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Practices of Resilience: Online Nahuatl Study and Nahua Cultural Initiatives in Mexico City and Los Angeles During COVID-19

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Abstract

This article introduces the concept of cyber-resilience as a pathway to urban Indigenous empowerment through digital media. Building on Karina Korostelina and Jocelyn Barrett's (2023) framework of "practices of resilience," I extend these ideas to cyberspace, examining how Indigenous content producers in urban areas used digital platforms to navigate challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020–2023. The focus is on Mexico City and Los Angeles, designated sister cities in 1969, whose shared Spanish colonial histories and transnational migration networks are further connected by Nahuatl as a living Indigenous language. The analysis examines social media content from two organizations in Mexico City—Conformidad Ollinkan and Resistencia Tenochtitlan—and cultural initiatives in Los Angeles by the Anahuacalmecac University Preparatory for North America and Nahuatl instructor Cuitlahuac Martínez. Using qualitative methods, including multimodal content analysis (images, video, text) and interviews, this study highlights how these groups leveraged digital tools to sustain Mesoamerican memory, promote Indigenous heritage, and foster community engagement. My analysis of these materials contributes to literature on digital content production and Mesoamerican identity, emphasizing how online initiatives in urban diasporic contexts strengthen Indigenous cultural knowledge and language preservation.

Introduction

On an October evening in 2020 in a basement in Mexico City, a group of Aztec danzantes (ritual dancers) defied COVID-19 regulations by gathering for a prohibited

ceremony. They removed their surgical masks and stood two meters apart. A gourd receptacle with smoking copal incense sat between them. Cameras captured their meeting in a Facebook Live event. These two members of the Indigenous activist group Conformidad Ollinkan began a ritual that invoked higher powers to strengthen them during a time when the pandemic led them to dance in secret.[1] Imploring aid through dance justified the risks the dancers may have felt were involved as it enabled other group members to watch remotely. As a Euro-descendant, non-Indigenous researcher at a US university, I found Conformidad Ollinkan on Instagram and Facebook. During a research project on Nahuas in the colonial period, I was drawn to online content producers and activists who also raise awareness of the pivotal importance of Nahuan cultures. The group extended an invitation to me to attend this live online event.[2] My interest in these groups also arose independently from my study of Huastecan and Classical Nahuatl and with the Instituto de Docencia e Investigación Etnológica de Zacatecas (IDIEZ) [Institute of Instruction and Ethnological Investigation of Zacatecas]. I have spent most of my life in California, living sixteen years in the LA area. I completed my undergraduate and graduate work in Mexico City and the city of Querétaro. Those experiences helped me to see synergies between Los Angeles and Central Mexico, particularly in the area of activism that embraces Indigeneity and use social media actively.

The next fall, in 2021, far to the northwest—across the Central Plateau of Mexico, its northern desert, and an increasingly securitized international border—another group of students would assemble in Los Angeles. This time it was high school students who gathered with their principal, Marcos Aguilar, at Anawakalmekak International College Preparatory School, a charter school that includes in its curriculum Nahuatl language study and instruction in Mesoamerican cultures. The school day began as usual, with the young women and men dancing to drums in the school's courtyard while wearing face protection. However, on this occasion, the cameras of the ABC Television program *Soul of a Nation* were rolling for a feature on the racial and cultural diversity of Spanish-speaking cultures in the US.[3] In addition to its conventional televised advertisement for the program, ABC also promoted the episode on Facebook. The school, like Conformidad Ollinkan in Mexico City, used social media routinely during the pandemic.[4] Both organizations opened spaces to study the Nahuatl language and to promote Mesoamerican cultural practices for members who live in two of Northern Abya Yala's largest cities.

For Conformidad Ollinkan and Anawakalmekak, interest in Nahuatl and Mesoamerican cultures forms the primary motivation for group affiliation. Conformidad Ollinkan consists of members who identify as mestizo as well as those who claim Nahua ancestry. Similarly, the Anawakalmekak is open to students of all backgrounds whose interests include the study of Nahuatl and Mesoamerica. During the ABC episode featuring the school, four students spoke on camera and identified as Nahua, Zapoteca, Mixteca, and Mexicano. Nahuatl, the most populous Indigenous language

in Mexico, with more than 1.6 million speakers, encompasses heterogenous communities from Zacatecas and Durango to El Salvador, with diasporic presences in the US.[5] As we shall see, the activism of these and other entities on social media has encouraged the recovery of the lost or silenced Indigeneity of their members.

This article examines ways in which these communities in Mexico City and Los Angeles engaged in online activism during the pandemic to raise awareness of the historical and contemporary importance of Nahuatl and Nahua cultures. Even if the membership of these organizations is not entirely Indigenous, they made decolonial uses of social media, bringing about what Nicholet Deschine Parkhurst terms the "disruptions of existing colonial systems."[6] I am interested in online Nahuatl instruction and cultural initiatives even more as they relate to the time of COVID-19, with its disproportionate impact on Indigenous communities.[7] For many Native content producers, the internet provides the key to overcoming the digital divide.[8] That divide itself often comes as a symptom of underlying socioeconomic inequalities.[9] For even non-Indigenous allies and activists, the pandemic provided time and the opportunity to produce pro-Indigenous content.

The activist groups and their online production during COVID-19 that I examine here converge on their efforts to recuperate Indigenous identities through the study of Nahuatl and Mesoamerican culture. These initiatives oppose the twin ideologies that have marginalized Nahuatl on both sides of the US-Mexico border. In the US, language education that favors English over Spanish and Indigenous languages has prevented those with Mesoamerican ancestry from learning Nahuatl. In Mexico, the state-sponsored ideology of mestizaje has marginalized Nahuatl and activist groups in educational spaces.[10] Through individual encounters with the past of Central Mexico, participation in danzante rituals, and fostering the growth of the Mesoamerican *ulama* ball game, organizations in Mexico City continue *indigenista* movements from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[11] In one sense, critical mestizos who distance themselves from governmental discourses regarding national identity comprise the groups under examination in Mexico City

In both cases, the internet offers a space wherein content producers demonstrated that they can exert influence over how and why they study Nahuatl and Nahua culture, a collective effect I refer to as *cyber-resilience*. In both cities, these activist groups have chosen to focus the worldwide potential of the internet on local change. Cyber-resilience draws empowerment from wide sources on language, heritage, and memory available online to address immediate concerns of educational equity and retroacculturation. As we shall see, in each case, the challenges and opportunities of the local take precedence over the transnational.

Before continuing, I wish to address caveats in my approach to online practices of resilience I consider from these activist groups. I argue that the activism I examine achieved cyber-resilience during COVID-19 despite obstacles and indifference on the part of governments and educational institutions. Resilience means more than a stable internet connection. Research has shown the positive contributions broadband

connection brings to Indigenous communities and recognize the deleterious effects of a lack of access to the internet. I submit that pro-Indigenous activism gains similar benefits from internet connectivity. As Karina V. Korostelina and Jocelyn Barrett explain, Indigenous communities "face roadblocks not only through an absence of funding but the exclusion from digital society, creating systemic inequalities and power imbalances."[12] With reference to the epidemic, the researchers continue: "During COVID, the need for broadband became almost desperate in communities as people could not work, learn, or connect with relatives, which was challenging for many communities. Without these opportunities, communities can become stunted, underdeveloped, and create patterns of exclusion."[13] In the end, the choice to maintain online activism and in-person meetings during COVID demonstrates creative, adaptive uses of social media beyond checking a box for internet connectivity.

I also question certain neoliberal interpretations of resilience that place the onus of connectivity and online activity entirely on Indigenous communities. Doing so shifts attention away from systemic inequality.[14] Placing the onus on Indigenous Peoples also allows governments to hold them accountable for the inequities they experience, particularly in times of crisis.[15] I look to the uses activist groups and content producers have made of digital technologies independently, at a time of exclusion from all in-person activities.

It is also worth mentioning the ideological barrier these groups face: the pernicious association of all things Indigenous with static tradition.[16] Such attitudes do not follow historical precedents of the Indigenous adoption of new technologies. Native communities have made wide use of the mechanical printing press since the 1820s.[17] Manuscript writing in the Nahuatl language predates that. In the case of Nahuatl, an unbroken line of textual production using letters of the Latin alphabet in that languages exists dating to the sixteenth century.[18] Beginning in the twentieth century, communities in the US and Canada have broadcast programming via radio and television.[19] In the twenty-first century, social media fulfills a similar role. Facebook, for example, has provided a means for communication and organizing collaborative teaching and information sharing for Indigenous groups.[20] I also note that the static past may also involve a romanticized, ancient past: such a depiction does not correspond to the groups I have observed in LA and Mexico City. Amid their immediate concerns of access to educational and cultural content during the COVID-19 pandemic, they made important contributions to online efforts to recover and promote lost or silenced Indigeneity.

Indigenous content production on Facebook and other social media platforms encourages their influence over self-representations: As researchers in Canada have noted, "[b]y generating their own digital visibility and legibility, Indigenous communities become 'present' online, and thereby exert increasing control over the terms of their own representation."[21] At the same time, I acknowledge the assimilationist forces of the internet. Private interests and companies harvest data on Native users for commercial purposes, and the US government can use the internet in its gatekeeping

of records related to family genealogies.[22] As mentioned, the activists I have examined do not come from Indigenous communities in a conventional sense. Many have mixed ancestry that includes European elements. However, their drive to learn more about their ancestral past drew them to participation in activities aimed at recovering lost or silenced Indigeneity in their respective regions.

I end this section by adding a word regarding orthographic systems in Nahuatl. Spellings in Nahuatl vary according to colonial and modern grammatical models and ideologies.[23] Debates center on power relationships implicit in spellings European friars introduced.[24] When I reproduce spoken Nahuatl, I use J. O. Anderson, Joe Campbell and Frances Karttunen's Modified Orthography (ACK).[25]

Methods

The article's approach is qualitative, focusing on multimodal content (images, video, text) and interviews of the content producers. Korostelina and Barrett also used interviews to gather data. Their anonymized interviewees from Native American communities, provided accounts on the challenges that COVID-19 posed to gaining broadband access; hence the researchers' emphasis on "resilience practices that allowed communities to use the internet as a tool of self-empowerment."[26] I conducted interviews via video platforms with Juan Zamudio and Charol Rodríguez of *Conformidad Ollinkan*. In addition, I interviewed the Instagrammer Yaocelotlest (Ignacio Estrada), also hailing from Mexico City, whose account *Resistencia Tenochtitlan* generated more than 118,000 followers, regarding his approaches to posting on Mesoamerican history and archeology.[27] From Los Angeles, I interviewed Cuitlahuac Martínez, the codirector of *SpeakNahuatl*, an initiative that is opening the study of Nahuatl to an online audience.[28] Likewise, I analyzed the content of Anawakalmekak International University Preparatory School and a televised interview with the school's director, Marcos Aguilar.

In all these cases, my questions concerned how they were coping with the pandemic, and what their organizations aimed to accomplish through their various informational and educational initiatives. While these organizations used social media in their online communities before 2020, COVID-19 tested the viability of these technologies as means to promote the study of Nahuatl and to foster awareness of the historical and contemporary importance of Mesoamerican cultures. After explaining the concept of cyber-resilience and discussing analytical precedents for my examination of social media posts, I will analyze online content by these organizations. My conclusions comment on the gains these organizations made through cyber-resilience and suggest paths for further research.

