Arabs or Taliban or Jihadis, is nothing but a "domestic" dispute between lord and vassal. (RAWA, 1998)

The U.S. invaded Afghanistan again for another 20 years under the pretext of destroying the existence of the element it had created. It kept making the same excuse. While Biden was listing the sacrifices made by the U.S. to liberate Afghan women and rebuild Afghanistan, what he did not mention was the profit the U.S. made while "liberating" Afghan women. According to the report by *WION*'s Palki Sharma, "America spent more than $2.2 trillion on the war in Afghanistan. Most of this money went back to the U.S. via private contractors and companies. Top U.S. arms dealers got $2 trillion in public funds between 2001 & 2021" (WION Video Team, 2021). The "sacrifices" made by the U.S. and U.S.-led NATO to establish feminism in Afghanistan led to the victory of one side in Afghanistan, the U.S. military-industrial complex.

Now, I will quote what Julian Assange, the founder of Wikileaks, had told us in 2011: "The goal is to use Afghanistan to wash money out of the tax bases of the U.S. and Europe through Afghanistan and back into the hands of a transnational security elite. The goal is an endless war, not a successful war" (Wikileaks, 2021). Nassim Nicholas Taleb tweeted describing this war no differently: "Afghanistan: Largely a wealth transfer from U.S. taxpayers to military contractors" (2021). As released in *Afghan Papers: A secret history of the war*, according to

Defense Department figures, "Since 2001, more than 775,000 U.S. troops have deployed to Afghanistan, many repeatedly. Of those, 2,300 died there and 20,589 were wounded in action" (Whitlock, 2019). According to the report prepared by Brown University, nearly two decades after 9/11, the estimated cost of America's counterterrorism efforts stands at $6.4 trillion and 801,000 lives lost. In 2011, *The Washington Post* had reported on the massive leak of secret files exposing the truth of occupation in Afghanistan (Davis and Leigh, 2010), about which I will go not in detail right now. ABC NEWS reported on the hundreds of pages of defense leaks that provided "an unprecedented insight into the clandestine operations of Australia's elite special forces in Afghanistan, including incidents of troops killing unarmed men and children" (Oakes and Clark, 2017).

Since the beginning of 2021, 400,000 Afghan children have been pushed into refuge "joining the 2.9 million people who were already internally displaced at the end of last year" (Huang, 2021). And not only that but "Since the Taliban took over the government, the administration of US President Biden has frozen $9.5bn in Afghanistan's central bank assets held in the US," and "other members of the international community have taken measures to stop the flow of money to the Taliban and cut it off from the global financial system" (ibid). The reason, according to the Biden administration, was to prevent the Taliban from accessing the billions of dollars held in U.S. banks and to use the money to meet the needs of Afghanistan in the midst of a humanitarian catastrophe and to compensate the victims of the September 11, 2001 attacks. While the U.S. is continuing to pose as a torch bearer of humanitarian missions, fourteen independent human rights activists have issued a statement which says that Washington has made the situation of women in Afghanistan worse by seizing billions of dollars from the Central Bank of Afghanistan. That statement posits that, "While gender-based violence has been a long-

standing and severe threat to women and girls, it has been exacerbated by the measures imposed

by the US" (Reuters , 2022). The United Nations has also warned that about 95 percent of

Afghans do not have enough to eat, 9 million are at risk of starvation, 23 million are dependent

on food aid, and this is having an "uneven effect" on women and children.

Again, quite a way of empowering Afghan women!

"WE WILL COUP WHOEVER WE WANT! DEAL WITH IT"

Before even completing the process of troop withdrawal from Afghanistan, the U.S. and

its mainstream media had already started another narrative and rhetoric how "[t]he Taliban are

sitting on $1 trillion worth of minerals the world desperately needs" (Horowitz , 2021). Let's pay

attention to the rhetoric here. A "tyrannical regime" is taking control over resources that the

world *desperately* needs. This regime is depriving the world of what it *desperately* needs. The

people will hate the Taliban even more than they are already conditioned to hate it. This is about

pre-manufacturing hatred and consent to attack and invasion or any other sort of "intervention,"

if it ever comes to that. The article in *CNN* starts,

> The swift fall of Afghanistan to Taliban fighters has triggered a humanitarian crisis, with
>
> thousands trying to flee the country. It's also brought renewed focus on Afghanistan's
>
> vast untapped mineral wealth, resources that could transform its economic prospects if
>
> ever developed. (Horowitz , 2021)

I really have a lot to say here. "Swift fall" as if the U.S. did not decide to leave. "Swift fall" as if

the U.S.-backed puppet government did not just leave. "Swift fall" as if the U.S. had not already

planned this. "Swift fall" as if U.S.-backed Afghan troops did not just vanish the moment the

U.S. announced the withdrawal and Taliban started marching in. "Swift fall!" The rest of the

paragraph is scary. As I have said before, it is preparing us to believe that whatever it does to

Afghanistan in the future is for the development of Afghanistan and to give the rest of the world

what it "desperately" needs. If one does the contrapuntal reading, it gets scarier:

> Supplies of minerals such as iron, copper and gold are scattered across provinces. There
> are also rare earth minerals and, perhaps most importantly, what could be one of the
> world's biggest deposits of lithium — an essential but scarce component in rechargeable
> batteries and other technologies *vital to tackling the climate crisis*. (Ibid, emphasis added)

They brought the issue of the climate crisis to the fore here. To save our planet, to save our

future generation, we need that lithium. Consent to do whatever the U.S. and NATO decide to do

to Afghanistan is being manufactured!

Not only that but with the "discovery" of lithium by the US in 2007 the Pentagon had

suggested that Afghanistan could one day become 'the Saudi Arabia of lithium'" (Cooper, 2010).

Gen. David H. Petraeus, commander of the United States Central Command said that it means a

"stunning potential" (ibid). But it leaves me wondering what that "stunning potential" might

mean to Afghanistan and the Afghan people.

Also, can we imagine any other country (let's say Iran, Cuba, Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen,

Syria, Palestine, Nepal, you name it) scouting through the U.S. for these resources like the U.S.

does in the rest of the world? When United States Geological Survey (USGS) teams discovered

"one of the world's largest untapped reserves of lithium," the media started reporting on what

that means to the world of technology and Silicon Valley: "Lithium is a soft metal used to make

the lithium-ion and lithium-polymer batteries essential for powering desktop computers, laptops,

smartphones, and tablets. And increasingly, electric cars like Tesla's" (Reilly, 2014). Richard

Byrne Reilly (2014), for *Venture Beat*, writes,

> In Silicon Valley and beyond, tech companies like Apple, Google, Amazon, Microsoft,

Hewlett-Packard, Samsung, Sony, and Tesla rely on continual, and uninterrupted, access

to lithium, as lithium-based batteries are the primary power storage devices in their

mobile hardware.

Without these batteries, MacBooks, iPads, iPhones, Kindles, Nooks, Galaxy IIIs,

Chromebooks, and, yes, Tesla Model S cars would be largely worthless. If forced to use

older, nonlithium batteries, their battery lives would certainly be much shorter. (ibid)

Currently, Bolivia is the largest exporter of Lithium. I will not go into details here, but I request

everyone to do some research on the connection between Lithium, Bolivia, coup, and Elon

Musk. I will just briefly touch upon it to show the pattern behind how the Global North exploits

the Global South for resources whether it is the Middle East, South Asia, Africa, or Latin

America. Many pointed out that the US government organized a coup against President Evo

Morales so that Musk could obtain Bolivia's lithium. When Musk tweeted criticizing the

government stimulus package saying it is "not in the best interests of the people," Armani

(@historyofarmani), the account which seems to have been suspended now, replied, "You know

what wasnt [sic] in the best interest of people? the U.S. government organizing a coup against

Evo Morales in Bolivia so you could obtain the lithium there" (Prashad & Bejarano, 2020). And

to this, Musk replied, "We will coup whoever we want! Deal with it" (ibid). Among all this,

what we do not get to hear much is "[h]undreds of Bolivia's Indigenous population were

massacred following what was branded "a fascist coup" against Morales, who is currently in

exile in Argentina" (Sweeney, 2020).

Lithium is also called the gold of the 21st century, and Bolivia has "between 25% and

45% of the world's known lithium reserves" (ibid) in Salar de Uyuni salt flats. The Bolivian

government of Evo Morales was working to create a "publicly-owned lithium industry to help

diversify his country's economy and raise more of its people out of poverty" (Atkins, 2019). The constitution allowed only Bolivians to extract and process lithium, but private companies and multinational mining companies based in the United States, Canada, and South Korea were pressing for access to Bolivia's lithium, which was failing before Morales' ousting. Instead, Morales had cancelled a joint venture with a German company "over concerns that not enough benefit would go to the indigenous people who live near Uyuni" (ibid) and he was planning a deal with Russian and Chinese companies that would benefit Bolivia's Indigenous population. It was even working in favor of the Bolivian people. With "the money generated from the now publicly-owned natural resource industries, the Morales government embarked on a massive— and successful—poverty elimination program" (ibid). According to data collected by the Center for Economic and Policy Research, economic growth in Bolivia has been twice that of the Latin American and Caribbean region during the years of the Morales government.

> Bolivia's economy has undergone structural economic transformation during Evo
> Morales's presidency. Real (inflation-adjusted) per capita GDP grew by more than 50
> percent over these past 13 years. This was twice the rate of growth for the Latin
> American and Caribbean region. Even as the Latin American regional economy slowed
> over the past five years, Bolivia had the highest growth of per capita GDP in South
> America. (Arauz et al., 2019)

And the U.S. was not happy with that. According to a People's Assembly National Committee member Steve Sweeney,

> The coup administration led by Jeanine Añez immediately announced plans to invite
> transnationals, including Tesla, to exploit Bolivia's lithium reserves. A letter to Musk
> from Foreign Minister Karen Longaric, dated March 31, said: "Any co-operation that you

or your company can provide to our country will be gratefully welcomed." (Sweeney, 2020)

Similarly, C.J. Atkins demonstrated how things unfolded after the coup that hinted at the connection between this coup and the Global North imperial power centers.

the military overthrow of the Morales government—to cheers from the Trump administration, the Trudeau government in Canada, and the U.S.-dominated Organization of American States—shows the dangerous stakes for any small resource-rich country which tries to embark on an economic path that favors the poor and working class over the demands of the rich, corporations, and imperialist states. (Atkins, 2019)

In a perfect world where imperialism and global capitalism do not exist, indigenous populations, working-class people, and civilians of Bolivia and Afghanistan would benefit from the vast resources of their land without the global capitalist destruction of the planet. But as we do not live in that world –not yet – we will not get to hear bottom-up narratives of the Global South. Therefore, scholars and activists must engage in contrapuntal rhetorical practices continuously because not every time it is going to be as direct as Elon Musk's tweet, "We will coup whoever we want! Deal with it." We must dig out those narratives. Contrapuntally. Only then, we will somehow be on the path to knowing people's worlds, people's narratives, and people's knowledges better.

"WE CAME, WE SAW, HE DIED!"

One more story of NATO's mission of liberating the peoples of the Global South from its tyrannical regimes. This time, I am going to Libya. Once upon a time, not so long ago, Libya had a great man-made river. Libya is 95% desert, and 70% fresh water was provided by this river for both drinking and farming. It took years to build that river. And when NATO performed a coup

d'etat against Libya and got rid of Gaddafi, they bombed out the pipe factory so Libyans could not fix the great man-made river. Human Rights Investigations (2014), Truthout (Ahmed, 2015), and other independent news agencies and research organizations call it a war crime as it was an attack on essential civilian infrastructure. When enquired by Human Rights Investigation (HRI) about the bombing, the NATO press office replied, "We can confirm that we targeted Brega on July 22nd and we stroke [sic] successfully: one military storage facility and four armed vehicles" (Human rights investigations, 2011). When HRI further enquired, "What considerations were taken into account to ensure that the strikes did not damage civilian infrastructure or was damage to the civilian infrastructure considered legitimate?" the following is the answer from NATO (2011):

> Now in the area of Brega, NATO strikes included armoured vehicles, rocket launchers, military storage facilities and a repurposed concrete factory from which Pro-Gaddafi forces were using multi-viral [sic] rocket launchers, exposing the population to indirect fire.
>
> Let me show you some intelligence pictures that illustrate what we have observed at this concrete factory. By the way these pictures will be made available on the NATO site so it will be possible for the media can [sic] download them
>
> So basically repeatedly over the last few weeks we got clear intelligence indicating that pro-Gadaffi forces are using this factory for military purposes. This factory is being used to hide military material including Multiple Rocket Launchers. These weapons have been used every day from within this factory compound and then carefully hidden after the day within or along massive pipes you can see in this picture.

The pictures NATO is referring to can be accessed at the following link:

https://humanrightsinvestigations.org/2011/07/27/great-man-made-river-nato-bombs/. These pictures are no different than the childlike slideshow presentation Collin Powell presented at the UN, which was a *danse macabre* of lies that led to the destruction of Iraq. No further proof was required in either case before NATO aborted both nations. In one of the leaked emails, Kevin Stech, a U.S. intelligence contractor Stratfor's research director, jokingly said,

> How often do Libyans bathe? You'd have drinking water for a month if you skipped a shower.
> Seriously.
> Cut the baths and the showers and your well water should suffice for drinking and less-than-optional hygine [sic].
> George calls Libyans warriors. Seems like they could scrape by. (Wikileaks, n.d.)

An independent journalist Richard Medhurst questioned the nature of NATO in NATO's explanation of bombing the pipeline in Libya. Medhurst asked how we can call NATO a defensive organization when it goes and attacks civilian infrastructures in another country (Medhurst, 2022). Besides, they say pro- Gaddafi forces, by which they might mean the Libyan army, were using the factory for military purposes. Medhurst asked how the Libyan army would not use it when NATO is attacking the infrastructure which is not only one of the world's largest civil engineering projects but also something that Gaddafi did for his people living in a land that is 95% dessert (also refer to Gijsbers and Loucks, 1999). Medhurst adds that everything that came to Libya after that like "slave trade, the lawlessness, the constant fighting between groups, the foreign mercenaries coming in… Turkey sending foreign mercenaries, all these countries Egypt, Russia, Turkey getting involved turning it into a failed state" (ibid). He summarized NATO's logic: "How dare you defend yourself. We are going to bomb you another time. What a

beautiful logic!" (ibid). He adds that it has hardly anything to do with what they say about Gaddafi being a dictator. Instead, it has to do with the gold in Libyan Central Bank and "Ghaddafi trying to make a pan-African currency which would have gotten rid of the dollar… and CFA, which is the French currency, which they use in fourteen African countries" (ibid). Through this pan-African currency, Gaddafi was proposing to move away from the Western currency and wanted to sell African resources in African currency. Denise Rhyne (as cited in Brown, 2016) writes about it in detail in their blog:

> Libya's Qadhafi (African Union 2009 Chair) conceived and financed a plan to unify the sovereign States of Africa with one gold currency (United States of Africa). In 2004, a pan-African Parliament (53 nations) laid plans for the African Economic Community - with a single gold currency by 2023.

The whole plan of couping Gaddafi which led to the turmoil and destruction of Libya can be witnessed in "emails & email attachments sent to and from Hillary Clinton's private email server while she was Secretary of State" (Wikileaks, 2016). Those emails were released by WikiLeaks and are available at https://www.wikileaks.org/clinton-emails/?q=libya (ibid). One of the emails, with the subject heading "France's client & Qaddafi's gold," contains the following content, which substantiates the fact that Gaddafi was killed for his visions for Libya and Africa:

> Gaddafi has nearly bottomless financial resources to continue indefinitely, according to the latest report we have received… Qaddafi's government holds 143 tons of gold, and a similar amount in silver. During late March, 2011 these stocks were moved to SABHA (south west in the direction of the Libyan border with Niger and Chad); taken from the vaults of the Libyan Central Bank in Tripoli.
>
> This gold was accumulated prior to the current rebellion and was intended to be

used to establish a pan-African currency based on the Libyan golden Dinar. This plan

was designed to provide, the Francophone African Countries with an alternative to the

French franc (CFA).

