Transnational Labour and Social Justice Peacemakers: Advocating for Multiculturalism in Virginia

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Introduction

In 2015, the pastor of a Mennonite church in Harrisonburg, Virginia, created a sign that has since "gone viral" across the continent: it proclaimed, in three languages, "No matter where you are from, we're glad you're our neighbor."[1] While some immigrant activists and advocates have quietly voiced hesitation about the value of what could be seen as mere virtue signaling, the persistence of this particular sign and its spread speaks to the ability of Mennonite churches to articulate a moral vision for inclusion and welcome at a time when the voices arguing against that vision in the United States are perhaps the loudest they have been in a very long time.

In this paper, I examine the specific role of Mennonite actors and institutions as advocates, activists, and allies for immigrants and refugees in a small city in central Virginia during the first decade of the new millennium, with a particular focus on the local context of reception for newly arrived Latinx families and individuals.[2] Facing a dramatic demographic shift in rural areas of the United States through the 1990s and early 2000s, Mennonites in the Shenandoah Valley brought a perspective rooted in Anabaptist

theology and experience to act on and express their moral vision. They used two primary strategies of solidarity with newcomers: "social change through infiltration," as one interlocutor expressed it, and collective action directed towards impacting government action, which was carried out with a simultaneous, and sometimes uneasy, refusal to engage with dominant discursive frames of nationalism. This approach resulted in productive yet limited ways of institutionalizing processes of inclusion for new Latinx youth and families. Understanding both the impact and the limitations of this approach holds promise for continued social justice peacemaking against the xenophobic violence that continues to fester across the United States.

Methodology

The analysis in this paper is extracted and elaborated from my dissertation research in cultural anthropology. Although it is normative in my field to disguise the precise locations of field research sites, the particularities of this study render such anonymization nigh impossible.

While I use pseudonyms for individuals and do my utmost to safeguard the confidentiality of my interlocutors, everyone participating in the study was aware that readers familiar with the context would likely be able to discern their identities. In some cases, the real names of public figures speaking in the public domain are used.

The analysis in this paper is based not only on formal ethnographic fieldwork, but also on the time I invested previously living and working in Harrisonburg and Rockingham County from 2000 to 2006. My own experience of moving into the Valley in 2000, and the schooling I received from Latinx families and from social service allies in immigrant advocacy, have been foundational in how I understand theoretical anthropological constructs in these thematic areas (immigration, diaspora, Latinidad, critical race theory, and so forth). I began formal fieldwork during the summer of 2007, and concluded with a focused year of research from 2009 to 2010, but the direct process of participant-observation in Harrisonburg began in the spring of 2000 when I walked into a Migrant Education Program office for a job interview, and for the first time read the slogan "No Human Being is Illegal" on a poster on the wall.

Methodologically, my ethnographic approach centres discourse.[3] Simply put, I approach discourse as the socio-cultural production and reception of language (text, speech events, media

broadcasts, etc.); I look for patterns of meaning embedded beneath the referential surface in order to analyze the ways in which discourses deploy ideologies by and about Latinx youth. Leo Chavez develops the following useful definition for discourse, following Michel Foucault[4] and Stuart Hall:[5] "a formation or cluster of ideas, images, and practices that construct knowledge of, ways of talking about, and forms of conduct associated with a particular topic, social activity, or institutional site in society."[6] Or, as James Gee puts it, "What is important is not language, and surely not grammar, but saying (writing)-doing-being-valuing-believing combinations."[7] In other words, discourses are ideological through and through, and intrinsically connected to "the distribution of social power and hierarchical structure in society."[8]

In this vein, I observed, recorded, and participated in public events where discourses were staged and shaped by the contours of audience and intent, as well as the relationships of power being enacted in those spaces; conducted interviews where discourses followed a line of inquiry moulded by my interview guide and particular points of interest; and examined online and print media discourses in multiple genres (news stories, bulletins, meeting minutes, program brochures). I was tracking echoes of when and where local discourses reflected and echoed dominant national discourses of illegality vs. the good ethnic, ways of being and belonging, and processes of racialization and ethnicization. This approach forefronts the ways in which social reality is discursively and socially constructed in the dynamic interplay between the micro-level local context and broader patterns on a national scale.[9] Close focus on localized instances reveals the particularities of that local context, and how the broader tropes are deployed according to those specificities.