Analytical Precedents

Previous studies show what the internet has allowed Native and non-Native users alike to accomplish on behalf of Indigenous cultural awareness. During times of crisis, such

as COVID-19, content producers had to rely more exclusively on the internet for their activities. Karina Korostelina and Jocelyn Barrett have shown how "practices of resilience," including the management of resources and productive networks have allowed Native American groups to gain access to broadband connections and begin to close the digital divide.[29] These practices include negotiating with government institutions, building digital capital such as online access and digital literacy, and developing social capital to strengthen economic and cultural resilience. Internet connectivity opens opportunities for rural Indigenous communities by mitigating social and economic exclusion.[30] Framing resilience as embodied practices allows it to adapt to the contours of face to face or virtual activism.

In a similar manner, research demonstrates the power of social media for Indigenous activism around the world and for cultivating resilient Native lifeways.[31] Bronwyn Carlson and Jeff Berglund have observed that Indigenous communities around the globe have often adopted social media early on and have used various platforms (Facebook, X [formerly Twitter], Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube) to share Indigenous knowledges including "health, well-being, and resilience, recognizing Indigenous strength and talent, and sustaining and transforming cultural practices when great distances divide members of the same community."[32] For example, the online linguistic and cultural activism of Mardonio Carballo serves as an example of a Nahua content producer who also has used conventional television outlets).[33] Carballo started his own the interview-based program in 2018, *La raíz doble*, on Canal 22 in Mexico City ("Conversando con Mardonio Carballo").[34] Much opportunity remains to study how Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces have used the internet and social media.[35]

Cyber-resilience as an activist practice helps me understand content production centering on Nahuatl language and cultural themes by Indigenous and non-Indigenous content producers during the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to approach cyber-resilience in urban settings, I focus my attention on Mexico City and Los Angeles. In 1969, the nonprofit diplomatic organization Sister Cities of Los Angeles designated Mexico City as a sister city to LA, based on a shared Spanish colonial history and migration and trade networks.[36] While the promotion of commerce and tourism motivated the organization Sister Cities of Los Angeles to pair LA and Mexico City, the LA-based activists whose work I examine see a deeper connection between them as urban centers on the same continent witnesses to the same pressures of external states over the past five centuries —the Spanish Empire, Mexico, and the US.

Transcending these borders, the historical linguistic commonalities between the ancestral Tongva lands of LA and the Nahuatl-speaking areas of Central Mexico, along with other markers of heritage allow activists to trace and construct transnational approaches to Indigenous, hemispheric identities. Linguists consistently classify the Tongva language as part of a subset of Uto-Aztecan languages.[37] Pharao Hansen describes the "Mexicayotl movement" as an organic tendency among "people in Mexico and the Mexican diaspora in the United States, who self-identify as

Indigenous, Native American people."[38] Individuals in this movement may adopt multiple Indigenous identities that reflect their locations and longings, such as Mexica and Chumash.[39] The availability of DNA testing and genealogical research have provided further means to reinterpret the past and one's ancestry. Mexicayotl activists often find that their DNA tests yield results of 50 percent or higher of "Native American DNA." As Pharao Hansen observes, "[f]or someone who has a physical appearance suggestive of non-European ancestry and who has family ties to an historically Nahuatl-speaking region in Mexico, this declaration may be enough for them to confidently claim to be of Indian ancestry and Nahua ethnicity."[40] By studying regional indigenous histories in Mexico and the US, through cultural practices—*Danza Azteca*, Nahuatl language study—the online activists and organizations I examine based in LA make efforts to reclaim what they view as a lost or stolen ancestral Indigeneity.

These processes of self-identification as Mexica and Nahua have provoked tensions with Native American groups in the US Southwest. Members of the Facebook group "Natives against Aztlán" point out that by claiming all the Southwest as the territory of Aztlán, the Mexica mythic homeland, Mexicayotl activists undermine tribal sovereignties and the US Federal laws that protect them.[41] These polemics point to the reality that the Southwest has long been a land of migration, trading, and linguistic exchange.

Spoken and even written Nahuatl have appeared in what would become the US Southwest since its appearance in legal documents from colonial times.[42] Nahuatl in the US, in that sense, has not been strictly a matter of ancestry and DNA, rather in the twentieth century, Chicano activism reframed the previously imperial language of the Mexica (Aztecs) as a means for advancing emancipatory causes.[43] Among the many transnational links between the cities, Nahuatl as a living Indigenous language connects them: The Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) identified LA as a "Nahua migratory capital city."[44] Nahuatl as a language on the move necessarily impacts the lives and experiences of many in Mexico City and LA—even more so for many with Mesoamerican ancestry.

This analysis contributes to growing literature on digital content production on Mesoamerican ethnic identities and cultural knowledge in diasporic settings.[45] Adam Coon has shown ways in which Nahuas in Mexico and the US have used Facebook to "stay in touch with rural communities and build kinship ties with places like Mexico City."[46] Similarly, Brook Danielle Lillehaugen has shown the power of Twitter [now X] for Zapotec language revitalization through conversation threads on topics of interest such as a professional wrestling.[47] These uses of social media parallel the flexible views that diasporic communities often take regarding space. As Lynn Stephen and Laura Velasco-Ortiz observe, "[c]enturies after those foundational and enforced displacements, well into the twenty-first century, Indigenous mobilities challenge the geography of mestizo/Ladino nationalist maps."[48] Through a shared experience of online simultaneity, similarly activists can use social media to promote Nahuatl study and cultural initiatives.

Cyber-resilience thus expands "practices of resilience" by describing Native sovereignty combined with the support of activist groups with non-Indigenous members. This approach resonates with the work of Candace Kaleimamoowahinekapu Galla (Kanaka Maoli) on the use of digital technologies to increase the production of Native languages and their study in Indigenous communities by interested non-Indigenous learners. Galla has surveyed Native internet users who represent Indigenous languages throughout the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan, Guatemala, Peru, Greenland, Mexico, Bolivia, French Polynesia, and Russia, in addition to her ancestral Hawaii.[49] She has drawn on the concept of "technacy" from the work of Kurt Seeman,[50] and again Seeman and Ron Talbot who both emphasized that communities around the world can generate "skilled, holistic thinkers and doers who can use appropriate technologies that are responsive to local contexts and needs."[51] Galla subsequently has shown that online communication has helped "many minority, endangered, and Indigenous language communities" by transforming the access to, the sharing of, and the engagement with information, all of which encourage language revival.[52] The internet has allowed Indigenous communities to maintain contact with kin over distances. Social media also increases the online reach of activists in favor of expanding Nahuatl language study.

By the same token, I recognize that digital technologies, along with their demonstrated advantages, continue to present the risk of cultural appropriation. As Galla explains,

> digital technologies have also contributed to the pervasiveness of cultural appropriation that plagues Indigenous peoples. Indigenous knowledge systems, languages and cultural elements are at risk of dilution, stereotyping, and manipulation when there is not an understanding of the sacredness of knowledge that belongs to individuals of these Indigenous communities.[53]

While the potential to empower and transform communities exists in digital technologies, they carry a concomitant imperative to care for Native cultural production and its deeper meanings. Unsurprisingly, these echoes of colonialism also lead to cautious engagements with new technology: As Vivian Delgado has observed, "[m]any Native People have considered the dark side of technology, the invasion of privacy, digital public domain used for personal gain, [and] the misuse of control."[54] As we shall see, the activists examined here as they seek to recover ancestral identities are mindful of deeper meanings and of the need to bring advantages to their communities through nonexploitative means.

In light of the foregoing, I consider cyber-resilience to include online activism adapted to the pressures of crisis situations and as an ethos that allows content producers to find creative ways to promote the study of language and culture. Faced

with homogenizing pressures of national and global cultures in these cities, online content producers drew attention to cognitive dissonance between their heritage and their surroundings, attracting many to study Nahuatl and to practice ancestral Nahua traditions, which make cultural values tangible.[55] I now turn to examples of online Nahua cultural initiatives in urban Mexico.

Mexico City

Conformidad Ollinkan



Figure 1.
Conformidad Ollinkan celebrates "Chicnahui Kalli Xihuitl," Year 9 House of the Mexica calendar (IG: @conformidadollinkan, March 17, 2021). Courtesy of Charol Yestopereles, 2021.

The members of Conformidad Ollinkan produce online content and organize in-person events that represent the Mexica (*see* Fig. 1), recalling their political and territorial apex before the Spanish invasion of the Valley of Mexico. In remembering the Mexica, however, their intention is not to celebrate that group's imperialism. At their height, the Mexica controlled lands from Zacatlan (Zacatecas) in the north to Soconosco in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. Conformidad works to counter processes of cultural erasure that have continued to marginalize Indigenous groups in Mexico, a legacy of five centuries of colonialism.[56] At the same time, their activism seeks to reverse processes of Hispanization and allow members to reconnect with their lost Indigenous heritage. Recalling Guillermo Bonfil Batalla's observation that a "de-Indianized"

Mexico is an "imaginary Mexico,"[57] Conformidad also critiques the homogenizing tendencies of the project of the mestizo state.[58] In addition to its Instagram and Facebook accounts, they operate a cultural center, the Faro Poniente Xochicalli in Azcapotzalco, on the northwest outskirts of Mexico City (*see* Fig. 2). Their activities include cultural discussions, dances, art, the ulama ball game, and healing ceremonies. Juan Zamudio, a *temaxtiani* (teacher, sage; their preferred spelling) and a leader in the organization, explained that they observe celebrations from the Mexica calendar.[59] Through these observances, Conformidad Ollinkan integrates online posts with in-person activities.



Figure 2.
Faro Poniente Xochicalli in Azcapotzalco; image courtesy of Charol Yestopereles, 2020.

Conformidad has partnered with other online content producers in Mexico City, as they did for a virtual conference the organization held in October of 2020. In the middle of COVID-19, on October 12, 2020, a Facebook Live broadcast emitted from the Plaza of Tlatelolco via *Chaneque Tevé*, a channel dedicated to highlighting Nahua contributions to regional history. Hosts Arturo Balche and Xicotencatl recalled the importance of Tlatelolco:

> Balche: [E]stamos haciendo este video especial el equipo de Chaneke TV, parte del equipo de Chaneke TV porque pues se están cumpliendo ya quinientos años de la resistencia cultural. Algunos de los que puedo mencionar, como resistencia indígena, pero en realidad es una resistencia cultural porque involucra toda nuestra identidad como nación, como país, como continente. […]

> Xicotencatl: Soy el encargado de la producción de Chaneke TV, y, pues, aquí estamos justamente en Tlatelolco, en donde fue el último bastión de nuestra amada Tenochtitlan. Aquí es dónde comenzó toda la invasión a lo largo y lo ancho de nuestro Anahuac y pues, aquí seguimos resistiendo: esto es un símbolo el estar aquí para dar a conocer nuestro mensaje sobre el rechazo de todo lo que nos ha dejado estos quinientos años.
>
> [Balche: [W]e are making this special video by the Chaneke TV team, part of the Chaneke TV team because, well, we are about to reach five hundred years of cultural resistance. Some of the ways which I can mention as indigenous resistance. But in reality it is cultural resistance because it involves our entire identity as a nation, as a country, as a continent. […]
>
> Xicotencatl: I am in charge of the production of Chaneke TV, and, well, here we are here in Tlatelolco, precisely in the place of the last bastion of our beloved Tenochtitlan. This is where the entire invasion began all throughout our Anahuac and well, here we continue to resist: this being here is a symbol in order to spread our message about the rejection of everything that these five hundred years have left us.]