Sarkozy's decision to commit France to the attack on Libya. According to these

individuals Sarkozy's plans are driven by the following issues:

A desire to gain a greater share of Libya oil production,

Increase French influence in North Africa,

Improve his internal political situation in France,

Provide the French military with an opportunity to reassert its position in the world,

Address the concern of his advisors over Qaddafi's long-term plans to supplant

France as the dominant power in, [sic] Francophone Africa. (Wikileaks, 2016)

Regarding what those emails demonstrated about an actual reason and a coverup story that the

NATO countries came up with, *Vice* writes,

While France's then-President Nicolas Sarkozy publicly said he wished to free the Libyan

people from tyranny, Blumenthal's memo argues that he was driven by a cocktail of less

lofty incentives, including a desire for Libyan oil, and a fear that Qaddafi secretly

planned to use his vast supply of gold to displace France's primacy in the region. (Asher-

Schapiro, 2016)

So much for democracy. So much for sovereignty. So much for decolonization that is said to

have begun in 1945.

If it were all about women in the Global South, why is there no "liberatory" mission

launched by NATO and the U.S. on Saudi Arabia, which has a worse human rights and women's

rights violation record? Because they are not in the way of NATO's interests and are rather

useful. And what we see in the mainstream Western media, Hollywood movies, and mainstream official reports is the repetition of the narrative of NATO. Hardly anyone in the mainstream media asked these questions that Medhurst and other independent and investigative journalists, political analysts, and researchers are asking. Rather, if we look at the rhetoric and narrative circulated by the corporate media in 2011, they were already laying the groundwork for manufacturing consent of publics. Here I present one example from *The New Yorker* by Andrew Solomon on March 22, 2011:

> Libyans did not merely have to put up with Qaddafi's lies. They were compelled to participate in them. He presented his Jamahiriya system as the world's only true democracy, declaring that the U.S. and other democratic countries should study it and learn from it. The system encourages people to participate in Basic People's Congresses, public forums in which everyone is supposed to air his concerns and grievances so that the voice of each person can be heard in the corridors (or perhaps tents) of power. These are not merely opportunities to let off steam or do the equivalent of writing to your congressman; they are supposed to be the basis on which the country is ruled. In fact, nothing is ever done about the opinions expressed there, except that anyone who has said anything too critical runs the risk of being detained, imprisoned, or tortured.

The article goes on like this making many claims against Gaddafi without providing any concrete evidence. The title of the article is "Why Qaddafi Must Go?" How many times are we going to normalize the ousting of the leader of any sovereign country in the Global South by the Global North while such ousting of a leader of the Global North by the Global South is unimaginable? Gaddafi was ousted on 20 August 2011 and killed on 20 October 2011. Since then, everything has changed for people in Libya. According to the 2011 Human Development Index – "which is

a composite measure of health, education and income" – Libya was ranked 1st in Africa and 53rd in the world (Mamdani, 2011). It had the lowest infant mortality rate and highest life expectancy in Africa. Now, the anti-imperialist activists say that NATO brought devastation to the whole country.

Then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's visit to Libya in October 2011 was referred to by the media as a "victory lap." But one question here: If it was a "humanitarian intervention," as they like to call it, how is it a victory lap with the havoc wreaked upon Libya after this "intervention"? As Ellen Brown (2016) wrote, "Crippling a civilian irrigation system serving up to 70% of the population hardly looks like humanitarian intervention." But if it was anything but a "humanitarian intervention," then we can consider calling it a victory lap. Let's dig it a little further. In a CBS video interview, after an unconfirmed report on the murder of Gaddafi, Clinton laughingly said, "We came, we saw, he died!" (CBS News, 2011). What she did not say is along Gaddafi's murder by NATO-backed "rebels," *Libya was aborted too*. Gaddafi, 69, was not only beaten to death, but he was also "sodomized" (Shelton, 2011 [Warning: Graphic]) and "lynched" (Azikiwe, 2011). According to the Geneva Conventions, "abuse of prisoners under any circumstance is not permissible" (ibid). No "international community" questioned it. No "international community" held the NATO countries accountable for any of these crimes.

Another evidence of war crime is contained in the brief sent by a long time close adviser to the Clintons and Hillary's unofficial intelligence gatherer, Sidney Blumenthal:

Under attack from allied Air and Naval forces, the Libyan Army troops have begun to desert to the rebel side in increasing numbers. The rebels are making an effort to greet these troops as fellow Libyans, in an effort to encourage additional defections.

(Source Comment: Speaking in strict confidence, one rebel commander stated that his

troops continue to summarily *execute all foreign mercenaries captured in the fighting…*).

(Hoff, 2016; refer to Foreign Policy Journal, 2015)

Let us unpack who they mean by foreign mercenaries. According to a former Marine Brad Hoff, "[B]lack Libyan civilians and sub-Saharan contract workers, a population favored by Gaddafi in his pro-African Union policies, were targets of 'racial cleansing' by rebels who saw black Libyans as tied closely with the regime" (Hoff 2016). And,

> [b]lack Libyans were commonly branded as "foreign mercenaries" by the rebel opposition for their perceived general loyalty to Gaddafi as a community and subjected to torture, executions, and their towns *"liberated" by ethnic cleansing*. This is demonstrated in the most well-documented example of Tawergha, an entire town of *30,000 black and "dark-skinned" Libyans which vanished by August 2011 after its takeover by NATO-backed NTC Misratan brigades*. (ibid, emphasis added)[24]

The Western mainstream media tried diverting the issue, as can be witnessed in CNN's piece (Koran et al., 2015) came out on the "New Year's Eve release of over 3000 new Hillary Clinton emails from the State Department" on "gossipy text messages" (Hoff, 2016). However, these emails proved the following things:

> admissions of rebel war crimes, special ops trainers inside Libya from nearly the start of protests, Al Qaeda embedded in the U.S. backed opposition, Western nations jockeying for access to Libyan oil, the nefarious origins of the absurd Viagra mass rape claim, and concern over Gaddafi's gold and silver reserves threatening European currency. (ibid)

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[24] Brad Hoff provides us resources that give us the brutal picture of this ethnic cleansing. Two of them are
   i)   Tarik Kafala (2011) https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-16051349 and
   ii)   The most comprehensive and well-documented study of the plight of black Libyans is contained in Slouching Towards Sirte: NATO's War on Libya and Africa (publ. 2012, Baraka Books) by Maximilian Forte, Professor of Anthropology and Sociology at Concordia University in Montréal, Québec. (Endnote, Hoff, 2011)

Does it mean Gaddafi was perfect? Far from it. We will find numberless instances of his exploitations. However, the question still remains: But is it really about Gaddafi's exploitation of Libyans? What does the killing of a leader of a sovereign nation and creating a complete turmoil in that country do to its people? I ask to the academics (as we all have witnessed many of them criticizing the Trump administration), would we justify destroying America and the lives of American people by some Global South leaders in the name of liberating American people from the Trump "regime"?

Can you really bomb feminism, liberation, and freedom into a country? Haven't we gotten the answer by now by looking at Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Libya, just to name a few? Can we imagine what the overturning of Roe v. Wade can do to women in general and particularly women from the BIPOC communities? So, let us ask the same questions: Can bombing undo these oppressive legalities imposed by unelected judges? Can bombing undo the state violence unleashed upon the protestors protesting this misogynist fascism? Forget about Gadhafi, we are talking about people here. What did the bombing of the Great Man-Made River have to do with nation-building or the liberation of the people of Libya? Can bombing Afghanistan liberate women from the Taliban's cruelty, especially against women? One cannot bomb feminism into a country and its people one is bombing that country for, can one? Coercion is coercion, isn't it? After 9/11, as per Arundhati Roy, the U.S. administration gave the rest of the world an option to choose between "a malevolent Mickey Mouse and the mad Mullahs" (Roy, 2003) and on October 7, 2001, the U.S. government, backed by the International Coalition Against Terror, "the new, amenable surrogate for the United Nations" (Roy, 2001). Here, let's not forget that this Coalition was formed from among the richest countries in the world:

Between them, they manufacture and sell almost all of the world's weapons, they possess

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the largest stockpile of weapons of mass destruction-chemical, biological and nuclear. They have fought the most wars, account for most of the genocide, subjection, ethnic cleansing and human rights violations in modern history, and have sponsored, armed and financed untold numbers of dictators and despots. Between them, they have worshipped, almost deified, the cult of violence and war. For all its appalling sins, the Taliban just isn't in the same league. (Roy, 2002)

GLOBAL SOUTH FEMINISMS VS. WESTERN IMPERIALIST "FEMINISM"

September 11, 2001 was not the first time the U.S. had started bombing "liberation from terrorists" in Afghanistan. On 20 August 1998, the U.S. had bombed Afghanistan and Sudan. The U.S. said that they had striking evidence to believe that "the organization of Osama Bin Laden was responsible for the bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania on August 7" (Kirgis, 1998) and "that a meeting of members of an international terrorist network he supported was imminent at the Afghan site when the missile attack occurred" (ibid). These officials also claimed that the target in Sudan was "a factory that American officials said made a precursor element used in the production of a potent nerve gas," to which Sudanese officials replied that "it was a pharmaceutical plant" (ibid). I will not go further into details here because I will be repeating the same rhetoric of defensive bombing against terrorism. By now, we all are familiar with it. Bombing liberation into Global South. Bombing nation rebuilding into Global South. Bombing utopian world into Global South. I will not go into it. But the reason I am bringing yet another example of bombing is to draw our attention to the response of the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA)[25] on August 21, 1998. It is going to be a

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[25] RAWA, founded in 1977, self-describes itself as "an independent political/social organization of Afghan women fighting for human rights and for social justice in Afghanistan" (RAWA, n.d.).

long quote, but we need to listen to this organization of Afghan women and their response to the U.S. imperialism carefully for once, for that does not seem to be happening quite often in this NATO's feminist mission and our consent to that mission:

> RAWA has in the past repeatedly warned that the US GOVERNMENT is no friend of the people of Afghanistan, primarily because during the past two decades she did not spare any effort or expense in training and arming the most sordid, the most treacherous, the most misogynic and anti-democratic indigenous Islamic fundamentalist gangs and innumerable crazed Arab fanatics in Afghanistan and in unleashing them upon our people. After the retreat of the Russian aggressors and the collapse of Najib's puppet regime in Afghanistan these fundamentalist entities became all the more wildly unbridled. They officially and wholeheartedly accepted the yoke of servitude to the interests of foreign governments, in which capacity they have perpetrated such crimes and atrocities against the people of Afghanistan that no parallel can be found in the history of any land on earth.
>
> RAWA roundly condemns the US air strikes against Afghanistan because the impoverished masses of Afghanistan --already trapped in the dog-fighting between the US's Taliban and Jihadi flunkeys-- are the ones who are most hurt in the attacks, and also because the US, like the arrogant superpower she is, has violated the sovereignty of the Afghan people and the territorial integrity of the Afghan homeland.
>
> The US is against fundamentalist terrorism to the extent and until such time as her proper interests are jeopardised; otherwise she is all too happy to be a friend and sponsor of any fundamentalist-terrorist criminal entity. If the US does not want her ridiculous bigotry to show and really wants to eliminate fundamentalist terrorism, she should draw lessons

from her own past myopic policies and realise that the sources of fundamentalist

terrorism are America's support to the most reactionary regimes in Arab and non-Arab

countries and her military and financial largesse to Afghan fundamentalist criminals.

Terrorism will be uprooted only when these two sources are dried up…

We condemn the US attack on Afghanistan!

Down with Taliban and Jihadi criminals!

Long live our people's intractable insurrection for Liberty and Democracy! (RAWA,

1998)

The fun thing is, as pointed out by Andrea Smith (2005), that "a group like the Fund for a

Feminist Majority ignore the voice of RAWA" (p. 25). I will bring one more instance of such a

voice. In one interview, Phyllis Bennis, an American writer, activist, political commentator, and

a leading supporter of Palestinian freedom, recalls her conversation with a young woman who

was the youngest member of the Afghan parliament at that time. When Bennis asked her, "What

about this whole question of what's going to happen to women in civil society, particularly

women's organizations, if the US pulled out?" To which, the Afghan Member of Parliament

replied,

You know, we women in Afghanistan, and we in civil society, we have three enemies,

three opponents in our country: One is the Taliban. Two is this group of warlords,

disguised as a government, that the US supports. And the third is the US occupation… If

you in the West could get the US occupation out, we'd only have two. (Jackson, 2021)

But these voices from the mouth of Afghan women were drowned in the loudness of the rhetoric

pushed forward by Western imperial power centers. Many Western feminists listened to Laura

Bush and ignored the voices of Afghan women –not only ignored but they did not even assume

that Afghan women have their own revolutionary voices. Epistemic violence is an assumption that people are voiceless and "speaking for" without listening to them. Laura Bush was not committing epistemic violence though. She knew she was speaking the language of the imperialist government. But through that speech, she created a foundation to strengthen epistemic violence. Imperialism's plan succeeded. Consent was manufactured and policies were built based on the words of Laura Bush, the U.S. administration, and NATO countries, and as a result Afghanistan was destroyed. Material violence. One of the ways to puncture the vicious continuum among epistemic, rhetorical, and material violence is to turn to transnational feminist grassroots organizations and activists and not corporate media, Laura Bush, the U.S. administration, or NATO countries. Contrapuntal reading is the only way to fight epistemic violence. The only way to get out of this vicious continuum is to listen to the feminist grassroots voices very carefully like that of the RAWA and amplify them through our pedagogical and research practices. The following three chapters are the continuation and exemplification of these last three sentences.

Chapter 4: Community-led Multimodal Bricoleur Archiving and a Demand for Accountability and Rematriation

I claim the accounting of humiliated history. (म अपमानित इतिहास को हिसाब चाहान्छु।)

-Dalit: A Quest for Dignity

If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.

- Lilla Watson & Aboriginal Rights group in Queensland

In her absence I created her image: out of the earthly the hidden heavenly commences.

- Mahmoud Darwish

WE STILL HAVE HOPE FOR ACCOUNTABILITY AND REMATRIATION, RIGHT?

This chapter is about hope and an exploration of possible paths to that hope. This chapter is about how, despite the weight of institutional, historical, and infra-structural violence and inequities that I discussed in the previous chapter, people are archiving back. This chapter starts and ends with the message I wrapped up the previous chapter with. Despite the weight of institutional, historical, and infra/structural violence and inequities, people write back and re-script the oppressive narrative demanding accountability and rematriation.[26] Communities have always been practicing resistance writing in the most creative and radical ways with the available resources, and all we need to do is humbly listen and learn from those practices and philosophies to design our community-student-centered pedagogical practices, curriculum, programs, services, documents, and institutions. This chapter draws upon Walter Mignolo's (2009) concept of epistemic delinking and disobedience to ask questions such as: Are hospitality and justice still possible through archival performances? If there is a possibility, then what does that possibility and hospitality look/feel like? Can archives still have healing effects? Can archives still be

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[26] Rematriation. (n.d.)

instrumental in curing social and global injustices? If it's impossible, why does finding possibility in that impossibility or demanding for the impossible feel like a decolonial feminist option?

I begin this chapter by accounting some of my experiences of building a digital archive of my street photography that I did in Nepal in 2017 before I came to the U.S. for my PhD. Discussing my own experience, I explore the ethics of archiving the Other. Then, I present the ethical dilemmas I encountered after I decided to build a digital archive. I connect these dilemmas with the—witting or otherwise—orientalist pattern behind two of the West-based digital archival projects about Nepal and South Asia. I also introduce the metaphor of pharmakon and argue for the need to interrogate archival performances through the questions of ethics. Through the discussion of my project, I attempt to offer, not a manifesto on ethical digital archives, but a possibility of making digital archives hospitable to the Other by building a dialectical relationship with the communities. After that, I turn to the works of grassroots organizations and individual activists from Nepal, India, Sri Lanka, Palestine, and Mexico with an aim to communicate that these works can help us in doing contrapuntal reading and re-rhetoricizing the Global South. I study their decolonial, anti-oppressive, and feminist recordkeeping and narrativizing works. My goal in this chapter is to amplify my insistence that Global Souths are speaking, and we need to train ourselves to listen to them. They have been telling their narratives using whatever is available to them amidst infra/structural and systemic inequities and to combat them. That is what I mean by multimodal bricoleur archiving.

AN EXPLORATION OF POSSIBILITIES IN THE IMPOSSIBLE[27]

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[27] The large part of this section has been published as an article, "The "nature" of ethics while (digitally) archiving the Other" in the Special Issue of *Across the Disciplines*. (Poudyal, 2021).