During my field research, I sought to foreground the voices and perspectives of Latinx newcomers, particularly young adult professionals who had come of age in the Shenandoah Valley. I also sought out non-Latinx leaders among the advocates and allies working with transmigrant communities; this resulted in, as local anthropologist Laura Zarrugh points out, a "disproportionate representation" of Mennonites.[10] For the purposes of this paper, I selected data specifically related to Anabaptist actors and institutions to examine that facet of the context of reception more closely.

This research project is shaped and informed by the road that brought me to it, and by the liminality of my own multiple identifications as Latina, American, Peruvian, Mennonite, and professional across several fields. It is shaped and informed by my life in Harrisonburg and Rockingham County prior to beginning academ-

ic training in anthropology. Given the constructivist nature of anthropological work, it is necessary to explicate the positionality of the researcher across all these dimensions.

Background Context

The impetus for the unprecedented arrival of Latinx transmigrants to the Shenandoah Valley in the 1990s was multifold.[11] The vertical integration of the meat-processing industries (in this case poultry) and increasing demand for non-unionized labour at that time resulted in new destination sites developing in rural areas all across the United States, far from the traditional "gateway" ports of entry for immigrants, particularly for Latinx newcomers.[12] Over the previous several decades, Latinx migrant farmworkers had transited through the area primarily to work in the apple harvest, but it was clearly changes in the poultry industry that transformed Harrisonburg, bringing families to settle more permanently in the city and county. In addition, Anabaptist denominations were leading the way in refugee sponsorship.[13]

I use school enrolment data as an index for linguistic diversity, and, by proxy, nation-of-origin diversity. Enrolment of students designated by the Harrisonburg city schools as "limited-English proficient" increased from 5 percent in 1993 to 38 percent in 2008; that is, from a tiny minority to one-third of the city school population, or about triple the African-American population, in a period of fifteen years. The primary language groups represented were Spanish (80 percent), Russian (6 percent), and Kurdish (4 percent), indicating the predominance of Latinx transmigrants over refugee families. While the country of origin for the majority of these children was the United States (58 percent), over thirty different countries of origin were represented by at least one student each.[14] Ten years later, that number had increased to over fifty. Alarmingly to some, government census data for Harrisonburg and the surrounding county showed a 465 percent increase in Latinx residents in the period from 1990 to 2000.[15] Change was coming about quickly.

Local reactions to the observed changes were mixed. As activist Penny Kidd recalls, around 1993 or 1994 "Harrisonburg was experiencing the discomfort that comes with a certain level of immigration. It had moved from an interesting little oddity to a feeling that people were uncomfortable."[16] While Kidd does not specify which people were uncomfortable, presumably she is referring to white settler-descended inhabitants of the area, where earlier the Pied-

mont, Sioux, Catawbas, Shawnee, Delaware, Cherokees, Susquehannocks, and the Iroquois had lived.[17] Given that the location is south of the Mason-Dixon line, and Civil War history is made present through memorials of many kinds in Harrisonburg and the surrounding Rockingham County, African-American experiences of this migration shift are also relevant, but difficult to synthesize concisely. In a process sociologists categorize as "segmented assimilation,"[18] newcomers racialized as non-white found that the social spaces, both laboural and residential, most open to them were alongside African-American neighbours, who had themselves been historically displaced first through the slave trade and then through an "urban renewal" rezoning process in Harrisonburg in 1957 that destroyed the city's historic Black neighbourhood, expropriating and razing generational homes as residents were forced to move elsewhere.[19] Because new Latinx families arriving in the area in the 1990s–2000s included a significant number of Afro-Caribbean people, what appears to have emerged has been both a sense of class and ethnoracial solidarity, as well as a conflictive discourse of further displacement. It was not uncommon to hear white people framing the threat posed by new immigrants as specifically displacing African-American workers and residents, a move which problematically naturalizes a particular association of lower socioeconomic class status with Blackness. In any case, reactions were mixed.