The broadcast opened two days of presentations, dances, and healing ceremonies, under the banner of "*Más de 500 años de resistencia: Encuentro virtual Anahuak Unida* [Over 500 Years of Resistance: Virtual Summit of Anahuak United]" and hosted by Conformidad Ollinkan.[60] Balche and Ximoteca commented on how the prevalence of misconceptions regarding history offered the opportunity for reflection on Tlatelolco as a pivotal point between ancestral Indigenous culture and Spanish colonialism. It was in Tlatelolco, after a ninety-three-day siege of that island city and of the nearby capital of Tenochtitlan that the Spanish and their Tlaxcalteco allies cornered the last Mexica *tlatoani* (ruler), Cuauhtemoc, on August 13, 1521.[61] In the sixteenth century the region experienced waves of Eurasian epidemics the Spaniards brought, which decimated populations. In Tlatelolco, Indigenous writers at the time recorded the fallout of those pandemics.[62]

The arrival of COVID-19 in 2020 provided an historical parallel. Conformidad's photographer, Charol Yestopereles, who teaches history in secondary school, regularly posts on the group's account, using single images, mise en scènes, and collages to represent Mesoamerican history and document the group's activities. Yestopereles is from Mexico City and a mestizo: He has come to identify as Nahua, recuperating part of his ancestry through membership in Conformidad Ollinkan. Since his family has lived in there for generations, he has chosen to reconnect with the ancestral inhabitants of the city. Lamenting that the group's dancers felt the need to hold ceremonies in secret under COVID-19 regulations, Yestopereles reflected that

> algo que tenía que ser presencial se transfirió a la imagen, pero no se puede apreciar toda la cultura por medios virtuales. No es la primera vez que los

> mexicanos hemos pasado por esto. Después de la invasión de los españoles, tuvimos que conservar las ideas de los antepasados en los códices.
>
> [something that ought to be in person was transferred to images; but one cannot gain appreciation for everything cultural through digital means. It's not the first time we Mexicans have been through this. After the Spanish invasion, we had to preserve the ancestors' ideas in the codices.][63]

Yestopereles's observation recalls that in ancestral times before the conquest, record keepers called *tlacuiloque* were already preserving ritual and political discourses with images in painted books (codices) or in murals.[64] A *tlacuilo* recorded the life events of a city's ruler with images.[65] Through songs and rhythms, the tlacuilo would also give an oral performance of the information in a painted book (*amoxtli*) or a mural.[66] After the conquest, as Yestopereles recalled, Nahua communities suddenly confronted the problem of disappearing knowledge: They were laboring to preserve information as community elders began to pass on.[67] By the same token, and in reference to the COVID-19 pandemic, Yestopereles has signaled an epistemological problem: Conformidad Ollinkan wishes to preserve Indigenous knowledge that is currently incompletely represented when it is relayed exclusively through the web.

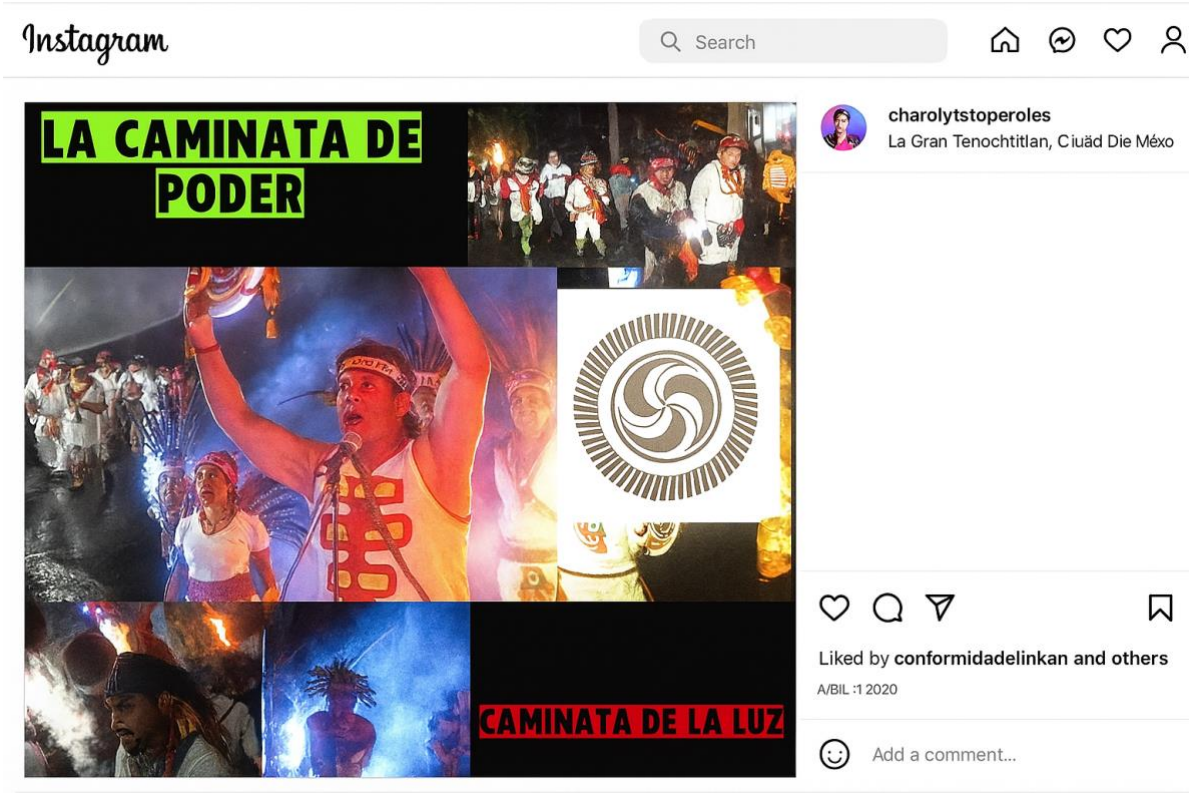


Figure 3. *Caminata de poder*, and *Caminata de la luz*; preparing for Día de los muertos (IG: @conformidadollinkan, October 30, 2020, Courtesy of Carol Yestopereles, 2021)

During the pandemic, social media helped maintain continuity in the organization's activities. Nevertheless, despite the ability of their online community to facilitate interactions, the leadership aimed ultimately to return to in-person gatherings. Two of Conformidad Ollinkan's largest in-person events in 2020, the *Caminata de poder* and the *Caminata de la luz*, were processions participants held to usher in el Día de los muertos. Unwilling to neglect their rituals, the organization held gatherings in Azcapotzalco at night as a temporary measure during the 2020 pandemic (*see* Fig. 3). By 2021, daytime, in-person events had returned. Their celebration of the Mexica new year, *Mikailhuitl* 2021, combined dances and altars for the deceased throughout the city, from the *Complejo Cultural Los Pinos* next to the presidential residence, to the Plaza of Iztapalapa, south of the city. By 2021 the purpose of online representations shifted from the transmission of the content to an invitation to participate in person. Thus, through the use of the internet to maintain connections during social distancing, Conformidad Ollinkan pivoted with ease between in-person and online events: cyber-resilience bridged the gap.

Many of the educators who participate in Conformidad's cultural events have expressed their commitment to the organization as a means to promote culture. In fact, one of the motivations in forming the activist organization was to expand members' access to sources and information related to Nahua ancestral culture. According to Juan Zamudio, as teachers and professors of history at various public institutions in Mexico City, members of Conformidad Ollinkan have had difficulty gaining admittance to official archives.[68] Although a constant and reliable internet connection in Mexico City exists, they have yet to gain equitable access to historical sources in the city's archives—notably the AGN (Archivo General de la Nación) and the BNAH (Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología e Historia).

Juan Zamudio and Charol Yestopereles explained to me that both the AGN and the BNAH denied their requests for in-person access to the archives, citing preferential treatment for researchers affiliated with universities. Zamudio and Yestopereles have thus instead relied on online sharing of files and digital codices to give the members of Conformidad Ollinkan broader access to resources. The BNAH has digitized many of its pictorial codices that provide examples of how the Mexica and other Nahua groups danced and performed their rituals.[69] However, the nondigitized archives in the city contain alphabetic manuscripts with colonial-era examples of the daily life of Nahuas in the capital and the surrounding region.[70] Given the specific interest of Conformidad Ollinkan in learning about and embodying Mexica lifeways, restricted access to these archives places obstacles in the organization's path.

In my own experience, having consulted both archives, I can attest to the time-consuming processes of making an appointment and demonstrating the existence of a project that requires the archives. In the case of the AGN, users must also apply for an identification card specific to that repository. Thus, it is understandable that an

affiliation with an institution of higher learning would facilitate access. What is more, this is not the only time that heritage activist organizations have faced obstacles and exclusion to accessing the archives of the AGN and the BNAH.[71] Difficulty in accessing archives in person has encouraged Conformidad Ollinkan to emphasize their rituals organized around the Mexica calendar as well as the ulama ball court at their center in Azcapotzalco, as mentioned earlier. During the pandemic, the internet allowed their members to continue to participate in rituals from a distance, as described in the opening, with an eye to resuming face-to-face events.

Resistencia Tenochtitlan

While Conformidad conducts its intellectual activism with an ambivalent relation to the academy, another content producer in Mexico City posted from within higher education during the COVID pandemic. Ignacio Estrada, during his studies at the *Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia*, aimed to make academic knowledge on history and archeology available to a wide audience. He started posting on Instagram in August of 2017, and in 2020 and 2021, using the account @resistenciatenochtitlan, began producing content under the handle of Yaocelotlest. The online name breaks down to the Nahuatl elements *yao-* "warlike," and *ocelotl* "jaguar," along with an ending recalling the Latin suffix "-ist." I approximate Yaocelotlest as "One Who Lives as a Warlike Jaguar."

A mestizo in an urban environment who does not identify as Indigenous, Estrada works through his studies and social media posts to raise awareness of the region's heritage. In our interview, he indicated that Yaocelotlest's content tends to resonate with followers of Mexican descent in the US. Other followers live in Europe and South America and have no Mesoamerican heritage.[72] He explained that his use of the term "resistencia" covers acts ranging from overt opposition to the Spanish to the cultivation of inner strength and resilience. [73] Estrada described his aim as providing a more nuanced version of the history of Mexico, emphasizing how Indigenous communities appropriated aspects of European culture, transforming them, rather than acquiescing passively to Spanish control. Estrada's approach recalls Brian Owensby's observation on power relationships in colonial Mexico: "[N]egotiation counterbalanced domination, reflecting the fact that social relations cannot be reduced to the mastery of overlords and the subjection and victimization of subalterns."[74] Estrada shares his intellectual journey with his followers by providing historical descriptions of lives and events of the Mexica in Tenochtitlan before the Spanish and during the colonial period.