When for the first time I recognized that I wanted to study theories and practices of critical digital archiving not only on a theoretical level but by building my own digital archive of the 2017 street photography I did in Kathmandu, I had already started dreading that one day I would actually have to embark on this impossible journey. As a teacher, student, and researcher continuing to train in deconstructive epistemological performances, the act of building archives, digital or not, appeared to be a formidable and forbidding task involving a range of dilemmas. While "the archive … is a literal re-centring of material for the construction and contestation of knowledge, whereas postcolonialism often works toward a figurative decentring of that same material" (Kurtz, 2006, p. 25), my dilemma persisted. My hesitations and fear looked like this: What if I end up limiting even further the already limited imaginations about Kathmandu and Nepal, rather than challenging or creating havoc in constrained and naïve imaginations produced, disseminated, and stimulated by power locations? What if an inevitable archival gap keeps me from resisting epistemic injustices and I end up becoming an accomplice? After all, as Abraham Acosta (2012) puts it, there is always "an irreducible narratological gap between signification and meaning through which any and all claims to identity and knowledge are forced to disavow" (p. 120). This is also why I am avoiding explaining the photographs in this project and rather choosing to invite *impossible archival imaginaries* through these photographs.

In June 2018, right after I started building a digital archive of my street photography in Nepal, I saw that the best of my intentions were not enough to build an archive that ethically "represents" what I am archiving. It did not take too long to see that an archival presence and inclusion of some narratives is possible only through an archival absence and exclusion of Others. There is always some Other who is not included. I came to realize early on in my project that the best intentions are not going to save me from that inevitable absence to make a certain

presence possible. The existence of archives is possible only due to this archival gap, and it is

unescapable. There are always some Others whose narratives and epistemologies will keep on

haunting us from lacunae, as they should, about our failure. But does this failure mean that we do

not even try? Can we afford to not even try? What does trying look like when failure is

unpreventable? Hence, in this context of inevitable archival-narratological gap, what does

archival ethics mean and what is the "nature" of ethics while archiving the Other? This chapter

revolves around the questions raised by these impossibilities and proposes an acknowledgement

of the impossible and an exploration of the possibilities in that impossible as a possible archival

ethics. As Acosta (2012) has said about Luis Alberto Urrea's *The Devil's Highway*, this digital

archival project is "the necessarily impossible venture" (p. 110).

At this juncture, I invite the readers to understand archives and ethics through the

metaphor of pharmakon. Pharmakon can be understood as a double bind of medicine and poison

(Spivak "Responsibility," 1994, p. 34; refer to Derrida, 1981). Whether an archive's medicinal or

poisonous aspect becomes dominant depends on how one is performing it. Archives can be, if I

were to borrow Derrida's words, "self-protecting and self-destroying, at once remedy and

poison" (as cited in Borradori, 2003, p. 124). Archives are the double bind of medicine and

poison with no definite distinction between these two aspects. And that's why while archiving

the Other, a cure can anytime turn into a curse if not performed with immense care and

interrogated with the questions of ethics. Furthermore, archival ethics, cures, and healing are

impossible without responsibly acknowledging the profoundly excruciating weight of structural,

systematic, and epistemic injustices and the "disquieting use…of archival records to establish,

document, and perpetuate the influence of power elites" (Jimerson, 2007, p. 254). With this

acknowledgment, one should ask: Can archives still be envisaged as a space for "the re-

construction and the restitution of silenced histories, repressed subjectivities, subalternized knowledges and languages" that "bring[] to the foreground other epistemologies, other principles of knowledge and understanding and, consequently, other economies, other politics, other ethics" (Mignolo, 2007, p. 451, 453)? Can archives, "at once an instrument of oppressive power," also be "a potential weapon of liberatory struggle" (Harris, 2021, p. 2)? With these questions, my project emerges from intervening interstices between, on the one hand, unbearable memories of different forms of violence executed through archival practices/records and, on the other hand, a desire to imagine the possibility of transforming archives into a hospitable space for historically and structurally marginalized, excluded, absented, and oppressed voices and experiences. And with that accountability, acknowledgment, desire, and imagination, I engage in theoretical and methodological discussions of "the problem of representation and constitution of the subject" (Harasym, 1990, p. vii) while digitally archiving or narrativizing the Other.

The Other can have layered and multiple meanings. In this dissertation, the Other is the other of the imperial, colonial, capitalist, neo-liberal, heteropatriarchal Self. The Other is an object of inquiry, exploration, and discovery of hegemonic discourses of socio-symbolic order (Mohanty 1984; Said, 1978 & 1997; Fabian, 2006; Baca, 2009). The Other is archived to serve the interest and match the limited imagination of the Self. In those archives, the Other is discoursed, constructed, constituted, distorted, absented, represented, portrayed, or even 'benevolently' spoken for, but is absent/ed from the dialogues that would challenge the knowledge, imagination, and comfort of the Self (refer to Spivak, 1988; Vázquez, 2011).

WHY CRITICAL DIGITAL ARCHIVING? [28]

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[28] The large part of this section has been published as an article, "The "nature" of ethics while (digitally) archiving the Other" in the Special Issue of *Across the Disciplines*. (Poudyal, 2021).

During my research, I witnessed that most of the projects that are labeled as digital archives about Nepal are built by Westerners and housed at West-based institutions and organizations. For instance, the *Digital Archaeology Foundation-Nepal*, which was founded after the 2015 earthquake in Nepal to collect data "for research, heritage preservation, heritage appreciation, reconstruction planning, educational programs and 3D replication to aid in rebuilding and restoration work" and the collected data are "sent to the IDA [Institute for Digital Archaeology] in Oxford for referencing and preservation" (*Digital Archaeology Foundation*). The tagline of the archive reads, "preserving the past and present for future" (*Digital Archaeology Foundation*). And as Eric Ketelaar (2001) paraphrases Derrida's *Archival Fever,* the archive "is not just a sheltering of the past: it is an anticipation of the future" (p. 138). So, which and whose version of Nepal and South Asia are being preserved for the future in the *Digital Archaeology Foundation*? And for whose future? What is the ideology behind the kind of future that is being envisioned? And what kind of future can be anticipated through unexamined and uninterrogated online-digital archival performances which are driven by will-to-knowledge instead of creating a space for reciprocity, accountability, and dialogue with communities and their pluralities and heterogeneities?

The second digital archival project is the *Digital Himalaya*. As accessed through the database of the University of Cambridge, it defines itself as a project undertaken "to develop digital collection, storage and *distribution strategies* for multimedia *anthropological* information from the Himalayan region" and is "designed by Alan Macfarlane and Mark Turin as a strategy for archiving and *making available ethnographic materials* from the Himalayan region" (*Digital Himalaya*, emphasis added). The project was established in 2000 and based at the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Cambridge. From 2002 to 2005, the archive moved to

the Department of Anthropology at Cornell University and began its collaboration with the University of Virginia. And then, from July 2014, the project has relocated to the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada, and is engaged in a long-term collaboration with Sichuan University in Chengdu, Sichuan, China (*Digital Himalaya*). Now, just a simple question: *Making available ethnographic materials* from the Himalayan region by whom, with whose willingness and participation, to whom, and for what purpose?

On individual levels, all of these archival collections, and thus representations, might appear innocent and innocuous. And due to this apparent innocence and innocuousness, we often let them go unexamined and take for granted the power imbalance between who is archiving and who is being archived. Once, when I tried to discuss the problems of these archival practices with someone working in the field of technology, diaspora, and education in the US, the person asked me disapprovingly, "What do you want digital archives about South Asia to represent, if not South Asia?" For me, this particular question is driven by a failure to acknowledge or a resistance to acknowledging that archival rendering and recording of the Global South by the Global North is not an apolitical gaze and cannot be separated from the matrix of power and domination, which was rather disconcerting. But what was more troubling was the reality that this failure and resistance to conceding the problems embedded in "the imperial archive's penchant for collecting, classifying, and isolating…and preserving artifacts from othered traditions" (Cushman, 2013, p. 116, 118) is not an isolable phenomenon. While we are interpreting archival records, we often tend to de-politicize and naturalize them, as an English historian Vivian Hunter Galbraith once metaphorically called them, "the secretions of an organism" (1948, p. 3). And we tend to avoid the fact that "[a]rchives—as records—wield power over the shape and direction of historical scholarship, collective memory, and national identity,

over how we know ourselves as individuals, groups, and societies" (Schwartz & Cook, 2002, p. 2). That is why not taking for granted such questions as "What do you want digital archives about South Asia to represent, if not South Asia?" is crucial. Such questions tend to work through the truth versus lie binary and miss the whole point regarding the tendency of a "great collective appropriation of one country by another" (Said, 1978, p. 84) in such archival projects. They also fail to put these archival projects against the larger context of colonialism, orientalism, and cultural imperialism, to consider their semantic genealogy (Ketelaar, 2001), and to do contrapuntal re-reading of archives (Ghaddar & Caswell, 2019; see Said, 1994). Such uninterrogated rhetorical questions can easily run the risk of letting archival epistemic violence against the Other goes unnoticed and justified.

When the Other is structurally, systematically, and systemically unpermitted to complete their speech act but is only portrayed and spoken about and for, that is epistemic violence. When pluralities and heterogeneities of the Other and their epistemologies and ontologies are reduced to match some flattened narrative constructed by the privileged structure, that is epistemic violence. When there is no reciprocity, no availability of a dialogic room for the Other to speak, and no acknowledgment of the narratological gap and impossibility of knowing and archiving the Other in their entirety, that is epistemic violence. Here, I would like to quote Qwo-Li Driskill to further highlight the instance of archival epistemic violence. The Cherokee scholar and poet says, "The archival project was not created *for* Indians. It was created to consolidate knowledge *about* Indians. And yet, here I am, an Indian *in* the archive" (as cited in Powell, 2008, p. 117, emphasis added). Hence, my concern is beyond the binary of a true versus false representation. It is about the construction, constitution, and distortion of the Other through biased, violent, and simplistic interpretations where the archived ones are neither concerned nor consulted in a

meaningful manner. As Derrida (1995) says in *Archive Fever*, archivists as archons are also "accorded the hermeneutic right and competence" and "have the power to interpret the archives" (pp. 9-10). And whether archives perform a medicinal role or a poisonous one depends on how archivists embrace their responsibilities concerning the right, competence, and power they have to become an agent of change in the interests of accountability, social justice, and diversity (Jimerson, 2007; Gutenson & Robinson, 2016).

Therefore, my question is about the nature and reason of archival representation instead of whether the representation is true or false. As Elizabeth Yakel expounds, "the term 'archival representation' more precisely captures the actual work of the archivist in (re)ordering, interpreting, creating surrogates, and designing architectures for representational systems" (2003, p. 2). In these representational systems, Non-Western communities feel like just another research project conducted through the colonial mentality and methodologies of museumization where the Other becomes knowable and graspable through the already existing epistemological lens and the preset ontological compartments. The Others are to be recorded and preserved for a future that does not belong to them.

Sadly, but not surprisingly, these two archival projects about Nepal are just a glimpse at how the Other appears under the (digital) gaze of the West. The study of a pattern behind these projects demonstrates the most repeated depiction of 'third' worlds as either damage-based (as is also evident in another archival project, *2015 Nepal Earthquake*) or as stuck in some fixed past to be preserved for the dynamic future that belongs not to the archived Others but to the intellectual, scientific inquirers and explorers representing the power-centers. This pattern parallels "[the] imperialist agenda of preservation of cultural tradition as hermetically sealed, contained, and unchanging" (Cushman, 2013, p. 117). The worlds of the Other are often

represented with a dimension of the damage, exoticization, past, and museumization and are backed up by 'big' institutions and large funding. Here, I am remembering Johan Galtung's words regarding scientific colonialism: "a process whereby the center of gravity for the acquisition of knowledge about the nation is located outside the nation itself" (1967, p. 300; refer to Lewis, 1973; Diamond, 1964; Said, 1978; Spivak, 1999; Lidchi 2013). These archival projects, which I am also calling digital orientalism, are different from classical imperialism only because they are "extraction of surplus-value without extra-economic coercion" (Spivak, 1988, p. 290), a process of "information retrieval" (Spivak, 1990, p. 59).

RECLAMATION OF DIGNITY AND DEMAND FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

Before starting to tell stories, the training we need is in listening. While accepting the Sydney Peace Prize, Arundhati Roy said, "There's really no such thing as the 'voiceless.' There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard" (2004, p. 1). Dalits are one of such communities who have been undergoing unimaginable violence for centuries: stratified and labeled as "untouchables" in the Hindu caste system to steal (the possibility of) resources from them, lynching, police brutality, rape, and whatnot. And amid caste-based violence, what happens is that we, non-Dalits who self-claim to be non-casteists or anti-casteists, selectively picture Dalits as voiceless passive victims who need to be spoken for. Here, I want to recall Spivak's discussion of representation and the greater harm that can happen if we are not aware of the possibility of epistemic violence. Therefore, I will try to approach Dalit narratives differently in this section: by listening to them carefully, humbly, and actively instead of labeling Dalits as voiceless people who needs to be spoken for and cannot be heard.

Dalit Camera: Through Un-Touchable Eyes (DC) is a multilingual archival project that brings together journalism and digital tools and tells the intersectional narratives of caste-based

oppression in the past and the present. It started "in 2011 with an ordinary still camera with a rudimentary video recording facility" (Dalit Camera, n.d.) as a YouTube channel. It is founded by Raees Mohammed (2020), formerly known as Ravichandran Bathran before conversion to Islam (Mohammed, 2020), after surviving "a brutal beating [because of his caste] at the hands of [20] members of a Hindu nationalist student organization" (Paul and Dowling, 2020, p. 1). Raees Mohammed is a Dalit himself and due to the historically oppressive, discriminatory, and exploitative forms of labor and resource control, his particular community belonged to "the manual scavenging community—which cleans toilets that do not have a modern flush system" (ibid).

He had to undergo vicious caste-based abuses. Around the same time, he heard about one Dalit woman being brutally beaten by "upper caste" villagers "who resented her position as the head of the village council" (Dhillon, 2014). And that's when he, along with around 20 students and two simple video cameras, taking raw footage, decided to start a YouTube channel on epistemic, symbolic, and material violence against Dalits and Dalit voices:

> This was primarily because we were fed up with mainstream English channels that were outdoing each other in accusing DABM people. As a response and a counter-view to the cartelised-hegemony of the English news channels, we started documenting different views from Dalit communities [sic] activists, students, intellectuals etc. (Dalit Camera, n.d.)

The contents *DC* documents are "activist-writer Arundhati Roy, Dalit music, and a southern Indian soft-porn actress talking about male dominance in the film industry," on the Osmania University beef issue, the Ambedkar Cartoon controversy, and Dr. Satyanarayana's perspectives on Prof. Ashish Nandy's comment "SC, ST, OBCs were most corrupt" under the title "Is Prof.

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Ashis Nandy a Sacred Cow?" (Dalit Camera, 2013) and an arrest of a strong advocate of Dalit rights, Delhi University's Associate Professor Hany Babu.

DC is said to be the first video-based project to document the experiences and activisms of Dalit students. *DC* describes its objective as documenting "perspectives on/voices of Dalits, Adivasis, Bahujans and Minorities (DABM)" (Dalit Camera, n.d.). Later, it also started a web archive which is available at https://www.dalitcamera.com. It is run by students, and its financial responsibility is largely carried out by themselves though they accept help if someone voluntarily offers. They also crowdsource materials and have specific guidelines for that (ibid). Because of how it states its objective and the way it invites communities to tell stories of oppressions and resistances around them, Subin and Dowling surmises, "[*DC*] casts its contributors as both citizen journalists and archival documentarians" (p. 2). Dalit Camera has been challenging not only oppressions but also mainstream urban movements that often leave out Dalits, Adivasis, Bahujans and Minorities (DAMB) communities, women, and their voices from their activisms. While speaking with Dalit Camera, feminist and Dalit activist Rekha Raj voices her opinions about "the significance of the protests and media outcry that followed the gang rape of a middle-class 23-year-old medical student in Delhi in December 2012" (BBC, 2014). She also adds, "I believe that the protests in Delhi over the gang rape of a student have no other political significance than a mere middle-class fury" (ibid). The same fury is hardly dedicated to DAMB. She brings up an example of "widespread rape of Dalit lower-caste women in farming at the hands of uppercaste landowning men had received no attention in comparison to the middle-class victim" (Subin and Dowling, p. 6). As per official figures, there were "1,574 Dalit women" raped that year, but there was hardly any "media outcry" (Dhillon, 2014). Dalit Camera reminds us about the rape and lynching of two teenage Dalit girls in Uttar Pradesh, India. The two girls were

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later "found hanging — symbolic of their less-than-nothing status in society" (GlobalPost, 2014). When the mainstream feminism fights against "rape culture," it hardly mentions rape culture against DAMB. In a 9-minute video posted on *DC*, Bojja Takaram, a Dalit lawyer says:

> If you look at it objectively, there is a sea of difference in the way Indian society reacts to the rape of a low caste woman compared to the rape of an upper caste woman… In the case of a dalit-class woman, rape is not seen as rape, it's a usual event, a dalit woman's body is there for the taking. (ibid; Castells, 2015)

In a 2014 interview, when he was asked if he will cover sexual violence against Dalit women in *DC*, Raees Mohammed (then known as Bathram Ravichandran) says:

> How many can we possibly cover? It's an epidemic – Dalit women suffer sexual violence every day. The case of the rape and death of the two teenagers only got media attention because Dalit groups brought it to public notice.
>
> Secondly, photographs of their faces and hanging bodies were shown, which is against the law and which would never be done with upper-caste victims.
>
> And thirdly, at no time has any television debate on the issue included a Dalit woman or Dalit group.