Generally, what my interlocutors in the fields of social service and education highlighted was a sense of crisis across social institutions, and especially in the school system as it scrambled to meet the changing needs of a new population. As Latinx educator Saul Mercado testified, "I was working with a program that had not fully developed yet. . . . I was in the cusp, when they were responding, sort of in an emergency sense . . . it was right as things were exploding."[20] This sense of demographic explosion and rapid "Latinization"[21] of the Valley contributed to an urgent feeling of crisis, particularly among social service institutions which were often the first point of contact outside the workplace for newcomer families.

At the same time, the discomfort and crisis reactions were intermixed with an attitude of welcome, particularly on the part of local faith communities and universities. Mexican anthropologist Jorge Gonzalez-Huerta, in an ethnographic study of Mixtec communities in Harrisonburg in the late 1990s, noted with some surprise a pattern of support for assimilation of newcomers, characterizing it as "paradoxical" within such a conservative state.[22] In his monograph, he cites a Mennonite social worker who was one of

the first and most active supporters of Latinx communities in the area as she observed the local culture of welcome:

> A mí me da mucho gusto que en un estado tan conservador por su origen sureño como es Virginia—y donde aún de cierta forma nostálgica está presente el rencor que dejó la guerra civil—haya mucha gente "realista" y que rápidamente acepta o van aceptando que su ciudad, o se [Harrisonburg] ha crecido y que tiene muchas minorías y nuevas lenguas, y que no pueden quedarse al margen de la diversidad étnica que antes no era común
>
> [I really like that in a state that is so conservative, and a southern state like Virginia is—and where there is a kind of nostalgia and bitterness left over from the Civil War—a lot of people are realists, who quickly accept or are accepting that their city, Harrisonburg, has grown and has a lot of new minorities and new languages, and they can't avoid the ethnic diversity that wasn't common before.][23]

During this time of rapid change, intercultural coalitions were formed to bring together non-profit organizations and other agencies in support of diverse newcomers, and Spanish-English bilingual professionals found many hiring opportunities. In 1994, in response to a confrontation between law enforcement and a Latinx transmigrant man which resulted in the man's death, local organizers created a Hispanic Festival to celebrate the cultural diversity blossoming in the area.[24] This event later became more broadly defined as the International Festival, and still continues to be held yearly. These gestures, however, encountered opposition as menacing graffiti and anonymous bomb threats also materialized during the first years of the Hispanic Festival, and letters to the editor complained of Spanish-language options being offered by various service providers.[25]

Despite these xenophobic acts of resistance to change, the quiet work of the coalitions and other actors had been so effective through the 1990s and early 2000s that a general sense of optimism, or even complacency, had begun to grow among immigrant advocates and allies in Harrisonburg. In particular, the promise and potential of passing the DREAM Act, bipartisan legislation that would provide a path to citizenship for young people brought to the United States as undocumented children, energized the immigrant advocacy networks, and a bipartisan city council resolution was passed in Harrisonburg in 2009 in support of this proposed legislation.[26] Although a city resolution did not have power to supersede federal immigration law, it felt like a significant symbolic victory in that powerful conservative voices in the community

spoke out in support. Local bipartisanship seemed like a possible harbinger of national-level change. In addition, by this time the local coalitions had gained significant ground in establishing and institutionalizing inclusive structures: health interpreters were trained, bilingual and bicultural staff were being hired all over the city, the city schools had taken initiative in developing innovative programs for English language learners, and the list goes on. These gains were significant, and a mood of optimism prevailed.