Mindful of misconceptions regarding the military power of the Spanish compared to the Mexica, Estrada often responds to followers' questions by emphasizing Indigenous strength.[75] Two posts from July 29, 2019, compare the rank of a Mexica warrior of the Ticociyahuacatl with an armed Spanish invader (*see* Figs. 4 and 5). The posts deemphasized the usual attention Spanish arms receive and more

accurately portrayed the force and numbers of Native combatants. For example, the caption under the Indigenous warrior reads:



Figure 4. Ticociyahuacatl (IG: @resistenciatenochtitlan, 29 July, 2019, Courtesy of Ignacio Estrada, 2020)

> Guerrero Ticociyahuacatl: …[E]ra uno de los primeros generales en la cadena del mando mexica. Junto con el Tlilancalqui, el Cuauhnochtli y el Ezhuahuacatl, comandaban unidades de 8000 guerreros, es decir un xiquipilli. Este tipo de general en tiempos de paz, tenía funciones judiciales, como la de juzgar y ejecutar criminales. Su vestimenta, similar a la de los guerreros rapados (cuachiqueh), es una alegoría al sol y las deidades celestes. La banderola que lleva atada en su espalda, representa a los últimos cuatro niveles del cielo y el campo de borlas el Omeyocan.
>
> [The warrior Ticociyahuacatl: One of the generals in the Mexica chain of command was Ticociyahuacatl. Along with the (officials) Tlilancalqui, Cuauhnochtili, and Ezhuahuacatl, he commanded units of 8,000 warriors, called a *xiquipilli*. In peacetime, this kind of general held a judicial role, passing sentences and executing criminals. His clothing is an allegory of the sun and celestial deities, similar to the shaven warriors (the *cuachiqueh*). The rack he carries tied to his back represents the upper four levels (of the cosmos) and the field of tassels (stands for) Omeyocan (the place of Ometeotl) (original Spanish in Fig. 4)].

The name ticociyahuacatl refers to a rank and not an individual.[76] With the root "*yahualtia*," "to go around something, to go in procession"[77] and the agentive suffix "-catl," the term likely refers to an infantry general. This rank also indicates the high level of strategy and sophistication associated with Mexica warfare.[78] The post connects Mexica warfare with a certain articulation of their cosmovision by referencing

the various levels of the celestial realms and even the male-female complementarity said to reside in the high abode of Omeyocan.[79] Numerous details, a concise presentation, and the image quickly help readers learn about high-ranking Mexica warriors. Via historical information to overcome stereotypes of the Nahuas as weaker than the Spanish, Ignacio Estrada uses digital content to form a basis for recognizing Indigenous achievements.



Figure 5. Typical Spanish combat gear (IG: @resistenciatenochtitlan, 29 July 2019, Courtesy of Ignacio Estrada, 2020)

The corresponding post on the Spanish combatant emphasizes European invaders' vulnerabilities:

> Aunque mucho se ha hablado sobre los caballos o las armas de fuego de los españoles poco se ha dicho sobre que la gran mayoría de los conquistadores eran hombres de a pie, con equipo y armamento pasado de moda en Europa que apenas podían hacerse de un casco o protecciones acolchadas. Estos hombres se maravillaron al ver los trajes e insignia de guerra mexicas o tlaxcaltecas a los que no tardaron en llenar de elogios e inclusive adoptar algunas de sus armas y armaduras.
>
> [Although much has been said about the horses and firearms of the Spanish, little has been said about the fact that the vast majority of conquistadors were footmen, who used equipment and arms obsolete in Europe. These men were barely able to furnish themselves with a helmet or even cloth armor. These same men marveled at seeing the combat gear and war banners of the Mexicas or the Tlaxcallans. Soon the Spanish would praise Native warriors effusively and adopt some of their weapons and armor].

This repositioning of historical content departs from the view of the Spanish conquistador as a larger-than-life figure from Spanish chronicles or later romanticized accounts. While true that some Spaniards received appointments from the crown to govern parts of the Americas, most of the men who went did so as fortune seekers of humble origin.[80] They armed themselves as they could, which led to many of them carrying outdated European equipment into battle.[81] The consensus today is that the Spanish invasion would not have been possible without the help the Spanish gained from Native allies, especially those from Tlaxcala.[82] In terms of military strength, on the ground it was not clear who would prevail when Cortés entered Tenochtitlan and only through a long and costly process to the Spanish did the city fall. By shedding light on lesser-known details of the Spanish invasion, the posts emphasize the resilience of Indigenous agents.

While Estrada's cultural initiative Resistencia Tenochtitlan did not host gatherings as did Conformidad Ollinkan, he focuses on bringing nuance and empathy toward the Indigenous aspects of the local history of Mexico City. Ignacio Estrada's informational approach turns social media browsing into learning and dialogue on Mesoamerican heritage. Both Conformidad Ollinkan and Ignacio Estrada have dedicated their online content to dispelling the persistent association of the Native with the nonmodern.[83] Similarly, Conformidad Ollinkan connects tradition with the present by performing rituals in the Mexica calendar and embodying the deep heritage of the valley that was home to Tenochtitlan. Despite challenges they encountered in the era of COVID-19, cyber-resilience allowed both organizations to continue to produce their Nahua-focused content. Other examples of online resilient practices come from the sister city to the north.

Los Angeles

SpeakNahuatl

The itinerant Nahuatl instructor Cuitlahuac Martínez came to the study of Nahuatl based on his experience of cultural connections between Los Angeles and Mexico. Martínez described to me how he had spent his childhood in LA and had always been aware of ways in which the category of Mexican American estranged him from his Indigeneity. His parents emigrated to LA from Jayamitla, Jalisco, when he was still a child. The elders of Jayamitla, during the sixteenth century, used written Nahuatl to produce a description of the town's territory and the area's flora and fauna as part of the *Relaciones geográficas* project of colonial administrators.[84] Nahuatl speakers in Jayamitla today form part of regional variant of the language.[85] The historical and contemporary influence of Nahuatl in Jayamitla has shaped ways that residents speak Spanish. For instance, Martínez commented that, in his family, "we spoke Spanish, but we used different names for animals. Instead of saying 'hormigas' for ants we would say 'asqueles.' It was only after I went to Mexico that I began to study Nahuatl and

learned that the word comes from 'azcatl,' Nahuatl for ant."[86] These experiences awakened a curiosity in Martínez that would grow through his travel, language study, and research into the past of his ancestral community.

As a teen, Martínez made a transformative trip to Mexico City, where he felt closer to his ancestors. People he met immediately recognized his first name, Cuitlahuac, as that of the penultimate ruler (*tlatoani*) of Tenochtitlan.[87] While processes of Hispanization had removed spoken Nahuatl from his family's home, Martínez found ways to revive his use of the language through study and his own educational initiative.

After his visit to Mexico City, Cuitlahuac Martínez cultivated a Nahua dimension as part of his identity. In addition to his name, his hometown, and the linguistic heritage of Nahuatl in his family, Martínez found in Nahuatl instruction a tool for self-empowerment and for empowering others to critique deficiencies he sees an institutional language instruction in the US. Recalling Magnus Pharao Hansen's earlier observation on the complex reinterpretations of the past and genealogy in tandem with language study, Cuitlahuac Martínez shows one path to identity recuperation. He began studying Nahuatl in 2016 at the Plaza de Cultura de Artes in Los Angeles. There he met David Marcelino Cayetano, from Soquitipa (also spelled Zoquitipa), San Luis Potosí in Mexico. Soquitipa lies in the region of the Huasteca, which extends to the Gulf coast of Veracruz. What began as a student-mentor relationship between Martínez and Cayetano developed into a partnership with the founding of SpeakNahuatl in 2018, with Cayetano guiding Martínez in connecting with Nahuatl and its cultural heritage. Martínez and Cayetano began by using Facebook and Instagram in April of 2018 to promote weekly gatherings in parks near UCLA.[88] They taught the Huastecan Nahuatl with which Cayetano was familiar, using the ACK orthography, mentioned earlier.[89]

As an instructor and autodidact, Martínez prefers to work outside of the academic institutions that study the language.[90] The classes he and Cayetano started in April of 2018 grew and soon Martínez expanded his range to locations throughout LA, from Plaza Olvera to Pasadena City College. Critiquing what he considers the inadequate instruction of Native languages in US education, Martínez bases his lessons on conversational models. In prepandemic Los Angeles, he held classes for underserved students, offering free and low-cost Nahuatl instruction. On November 15, 2019, he sat with his students in a hallway at Pasadena City College, leading them in conversation and giving prompts and corrections:

> Student 1: Canin tiehua? [Where do you come from?]
> Student 2: Na niehua Agua Nueva. [I come from Agua Nueva.]
> Student 1: Canin titequiti? [Where do you work?]
> Student 2: Canin ax nitequiti… (*sic*) [Where not I work…]
> Cuitlahuac: *Axnitequiti*. [*I don't work*.] (emphasis original)
> Student 2: Axnitequiti. [I don't work.]

Student 1: Canin timomachtia? [Where do you study?]
Student 2: Na nimoch… (sic) [I stud…]
Cuitlahuac: *Nimomachtia…* [I *study*…] (emphasis original)
Student 2: Nimomachtia ipan Centro en PCC. [I study at "Centro" PCC.][91]

These exchanges occur in a positive environment. His students show a high level of commitment: None of them received formal college credit for their efforts and the instructor worked on a donation basis. Bouncing back from an educational system that marginalized his ancestors' language, Cuitlahuac Martínez entered into his heritage by teaching others.

For Cuitlahuac, language learning carries an added dimension of social equity. During our Zoom conversation, Martínez commented on the need for those of European ancestry (a category which he considers inclusive of Latinos) to learn an accurate pronunciation of Nahuatl, such as the "-tl" digraph.[92] Likewise, his SpeakNahuatl Instagram account includes a range of social topics, and serves as an information board for Los Angeles and the San Gabriel Valley regions. The pandemic slowed but did not stop Martínez's work, which he continued online exclusively, through videoconferencing, using a format similar to that of the conversational exercises with his students described above. Martínez commented that he looked forward to returning to in-person instruction, anticipating a more comprehensive integration of the cultural aspects that accompany language instruction.[93] As with organizations in Mexico City, Martínez has used digital technology not so much to build a community exclusively online, but to encourage those who are able to meet in person. Empowerment through the study of Nahuatl is a face-to-face concern.

By the end of 2021, as pandemic protocols shifted toward in-person events, Cuitlahuac Martínez had attracted more than twenty-three thousand Instagram followers, indicating a growing interest in learning Nahuatl. Over time, the number of his followers has continued to increase. In spring of 2025, SpeakNahautl had more than twenty-nine thousand followers. Martínez's efforts to recover Indigenous identities through language study in SpeakNahuatl parallel those of fellow educators in LA who share a commitment to extending the opportunity to study Nahuatl, particularly to persons of Mesoamerican heritage.

Anawakalmekak

Promoting the study of Indigenous knowledges as a component of a university preparatory curriculum, Anawakalmekak International University Preparatory of North America provides signposts toward a greater understanding of Native roots in Los Angeles. In 2002, local high school history teacher Marcos Aguilar together with parents in the local area founded the charters school Xinaxcalmecac (Seeds of the People Academy) with a curriculum aimed at recovering the heritage of students of Mesoamerican descent. The first site of the school was an unused recreation center in El Sereno Park, northwest of California State University, Los Angeles.