Though it's impossible to include each of the excluded experiences of oppression, Dalit Camera is archiving and humanizing the stories of DABM bodies, ontologies, epistemologies and dignity that have been treated indifferently by these activisms, media, and journalism. DABM are fighting back, and *DC* is a documentation of those resistance narratives demanding accountability.

Comparing *DC* with the traditional practices of archiving, Subin and Dowling writes, "the former is a more dynamic endeavor—filled with timely ripostes and commentaries against

opposing mainstream narratives—than an exercise confined to designing and maintaining web portals for information storage and display" (p. 5). *DC* is not just a static curation of the past or present but a dynamic political protest and social justice project. Just as Castells noted that in Tunisia and Iceland, "the movement went from cyberspace to urban space, with the occupation of the symbolic public square as material support for both debates and protests" (2015, p. 46), Subin and Dowling writes, "DC has similarly leveraged online media to publicize its protests on behalf of Dalits" (p. 5). Drawing upon Manuel Castell's (2015) examination of the role social media networks played in Egyptian revolution, they also equate social protests sparked by *DC* with the Egyptian revolution, "The Egyptian revolution relied heavily on YouTube to bring a deeply human element of lived experience to the event that mobilized resistance, which was further coordinated through Twitter and other SMS" (p. 6). Before moving ahead, I would like to quote Castells (2015) here:

> [V]ideos of security forces treating the protesters brutally were shared via the Internet, exposing the violence of the regime in unedited form. The viral nature of these videos and the volume and speed with which news on the events became available to the wider public. (p. 60)

DC does the three things if we were to categorize: brings forth the oppression against these communities for the world to witness, which would not have been possible through mainstream media, ii) highlights heterogeneities of DABM communities and subjectivities by going beyond the "passive victims" delineation of these humans, and iii) brings protestors together. *DC* is a fine example of how technologies and digital tools have been used from the margin and the space of resistance for social movements and social transformation.

When we talk about the power of digital and multimodal archiving, it is not about moving

from offline to online platforms but the combination of both. Castells (2005) writes on the multimodal nature of the Egyptian revolution:

> The role of pre-existing offline social networks was also important, as they helped facilitate the canvassing of pamphlets in the digitally excluded slums, and the traditional forms of social and political gatherings in the mosques after the Friday prayers. It was this multimodality of autonomous communication that broke the barriers of isolation and made it possible to overcome fear by the act of joining and sharing. (p. 60)

Similarly, Noha Atef, an activist in an interview during the Egyptian revolution, articulates:

> To have a space, an on-line space, to write and talk to people, to give them messages which will increase their anger, this is my favorite way of on-line activism… When you ask people to go and to demonstrate against the police, they were ready because you had already provided them with materials which made them angry. (Aouragh & Alexander, 2011)

We can interpret it further in terms of the expiry date and intensity of that anger, but we can still see the value in it.

ETHICS OF ARCHIVING THE OTHER

When we are talking about archival optimism, archival activism, digital activism, how about starting this conversation with other others, doubly, triply, quadruply othered ones? Dalit. Dalit women. Dalit Madhesi women. Dalit Madhesi Queer. Dalit Madhesi Queer with Disability. The further we go, the more absent they seem and the more non-existent their existence feels like. I started this chapter with a confession of the limitations of archival optimism. Yet, we are determined to hope. As mentioned earlier, this chapter is about that: multimodal archival hope. When I had just started building my digital archive, I was overwhelmed by my own project

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(because archival labor is so real). I said that to one of my colleagues who asked me, "Think about what you want to achieve from this archive." I replied, "Dignity." And now I am remembering the 2016 *Dalit: A Quest for Dignity* exhibition (2016) and the photobook (2019), by the same title, both curated by Raja KC Diwas. These projects are "an attempt to create a visual archive of the Dalit experience in modern Nepal" (Diwas, 2019, p. 4) through the heuristics of dignity. I will take help of this project to lead this section on Dalit activism and careful archival optimism.

     Dalit: A Quest for Dignity is a collection of photographs from the last sixty years and various parts of Nepal on the historical presence of Dalits in Nepal, their lives and their resistance. The project also contemplates the ethics of a photographic archival project about the Other. While "[c]ameras were, for much of the twentieth century, prohibitively expensive" and "the few Nepalis who owned cameras did not think to turn their lenses towards Dalit communities around them, leaving the bulk of the task to foreigners," "Dalits themselves occasionally accessed the growing culture of studio photography and hired photographers for their own purposes of representation" (Diwas, p. 4). This project attempts to see if cameras can be useful in Dalit emancipation even if history itself has not shown any substantial promise on that end. They observe,

> This is, however, not due to a lack of interest on the part of Dalits in the cultural politics of representation not due to the absence of an image world. Religious practice, art and architecture, public symbols, and popular culture, among other things, concretely constitute visual imagery as a vital aspect of caste society. There is also a more rudimentary kind of image-making that occurs. Those of us who grow up in a caste-based society have certain stereotypes of the "untouchables" planted in our heads, which are

well-defined mentally and can be recalled as if they were photographs. We use these images of the enslaved and the ostracized to determine our quotidian interactions and position ourselves among others. These images can have a mnemonic force more powerful than actual photographs. Dalits understand that their struggle for justice and dignity is already steeped in this world of mental image-making and therefore dependent on the production of alternative images. What images can do for and against caste oppression is, thus, not in question. (Diwas, 4, 6)

I ponder upon this quote by connecting it to the ethics of contrapuntal reading. With the unsurprising and expected lack of substantial visual-archival documents invested in Dalit emancipation, how can the journey toward dignity be taken by looking back into those documents? It needs contrapuntal reading and archiving, reading against the grain, digging out the other side of the story. *Dalit: A Quest for Dignity*'s attempts to do so, which compelled me to write about it. How much did it succeed? I will leave the answers to this question to the communities that this project is about. I am still an outsider trying to learn and exemplify contrapuntal reading.

> The smell of my forge is in your temple idol
> the smell of my sweat in the pan on your hearth's tripod.
> Have the nerve to meet my eyes pious one!
> Either roast my existence in red hot embers and have the nerve to uphold dharma
> or rip up the learned pages that humiliate me and have the courage to set them ablaze.
> I am the Kami who made the god of your temple!
>
> -Dalit: A Quest for Dignity

As per the visual curation in *Dalit: A Quest for Dignity*, most of the photographs collected go back to documentary photography, travel photography, or photojournalism. While these photographs capturing Dalit lives trapped in socio-economic discriminations and precarities is crucial to demonstrate the urgency for radical social

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transformation, the important point that this archival project raises is:

> there are also questions about the ethics of depicting human beings caught up in
>
> inhumane conditions, of showing people engaged in political strife, of uncomfortably
>
> baring the pain of maimed and crushed bodies, and yet finding ways to present the basic
>
> dignity and stubborn beauty that thrives even among subjects covered in sweat, dirt, and
>
> blood. (Diwas, p. 6)

As I have pointed out in Chapter 1 while discussing epistemic violence, there is no way one can

avoid re-presenting and representing. To call some portrayal an objective portrayal of reality can

be violence in itself. I have no access to the *intended* "objective" narrative behind the portrayal

of Dalits in those images, but as *Dalit: A Quest for Dignity* builds upon the critiques of such

photography, "the mass production of images of hardship and exploitation have only

desensitized public viewers, making it easier for them to ignore violence" (p. 6) and "served only

to sate the appetite of their voyeuristic gaze" (p. 8). Despite provoking audiences to understand,

question, and fight the discriminatory structure that gives birth to such unequal living conditions,

such uncritical and neutrality-pretending visual documentations rather demarcate them as

inherently poor, underdeveloped, and "backward." Not only that, but "we frequently find

persecutors openly lynching Dalit victims, sometimes themselves photographing, video-

recording, and circulating their acts of violence as a warning to other Dalits" (p. 8). So, given

this context of violence and shivering discrimination, one cannot get away with declaring

neutrality in the performance of record keeping. But, as observed earlier, when we have nothing

substantial but these artifacts while looking back into the past for visual archival records on Dalit

lives as a quest for dignity, we have to read it differently, which is what I meant by contrapuntal

reading. While doing contrapuntal reading of the artifacts, we also must archive contrapuntally,

as *Dalit: A Quest for Dignity* is demanding from us, to humanize these realities of the people in these photographs and dig out the submerged "hidden structures of caste violence" (p. 10). (As I am writing these lines, I received news that an 18-year-old young Dalit man, Chandre Kami, is missing after his intercaste marriage a "higher caste" woman (Kunwar, 2019). Dalit and non-Dalit activists and the Dalit community is dreading if it is another reiteration of the barbaric Rukum incident (Karki, 2020).)

REMEMBERING THE WILLFULLY OBLITERATED AND UNACKNOWLEDGED STORIES

Black July, or July 1983, in Sri Lankan history, is one of the willfully obliterated histories of the "act of genocide" and "orchestrated project of targeted bloodletting" against Tamil people (Jananayagam, 2011). This "state-sponsored murder" has been subject to "many analyses of the Sri Lanka's protracted ethnic crisis" but only recognized as a "marker for the 'start of the war'" (ibid). It is not the first such strategic violence against Tamil communities, but the first one that was recognized, though not substantively, by the international community. But the lack of acknowledgement cannot block the stories from being heard. They leak and the community members make that leakage happen. The 'Shadow Scenes' exhibition, by an Ahmedabad-born curator Natasha Ginwala and Menika Van Der Poorten, is one of the leakages. About the exhibition, which "sees reflection of [2002] Gujarat riots in Sri Lanka's Black July anti-Tamil pogrom of 1983," Ginwala says, "It became quite personal. I had to think about this as a living ruin and an archive that had endured this kind of history" (Daniel, 2015). The exhibition featured 41 contributors from local and international visual art practices that converged into multimodal archiving and exhibition of painting, installation, sound, photography, film, and performance (The Gujral Foundation, n.d.). Not only the exhibition but its physical situatedness has an

intentional meaning as well. I will take help from Smriti Daniel's (2015) words to capture that meaning:

> Thirty-two years after an anti-Tamil pogrom engulfed Colombo in what came to be known as Black July, there is perhaps only one place in the city where you can still see traces of the fires that were set that day. But that is not the reason why drivers of tuk-tuks, as auto-rikshaws are known to locals, will throw you a questioning look if you ask to be dropped off at the Rio on Slave Island.
>
> For the most part, the once luxurious, 60-room hotel has been forgotten, as has the adjoining Navah Cinema. It is the third member of that complex, an adult film cinema, also called the Rio, which has earned the venue its notoriety. But until the end of the month, if you walk past the box office, take a right and brave a dark corridor, you will find yourself at the threshold of one of the city's most unusual art exhibitions. (n.p.)

The "beautification" and gentrification has erased the marks of the histories of this city, and the curators and artists find this exhibition venue, perhaps, the only place in the city that is still keeping history in its womb. The exhibition, curated in a 7-storeyed building, is both of the violence and the "beautified" erasure of the history of anti-Tamil violence. The exhibition not only foregrounded "aspects of urbanization, colonial legacy, cultural identity and communal memory, while undertaking a cinematic reading of modernity as a resonant field of violence" but also demonstrated "an organic and temporary architecture of ideas and possibility" (The Gujral Foundation, n.d.).

Another visual artist who is recording the obliterated history of state violence is Gauri Gill. Gill is a photographer who is visually telling stories about the 1984 anti-Sikh pogrom that occurred in New Delhi. The notebook, *Gauri Gill – 1984*, is one such photographic testament

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which archives the stories of "the people and places that had been so devastated by the pogrom, to photograph and reconnect with the victims and their families" (Storney, n.d.). To prepare this notebook, she keeps returning to the people and communities in 2009, 2014 and 2019. She updated her notebook over and over and published it in 2020. What I am trying to draw our attention to is she is not treating the people and their woes as a tool to, lazily and without due respect, produce something. But she uses her art and resources to tell the history that has been silenced. She takes time to do it. Her respect is visible in the slowed-down and careful process. The first time she made the notebook *1984* available was in 2013 at https://kafila.online, which "is a collaborative practice of radical political and media critique, and an engagement with the present" (Kafila, n.d.).

The artists from the margin have been telling stories which are deliberately or carelessly buried by the dominant systems and power centers. The examples I am presenting are just a small yet powerful part of the vastness of the leakage happening from the margins that will not let the center rest so easily. These leakages are the symbol of hope that people, their experiences and the realities of their resistances cannot be appropriated or obliterated.

EARTH: THE SOURCE AND CANVAS OF INDIGENOUS STORYTELLING OF *SUMUD*

On March 30, 1976, "Israeli police shot and killed six Palestinian citizens of Israel as they were protesting the Israeli government's expropriation of thousands of donums of Palestinian land" (Hawari, 2018). Since then, March 30 has been "a major commemorative date in the Palestinian political calendar and an important event in the Palestinian collective narrative" (ibid). This day is a reminder of the Palestinian resistance against ongoing Israeli colonialism and Palestinian steadfastness to continue remaining despite every Zionist effort to

ethnically cleanse them. Palestinian artistic expression of resistance is one of the examples of that resistance and steadfastness. These artists have made land not only the subject matter of their art but also a source of their art.

> Though not belonging to a coherent art movement, these artists use the materials of occupied land in order to reclaim agency over it and to resist the settler-colonialist structures which continue to exploit it. Ranging from the very mud of the ground to the olives it produces and the limestone that is dug from its belly, these materials both embody Palestinian culture are charged with violent histories of conflict, evoking the material realities of life under occupation. (Dahshan, n.d.)

During the first Intifadah of 1987 to 1993, Sliman Mansour, Tayseer Barakat, Vera Tamari, and Nabil Anani are some of the Palestinian artists who started boycotting Israeli art supplies and turned toward land and natural and earthly materials like "mud, wood, natural dyes, and leather to make their work" (ibid). Olive trees or olives have their own special place in Palestinian history and resistance, and artists have used it as a way to perform contrapuntal storytelling. Installation artist Rana Bishara's *Olivetus*, for instance, "features an olive painfully punctured by needles: a gruesome metaphor for the Israeli regime's systemic violence against Palestinian land and culture" (ibid). Making these materials the source and canvas of their art, they told the story about Palestinian *sumud*: steadfastness against Israeli genocidal occupation.

FEMINIST COUNTERDATA

The first project that comes to my mind while talking about data feminism is María Salguero's counterdata initiative, *Los feminicidios en México*, an open-access map tracking cases of femicide in Mexico. For this project, she "sifts through her Google Alerts and the local news in Mexico for reports of femicides" (Sim, 2018). The lack of government-published data on

gender-based killings of women and girls caused the continuation of this violence against women led Salguero, a geophysical engineer, to initiate this project in 2016. D'Ignazio and Klein (2020) succinctly contextualize this project and give us a picture of the consequences of the lack of data on the administrative level:

> [W]idespread media coverage about the deaths of poor and working-class women in Ciudad Juárez. A border town, Juárez is the site of more than three hundred maquiladoras: factories that employ women to assemble goods and electronics, often for low wages and in substandard working conditions. Between 1993 and 2005, nearly four hundred of these women were murdered, with around a third of those murders exhibiting signs of exceptional brutality or sexual violence. Convictions were made in only three of those deaths. In response, a number of activist groups like Ni Una Más (Not One More) and Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa (Our Daughters Back Home) were formed, largely motivated by mothers demanding justice for their daughters, often at great personal risk to themselves. (p. 35)

The activist groups Ni Una Más and Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa along with other groups pushed the Mexican government to take an action to stop this violence. The latter started a Special Commission on Femicide and produced fourteen volumes of information on femicide. But nothing substantial happened. One study done in 2009 showed that one of the major reasons behind this failure to address this issue was the lack of data.