However, as the recent political developments across the United States have made clear, the underlying structures of racialized inequality rooted in ideological frameworks of nationalism and nativism were left intact, and immigrant communities of colour continue to be clearly marked as "other," producing the situation I define as sequestered inclusion. Succinctly, this kind of immigrant integration includes transmigrant people and communities based on a performance of "good ethnic" identity; spaces are opened for those who are considered deserving, who are situated at the intersection of enacting positively valenced social citizenship and maintaining an ethnicized identity.[27] The primary limitation of this strategy of inclusion is that underlying structures of power and privilege go unchallenged. In any case, while significant gains were made during these decades around the turn of the millennium, the reach was not enough to turn the tide of nativist racism either in the region or the nation.

Mennonite Influence

While the phenomenal changes in Harrisonburg followed the pattern of demographic shifts across the United States, one idiosyncratic characteristic particular to this site was the way that Anabaptist presence and action influenced public discourse at the local level. Significantly, Mennonites in Harrisonburg had broadly infiltrated local social service institutions, across every sector, perhaps especially health and education. One outstanding example is the establishment of a major health and human services institute at the large state university in the city by a well-known Mennonite nurse; her leadership in this area has had incredibly widespread impact in these fields for two decades now. In addition to the fertile farmland that attracted more conservative white Mennonite families to the area, the presence of Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) also brought Anabaptist intellectual and church leaders as well as returned service workers to settle in the Valley after years of international work. This institutional infiltration worked in tan-

dem with the historic commitment of Anabaptist churches to sponsoring international refugees. In addition, the cultural and linguistic capital of returned service workers gave them leverage for finding work in the social service sector, especially in programming directed towards supporting immigrants, a niche that began to burgeon during this time.

In a deep probe into the history of immigration to Harrisonburg, Laura Zarrugh found that Anabaptist churches had a significant influence in terms of welcome and integration of newcomers in the Valley:

> Any attempt to understand Harrisonburg and the surrounding area as a host community to new immigrants must take into consideration the strong influence of the Mennonite Church and closely allied Church of the Brethren on local values and attitudes. . . . World War II experience with alternative service and the presence of a "liberal" Mennonite college in Harrisonburg have contributed more recently to a subculture of community service and conflict resolution, as well as *a disproportionate representation* of local Mennonites in the helping professions. Both the Mennonite Church and Church of the Brethren also have long histories of involvement in refugee and immigrant assistance within the US and in relief and development work overseas. As the pastor of one local Mennonite church explained, "Mennonites have been hounded from place to place and of all people, we should be empathetic to immigrants."[28]

My own observations, both prior to and during my field research period, confirmed Zarrugh's characterization of "disproportionate representation" of identifiable Mennonites. For Zarrugh, who was deeply embedded in advocacy circles, this identification was made primarily through institutional affiliations: knowing who had graduated from EMU, who belonged to a church with Mennonite in its name, or who had served with the Mennonite Central Committee overseas. For myself, linked by marriage to the Mennonite world, the identification process was also based on additional signifiers, such as a surname historically identified as Mennonite. While this paper does not finely disaggregate Mennonite affiliation by conference or other markers of internal differentiation, taken as a complex whole this "imagined community"[29] can be seen to have had a particular impact and influence within immigrant advocacy circles. Specifically, the contribution of Mennonites through internal influence shaped social service programming towards greater inclusivity, especially language inclusivity, and steered public discourse towards an ethic of "welcoming the stranger," for reasons which are further articulated below.

Briefly, I will outline here in broad strokes cultural and theological aspects of Mennonite faith that have impacted local discourses around immigration generally, and new Latinx diaspora incorporation specifically. Two particular features of Mennonite ecclesiology stand out as significant: a posture of empathy towards refugees and migrants, and a strong Germanic-ethnic identity historically associated with Mennonite and Brethren church membership. In addition, and significantly, the Anabaptist posture of resistance or refusal towards state power specifically comes into play in with regard to immigrant advocacy work.