The school's website recalls how the parents of one hundred and thirty-nine children opposed English-language-only laws over classroom instruction. In 2006, Proposition 227 limited dual-language education in California by prohibiting the use of languages other than English in public school classrooms.[94] However, the charter school movement opened an opportunity to design trilingual Spanish, Nahuatl, and English instruction at Anawakalmekak. The educators' focus reflects a wider concern regarding the future of Indigenous languages. Candace Kaleimamoowahinekapu Galla has commented, "[i]f Indigenous languages are not seen as a resource that has the potential to influence all aspects of life, a wealth of knowledge systems and all that is embedded within [them] may be lost. Hence, great potential exists for utilizing technology as a supplemental tool to record the language, distribute the language material, deliver courses to those in far distances."[95] Today, the school operates with a renewed charter, in permanent facilities, less than one mile from the recreation center in El Sereno Park where the school began (*see* Fig. 6). Anawakalmekak takes pride in building up Indigenous identities and in its use of digital technology.

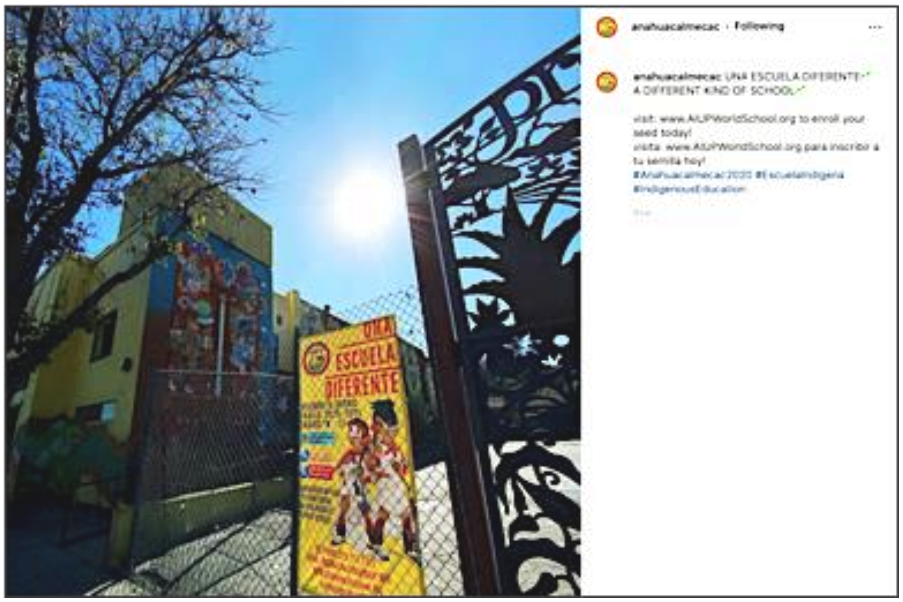


Figure *Figure 6.*

Instagram post, Anawakalmekak. (IG: @Anawakalmekak, March 10, 2020, fair use)

The distinctive approaches and vision of the school have attracted national media attention. On September 17, 2021, ABC visited Anawakalmekak and interviewed Marcos Aguilar, the school's executive director, for *Soul of a Nation* as part of a special episode, "*Corazón de América*," here in conversation with Alex Pérez, national correspondent for ABC News:

> **Pérez:** The focus for students here is just as much about academics as it is about understanding their own roots and foundations.

> **Aguilar:** It's important for our students to know where they come from, and that's what that identity should reflect. When we use labels like "Hispanic" and "Latino" or even "Latinx," we're erasing the history of each family, of each nation, and of each person in a way that is a part of the overall erasure of our history.
>
> **Pérez:** I grew up in a Mexican immigrant neighborhood. I went to a mostly all-White high school, and as soon as I got there I felt like I was different and my skin was different. And the things that I was proud of, I was suddenly trying to be quiet about. It seems the complete opposite here.
>
> **Aguilar:** Well, we hope so. The school is a beacon to many about what can be done differently in a school.

Educational innovation through culturally relevant curricula emanates from the school's founding days. Anawakalmekak has grown from the same soil as curricular changes on the university level: out of the Chicano movement.

Juan Gómez-Quiñones, a path-breaking scholar in Chicano studies, was among the founding members of Anawakalmekak. Gómez-Quiñones began teaching history in 1969 at UCLA, where he also helped found the Chicano Studies Research Center (CSRC). Following Gómez-Quiñones's passing on November 11, 2020, the City of Los Angeles declared January 28 a holiday in his honor,[96] and Anawakalmekak has added that observance to its calendar. With deep roots in social movements in the US Southwest in the second half of the twentieth century, Anawakalmekak continues the work of Gómez-Quiñones by promoting Indigeneity via digital technologies. The school offers students historical and contemporary models of strength and resilience in response to local calls for educational change.

At Anawakalmekak, teaching technologies support identity construction via distance instruction in Nahuatl. Anawakalmekak students participated in live Nahuatl instruction via video conference from their campus, and, during the pandemic, from their homes. Native-speaker instructors of Nahuatl Victorino Torres Nava and Juana de la Cruz Farias have taught the school's language classes remotely. As well as being an instructor of the language, Torres Nava, originally from Cuentepec, Moreleos, is also a Nahuatl author and researcher who has collected linguistic data from Cuentepec.[97] In 2019, he visited the Newberry Library in Chicago and helped translate a sixteenth-century Nahuatl play into English.[98] De la Cruz Farias has worked with Anawakalmekak since prior to the pandemic and appears in Facebook groups devoted to Nahuatl.[99] Both instructors have contributed to Anawakalmekak's understanding of Nahuatl orthography, which has shifted from colonial-era conventions to what Magnus Pharao Hansen terms an "intuitive orthography."[100] The school thus commits to teaching Nahuatl not as a part of a frozen past but as a dynamic, vital source of identity and empowerment today.

During the pandemic, Anawakalmekak regularly posted on Instagram and Facebook regarding their in-person events, from live musical performances to dances and culinary demonstrations.[101] In 2021, the online engagement of the school garnered them more than forty-three hundred Instagram followers, Cuitlahuac Martínez among them. In fact, Martínez commented that he had once shared workspace with Anawakalmekak in Plaza Olvera and spoke in positive terms of their impact in the community.[102] By 2025, Anawakalmekak's audience on Instagram had reached more than seven and a half thousand followers.

The mutual commitment of Cuitlahuac Martínez and the Anawakalmekak school to Nahuatl instruction in Los Angeles has allowed these organizations to overcome the digital divide and physical distance that reduce young people's access to learning Nahuatl in the US. The strengthening of in-person activities via online engagements parallels research on activism for advancing Indigenous language instruction as a prelude to in-person action. As Channarong Intahchomphoo, a scholar of education for Indigenous youth, has observed, "[f]or Indigenous activists to achieve their objectives, social media cannot be the only tactic. To make sure that their voices are heard by government, businesses, and others in positions of power, they still need to demonstrate on the streets. Thus, social media can be seen as a tool to bring together and coordinate the actions of people who share the same agenda before the in-person demonstration eventually occurs."[103] Ultimately, the advances in online communication aim to enrich in-person activities. Rather than a manifestation or march in a traditional sense, these Indigenous students in LA manifest their understanding of who they are and why it matters through how and why they study. The palpable issues of access to Nahuatl instruction motivate Cuitlahuac Martínez and Anawakalmekak. Helping students find their voices in a shared study of Nahuatl and Mesoamerican cultures speaks of the success that Martínez and Cayetano's SpeakNahuatl and Anawakalmekak demonstrate in LA.

Conclusion

In this article I have examined instances of how content producers in Mexico City and Los Angeles have used social media to address educational inequities with regard to language and cultural initiatives. In these cases, I have argued that the cyber-resilience of social media posting formed a bridge in the pandemic toward resuming in-person activities. Drawing on work by Karina Korostelina and Jocelyn Barrett regarding Indigenous practices of resilience, I framed my analysis with the concept of cyber-resilience and have emphasized online practices that moved urban Native communities toward a post-COVID return to living culture and face-to-face language.

In many of these cases, the study of Nahuatl and of Nahua culture has helped learners recover Mesoamerican identities that modern states and economic structures have marginalized. These producers of Nahua-centered content post amid a re-evaluation of earlier, dubious, utopian ideas regarding the internet and social media.

For example, MIT Media Lab cofounder Nicholas Negroponte in *Being Digital* optimistically imagined the twenty-first century as a harmonious period of nonterritorial existence.[104] As we have seen, activists online of Indigenous and on-Indigenous descent gravitate toward solving problems of local concern. Neither deterritorialization of the language revival nor retro-acculturation is possible.

Others have not shared Negroponte's optimism: After all, during the nineteenth century, the telegraph and railroads promised similar utopian equality.[105] Then, as now, society generated multiple narratives, each faction aiming at its own goals. Responding to misguided digital optimism, Vincent Mosco observes that when it comes to any pretension to online utopia, "the telling and retelling of the mythic story shields cyberspace from the messiness of down-to-earth politics."[106] Some of the content producers examined here have experienced limited access and exclusion from academic resources. Clearly, information divides unfavorable to cultural initiatives on Indigeneity still exist. As Gómez-Quiñones observed, "[g]eography must be foregrounded because real struggles occurred and occur in real spaces; that said, the effort is not to reclaim turf, but civic freedom and intellectual sovereignty."[107] For these content producers, proximity and belonging to a physical community figure prominently. To deterritorialize any of these groups implies an impossible depoliticization.

Individuals of Mesoamerican descent seeking to reconnect with their Indigenous roots in Mexico City and LA continue to face marginalization with regard to intellectual resources. Although Conformidad Ollinkan is comprised mostly of educators, the organization has not been able to enter and research in important archives in Mexico City, a fact that points to unequal access to information. Shared physical spaces open the possibility of sharing material culture. However, structural exclusions like these prevent activist organizations from accessing physical archives. Thus, I invite future research addressing the question of what approaches organizations that promote Indigenous cultures like Conformidad Ollinkan have for gaining access.

Facebook and Instagram as Juan Zamudio and Charol Yastopereles have explained, offered Conformidad Ollinkan the means to remain in touch with followers and continue the rituals that help them cope during a time of uncertainty. Eventually, their cyber-resilience allowed them to return to the Faro Ollinkan in Azcapotzalco and to one of the most complex in-person events they host: the ulama ball game. By comparing themselves with their ancestors, who used images in codices to remain rooted in tradition, the organization used the visual resources of photography and video to encourage resilience and find a collective way forward. Also from Mexico City, I interviewed Ignacio Estrada, a university student in anthropology who had access to academic resources during the pandemic. His posting during the COVID-19 period in 2020 and 2021 worked to bring to light stereotypes and correct misimpressions regarding Indigenous vulnerabilities during the Spanish invasion. Both organizations refused to remain in a static, stereotyped past and show that the tools of social media can empower activists and mestizo urban populations who seek to understand heritage through Nahuatl.