One of the goals of the data mapping project, *Los feminicidios en México*, is to humanize the victims of femicide and therefore, Salguero logs in as much information as she can gather to keep their memories alive and to understand the socio-economic foundation of that violence. One of the figures from the project *Los feminicidios en México* presented in *Data Feminism* (Figure

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1.5b at p. 38 in the book) shows "a detailed view for a single report from an unidentified transfemicide, including the date, time, location, and media article about the killing," which can take Salguero three to four hours a day to do this unpaid work" (p. 36). The method of depending on crowdsourcing and media reports might not be able to create a perfect map but this is one of the kindest and toughest endeavors by a single human to fill in the vacuum created by the negligence and incompetence of the government. *Los feminicidios en México* has provided data to activists and "has been used to help find missing women, and Salguero herself has testified before Mexico's Congress about the scope of the problem" (p. 36). About the function of the map, Salguero says, "This map seeks to make visible the sites where they are killing us, to find patterns, to bolster arguments about the problem, to georeference aid, to promote prevention and try to avoid femicides" (as cited in D'Ignazio and Klein, p. 38).

ETHICS OF DEMANDING AND DESIRING IMPOSSIBLE ETHICS: OUTRO[29]

What I am learning from this research and my own archive-building journey is that digital and multimodal archives must prioritize dialectical relationships with the community where the presence of incongruous, intricate, and irreconcilable dialogues is possible, and archivists should not be afraid to let these dialogues slow down the archival process. There must be a humble awareness that archival presence for some realities and records means an absence and exclusion of the others. Archival inclusion of all is impossible, and that impossibility is what archivists must strive for. This struggle toward the impossible is "the call of justice—which comes from outside of 'the record,' outside of any archival or recordmaking theory" and this call "is a calling more important than any other calling" (Harris, 2007, p. 248). For this call for

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[29] The following section is published as an article, "The "nature" of ethics while (digitally) archiving the Other," in the Special Issue of *Across the Disciplines*. (Poudyal, 2021).

justice, archivists must endeavor for impossible archival imaginaries. As per Gilliland and Caswell (2016), these archival imaginaries "can provide a trajectory to the future out of a particular perspective on the past and may build upon either actual or imagined documentation and narratives" and "to instantiate the possibility of a justice that has not yet arrived" (pp. 61, 65). If I could not find a compatible answer related to archive-building among only 20-25 participants, we need to understand what "answers" would look like if we imagine a community beyond that participatory design table. What about the ones who are photographed? What would they say? What about the ones who are not photographed? Again, what would they say? What about the participants who might never have access to participate in any such dialogic rooms? Is it ever possible to ethically address and include all the Others? These are the toughest questions that will rupture any final ethical claims. From here, archivists should slowly, patiently, humbly, and stubbornly move toward impossible archival imaginaries.

Rhetoricians, writers, storytellers, educators, designers, and archivists must ask themselves the hardest of questions, the ones that are impossible to answer. And they must walk toward the impossible. That's the ethics. Impossible ethics. Let's call it, as Christen and Andersons (2019) would say, the ethics of staying with the trouble. Citing Donna Haraway, they ask archivists to "stay with the trouble," continuing "to be open to 'unexpected collaborations and combinations' [and] to see the colonial troubles— the structures and logics that drive our collection, curation, and circulation practices and processes" (p. 99). Staying with the trouble also means, to borrow Spivak's (1993) words, "arrest[ing] the understandable need to fix and diagnose the identity of the most deserving marginal" and "suspend[ing] the mood of self-congratulation as saviors of marginality" (p. 61). There must be a strong sense of commitment to self-interrogation, which will protect digital archivists from falling into a self-congratulatory

snare that traps every possibility of further evolution, transformation, and archival social justice. Failure to do so will make even a well-intentioned project an accomplice of epistemic violence. While digitally archiving the Other, archivists cannot deny the pharmakon-like characteristics of archives where medicine/cure can always be in danger of turning into poison/curse if archivists do not recognize, acknowledge, demand, desire, and strive for the impossible ethics.

Chapter 5: Design Justice and Data Feminism with and for Global Souths

> *Design justice practitioners are working to rethink extractive design processes and to replace them with approaches that produce community ownership, profit, credit, and visibility.*
>
> – Sasha Costanza-Chock, *Design Justice*

> *We want a world where many worlds fit.*
>
> – Arturo Escobar quoting the Zapatistas from Chiapas, *Designs for the Pluriverse*

> *Injustice IS a technical communication problem…. We contend that problems of social injustice are more pernicious than other kinds of problems. Social injustices require coalition action, collective thinking, and a commitment to understanding difference that are not necessarily demanded by other technical communication problems.*
>
> – Rebecca Walton, Kristen Moore, and Natasha Jones, *Technical Communication After the Social Justice Turn*

No form of global injustice and violence in today's world can be disjointed from the violence of heteropatriarchal capitalism and imperialism, the highest form of capitalism, and there is a deeply vicious connection between capitalism, heteropatriarchy, and our modern use and philosophy of technology as was evidenced, especially, in the first three chapters. The nagging questions for me are: Can computing be anti-capitalist and feminist? Can an algorithm be hospitable? Can design be just? Can data be feminist? After all, what do we think about when we say computing, algorithm, and design, what spaces do we think about, and who controls those spaces? Who has access to these spaces, these "innovation" labs, big data extraction tools, technology centers, and audiences? I give one example here from a personal observation of the academic job market. We have been witnessing that the field of DH is taking a critical and anti-oppressive turn. We have seen many projects coming out which are more assertively anticolonial, antiracist, and feminist. But as I have been observing the digital humanities job market for a few years, each position requires the candidate to have coding literacy. Who has access to it? Why can't we imagine DH as a collaborative space where justice-driven critical

intellectuality and coding literacy are equally valued? A collaborative space where community knowledge, justice-driven critical intellectuality, and coding literacy are equally valued? A space where community knowledge and communities are valued more? If these questions seem a bit far-fetched, can computing ever be decolonial and feminist, can databases ever be hospitable, and can design be just?

Posing these questions, I propose a feminist design justice approach with and for the Global South as a way to subvert the heteropatriarchal, imperialist, capitalist, neoliberal understanding and practice of design and technology. The practitioners of this approach understand that the design process and products are in a continuum with the design of the world we live in, how we interpret the design of the world, and how we anticipate or wish to design the future of the world*s*. As Fred Turner said, "Design is the process by which the politics of one world become the constraints on another" (Kelly and Brand, 2017, n.p.). And when we say, "one world," that default "one world" is the Global North which is imposing, its design (of what not) on the rest of the planet, many worlds in the planet. Feminist design justice works with a knowledge that the world is already many worlds, but we tend to think of the world as singular/*uni*verse only because dominant capitalist, imperialist, heteropatriarchal power centers have been imposing the *idea* of one version of the world upon the rest of the worlds through epistemic-material violence. That suffocatingly oppressive version of the world is the "one world" project of neoliberal globalization (Costanza-Chock, 2020) that has been robbing us of the sense of community, the healing that happens in the community. Hence, even when we say community, diversity, inclusion, and equity, we are dominantly propelled by the project of neoliberal globalization. I would like to continue by quoting Sasha Costanza-Chock (2020) to set a mood for the remaining part of the chapter:

Design justice is a framework for analysis of how design distributes benefits and burdens

between various groups of people. Design justice focuses explicitly on the ways that

design reproduces and/or challenges the matrix of domination (white supremacy,

heteropatriarchy, capitalism, ableism, settler colonialism, and other forms of structural

inequality). Design justice is also a growing community of practice that aims to ensure a

more equitable distribution of design's benefits and burdens; meaningful participation in

design decisions; and recognition of community-based, Indigenous, and diasporic design

traditions, knowledge, and practices. (p. 23)

Feminist design justice practitioners do everything to smash the top-down model of community

engagement where the designers – silently or articulately – stay at the top of the design process

and decision-making hierarchy. The rest of the chapter will exemplify and unpack these

statements by bringing examples from my experiences building an archive and conducting UX

research with a Nepali community. As Arturo Escobar (2018) proposes in his book, *Designs for

the Pluriverse*, my chapter too oscillates between "a politics of the real and a politics of the

possible—between pragmatism and utopianism" (p. 226). The chapter acknowledges the

everyday reality of our situatedness under the "one world" system, where we live, work, and

design. But it aims to rupture that "one world" system and design with and for multiple worlds.

This oscillation is feminist design justice. Costanza-Chock elaborates on this oscillation. She

says, "Design justice considers a dual pragmatic/utopic approach that simultaneously offers

concrete suggestions for immediate implementation to improve people's quality of life while also

calling out power inequalities and larger structural forces that impact people's life chances in the

long run" (p. 134). It is the right here, right now, and beyond. Feminist design justice

practitioners work with what we have, where we are at, and what we immediately need, but what

they do with 'right here and right now' is committed to transforming the world, designing the world free of the matrix of domination.

While I am making a case for feminist design justice practices, I find it helpful to think about Escobar's reminder about the difference between patriarchy and matriarchy. His notion of feminism is not an advocacy of "girl boss" neoliberalism, which keeps the oppressive system intact but only changes the face of the boss. Feminist design justice practices, to borrow Escobar's (2018) definition of matriarchy, are not "defined by the predominance of women over men, but by an entirely different conception of life, not based on domination and hierarchies, and respectful of the relational fabric of all life" (p. 10). Hence, when I propose feminist design justice practices with and for the Global South, I am doing so many things but not advocating the dominance of women over men or of Global South actors over the Global North, other species, and the planet. I am advocating a design practice that "has developed a new sensitivity to the environment and to human predicaments and is more attuned to its ability to contribute to creating a better world," and "it becomes a medium in the service of society rather than solution-making expertise in the service of industry" (Escobar, 2018 p. 10).

Besides, what would the journey toward decolonial-feminist computing, hospitable data, and design justice look like in practice when performed from a space which has access to the "innovation" labs, big data extracting tools, technology centers, massive funding, and audiences? I am no judge of that, but I will leave these ideas here for us to self-reflect and if necessary, self-criticize. In the rest of the chapter, I will once again discuss the relationship between technology and how it is used for a colonial way of data retrieval in the name of humanitarianism. After that, I examine a few such projects and organized groups of people who have access to these infra/structural supports to various extents and try to go beyond "big" data retrieval and make

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some differences. Next, I insist on the difference between top-down community engagement models and ground-up community engagement models by discussing whether participatory design is enough without a critical understanding of it. I wrap up the chapter with a note on the need to be cautiously hopeful about our access to tools and technologies to produce knowledge, circulate, and amplify it. I also link a list of open-access digital and multimodal tools and methods along with methods and tools for UX research.

TECH GIANTS, DATA RETRIEVAL, AND HUMANITARIANISM

Mirca Madianou (2019), in "Technocolonialism: Digital Innovation and Data Practices in the Humanitarian Response to Refugee Crises," shows us "how the convergence of digital developments with humanitarian structures and market forces reinvigorates and reshapes colonial relationships of dependency" (p. 1). Madianou reminds us how the colonial rhetoric of "West as a savior" has been ported over the digital structure while the colonial and imperial episteme, rhetoric, and action remain the same but only guised differently. It is just that coloniality and imperiality have been constantly updated with "modern" technologies. She writes further,

> In February 2019, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) signed a US$45 million partnership with Palantir Technologies, the US software firm known for its association with CIA and Cambridge Analytica and its work on predictive policing, advanced biometrics, and immigration enforcement. (p. 1; refer to Parker, 2019)

If we reflect upon this partnership by going back to Chapter 3, how do we feel about "the collaboration between the world's largest agency fighting hunger and the Silicon Valley firm mainly known for its intelligence and military links?" (Mirca, 2019, p. 1). The alarming thing about it is that "the WFP–Palantir partnership is the tip of much larger phenomenon," and "[t]here are thousands public–private partnerships in the humanitarian sector" (ibid).

I call this kind of data retrieval digital orientalism, which is different from classical imperialism. And as extensively discussed with evidence in Chapter 3, orientalism is always in a continuum with material or physical violence. Mirca Madianou calls this data retrieval technocolonialism. She provides very useful points on how technocolonialism functions, which I break down in the following:

- through the extraction of value from the data of refugees and other vulnerable people;

- through the extraction of value from experimentation with new technologies in fragile situations for the benefit of stakeholders, including private companies;

- by materializing the intangible forms and "ruins" of colonial legacies such as discrimination;

- by contributing to the production of social orders that entrench the "coloniality of power" (Quijano, 2000); and

- by justifying some of these practices under the shibboleth of "emergencies."

With these examples of "humanitarianism" and the useful points of understanding how data orientalism, technocolonialism, or data imperialism operates, I am continuing with this chapter. This is an invitation to stay realistic while demanding nothing less than utopia.

DATA FEMINISM AND ALGORITHMIC JUSTICE

We have witnessed in Chapter 4 that communities have always been using tools, techniques, and strategies creatively and radically to resist oppression. We also witnessed that these communities have been building solidarity way more effectively, powerfully, and humanely, and there is so much that those with access to powerful institutional and infrastructural support must learn from these actions. This chapter provides a range of digital and multimodal tools, techniques, and learning resources that can be used by universities,

institutions, digital humanists and UX researchers. The goal is to make them available to communities, community members, and spaces who might not only have access to these resources but also to the knowledge of their existence and learning avenues. While I do this, I also provide working questions for academics and researchers who have access to resources, funding, connections, and to communities while doing community work. These questions arise from the intention of performing community engagement from the design justice frameworks instead of the top-down model of representation. Essentially, this chapter is written from the threshold from where I aim to communicate with both audiences. However, before moving ahead, I also want to acknowledge that when I say both, it does not mean they stand in some clear binary of disadvantaged communities versus privileged communities. Also, many of us belong to both communities to varying degrees. It is up to us to contemplate honestly where we belong or our shifting situatedness and positionality. The chapter emerges from my own such contemplation that started with the building of a digital archive of my street photography (http://cassacda.com) and lists the questions we need to ask ourselves. But before anything else, this chapter begins with projects that blur that binary of disadvantaged communities and privileged communities, and for now, I call these projects feminist computing.

When I frame the events of a digital revolution from within the system as feminist computing, I very much relate it to the way Catherine D'Ignazio and Lauren F. Klein (2020) do it. They very aptly recognize that data feminism is not only for one gender but for all people. The same is true about feminist computing. It is not only for people who are identified or who identify themselves as women. Feminist computing is about recognizing how power dynamics and structural inequity works in the "real" world, in turn affecting the world of computing, which in turn affect the things in the real world. In other words, feminist computing recognizes the

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vicious continuum between these two worlds (the world of computing and the "real" world) and

works toward turning the tables to make that continuum revolutionary and healing. D'Ignazio

and Klein (2020) offer the following seven principles of data feminism:

> Examine power. Data feminism begins by analyzing how power operates in the world.

> Challenge power. Data feminism commits to challenging unequal power

> structures and working toward justice.

> Elevate emotion and embodiment. Data feminism teaches us to value multiple

> forms of knowledge, including the knowledge that comes from people as living, feeling

> bodies in the world.

> Rethink binaries and hierarchies. Data feminism requires us to challenge the

> gender binary, along with other systems of counting and classification that perpetuate

> oppression.

> Embrace pluralism. Data feminism insists that the most complete knowledge

> comes from synthesizing multiple perspectives, with priority given to local, Indigenous,

> and experiential ways of knowing.

> Consider context. Data feminism asserts that data are not neutral or objective.

> They are the products of unequal social relations, and this context is essential for

> conducting accurate, ethical analysis.

> Make labor visible. The work of data science, like all work in the world, is the

> work of many hands. Data feminism makes this labor visible so that it can be recognized

> and valued. (p. 19, 17-18)

Here, I would like to remember Salguero's (n.d.) counterdata initiative, *Los feminicidios en*

México from Chapter 4 and continue this conversation on data feminism and algorithmic justice

with an example of *[Gender Shades](#)*. Joy Buolamwini, a Ghanaian-American graduate student at

MIT, was working on a class project using facial-analysis software (D'Ignazio and Klein, p. 29).