The examples I considered from LA focused on Nahuatl language instruction as a central pillar to building and strengthening diasporic Mesoamerican identities. Cuitlahuac Martínez, through his travel in Mexico and his living Nahua heritage, supports the burgeoning Nahuatl language-learning movement in the LA area. By providing technical knowledge on the language and insisting on respect in its usage, Cuitlahuac Martínez works against pervasive stereotypes in the US and Mexico regarding any would-be lack of sophistication in Nahuatl and Indigenous languages. Marcos Aguilar at the Anawakalmekak International College Preparatory School also emphasizes the sophistication of Nahuatl as a means for facing a world often hostile to Indigenous values and worldviews. Through daily discipline, study, and acts of self-determination, Aguilar encourages students to lean forward on tradition. Los Angeles, a migratory capital of the Nahuatl language, serves as a bridgehead. Activist educators there make visible vivid networks of knowledge generation in the larger Uto-Aztecan region.

Across the materials surveyed here collective moves emerge toward nuanced identity constructions that prioritize rather than disavow Indigeneity. Cuitlahuac Martínez and Marcos Aguilar have both pointed out the insufficiency of monolithic ethnic descriptions that lump together complex Indigenous ancestry with the homogenizing terms "Latino" or "Hispanic" to encapsulate the identities and experiences of persons with deep roots in the US Southwest and Mesoamerica. Similarly, Conformidad Ollinkan and Ignacio Estrada endeavor to more accurately describe the role that specific Indigenous groups and figures have played in their regional history. For future research, these shared concerns of ethnic identity construction and historical representations between these organizations offer potential to examine how the study of language and culture allows groups in the US and Mexico to reclaim silenced Indigenous heritage.[108]

Activist content producers who engaged in Mesoamerican interest networking faced potentials and limitations during the COVID-19 pandemic. By deemphasizing ideological narratives of the nation-states of the US and Mexico, these organizations facilitated an expansive basis for identities centered on Mesoamerican heritage. Aware of the threat of assimilation into dominant Western culture through the internet, the content producers examined here used the internet to promote Indigeneity. Even when it was inconvenient during the COVID-19 pandemic, and even with the contingency protocols in place, these online activist entities found ways to promote their contemporary understandings of the Mesoamerican heritages present in Mexico City and LA. The sign in Plaza Olvera marking the sister-city status of Los Angeles and Mexico City stands as an officializing emblem that conceals rather than reveals commonalities between these urban areas. Millions pass through that plaza each year—some as tourists, and some celebrating Mexican mestizo heritage. Still others gather to remember the village of Yagna, next to which the founding of Los Angeles occurred as a distant outpost of Mexico City. Today, in both cities, Nahuatl and Nahua cultural initiatives have deep roots in a transnational region of linguistic exchanges and

cultural connectivities. That common ground continues to offer potential for supporting cyber-resilience that brings participants face to face.

Notes

[1] Ollinkan refers to the "place of a path" and uses a spontaneous orthography. My approach to the spellings of words in Nahuatl in this article is to respect those that the organizations under examination have chosen. Magnus Pharao Hansen refers to respecting the spelling orientation of individuals and groups as "orthographic relativism." For more on orthographic systems in Nahuatl, see Pharao Hansen, *Nahuatl Nations: Language Revitalization and Semiotic Sovereignty in Indigenous Mexico* (Oxford University Press, 2024), 51–67. All translations are mine unless I note otherwise.

[2] This article draws on those events and began as the paper "The Corner of Tlatelolco, Tenochtitlan, and Plaza Olvera: Social Media, Nahuatl and Nahua Cultural Initiatives," which I presented in 2021 for the Latin American Studies Association (LASA) as part of the panel "Mesoamerican Cyber-Revitalizations."

[3] *Soul of a Nation: Corazón de América, Celebrating Hispanic Culture*, S1, E9 coincided with Hispanic Heritage Month and aired on September 15, 2021. Adding to the series's focus on topics emanating from African American experience, this episode featured Anawakalmekak International University Preparatory School as well as Danys Pérez Prades's Afro-Cuban dance company Oyu Oro in New York City, and the Indigenous culinary activism of Claudia Serrato (Puréhpecha, Huasteca, Chicana), in Montebello, California.

[4] Conformidad Ollinkan AC, Facebook account, main page, accessed November 18, 2023, https://www.facebook.com/conformidadollinkan.ac.1; and Conformidad Ollinkan AC, Instagram account, main page, @conformidadollinkan, accessed November 18, 2023, https://www.instagram.com/conformidadollinkan/?hl=en

[5] Nahuatl was the lingua franca from Central Mexico to El Salvador before and during the colonial period. Spanish colonial administrators, instead of prohibiting the language, used interpreters widely (Elizabeth Hill Boone, "Foreword," in *Indigenous Intellectuals; Knowledge, Power, and Colonial Culture in Mexico and the Andes*, ed. Gabriel Ramos and Yanna Yannakakis [Duke University Press, 2014], ix–xiii), and clergy often learned Nahuatl to proselytize (John Frederick Schwaller, *The History of the Catholic Church in Latin America: From Conquest to Revolution and Beyond* [New York University Press, 2011]). Although Bourbon reforms in the 1750s and 1780s sought to displace Indigenous languages from administrative and ecclesiastical activities, Nahuatl's place as the most spoken language in New Spain remained (Susan Blue Zakaib, "Built upon the Tower of Babel: Language Policy and the Clergy in Bourbon Mexico," PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2016).

Ironically, postindependence governments continued pressuring populations to speak Spanish (Camilla Townsend, *Fifth Sun: A New History of the Aztecs* [Oxford University Press, 2019], 207). Even so, Nahuatl survives today: Estimates range from 1.5 million ("Población hablante de lengua indígena de cinco y más años por principales lenguas, 1970 a 2005," INEGI/Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática, 2010, Sistemas Nacionales Estadístico y de Información Geográfica, México, https://www.inegi.org.mx/), to 2.5 million speakers (Carlos Montemayor and Donald Frischmann, *Words of the True Peoples: Anthology of Contemporary Mexican Indigenous-Language Writers,* vol. 2 [University of Texas Press, 2017], xiv). The adjective "Nahua" refers to their cultural forms and identities. See Pharao Hansen, *Nahuatl Nations: Language Revitalization and Semiotic Sovereignty in Indigenous Mexico*, 5–11.

6 Nicholet Deschine Parkhurst, "From #Mniwiconi to #StandwithStandingRock: How the #NoDAPL Movement Disrupted Physical and Virtual Spaces and Brought Indigenous Liberation to the Forefront of People's Minds," in *Indigenous Peoples Rise Up: The Global Ascendancy of Social Media Activism*, ed. Bronwyn Carlson and Jeff Berglund (Rutgers University Press, 2021), 35.

7 Ismael Ibarra-Nava, et al., "Ethnic Disparities in COVID-19 Mortality in Mexico: A Cross-Sectional Study Based on National Data," *PLoS One* 16, no. 3 (2021): e0239168.

8 I consider the digital divide "the very large difference in opportunity between those who can easily access computers and the internet and those who cannot" (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, 2020).

9 Candace Kaleimamoowahinekapu Galla, "Digital Realities of Indigenous language Revitalization: A Look at Hawaiian Language Technology in the Modern World," *Language and Literacy*, Special Issue, 20, no. 3 (2018): 100–20, https://doi.org/10.20360/langandlit29412

10 On mestizo state propaganda from Porfirio Díaz through the PRI-era, see Joshua Lund, Introduction, in *Mestizo State: Reading Race in Modern Mexico* (University of Minnesota Press, 2012). See also Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, "Sobre la ideología del mestizaje," in *Decadencia y auge de las identidades: Cultura nacional, identidad cultural y modernización*, ed. José Manuel Valenzuela Arce (Colegio de la Frontera del Norte, 1992).

11 See Rebecca Earle's overview of indigenista movements in Mexico, Peru and elsewhere in Latin America, especially Chapter 5 "Archeology, Museums and Heritage"; Rebecca Earle, *The Return of the Native: Indians and Myth-Making in Spanish America 1810–1930* (Duke University Press, 2007). Pharao Hansen explains that the "Mexicanidad" movement of the 1940s in Mexico provided a precedent

for efforts to reconstruct similar nativized identities in the US; see Pharao Hansen, *Nahuatl Nations: Language Revitalization and Semiotic Sovereignty in Indigenous Mexico*, 224–28.

[12] Karina V. Korostelina and Jocelyn Barrett, "Bridging the Digital Divide for Native American Tribes: Roadblocks to Broadband and Community Resilience," *Policy and Internet* (2023): 16, https://doi.org/10.1002/poi3.339

[13] Korostelina and Barrett, "Bridging the Digital Divide for Native American Tribes," 16.

[14] See Jeremy Walker and Melinda Cooper, "Genealogies of resilience: From Systems Ecology to The Political Economy of Crisis Adaptation," *Security Dialogue* 42, no. 2 (2011): 143–60.

[15] Wolfgang Wagner and Rosanne Anholt, "Resilience as the EU Global Strategy's New Leitmotif: Pragmatic, Problematic or Promising?" *Contemporary Security Policy* 37, no. 3 (2016): 414–30, and Korostelina and Barrett, "Bridging the Digital Divide for Native American Tribes," 16.

[16] Oscar Ramos, "Notas etnográficas sobre juventudes indígenas, conexiones digitales, mobilidades y contextos socioculturales," *ACENO-Revista de Antropologia do Centro-Oeste* 8, no. 18 (2021): 148; and Ingrid Kummels, *Transborder Media Spaces: Ayuujk videomaking between Mexico and the US* (Berghahn Books, 2017).

[17] James Murphy and Sharon Murphy, *Let my People Know: American Indian Journalism, 1828–1978* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1981).

[18] Kelly McDonough, *The Learned Ones: Nahua Intellectuals in Postconquest Mexico* (University of Arizona Press, 2014).

[19] Michael Keith, *Signals in the Air: Native Broadcasting in America* (Bloomsbury Academic Press, 1995); and Enn Raudsepp, "Emergent Media: The Native Press in Canada," *Canadian Journal of Communication* 11, no. 2 (1985): 193–209.

[20] Rob McMahon, Michael Gurstein, Brian Beaton, Susan O'Donnell, Tim Whiteduck, "Making Information Technologies Work at the End of the Road," *Journal of Information Policy* 4 (2014): 250–69, https://doi.org/10.5325/jinfopoli.4.2014.0250; compare with Adam Coon, "From Facebook to Ixamoxtli: Nahua Activism through Social Networking," in *Indigenous Interfaces: Spaces, Technology, and Social Networks in Mexico and Central America*, ed. Jennifer Carolina Gómez Menjívar and Gloria Chacón (University of Arizona Press, 2019), 227–52.

[21] Jennifer Carpenter et al., "Digital Access for Language and Culture in First Nations Communities," *Knowledge Synthesis Report for Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada* (2016), 4. Conversely, a lack of internet connection

impedes the efforts of Native communities to communicate regarding language and culture. Neftalí García Castro examines economic factors that lead to uneven connectivity for Nahua communities in rural areas of the Mexican state of Guerrero compared with the cities of Acapulco, Ixtapa, and Chilpancingo; see Neftalí García Castro, "La brecha digital como factor de vulnerabilidad y exclusión social en el Estado de Guerrero, México," *Entorno geográfico* 1, no. 23 (Jan.–July 2022): e20511616. In Latin America and the US, remote Indigenous communities face high costs to broadband introduction (Channarong Intahchomphoo, "Indigenous Peoples, Social Media, and the Digital Divide: A Systematic Literature Review," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 42, no. 4 (2018): 92–93; and Melissa Filippi et al., "Perceptions, Barriers, and Suggestions for Creation of a Tobacco and Health Website among American Indian/Alaska Native College Students," *Journal of Community Health* 38 (2013): 486–91.

22 Leonard Mukosi, "Extraction of Personal Data: A 'New' Form of Colonialism or Continuation of a Colonial Practice? Adult Native American Adoptees Resist Assimilation and Rebuild Erased Identities," *American Indian Law Journal* 10 (2022): 3–52.

23 Pharao Hansen, *Nahuatl Nations: Language Revitalization and Semiotic Sovereignty in Indigenous Mexico*, 56–57.

24 See McDonough, *The Learned Ones*, 148–52; see also Pharao Hansen, *Nahuatl Nations: Language Revitalization and Semiotic Sovereignty in Indigenous Mexico*.

25 The Introduction of Frances Karttunen's *Analytical Dictionary of Nahuatl* explains continuities between colonial-era orthographies and the ACK system; see Frances Karttunen, *Analytical Dictionary of Nahuatl* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1992). In the article I have chosen to use the spelling that each organization and content creator prefers, what Pharao Hansen refers to as "orthographic relativism" (*Nahuatl Nations: Language Revitalization and Semiotic Sovereignty in Indigenous Mexico*, 67). When no written material exists and I reproduce spoken Nahuatl, I use, as I explained above, J. O. Anderson, Joe Campbell, and Frances Karttunen's Modified Orthography (ACK), which I learned from the Nahua instructors Eduardo de la Cruz, Sabina de la Cruz, and Orfelia Cruz Morales at the Instituto de Docencia e Investigación Etnológica de Zacatecas (IDIEZ), idiezmacehualli.org. IDIEZ teaches Modern Huastecan Nahuatl and the "Classical Nahuatl" of the colonial period. On the language revitalization goals of IDIEZ, see Justyna Olko and John Sullivan, "Bridging Divides: A Proposal for Integrating the Teaching, Research and Revitalization of Nahuatl," in *Language Documentation and Conservation in Europe*, ed. Vera Ferreira and Peter Bouda (University of Hawai'i Press, 2016). The organization also makes study aids and authentic language materials available on their website at https://www.idiezmacehualli.org/page10.html

[26] Korostelina and Barrett, "Bridging the Digital Divide for Native American Tribes," 18.

[27] At the time of our interview, Estrada was posting on *Resistencia Tenochtitlan*. Later, he shifted to *Resistencia Mexica* (@resistenciamexica). The latter account had more than 118,000 followers, as of 2021, similar to the number of followers on his original account @resistenciatenochtitlan (Resistencia Tenochtitlan, Instagram account, main page, accessed December 15, 2021, @resistenciatenochtitlan).

[28] SpeakNahuatl, Cuitlahuac Martínez, Instagram account, main page, accessed November 18, 2023, @speaknahuatl

[29] Korostelina and Barrett, "Bridging the Digital Divide for Native American Tribes."

[30] Carpenter et al., "Digital Access for Language and Culture in First Nations Communities"; and García Castro, "La brecha digital."

[31] Jennifer Carolina Gómez Menjívar and Gloria Chacón, eds., *Indigenous Interfaces: Spaces, Technology, and Social Networks in Mexico and Central America* (University of Arizona Press, 2019).

[32] Bronwyn Carlson and Jeff Berglund, eds. *Indigenous Peoples Rise up: The Global Ascendancy of Social Media Activism* (Rutgers University Press, 2021), 4.

[33] Coon, "From Facebook to Ixamoxtli: Nahua Activism through Social Networking," 227.

[34] See Abelardo de la Cruz, "Conversando con Mardonio Carballo: Reflexiones sobre la lengua náhuatl," The University of Utah, Center for Latin American Studies, YouTube, February 11, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0FNGhDuvWKo. In 2024 Mardonio Carballo was interviewed on the program *Vidas* on TeleSur. *La raíz doble* is a continuation of his earlier interview-based program *De raíz luna*, which he also started in 2008 on Canal 22, sponsored by Mexico's *Secretariado de Cultura* [Secretariat of Culture].

[35] Intahchomphoo, "Indigenous Peoples, Social Media, and the Digital Divide," 103. Compare with Lumby Bronwyn on the Aboriginal use of Facebook to promote culture and identity in Australian cities; see Lumby Bronwyn, "Cyber-Indigeneity: Urban Indigenous Identity on Facebook," *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education* 39, no. S1 (2010): 68–75.

[36] "Mexico City, Mexico," *Sister Cities of Los Angeles—City of Los Angeles*, website, https://sistercities.lacity.org/html/15.html

[37] Jane H. Hill reinforced the consensus that Tongva is an Uto-Aztecan language in the Numic branch, which encompasses the Southern California coast and desert

interior; see Jane H. Hill, "Proto-Uto-Aztecan as a Mesoamerican Language," *Ancient Mesoamerica* 23 (2012): 57–68. However, Tongva's core vocabulary lacks cognates that abound in other Uto-Aztecan languages, which suggests other influences on its development; for example, the words for "fire" and "blood" (Daniel Siddiqi, *The Routledge Handbook of North American Languages,* [Routledge, 2019], 580). See also Carmen Dagostino, Marianne Mithun, and Keren Rice, *The Languages and Linguistics of Indigenous North America: A Comprehensive Guide, Vol 1.* (De Gruyter Mouton, 2024), 1334; and Victor Golla, *California Indian Languages* (University of California Press, 2022), 179.

38 Pharo Hansen, *Nahuatl Nations: Language Revitalization and Semiotic Sovereignty in Indigenous Mexico*, 224.

39 See Brian D. Haley and Larry R. Wilcoxon, "How Spaniards Became Chumash and Other Tales of Ethnogenesis," *American Anthropologist* 107, no. 3 (2005): 432–45.

40 Pharao Hansen, *Nahuatl Nations: Language Revitalization and Semiotic Sovereignty in Indigenous Mexico*, 235.

41 Pharao Hanson, *Nahuatl Nations: Language Revitalization and Semiotic Sovereignty in Indigenous Mexico*, 247–48.

42 Pharao Hansen, *Nahuatl Nations: Language Revitalization and Semiotic Sovereignty in Indigenous Mexico*, 229–30.

43 Regarding Aztlan movement history, which includes colonial precedents and echoes of Mesoamerican cultures of the Postclassic Period, see Chapter 6, "Nahuatl across Borders: Mexican Transnationalism in the United States," Pharao Hansen, *Nahuatl Nations: Language Revitalization and Semiotic Sovereignty in Indigenous Mexico*, 221–56.

44 See Marta García Ortega, "Nahuas en Estados Unidos: 'Capitales migratorias' de una región indígena del sur de México," in *La migración y los latinos en Estados Unidos: Visiones y connexiones*, ed. Astrid Velasco Montante (UNAM, 2008). Gloria Anzaldúa also drew attention to the profound Indigenous roots of transnational populations; see Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera* (Aunt Lute Books, 1999), Chapter Seven, 77–91. Juan Gómez Quiñones, by tracing parallels between what he termed "central and greater Mesoamerica," placed foundational Indigenous identities ahead of categories of nation-state affiliation as well: Juan Gómez-Quiñones, *Indigenous Quotient/Stalking Words: American Indian Heritage as Future* (Aztlan Libre Press, 2012), 106.

45 Rodrigo González Reyes, "Mexican Diaspora Online: A Reading on the Social Capital," *Nómadas* 28 (2008): 112–20; see also Gabriel Alberto Moreno Esparza and Rosa Angelica Martinez Tellez, "Visualizing Simultaneity in Diasporic Public

Spheres: The Case of the Mexican Diaspora in the US," *JOMEC Journal* 11 (2017): 23–40. Regarding how transnational communities between Mexico and the US post on social media regarding class and race, see Lorena Nessi García and Olga Guedes Bailey, "The Mexican European Diaspora: Class, Race and Distinctions on Social Networking Sites," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 45, no. 15 (2019): 3007–22.

[46] Coon, "From Facebook to Ixamoxtli: Nahua Activism through Social Networking," 228.

[47] Brook Danielle Lillehaugen, "Tweeting in Zapotec: Social Media as a Tool for Language Activists." In *Indigenous Interfaces: Spaces, Technology, and Social Networks in Mexico and Central America*, ed. Jennifer Carolina Gómez Menjívar and Gloria Chacón (University of Arizona Press, 2019), 211.

[48] Lynn Stephen and Laura Velasco-Ortiz, "Introduction: Mesoamerican Indigenous Mobilities in Mexico and the United States," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 39, no. 1 (2023): 7.

[49] Candace Kaleimamoowahinekapu Galla, "Indigenous Language Revitalization, Promotion, and Education: Function of Digital Technology," *Computer Assisted Language Learning* 29, no. 7 (2016): 1139.

[50] Kurt W. Seeman, "Technacy Education: Understanding Cross-cultural Technological Practice," in *Work, Learning and Sustainable Development*, ed. John Fien, Rupert Maclean, Man-Gon Park (Springer, 2009), 117–18, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-8194-1_9

[51] Kurt W. Seeman and Ron Talbot, "Technacy: Towards a Holistic Understanding of Technology Teaching and Learning Among Aboriginal Australians," *Prospects* 25, no. 4 (1995): 762.

[52] Galla, "Digital Realities of Indigenous language Revitalization," 114.

[53] Galla, "Digital Realities of Indigenous language Revitalization," 114.

[54] Vivian Delgado, "Technology and Native America: A Double-Edged Sword," in *Toward Digital Equity: Bridging the Digital Divide in Education*, ed. Gwen Solomon, Nancy Allen, and Paul Resta (Ally and Bacon, 2003), 94.

[55] Performative aspects of these Nahua cultural initiatives recall the UNESCO concept of "intangible heritage," formalized in 2003 (https://ich.unesco.org/en/lists). For theorization of digital intangible heritage, see Chiara Bonacchi and Marta Krzyzanska, "Digital Heritage Research Re-Theorised: Ontologies and Epistemologies in a World of Big Data," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 25

(2019): 1235–1247.

56 Compare to Barbara Mundy, *The Death of Aztec Tenochtitlan, The Life of Mexico City* (University of Texas Press, 2018), 9, 211.

57 Bonfil Batalla, "Sobre la ideología del mestizaje," vii, xvi.

58 For critical perspectives on mestizo, see Lund, *Mestizo State*; and Bonfil Batalla, "Sobre la ideología del mestizaje."

59 Personal communication October 13, 2020.

60 See Facebook channel *El Chaneke tevé*, October 6, 2020, https://www.facebook.com/ElChanekeTeve/

61 The Tlatelolca recounted Cuauhtemoc's surrender in the *Anales de Tlatelolco* (Rafael Tena, ed., *Anales de Tlatelolco: Paleografía y traducción* [Conaculta, 2004]); the *Codex Azcatitlan* (*Codex Azcatitlan*, ed. Michel Graulich and Robert Barlow [Bibliothèque Nationale de France Société des Américanistes, 1995]), and in Book 12 of the *Florentine Codex* (Bernardino de Sahagún, trans. Charles E. Dibble, and Arthur J. O. Anderson, *Florentine Codex* (1578, School of American Research, University of Utah Press, 1975). Bernal Diaz del Castillo, an invader with Cortés, tells the of event in Chapter 155 of his *Verdadera historia de la Conquista de la Nueva España*; see Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España*, ed. Miguel León-Portilla (1795, Linkgua, 2009).