The software could not detect her dark-skinned face until she put on a white mask, "essentially

going in 'whiteface'" (figure 1.3 in D'Ignazio and Klein, p. 30). Then, the system detected the

mask's facial features perfectly. Using the dermatologist-approved Fitzpatrick Skin Type

classification system, Joy Buolamwini and computer scientist Timnit Gebru characterize the

gender and skin type distribution of two facial analysis benchmarks, IJB-A and Adience, and

they came up with a conclusion that "machine learning algorithms can discriminate based on

classes like race and gender" (2018, p. 1). Assessing the accuracy of AI-powered gender

classification products based on four categories – darker-skinned females, darker-skinned males,

lighter-skinned females, and lighter-skinned males – they write,

> We find that these datasets are overwhelmingly composed of lighter-skinned subjects
>
> (79.6% for IJB-A and 86.2% for Adience) and introduce a new facial analysis dataset
>
> which is balanced by gender and skin type. We evaluate 3 commercial gender
>
> classification systems [including those developed by IBM, Microsoft, and Megvii
>
> (Face++)] using our dataset and show that darker-skinned females are the most
>
> misclassified group (with error rates of up to 34.7%). The maximum error rate for lighter-
>
> skinned males is 0.8%. (ibid)

Buolamwini also informs us about the demography of these tech giants.

> Less than 2% of employees in technical roles at Facebook and Google are black. At eight
>
> large tech companies evaluated by Bloomberg, only around a fifth of the technical
>
> workforce at each are women. I found one government dataset of faces collected for
>
> testing that contained 75% men and 80% lighter-skinned individuals and less than 5%

women of color—echoing the pale male data problem that excludes so much of society in

the data that fuels AI. (Buolamwini, 2019)

The consequence of this disparity between the facial-recognition software and the demographic

makeup goes above and beyond our simple imagination. Alex Najibi (2020) tells us that these

face-recognition algorithms are "employed for law enforcement surveillance,[30] airport passenger

screening,[31] and employment and housing decisions[32]" and reminds us about the history and

pattern of racist and anti-activist surveillance and the use of such software and algorithms.

Alvaro Bedoya (2020) discusses about the ubiquity of surveillance in 2020 and the extent of how

literally true "everyone is watched" (p. 305) is. Now, let us imagine the combination of

"everyone is watched" and this algorithmic disparity and inequity in the system and structure that

is already violent toward certain communities and genders. Many national media covered

Buolamwini's works and these compelling data analyses of *Gender Shades*. Many showed "a

hint of shock" because, after all, "their 'intelligent technologies' are not so intelligent after all"

(D'Ignazio and Klein, 2020, p. 30). At this point, D'Ignazio and Klein recommend that those who

were "shocked" read data journalist Meredith Broussard's book *Artificial Unintelligence* adding,

> When sexism, racism, and other forms of oppression are publicly unmasked, it is almost
>
> never surprising to those who experience them… Race becomes something that only
>
> people of color have. Gender becomes something that only women and nonbinary people
>
> have. Sexual orientation becomes something that all people except heterosexual people
>
> have. And so on. (2018, p. 31)

Within seven months of the Gender Shade's original audit, IBM and Microsoft announced plans

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[30] Also refer to Algorithmic Justice League. (n.d.). What is facial recognition technology?
[31] Also refer to Oliver, 2019
[32] Ibid

to work on reducing this algorithmic disparity, and all three targeted companies [IBM, Microsoft, and Megvii (Face++)] released new API versions "that underwent a 17.7% - 30.4% reduction in error between audit periods" (Raji & Buolamwini, 2019). But the point is not only about the accuracy because the structural and systemic violence will not be erased with that accuracy. Najibi (2020) very well reminds us that this is not where the fight against algorithmic injustice ends. He takes us back to eighteenth-century New York, when "'lantern laws' required enslaved people to carry lanterns after dark to be publicly visible" (2020, n.p.). The issue of in/accuracy is not where the justice lies because "even if face recognition algorithms are made equitable, the technologies could be applied with the same spirit, disproportionately harming the Black community in line with existing racist patterns of law enforcement" (ibid). The evidence is right in front of us, everything that the already marginalized and targeted communities must go through because of these in/accurate facial-recognition software, "such as undocumented immigrants by ICE, or Muslim citizens by the NYPD" (ibid).

In 2016, Buolamwini founded the [Algorithmic Justice League](#) with Sasha Costanza-Chock, the author of *Design Justice*, as its senior researcher. Its mission is to "raise public awareness about the impacts of AI, equip advocates with empirical research to bolster campaigns, build the voice and choice of the most impacted communities, and galvanize researchers, policymakers, and industry practitioners to mitigate AI bias and harms" (Algorithmic Justice League. (n.d.). "We're leading a cultural movement").

In 2018, Buolamwini launched [Safe Face Pledge](#). The pledge, drafted by [Algorithmic Justice League](#) and the [Center on Technology & Privacy at Georgetown Law](#), was an opportunity for organizations to "make public commitments towards mitigating the abuse of facial analysis technology" and prohibit "lethal use of the technology, lawless police use, and required

transparency in any government use" (2021).

A few other projects which are raising issues regarding technology, data, design, ethics, justice, and labor are:

- Algorithmic Justice League: https://www.ajl.org

- Design Justice Network: https://designjustice.org

- Labor Tech Research Network: http://labortechresearchnetwork.org

- Tierra Común Interventions for Data Decolonization: https://www.tierracomun.net

- Data Feminism: https://dataplusfeminism.mit.edu

A DANGER OF UNCRITICAL CELEBRATION OF PARTICIPATORY DESIGN

Coming from a community that is heavily underrepresented, misrepresented, and stereotyped, and experiencing the consequences of such a phenomenon agitates my sense of dignity to its core. My decision to build an archive was my attempt to reclaim that dignity loud and clear. I did not know how I was going to do that. I did not even know how to build a digital archive. The University of South Dakota Library defines an archive as a "repository holding documents or other material, usually those of historical and/or rare value [which is also] referred to as Special Collections" (Fowles, 2000). The artifacts for archives are selected for long-term preservation on the basis of their historical, cultural, and evidential value. Most definitions of archives put emphasis on the selection of historically, culturally, and evidentiarily valuable artifacts for permanent or long-term preservation without conscious human intervention. While some archivists and historians emphasize notions of organicity, authenticity, and the preservation of artifacts and contexts while archiving, other scholars question these same ideas (Derrida, 1995; Foucault, 1972; Mbembe A., 2002; Vosloo, 2005; Cushman, 2013). The latter scholars

assert that no archives, digital or not, are *secretions of an organism.* Once archivists select

something, however well-intentioned and knowledgeable archivists are, or no matter how

'neutral' they try to be, they do archiving through/within/around certain rhetorical ecologies and

structure, which in themselves are constrained by the ideologies. Therefore, there is no "organic"

relationship between archives and artifacts-contexts. Derrida (1995) stresses, "The archivization

produces as much as it records the event" (p.17). Archivization is not just the recording of data,

but also the production of data. It is not only storing or preserving what is out there, but also

production and construction of out-there. It is about making the choices and decisions regarding,

for instance, what is that cultural artifact that is valuable enough to be stored and preserved; it is

about affiliations, constraints, and interests involved in those decisions. These scholars say that

whatever appears on the surface is an interplay and a tussle among these multiple factors that are

usually hidden underneath the surface as an underlying grammar.

Therefore, even if it was more than natural to be intimidated by the idea of building a

digital archive due to the lack of any infrastructural support, my insistence was that the colonial-

racist archival and digital archival practices and logics had to be interrupted. And they had to be

interrupted from the margin. They had to be interrupted with whatever is available to the margin.

That is the only thing I was trying to do. Because the margin must take its contrapuntal stories to

the future by exploiting the definition and praxis of archives and digital.

The issue was larger than what I or any Nepali or any South Asian or people from the

Global South experience daily in the Global North. It was informing lives of the rest of the planet

(and now, with billionaires in the race of colonizing the space and beyond). It was shaping our

(GlobalNorth-centric) dreams, desires, ambitions, self-criticism, and self-alienation. It was

manufacturing the consent of not only peoples from the Global North but also the Global South

when the U.S.-led NATO invaded Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, when they airstrike Yemen, Syria, and Somalia and put horrific sanctions upon Yemen, Iran, Cuba, Syria, and North Korea. The issue is much larger, and everything is connected. I needed to work on this project to be able to talk about these things (as I am doing right now). But to begin with, the triggering point to build a digital archive of my street photography was when I came across some universities' South Asian Studies programs. One of them was the University of California, Berkeley's Department of South and Southeast Asian Studies' program (SSEAS) and their photographic images of South and Southeast Asia (http://sseas.berkeley.edu/). The images on the website keep on rotating. But I will mention the images that prompted this study back in Fall 2017.

Those images were titled "UC students at Yamonotri India," "Cyclos in Vietnam," "Adat procession in Solok," "Mount Merapi and Minangkabau longhouse," "Swedagon, Burma" "Fishing village, Buton" "dawn on the Ganges, Varanasi," and "monks in Nepal" (Department of South & Southeast Asian Studies, n.d.). Those images felt like the reconfirmation of exotic and spiritual Others, the others that linearly belonged in the past and not today or tomorrow. And this feeling/thought was further confirmed by one more image, "Commencement 2012," which showed Berkeley's students in graduation caps and gowns. This visual representation of these nine images alongside each other delineated the worlds in terms of distinct "us" versus Others binaries, both epistemologically and ontologically. The eight images of the Other worlds were (and still are, if you visit their website) religious-ritual, naturally beautiful, and exotic. Now am I saying that these images are part of an intentional orientalist epistemological projects? Honestly, I don't know. But what I am definitely saying is that portrayal of the Global South is definitely an uncritical and intellectually lazy project. It appears as though the archivists were going to South Asia and Southeast Asia only to extract information in a way that would only confirm their

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existing perception about these spaces but not to challenge epistemic violence. This situation brings us to the question that design justice asks as to "whether the affordances of a designed object or system disproportionately reduce opportunities for already oppressed groups of people while enhancing the life opportunities of dominant groups, independently of whether designers intend this outcome" (Constanza-Chock, p. 41). Here, I would like to point to the following three arguments:

- It's not necessary for designers to always be aware of the intentions behind their design process and goals.

- Not intending harm is not enough for feminist design justice in the structure and system that is already too inequitable and oppressive toward the Global South.

- Designers must be actively, articulately, and explicitly anti-oppressive.

Constanza-Chock illustrates the lack of active anti-racist and anti-oppressive design practices. She gives an example of an experience of a Black person with a soap dispenser. This example shows that every bit of our everyday experience is charged with structural and systemic exclusion and oppression. She writes, "a Black person might experience a microaggression if their hands do not trigger a hand soap dispenser that has been (almost certainly unintentionally) calibrated to work only, or better, with lighter skin tones" (p. 45). This example recaps the point that design injustice goes beyond the binary of intentional or unintentional designers, and how designers are a part of a system possibly perpetuating the systemic injustice unless they are actively anti-oppressive in their self-reflexivity, self-criticism, philosophy, and practice. The same is true of the images on the website of UC Berkeley's Department of SSEAS. The images were structural reiterations of how these Other worlds are traditionally glorified in popular imagination via the discourse of mainstream 'White' media. These images attempted neither to

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challenge nor deconstruct that historically enduring dominant imagination regarding the Global South. These images among many other representations of the Global South aptly remind us of Edward Said's (1978) remark regarding *Description de l'Égypte*, the encyclopedic volumes about Egypt catalogued during and after Napoleon's expedition to Egypt in 1798 to 1801: "great collective appropriation of one country by another" (p. 84). So, while designing that website, it does not look like UC Berkeley's Department of SSEAS program contemplated the following principle of design justice:

> Design justice does not focus on developing systems to abstract the knowledge, wisdom, and lived experience of community members who are supposed to be the end users of a product. Instead, design justice practitioners focus on trying to ensure that community members are actually included in meaningful ways throughout the design process. Another way to put this is "If you're not at the table, you're on the menu." (Costanza-Chock, p. 84)

Many of the narratives, rhetorics, and archives about the Global South by the Global North are driven by a will to building knowledge about the Global South rather than to make onto-epistemological systems into an opportunity to build a dialectical relationship with the Global South. Instead of allowing a chance for dialogues manifesting heterogeneous narratives and plural realities about the Global South, these systems give the Global South a flat dimension with contingencies being entirely bulldozed. As I have pointed out previously, the debate I am pushing here cannot be understood through the binary of truth and lies or intentional and unintentional. The problem goes far beyond such simplistic binary opposites. As Edward Said (1978) said in *Orientalism*, "One ought never to assume that the structure of Orientalism is nothing more than a structure of lies or of myths which, were the truth about them to be told,

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would simply blow away" (p. 6). It is not a simple truth v. lies binary. Hence, in relation to design questions, what we need to pay attention to are: How do we collect data? How do we consider something perceived as "invaluable" data to be taken into consideration during a design process? How do we interpret those data? What narratives are meant to be woven through those data? What kind of future are we anticipating and designing through this preservation?

When I started building an open-access online archive of my street photography in 2018 (http://cassacda.com), I also started doing usability testing and UX study with South Asian (largely comprised of Nepalis) audiences from the very beginning. I wanted to know how the archive was performing from the points of view of the participants who were from the city those photographs were from but living differently situated lives. Those streets were familiar to the participants but not in the same way. I conducted three different UX studies with three different IRBs within the span of three years. The first and third studies were conducted online, while the second study was done in person when I went to Nepal in 2019 to conduct a workshop on "Critical Digital Humanities and Participatory Design." During these three studies, I used different UX methods, tools, and techniques such as survey questions, online and in-person interviews, a contemplative walk through the archive, dot voting, sticky notes, and affinity mapping among others. My UX research very much reflects discover, decide, make, and validate frameworks of 18F Methods (see 18F Methods, n.p.). 18F Methods are a collection of tools conceptualized, planned, and practiced by an office of federal employees within the General Services Administration (GSA) of the U.S. government to put human-centered design into practice. The following are the two methods I employed in the 2019 in-person UX study

(Poudyal, 2020)[33]:

Dot Voting

The participants of the UX survey were given around 360 printed photos from my collection, some of which were already in the archive and others were in the uploading process. I used a dot voting technique to get feedback from the participants regarding the photos I should include in the archive. Each participant was given sticky notes and colored dot stickers and the survey question was, "Do you want this photo to go into the digital archive I am building?" The green dots meant 'Yes,' yellow meant 'Maybe,' and pink meant 'No'. I chose dot voting and sticky notes methods for my UX survey to see how each participant perceived each photograph through archival perspectives and what their reasons for their decisions would be. They had to stick the dots of their choice on the back of the photographs along with their reason on the sticky notes.

Affinity Mapping

After dot-voting, the participants placed several sticky notes on a whiteboard with photography themes and ideas for the kind of digital archive they wish to see about Nepal and South Asia. Some of their responses were specifically about certain thematic exhibits and sometimes they chose to give a general overview. I worked with them to move those notes into thematically related groups. The purpose of this activity was to build digital exhibits in my archive based on various themes. And while contemplating over these themes, I asked them questions such as, what is (rethinking) South Asia and/or Nepal for you and what kind of photographic digital archives would you build to reflect your vision and imagination?

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[33] A detailed analysis of the findings of the 2019 in-person UX study is available in the conference proceedings "Building Digital Archive through Collaborative UX Research: Relationship-Building with the Community or Knowledge-Building about the Community?" (Poudyal, 2020)

The fun part is that when I started my UX studies, I was hoping to get some answers to my design and content-related questions. Though I was getting all kinds of answers for each of the questions or concerns, I got hardly any answers that would help me make any concrete decisions. The photography of architectural culture in Kathmandu does not stand for the same thing for all genders, all ethnicities, and all classes, for instance. The photography of religious sculptures, uneven roads, unruly wires hanging above the street, homeless people, posh residential areas, big malls, political slogans, the Nepali flag … Each of them carried different meanings and experiences for different individuals around that metaphorical and literal participatory table (Poudyal 2019; Poudyal 2020; Poudyal 2021; Poudyal 2022). For instance, even if any photograph got several green dots (or positive votes from participants), the reasons would be different. So, the inclusion of the photograph in the digital archive was not enough because the heterogenous voices would not be included still. Thus, "[t]he unexamined assumption of inclusivity can perpetuate epistemic violence as voices of the few will be assumed as the representation of all the marginalized and subalternized voices and that assumed voice will be taken for granted as to be speaking for all who are absent" (Poudyal, 2020). We all knew we wanted that digital archive to be a dignified expression of our place and our people. But that dignified expression was expressed differently by each one of us. What was becoming evident was that "the answers, choices, and desires expressed by participants regarding different aspects and elements of my archive brought out multiple non-linear and incongruous narratives about Nepal and South Asia" and even if it was frustrating at times, in hindsight, that absence of unanimity was helping us as a community "to combat essentialist identity categories often imposed upon South Asia and Nepal" (Poudyal, 2019). And we are talking about only 20-25 participants at this moment.

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I had IRBs for all the studies (IRBNet numbers 1582142-1, 1324465-3, 1324465-4), and I followed the steps of what we call designing (I had checked almost all the boxes known to me). Based on what the majority had said about different things, I could have made up a success story of my social justice work and built an archive concluding with something like the following: This is what Nepalis want, this is what Nepalis said, this is how archives about Nepalis should be built. Now, can I invite everyone to contemplate the definition of epistemic violence (as discussed in Chapter 1) and imagine calling the answers given by the majority among 25 participants the representation of Nepal? How about "some Others whose narratives and epistemologies will keep on haunting us from lacunae, as they should, about our failure" to be inclusive as we claim to be (Poudyal, 2021, p. 179)? Can I request everyone to imagine the enormity of epistemic violence here? So, with this, can I further invite you to imagine epistemic violence in an uncritical celebration of the representation of Nepalis, South Asia, and the Global South? Is representation, without the acknowledgement of the limitations of that representation, sufficient? As my experience with dot voting shows, there is a massive incommensurability among 25 participants. As the number of participants grow, what would that incommensurability look like? So, the question is what does it mean to say representation? Doesn't representation already mean an absence? How deeply have theorists and practitioners in our fields been thinking through these questions while designing technology, (UX) research, design process, curriculum, organizations, and systems, and addressing questions related to community, justice, ethics, diversity, inclusion, equity, and accessibility?

Going back to my project, as someone who was already not quite comfortable with the idea of building a digital archive, the lack of "concrete" answers regarding the digital archive I am building was frustrating. And please remember, I wanted some concrete answers to have

some success stories to tell the field(s), to get the validation, to be recognized, and possibly, to secure my career in a renowned university or industry (we all know how it goes). I needed some "this is it!" answers. It was frustrating not being able to answer when people would ask me, "How do you want us to represent Nepal?" or "What do we learn from your digital archive?" The problem was not that I did not have any answer. I did have answers to that question. The problem was the answers were anything but straightforward. How could I say, "I do not know what the best ways of representing Nepal, Nepalis, South Asia, and the Global South are, but I have so much to say about epistemic violence"? I remember saying this to a one-time mentor, who advised me, "At one point, you have to know how to build an archive." But I do not know. I still do not have my "this is it!" to offer to the field, but I have a lot to say. This dissertation is that attempt. The next section will discuss what the feminist design justice praxes can offer the field of TPC to combat epistemic violence.

PARTICIPATORY DESIGN OR CHECKING OFF SYSTEMIC SOCIAL JUSTICE ITEMS OFF A LIST?

The crucial questions at this point are: do IRBs, consent forms, "right" language, and "right" citations justify "this is what Nepalis want" and make my project an ethical and justice-oriented project? Is that it? Is that all it takes to materialize our vision of justice? Have we ever considered that the "This is it" kind of narrative can often be possible only under the following circumstances?

- Being driven by the necessity to draw conclusions.

- Building knowledge about the Others as if the Others are knowable by the researcher who puts themselves in the position of a knower and knowledge-builder.

- Working through the binary of knower and knowable ones.

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- Speaking for the community without mandatorily listening to them, which means entering into the space of the community as their savior rather than someone who wants to do the hard work of being educated by the community before anything else.

- Not paying attention to the context of the study and the power dynamics between and among the participants and the researcher.

Costanza-Chock (2020) writes, "Power shapes participation in all design processes, including in PD, and the politics of participation are always intersectionally classed, gendered, and raced" (p. 88). Just because everyone is around the table at that moment does not mean they have equitable access to the design process and design decisions. Drawing upon Foucault, Ramesh Srinivasan (2017) reminds us:

> Foucault points out that cultural violence is perpetuated through seemingly inclusive systems, what one today might describe as liberal or neoliberal. These systems appear democratic, yet in practice they subordinate beliefs and practices not in line with those who manufacture discourse and manipulate media and technology systems to maintain their power and privilege. (p. 117)

After all, as Merritt and Stolterman (2012) put it, "[R]efined approaches to improve participation do not necessarily ensure balanced power relationships" (p. 73). The inviters' positionality "as an 'outsider' with means and resources for generating a technological intervention" is a "powerful position by itself and implies a position of dominance that accompanies a designer's cultural identity" (Merritt and Stolterman, 2012, pp. 75-76). In the case of my project, this hierarchy could have been easily hidden from me as I am a part of the community and time-space I was building the archive of. Or, at least, I did not have to put much effort into hiding that hierarchy from the audiences of my project. It was easier for me to take it for granted especially after

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clearing my checklist of ethical research. To the West, the heterogeneities among the community members would not have appeared as the West is habituated to representing us as essentially the same. No one would have noticed the epistemic violence in the "politically correct" project of a brown woman who was "speaking for" her own community. But as both a researcher and a community insider, I was able to see – perhaps not always but more than often – when I was tempted to believe what was convenient to me and my research without, technically, making false claims. I just had to keep quiet about some of the truths. I just had to hide the fact that all photographs received incommensurable thoughts from the participants. I just had to hide the fact that we did not completely agree on the particulars of the archive-building. I just had to not tell the whole truth that I was aware of. I just had to let go of a few things and place my priorities on building an archive as a product. I just had to use the right words, be politically correct, and conveniently deny or not say it out loud that finally I was the one who invited participants around that participatory table, I decided who will participate, and I was the one who was going to make final decisions on every aspect. I was the one who would make decisions on how I would make decisions. I was the one who would have synonymized "majority" as diversity and inclusion. I was the one who was going to write about it (as I am doing right now). I was (and am) the one whose name would be primarily attached to this "social justice" project. I was still the one who would write a success story and call it social justice. I just had to complete the "social justice checklist" and word them right. I just had to hide my authority and authorship. I just had to perform humility and perform the acknowledgement of my privileges and positionality. I just had to show that I am a marginalized Nepali woman while further marginalizing my own communities and other oppressed communities as their allies or whatever. I just had to *appear* right.

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I would have a shining success story of social justice, a manifesto to share with everyone in the field. I just had to keep quiet about how almost the participants' voices have almost been silenced in my project. The traces of the participants could have been found here and there, but those traces would have been metonymically portrayed as the entirety of the community during the design process. Heterogeneity would have been bulldozed, and that bulldozing would have been denied and overlooked because this UX researcher and designer has checked off all the social justice items on the list. I could have also quoted Costanza-Chock and design justice because I had access to these discourses and yet still manage to perpetuate epistemic violence. For a long time, I might deny or hide (even from myself) to what extent I was using the community knowledge for my personal recognition, career advancement, and material benefits. The community members might – even if not always – see through my lies, performance, and hypocrisy, but due to power dynamics and risk involved, their observation and disagreements would not be voiced. None of these would ever be uttered in my articles, my conference presentations, my talks, or in the way I present myself, my works, and the community. As we have normalized extracting information and materials with perfectly aligned social justice language and commodified community engagement, my harmful pretense would not only be deemed okay but even rewarded.

Please note that this checklist is anything but evil in itself. But these things are to be deeply contemplated upon and participatory researchers must engage in rigorous self-reflexivity to materialize every social justice vision of the field. The field of TPC has strongly felt the turn toward social justice in the 21st century (Agboka, 2013b; Jones, 2016; Walton, Moore, & Jones, 2019; Haas & Eble, 2018; Haas 2012; Savage and Mattson 2011) and its presence can be found in the community-based UX research and participatory design frameworks developed and

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advocated by the professionals and scholars of this field (Rose et al., 2017; Quesenbery and

Brooks,2010; Sun,2012; Taboada, et al. 2020; Agboka, 2013a; Agboka, 2014). Natasha Jones

and Rebecca Walton (cited in Colton and Walton, 2018) say that social justice in TPC research:

> investigates how communication, broadly defined, can amplify the agency of oppressed
>
> people—those who are materially, socially, politically, and/or economically
>
> underresourced. Key to this definition is a collaborative, respectful approach that moves
>
> past description and exploration of social justice issues to taking action to redress
>
> inequities. (n.p.)

The emphasis of the justice-driven advocates is that community-based UX research and

participatory design frameworks help to build an emotional and empathic relationship with

participants while designing technology and to view them as humans who experience technology

instead of just users using products. These frameworks can free UX research from the narrow

concept of usability (Sullivan, P. 1989; Dilger, 2006), help UX researchers imagine and include

humans beyond their own situatedness and surrounding, and build a dialogic room for Others.

The need for dialogic room has been emphasized by Huatong Sun (2012) as well:

> I argue for a dialogic view of culture that is both robust and flexible to study local culture
>
> and offer a more complete vision of culture for technology design. Here, culture is
>
> dialogic as an open set of practices and as an energetic process with meanings, objects,
>
> and identities flowing across sites in diffuse time–space. (p. 25)

As Rose and Cardinal (2018) explain, Participatory Design (PD) methods emphasize the

importance of "engaging users throughout the design process, giving them a seat at the table and

a full voice in the design process" (10). PD frameworks allow designers to journey toward an

equitable relationship with participants (Rose & Allison, 2018; Agboka, 2013; Walton, Zraly, &

Mugengana, 2014) and to really listen and engage in a relentless dialogue with users and contexts to build a technology that is ethical and critically responsible. And community-based PD frameworks require UX researchers to build relationships with a community (Rose et al., 2017) instead of building knowledge about a community. At the same time, as Walton et al. (2015) write, such research demonstrates how "well-designed, well-conducted community-based research encounters unexpected challenges and serendipitous surprises because power is not centralized with researchers and because complex, dynamic local contexts are informing the work" (Walton et al., p. 64). Having said this, as we are reminded by Merritt and Stolterman (2012), the TPC researchers and designers must have a self-reflexive awareness of their situatedness in the larger context of colonialism, neocolonialism consumerism, and patriarchy and self-interrogate any possibility of epistemic violence in their praxes. Therefore, even relationship-building cannot be taken for granted. I go a step further and call it dialectical relationship building. As Gesa E. Kirsch observes, "Indeed, the more successful I was at forming good relationships with interviewees, the more I felt like a voyeur" (1999, p. xi; see Middleton, 1993; Sunstein, 1996). Even relationship-building cannot be taken for granted and it must be deconstructed to subvert that—witting or unwitting—voyeuristic gaze of a researcher. That is why I am using the modifier dialectical to emphasize the kind of relationship where there are possibilities of dialogues between a researcher and participants, which will challenge the preconceived stance and stand of a researcher about the research and participants. Hence, even relationship-building must not be accepted uncritically because it has every possibility of turning into will-to-knowledge and will-to-power. Instead of allowing a chance for dialogues manifesting un-representable narratives and plural realities about the underrepresented communities, community engagement based on the uncritical relationship-building can also end

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up invading the space of communities, giving these communities a flat dimension with contingencies being entirely bulldozed.

Hence, what writers, rhetoricians, storytellers, and technical communicators must remember is that only by problematizing uninterrogated-essentialized representations of minoritized communities, the design process and design decisions can be a home for contradictory, contingent, counter-narratives emerging from marginalized spaces and subalternized voices (refer to Harris, 2007; Cushman, 2013; Cushman et al., 2019; Gilliland and Caswell, 2016; Ghaddar and Caswell, 2019; Punzalal and Caswell, 2016; Caswell, 2016). And to do so, there must be a strong sense of commitment toward self-interrogation, which will protect designers and technical communicators from falling into a self-congratulatory trap. While working with the methods promulgated by PD frameworks, one must always remember the ethos of these frameworks, which means while celebrating the participants or collaborators who could participate, UX researchers must remember innumerable others who could not be there. At the same time, to assume that the voices of the ones who could participate are not affected by the power dynamics and hierarchy around that very table will hurt the ethos behind PD frameworks. The unexamined assumption of inclusivity can perpetuate epistemic violence as voices of the few will be assumed as the representation of all the marginalized and subalternized voices and that assumed voice will be taken for granted as to be *speaking for* all who are absent.

So, going back to the question of the "social justice checklist," especially in a field where epistemic violence is just beginning to be recognized, discussed, or critiqued, this checklist can easily turn into a tool of exploitation and continue masking itself as social justice. Moreover, it is not even about intentional or unintentional exploitation. As it has been *almost* so unanimously validated and encouraged in our academic system and structure that neoliberal identity politics

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and commodification of what we call diversity has become a celebrated and rewarded norm. And the community that we seem to be "helping" or "speaking for" gets further exploited. The exploitation of the Global South has become a fertile ground for our career-advancement while we continue posing ourselves as torch bearer of social justice. That makes us even more dangerous.

How not to be so dangerous? The final chapter will try to address this question.

HOWEVER, CAN THE MASTER'S TOOLS DISMANTLE MASTER'S HOUSE?

Before wrapping up, I provide a link to the [List of Digital and Multimodal Tools, Methods, and Resources](#) that I have prepared with the hope that the teachers, students, researchers, communities, and community members with no to little infrastructural support to work on digital projects. And with this hope, I want to insist that while gaining access to these tools and producing something with these tools, it must be remembered that the more the access there is to "master's tools," the greater the responsibility while using them is. Every time I think about whether the master's tools can dismantle the master's house, I happen to remember the following three different but structurally and systemically connected instances that make systemic inequity and exploitation on a global level too stark for me:

Billionaire-producing system

Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk could become the first person to ever accumulate a $1 trillion net worth, and it could happen as soon as 2024, says a new report… "Since 2017, Musk's fortune has shown an annual average increase of 129 per cent, which could potentially see him enter the trillion-dollar club in just two short years, achieving a net worth of $1.38 trillion by 2024 at age 52," Tipalti Approve, who conducted the study, said in their report. (Business Standard, 2022)

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Military spending

Federal budgetary expenditures for the post-9/11 wars include many expenses far beyond direct Congressional war appropriations. The approximately $2.3 trillion in Congressional appropriations through Fiscal Year 2022 for "Overseas Contingency Operations" – which include combat in the post-9/11 war zones as well as international assistance through the State Department and USAID – are just the tip of an iceberg. (Brown University, 2021)

War, sanctions, starvation, and death:

Since then, more than 150,000 people have been killed in the violence and 3 million have been displaced. Two thirds of the population receive food assistance. There is now a truce even though the two sides did not renew it this month. Hafsa and more than half a million Yemeni children are severely malnourished. Every 10 minutes, a child in Yemen dies from a preventable disease, according to Save the Children. Hafsa is the youngest of six. One died of malnutrition. Her father, Ahmed, 47, works as a day laborer. Every day he can only afford a little flour and cooking oil. (Centre Tricontinental, 2022)

If the master's tools could dismantle the master's house, they would have done that by now and we would not be having this conversation.

YET, HOPE REMAINS AND SHOULD REMAIN…

Capire is a media tool "to echo the voices of women in movement, to publicize the struggles and organizational processes from different territories, and to strengthen local and international references of anti-capitalist, anti-racist, grassroots feminism" (n.d.). *Capire* means 'to understand' in Italian, and *Capire*, as a philosophy and purpose, understands and changes the world through and with the voices and eyes of women. It showcases stories of the works of the

Global South grassroots communities from around the world. One can feel the dignity of those communities in the way their works are told and presented here. *Capire* is not showcasing itself as a savior of grassroots communities and women around the world. It is just using the resources it can access to dignify and highlight the work people are already doing. *Capire* does not pretend to solve the problems for these people. It shows the people are already resisting against the exploitative systems and all we can do is make use of our resources and platforms to accentuate that and learn from that. It shows that people will not only save themselves but the planet and its inhabitants if we learn to have humility and be educated by Global Souths.

By taking an example of archive-building, I present a few points on what we can do to walk toward contrapuntal narrativizing:

1. Slowing down. Not rushing toward building. Really slowing down.

2. Spending a lot of time to build dialectical relationship with the community so that community can show disagreement and stop at any point of time if the narratives and design process feel more top-down than ground-up. If an archivist is not ready for that, the project should never begin.

3. An archivist must be trained in a feminist ethics of love, care, respect, responsibility, and accountability.

4. The archive's metadata should be designed in a way that can bring out as much pluri-counterstories as reasonably possible, but the impossible ethics should be the goal.