62 Book 12 of the *Florentine Codex*, written at the Colegio de la Santa Cruz in Tlatelolco by the sons of Native nobles from that town and others in the Valley of Mexico, records the smallpox outbreak of 1576; see Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, Book 12. For more eyewitness accounts, see Elsa Malvido and Carlos Viesca, "La epidemia de cocoliztli de 1576," *Historias* 11 (1985): 27–34. Additionally, the sixteenth-century Mexica pictorial manuscript, the *Codex Mexicanus*, shows pandemics in the city (Lori Boornazian Diel, *Codex Mexicanus: A Guide to Life in Late Sixteenth-Century New Spain* [University of Texas Press, 2021]).

63 Personal communication, February 24, 2021.

64 James Lockhart, *The Nahuas after the Conquest: A Social and Cultural History of the Indians of Central Mexico, Sixteenth through Eighteenth Centuries* (Stanford University Press, 1992), 326; and Elizabeth Hill Boone, *Stories in Red and Black: Pictorial Histories of the Aztecs and Mixtecs* (University of Texas Press, 2000), 24–27.

65 The sixteenth-century priest and grammarian Alonso de Molina defined tlacuilo as "escribano o pintor" [scribe or painter]; see Alonso de Molina, *Vocabulario en lengua castellana y mexicana y mexicana y castellana* (1571, Porrúa, 2004), f120r. See

also John Glass, "Survey of Native Middle American Pictorial Manuscripts," in *Handbook of Middle American Indians, Vol. 14*, ed. Robert Wauchope and Howard Kline (University of Texas Press, 1975).

66 Gary Tomlinson, *Singing of the New World: Indigenous Voice in the Era of European Contact* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 21–29.

67 Townsend, *Fifth Sun*, 5; and Enrique Florescano, *Memory, Myth, and Time in Mexico: From the Aztecs to Independence* (University of Texas Press, 1997), 102–04.

68 Personal communication, October 13, 2020.

69 Códices de México, INAH.

70 Lockhart, *The Nahuas after the Conquest*, 613–16.

71 See Andrew Paxman, "La evolución del Archivo General de la Nación (México) de 2000 a 2022: Injerencia política, retos logísticos y la memoria de la 'Guerra Sucia' América," *América: Cahiers du CRICCAL* 58 (2024): no pag., https://doi.org/10.4000/12j7f; and Ariel Antonio Morán-Reyes, "The Right to Information to Counteract Epistemic Injustices: Documentary Collection M68 of Mexico's AGN," *Archives and Records* 42, no. 2 (2020): 167–82.

72 Personal communication, April 29, 2021.

73 Personal communication, April 29, 2021.

74 Scholars increasingly emphasize Spanish vulnerability, which prevented their full control of the Americas. See Brian Owensby, Foreword, in *Negotiation within Domination*, ed. Ethelia Ruiz Medrano and Susan Kellogg (University Press of Colorado, 2011), xii.

75 Personal communication, April 29, 2021.

76 Alfredo López Austin, *Tamoanchan, Tlalocan: Places of Mist*, trans. Bernard and Thelma Ortiz de Montellano (University Press of Colorado, 1997), 106. The other types of generals listed—tlilancalqui, cuauhnochtli, and ezhuahuacatl—appear in the *Anales de Juan Bautista*, a Nahuatl manuscript describing economic and political events in the 1550s in Mexico-Tenochtitlan (Luis Reyes García, *Anales de Juan Bautista: ¿Cómo te confundes?: ¿Acaso no somos conquistados?* [CIESAS: Biblioteca Lorenzo Boturini, Insigne y Nacional Basílica de Guadalupe, 2001], 215 FN 105). For commentary and analysis of these annals see Townsend, *Fifth Sun*, 155–79, Chapter 7.

77 Karttunen, *Analytical Dictionary of Nahuatl*, 334.

78 José López-Portillo y Weber, *La conquista de la Nueva Galicia* (Secretaría de

Educación Pública, 1935), 79.

79 López-Austin, *Tamoanchan, Tlalocan*, 106. Recent research suggests that many Nahua groups conceived of the universe not in a vertical arrangement but as a horizontal plane reminiscent of Dante's *Divine Comedy*; see Ana Díaz, ed., *Reshaping the World: Debates on Mesoamerican Cosmologies* (University Press of Colorado, 2020).

80 González Reyes, "Mexican Diaspora Online," 120; and James Lockhart and Stuart Schwartz, *Early Latin America: A History of Colonial Spanish America and Brazil* (Cambridge University Press, 1983), 19–22. An "hidalgo," on the lowest tier of nobles in Spain, Cortés could count on no inheritance or permanent income. He invaded Mesoamerica to get rich. For more on Cortés's early life, see Christian Duverger, *Hernán Cortés más allá de la leyenda* (Taurus, 2013).

81 Luis Weckmann, *The Medieval Heritage of Mexico* (Fordham University Press, 1992), 88.

82 Matthew Restall has termed the approach "New Conquest History," which he describes as centering on perspectives of Indigenous fighters who, as part of their own military and political strategies, affiliated with Spaniards (Matthew Restall, "The New Conquest History," *History Compass* 10, no. 2 (2012): 151–60, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-0542.2011.00822.x); see also Matthew Restall and Micaela Wiehe, *The New Conquest History and the New Philology in Colonial Mesoamerica* (Oxford University Press, 2023); Florine Asselbergs, *Conquered Conquistadors: The "Lienzo de Quauhquechollan": A Nahua Vision of the Conquest of Guatemala* (University Press of Colorado, 2008); and Rolena Adorno, *The Polemics of Possession in Spanish American Narrative* (Yale University Press, 2007).

83 See McMahon et al., "Making Information Technologies Work at the End of the Road"; and Carpenter et al., "Digital Access for Language and Culture in First Nations Communities."

84 See Alberto Puig Carrasco, "'De los árboles, peces y animales de esta tierra:' Reconstrucción del paisaje colonial e historia ambiental de la *Relación Geográfica de Ameca* (México, 1581)," *Anuario de estudios americanos* 81, no. 1 (2024).

85 See Rosa Yáñez Rosales, et al., "Reclamation Initiatives in Non-speaker Communities: The Case of Two Nahua Communities in the South of Jalisco State, Mexico," in *Language Documentation and Revitalization in Latin American Contexts*, ed. Gabriela Pérez Báez, Chris Rogers, and Jorge Emilio Rosés Labrada (De Gruyter Mouton, 2016).

86 Personal communication, February 19, 2021.

[87] Personal communication, February 19, 2021.

[88] See Constanza Eliana Chinea, "These Indigenous People are Fighting to Keep their Languages Alive," *Los Angeles Times*, October 9, 2023, no pag., https://www.latimes.com/delos/story/2023-10-09/indigenous-people-language-culture

[89] According to Magnus Pharao Hansen, "spoken contemporary varieties such as those of the Huasteca, North Puebla, or Guerrero [...] tend to have phoneme systems fairly similar to colonial Tezcocan Nahuatl" (Pharao Hansen, *Nahuatl Nations: Language Revitalization and Semiotic Sovereignty in Indigenous Mexico*, 61).

[90] US universities offer Nahuatl language courses. Yale started offering Nahuatl in 1998, and public universities have followed, including the University of Utah, the University of Texas at Austin, the University of California at Los Angeles, and the University of Arizona. IDIEZ (see Note 26) offers language courses at the University of Utah, the University of Texas at Austin, and Yale, to name a few.

[91] The transcription comes from a YouTube video that is no longer available. Those interested in learning more may contact Cuitlahuac Martínez through his website speaknahuatl.com

[92] The "-tl" at the end of many Nahuatl nouns is not pronounced as the end of "bottle" in English. Louise Burkhart provides concise and effective tips on pronunciation; see Louise M. Burkhart, trans. Louise M. Burkhart, Barry D. Sell, and Stafford Poole, *Aztecs on Stage: Religious Theater in Colonial Mexico* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2011), 35–37.

[93] Personal communication, February 19, 2021.

[94] From 1998 to 2016, Proposition 227 limited instruction in core subjects to English. In 2016, Proposition 58 reversed that policy and bilingual education be returned to California. For policy analysis of propositions 227 and 58, see Noah Katznelson, and Katie Bernstein, "Rebranding Bilingualism: The Shifting Discourses of Language Education Policy in California's 2016 Election," *Linguistics and Education* 40 (2017): 11–26.

[95] Galla, "Indigenous Language Revitalization," 1149.

[96] Chon Noriega, "City of Los Angeles Declares Día del Profesor Juan Gómez-Quiñones," *CSRC Newsletter*, February 2021, https://www.chicano.ucla.edu/about/news/csrc-newsletter-february-2021

[97] "Victorino Torres Nava: Detalle del autor," *Enciclopedia de la literatura en México,* January 2020, https://www.elem.mx/autor/datos/106993

98 Analú María López and Victorino Torres Nava, "A Nahuatl Play in One Act," *The Newberry Magazine* 13 (2019): 15–20.

99 Facebook, Copalillo Guerrero, June 23, 2020, https://www.facebook.com/p/Copalillo-Guerrero-100085129821639/

100 Pharao Hansen, *Nahuatl Nations: Language Revitalization and Semiotic Sovereignty in Indigenous Mexico*, 64–66.

101 Anawakalmekak International University Preparatory School of North America, Facebook Account, https://www.facebook.com/anawakalmekak/; Anawakalmekak International University Preparatory School of North America, Instagram account, main page, @anawakalmekak, accessed November 18, 2023, https://www.instagram.com/anawakalmekak/?hl=en; "Anahuacalmecac International University Preparatory of North America, California School Directory, California Department of Education, accessed November 10, 2021, https://www.cde.ca.gov/SchoolDirectory/details?cdscode=19647330132928; and Anawakalmekak International University Preparatory School, website, accessed November 18, 2023, https://www.anawakalmekak.org/

102 Personal communication, February 19, 2021.

103 Intahchomphoo, "Indigenous Peoples, Social Media, and the Digital Divide," 98–99.

104 Nicholas Negroponte, *Being Digital* (Knopf Doubleday, 1996); 230.

105 See James W. Carey, "Everything That Rises Must Diverge: Notes on Communications, Technology and the Symbolic Construction of the Social," in *Beyond Agendas: New Directions in Communications Research*, ed. Philip Gaunt (Greenwood Press, 1993).

106 Vincent Mosco, *The Digital Sublime: Myth, Power, and Cyberspace* (MIT Press, 2005), 31.

107 Gómez-Quiñones, *Indigenous Quotient/Stalking Words*, 43.

108 Centuries of Indigenous migration between what are now Mexico and the US have made Indigeneity visible, despite settler colonialism; see Maylei Blackwell, Floridalma Boj López, and Luis Urrieta, Jr., introduction to "Special Issue: Critical Latinx Identities," *Latino Studies* 15, no. 2 (2017): 126–37, https://doi.org/10.1057/s41276-017-0064-0. For an overview of coloniality in the US prison system see the Introduction in Shannon Speed, *Incarcerated Stories:*

Indigenous Women Migrants and Violence in the Settler-Capitalist State (University of North Carolina Press, 2019).

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