One thing we need to internalize is by remaining within the dominant system, by seeking validation from the system, and by climbing up the ladder that the system has created, we cannot think of ourselves as problem solvers for the margins. As I have been insisting throughout the dissertation, we have hope only if we learn to do contrapuntal reading and writing and use our

resources in a way that serves the people in whatever way possible. Contrapuntal reading requires looking into, for instance, the story of exploitation behind poverty. It requires digging out the story of global capitalism, systemic and environmental injustice, patriarchy, colonialism, imperialism, racism behind someone's reality as a refugee (remember VHacks?). So, as I write this dissertation largely from and for the fields of RWS, TPC, and DH, I want to remember that many of us are moving toward doing social justice works. Social justice works mean every attempt to make this world more equitable and livable for everyone and for the ones who have been constantly pushed into the margins. That means we are taking a huge responsibility or claiming to be taking a huge responsibility. How can we do that without educating ourselves by going beyond disciplinary, institutional, and academic boundaries and without climbing down from the ivory tower? How can we do that without looking for what is behind what's apparent? Our work is to use our resources to bring out those stories. Our work is to re-rhetoricize Global Souths contrapuntally. Our work is to use our resources and platforms to actively rally against heteropatriarchy, global capitalism, imperialism, neoliberalism, racism, colonialism. Our work is to make colonial-imperial border irrelevant while building transnational solidarities and learn from those grassroots communities who are doing solidarity works. That's our job.

Chapter 6: An Outro: A Call for Ground-Up Solidarity to Design a "World Where Many Worlds Fit In"

> *The constitution of a field of "design for/by/from the Global South" is thus a very welcome and timely call, for two main reasons: first, because much of what goes on under the banner of design in the Global North is not appropriate for design in the South (and increasingly inappropriate to a North in crisis as well); and, second, because there is great potential in design's reorientation to serve a range of theoretical and political projects in the South.*

<div align="right">

– Arturo Escobar, *Designs for the Pluriverse*

</div>

"I'M NOT GONNA GIVE AN EASY ANSWER."

Recently, I gave a presentation on the need to redefine ethos through the lens of contrapuntal rhetorics by centering the voices, knowledge, and experiences of communities who are undergoing what we claim to solve for them. I presented several examples including that of VHacks and Walter Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. After the presentation, there was a Q&A session. Below, I present one of the interesting conversations with an audience member who is also a professor of Rhetoric and Composition.

He asked, "So, if one of my students is doing some research on some community in Cuba? Where should I ask him to look for the information?"

That was a very vague question. But I tried to answer it, "First of all, I think you might want to begin by telling your student that we cannot expect to have access to any community we like to study for whichever projects we desire to start. Not everything is accessible. That kind of accessibility should come only with dedication and commitment." Because I had already talked about epistemic violence during my presentation, I continued with something like the following:

Another thing that we need to know is that the world system is very inequitable. So, just because we have access to the internet does not mean we have access to the voices of the people. We need to have information literacies to understand what information comes to

us repeatedly in this horrifyingly inequitable global structure. But if we want to *learn to learn* about those communities, we can start by looking into, for example, the digital projects of the organizations who work with grassroots communities and see the kind of language they are using to talk about the communities. Are they 'speaking for' the communities as if communities do not have their own voice, are they presenting themselves as the saviors of those communities, or are they using their platforms and resources to amplify the voices of those communities?

Then, he asked again, "But how exactly do we know that?" I replied, again, something like the following:

Please tell your student that it is a learning process for us researchers and writers. As we are still dedicated toward learning and teaching logos, ethos, and pathos as rhetorical tools to persuade, convince, and argue for something and not as much advanced in discussing why use those tools in terms of ethics and justice, we need to do a lot of work on our part to figure it out ourselves. The more we read and dedicate our time and energy to dignified reading of another human, another community, the more we will learn to identify the language of dignity. Otherwise, we will end up with a bunch of sophisticated politically correct language but with no to very little impact on the communities' lived experiences. Even worse, by continuing epistemic violence while claiming to help them.

The professor, apparently a little annoyed, insisted again (of course, in the name of an imaginary student): "But what if the student come across a Cuban communist propaganda? How can he trust such propaganda?" My heart wanted to ask, "But how come we never doubt Western imperialist propaganda about Cuba and Cubans?" To avoid going in that direction, which, personally, I would not mind, I replied, "Is it okay if I imagine you as that student so that it is

easier for me to reply to your answer instead of every time adding, "Maybe you could tell that student"? The professor gave me permission. Then, I said,

> Stay with that doubt. Protect it. Don't trust one narrative. Don't trust any absolute narrative about any community. Therefore, read. Read a lot. Explore. Understand the rhetorics of those narratives. No one can do that job for you. No one can and should give any easy answer. You have to figure it out yourself. Read a lot. Listen a lot.

My final insistence, which I reiterated throughout, was: "I am not going to give any easy answer here. Everyone must do their own part. I did and am doing my part every day. Others have done too. Everyone has to." Everyone has to do it because we are fighting information wars here. We are re-rhetoricizing Global Souths. We are exploring and practicing the frameworks of Borderless Transnational Feminist Design Justice. Everyone must do their own part. That's what contrapuntal reading, writing, and rhetoric is.

DESIGNING WITH GLOBAL SOUTHS

While U.S. president Joe Biden was hosting fellow leaders from the Western hemisphere for the ninth Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles barring Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela and hence, being boycotted by Mexico, Bolivia, Honduras, and Guatemala, just a few blocks away was the People's Summit 2022 welcoming "over 3000 attendees from 15 countries and open[ing] up space for shared dialogue, unity, and collaboration between organizations and movements in the region" (People's Summit for Democracy). The People's Summit had "unionists, activists, grassroots organizations, and progressive people of the Americas [coming] together… to uplift the voices of the people and imagine a new world—one that puts people's democracy first" (ibid). This is the vision of the feminist design justice practitioners: *to uplift the voices of the people and imagine a new world—one that puts people's democracy first*. The

words spoken by Cornel West at that summit on the panel "Workers Run the World: Transnational Organizing for Labor Justice" is what I mean when I say designing not only technology, not only TPC but the world with the Global South against Neoliberal identity politics. Once we aim and work toward building bottom-up justice systems for the world and world systems, the field of TPC and design must transform organically. West passionately uttered the following words:

> Don't come to Los Angeles like you've been some vanguards for human rights when you look at the history of Latin America as the playground of the American empire, treating Latin American brothers and sisters like as if they are cockroaches to be crushed rather than human beings with great dignity who organize and fight back.
>
> Don't come to Los Angeles acting as if you don't have crimes in the Middle East with Saudi Arabia committing crimes right now against the Yemenis, with the Israelis committing crimes right now against Palestinians, with crimes committed in Asia, don't come thinking that we are going to take your lie.
>
> And don't think that simply because we hate the injustice, we hate the other folk. No, Frantz Fanon was right. Brother David put it well in our presentation. You don't know of the national bourgeoisie that has not betrayed the working people, have not betrayed the poor people. I don't care what color, what national identity, what gender even sexuality. This is not a question of some neoliberal identity politics. We are talking about justice, we talk about equality. We are talking about democracy from the bottom up. That's right. That's what solidarity is all about…
>
> This is not the question of skin pigmentation. I have solidarity with my brothers and sisters because they are human beings, who in their body's come from various

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genders and skin pigmentations, but they choose to be freedom fighters, and love

warriors, and wounded healers and joy spreaders. (People's Summit for Democracy, June

10, 2022)

I invite the entire fields of RWS and DH to take all the time we need to meditate upon these

words and commit to the bottom-up design practices with the community. I invite the sub-fields

of TPC, UX researchers, and designers to remember that just because one Bibhushana, a woman

from a precariously underrepresented and marginalized Nepali community, got access to the

platforms created by the institutional power centers does not mean it is an act of justice. Just

because you can see the face of one Bibhushana, a woman from a community which has

constantly been made a victim of epistemic violence, does not mean she cannot commit

epistemic violence against her own community or other communities for her personal benefits.

We cannot mistake neoliberal identity politics – a superficial change without any structural and

systemic change – as justice. We need to see how design philosophies, practices, processes, and

products impact the lived experiences of the communities in the Global South and how our

praxes challenge the matrix of domination. That is what the feminist design justice is. A similar

opinion has been expressed by Ruha Benjamin (2019):

We could be focusing mainly on individuals' identities and overlooking the norms and

structures of the tech industry, many diversity initiatives offer little more than cosmetic

change, demographic percentages on a company pie chart, concealing rather than

undoing the racist status quo. (p. 61)

Hence, currently, as there is no solid system to hold us accountable for causing further harm to

the community or doing nothing except for serving neoliberal identity politics, only we and our

self-reflexivity, self-criticism, honesty, commitment, and humility can stop faux social justice

projects, epistemic violence, and exploitation from continuing to get rewarded. It will be entirely up to us to ask ourselves when engaging in PD research:

- Am I benefitting myself or the community in reality? But the way I tell it to the world, am I benefitting myself or the community?

- Do we turn to communities to assess the impact of our works, or do we turn to the dominant systems?

- Am I inviting community members for my sake under a pretense of my working with them or am I actually working *with* and *for* them?

- Did I listen to the community only for my convenience (for the information I need for my research) or with an intention of doing something that would bring about some changes in their lived experiences?

- Did I create a space for community members to critique, question, and inform my design process? Basically, did I create a dialectical space during my design process where there are incommensurable, contradictory, and harmonious dialogues among community members and me (Poudyal, 2021)?

- How much effort have I put to learn about this community?

- Am I speaking for them while molding them into a discourse without critically analyzing or questioning my own presence in that space? Or am I using my access or privileged position to serve the community?

- What have I done to bring into attention, question, and dismantle the hierarchy around that PD table?

- Would I still do it if there were no recognition and career advancement for me but only benefits to the community?

- How often do I ask these questions to myself?

- How honest am I (to myself and others) while answering these questions?

Without asking these questions and reflecting on them honestly, one cannot engage in contrapuntal reading, writing, or designing. For any design practitioners to be design justice practitioners, they must "choose to work in solidarity with and amplify the power of community-based organizations" Costanza-Chock, 91). Only when the community benefits more from our work than any industry, institution, or individual and when bottom-up design systems become our goal and commitment, we will know we are living in a world *where many worlds fit in*.

BORDERLESS TRANSNATIONAL FEMINIST DESIGN JUSTICE

Before concluding, let us look at the following data (Figure 5) presenting the number of people murdered in the Global South again. Let us look at the heart-wrenching numbers of bombs dropped in the Global South every day. After taking a very careful and humane look at it, let us brainstorm collectively: What can we do collectively so that our sentiments, solidarities, and fight for "Black lives matter," "brown lives matter," "indigenous lives matter," "Muslim lives matter," and "Asian lives matter" transform into the lived experiences of these communities within, on, and beyond colonial borders?
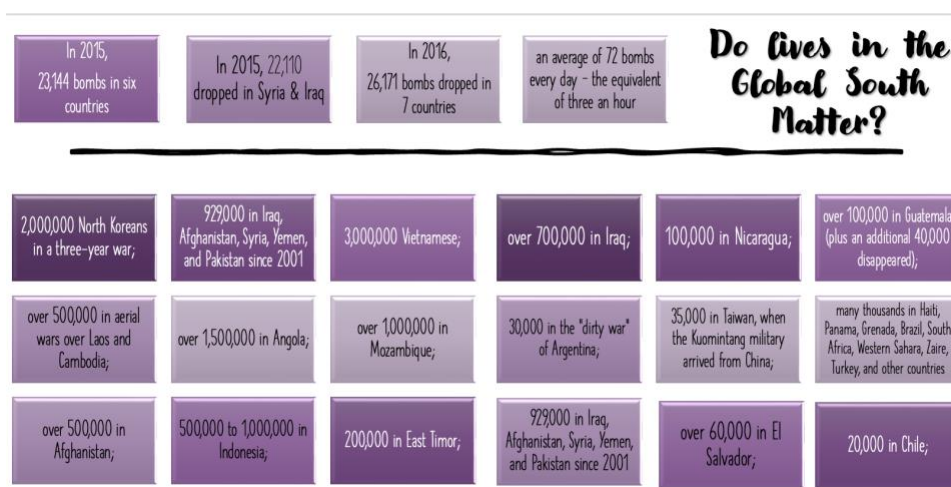

Figure 5 Data Sources: [Council on Foreign Relations (CFR),](#) Michael Parenti's *Blackshirts and Reds*, Brown University's "[Costs of War](#)"

Let us also remember the 4Cs statement against war crimes and ask ourselves some questions emerging from the ethos of Borderless Transnational Feminist Design Justice:

- If we center Borderless Transnational Feminist Design Justice, what would this statement look like?

- Or how would so many non-existing statements look?

- What would equitable dissemination of rage and compassion look like?

- If we genuinely do anti-colonial works by crossing the colonial and imperial borders, whether through teaching, research, community works? What would our courses look like?

- What would this field look like, what would our behavior with one another would look like?

- What would our definition of ethos and expertise look like?

- What would meaning-making and knowledge look like?

A Borderless Transnational Feminist Design Justice framework optimistically dreams about the day when we will compose statements like this one through a transnational feminist design justice framework and equitably extend our solidarities to differently situated Global Souths. That day, as a field, we will send a message to all the Global Souths that we see them, we hear them, and our classrooms, our academic and administrative spaces actively and assertively recognize and honor their humanity and their agency.

CONTRAPUNTAL RHETORICIZING

Contrapuntal rhetoricizing does not have finality. There is no point where one can say, "That's it. I did it." It is a journey toward that impossibility. I want to remember the phrase that I have used previously: ethics of impossible ethics. That push toward impossibility is what

contrapuntal rhetorics demand from us. Why impossible? Because how can we ever know that

we know? What knowing is? Isn't it a journey more than anything else? Contrapuntal rhetorics is

an ongoing journey of *bottom-up* knowing, reading, and writing. Academia cannot have the

hubris of having access to that bottom-up journey. One can never have full access to it. One

example of that impossibility is my own dissertation. I am aware that there are so many things

missing. The time-space constraint and the institutional genre constraint are always shaping my

knowledge and my expression of my knowledge. Besides, my access to that bottom-up journey is

limited. So, in a way, there are more shortcomings than accomplishments in this dissertation. But

amidst this, my hope is that I will be able to say and show the following five things (yes, I am

repeating them again):

i. There is a vicious relationship between epistemic violence, rhetorical violence, and material violence. There is no racist material violence without racist epistemic and rhetorical violence.

ii. If we are not careful about the distinction between the top-down model of community engagement and ground-up model of community engagement, even if our intentions are all benevolent, we might end up committing epistemic violence.

iii. We must start transforming the rhetorics and definitions of expertise, credibility, and ethos and start centering the works and knowledges of transnational grassroots communities in our research, teaching, & curriculum.

iv. We must make Global South Rhetorics, African American Rhetorics, Indigenous Rhetorics, Chicanx and Latinx Rhetorics, and Anti-Islamophobic Rhetorics active frameworks to reflect upon, access, and revise our programs, curriculum, our academic and administrative goals and visions.

v. How we do rhetoric and writing in the Global North cannot be guided by the neoliberal

commodification of identity or multicultural participation within the existing political economy of racism, colonialism, imperialism, capitalism, and heteropatriarchy.

The limitations and my visions for this dissertation are in stark contrast and to come to terms with that I am turning some part of my dissertation into a digital project and will continue to work on that project through the lens of transnational feminist design justice. I would like to build an open-access digital project that will bring a lot of resources that I could not bring into my dissertation, because contrapuntal reading, writing, narrativizing, and rhetoricizing is never complete.

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Vita

Bibhushana Poudyal is an academic from Nepal and a doctoral candidate at the University of Texas at El Paso. Her dissertation, *Re-rhetoricizing Global Souths Contrapuntally: Borderless Transnational Feminist Design Justice*, emerges from anti-oppressive intersections of the fields of Rhetoric and Writing Studies, Technical and Professional Communication, and Digital Humanities. The paradigms and rhetorical frameworks she works with are Transnational Feminism, Global (South) Rhetorics, Decolonial Border Rhetorics, and Contrapuntal Rhetorics. Her works have also been published in several journals and edited collections including *Across the Disciplines*, *Xchanges*, *the Journal of Interactive Technology and Pedagogy* (*JITP*), *Food Justice Activism and Pedagogies: Literacies and Rhetorics for Transforming Food Systems in Local and Transnational Contexts*, *Methods and Methodologies for Research in Digital Writing and Rhetoric*, and *Re-making the Library Makerspace: Critical Theories, Reflections, and Practices*. Besides, she is also working on her monograph, *Gendering South Asia in Global Capital: Non-Phallic Bodies in Invisible and Visible Spaces*, which has recently been accepted for publication by Routledge. Her awards include the CCCC Scholars for the Dream Travel Award, the CCCC Chair's Memorial Scholarship Award, the Rhetoric Society of America Graduate Research Development Award, the ATTW Graduate Research Award, and the ATTW Amplification Award. She serves on an editorial board of a Nepali grassroots feminist magazine, *Aparaajitaa Paarijaat* and works with several communities in Nepal. She endeavors to keep grassroots communities at the heart of everything she does, and academia is where she chooses to do those works from.