While "German-ethnic identification" and "Mennonite" are clearly not coterminous, this powerful ethnic identification does buttress the Mennonite sense of belonging for those who fit both descriptions, grounding it in narratives of persecution and difference, and simultaneously enhancing a powerful humanistic impulse that informs Mennonite institutional commitments. Mennonite sociologist Conrad Kanagy distinguishes, and laments, the divide between historically white Germanic congregations ("cradle" Mennonites) and the "racial-ethnic congregations"[30] produced through mission work among people of colour in the United States as well as the Global South. Anthropologist Philip Fountain has noted that "the Mennonite peoplehood is often also described colloquially as 'Germanic', 'ethnic', 'cradle', or 'birthright' Mennonites"[31] and cites this commentary from Mennonite theologian and sociologist Calvin Redekop:

> unless one came from German parentage and was reared on the heritage of German preaching and Bible reading, enhanced by the sacred mythology of the martyrs . . . one could never fully identify with the Anabaptist-Mennonite heritage. . . . The division between the Germanic and non-Germanic is so sharp that a knowledgeable Mennonite can tell immediately by a surname alone whether a Mennonite is a birthright or convinced member.[32]

In Harrisonburg, dozens of German-ethnic congregations can be found, while a smaller number of Mennonite-identifying non-Germanic Spanish-language congregations have emerged as well. At the time of my field research there appeared to be some, albeit limited, interaction across language and ethnicity lines, as these Spanish-language congregations also belong to the Virginia conference, the governing body of the church.

In some important ways, Mennonites are, and see themselves as, a diasporic community, with Mennonite colonies and communities present in Russia, Europe, Mexico, Paraguay, Bolivia, Belize, and Brazil, as well as the United States and Canada. This pattern

arises from a history of fleeing from religious persecution and seeking political and religious freedom wherever they might find it.[33] This demographic fact also informs the pastor who said, "Mennonites have been hounded from place to place and of all people, we should be empathetic to immigrants."[34] Robyn Sneath notes that "unlike immigrant groups who have a homeland to long for and reminisce about, the Mennonite people . . . have no clear homeland. Rather, their homeland . . . is a place of the heart and of the imagination. It exists in the memories of its people, both collectively and individually."[35] While the consciously constructed nature of this "imagined community"[36] may perhaps destabilize it to some degree, and a certain unease related to consciousness of privilege seems to accompany awareness of the whiteness of the Germanic-ethnic aspects of Mennonite identity, the shared narratives of persecution and seeking refuge at the same time buttress that identity and provide a platform for acting out of compassion and empathy towards immigrants. A powerful sense of diasporic identity resonated in the words of theologian Nancy Heisey in a chapel talk at EMU on April 7, 2010, which followed directly after two Latinx students related stories of their own experiences with discrimination as undocumented immigrants:

> Very often the words stranger or foreigner appear in the Bible to relate to two ideas: number one, that God's people are foreigners and strangers in the world, and number two, that for that exact reason God's people are called to open themselves and to be hospitable to foreigners.[37]

The parallels between Mennonite diasporic identity, the notion that "God's people are strangers and foreigners in the world," and empathy with contemporary immigrants or refugees could not be clearer than in this excerpt.

One important initiative born of this orientation towards hospitality towards foreigners was the creation of a non-profit organization created and primarily funded by local Mennonite churches in 2000 for the support and integration of new immigrants. While Anabaptists in Harrisonburg responded to the biblical call to welcome strangers and foreigners, and to treat them as neighbours through a clear ethic of hospitality, advocacy work directly confronting state power was often a source of discomfort. Initially, there was some controversy in the churches supporting the Immigrant Resource Center, specifically related to a proposed paralegal program that would help undocumented immigrants become legal residents. There was certainly a perspective among Mennonites (as well as non-Mennonites) that "the law is the law, and the Bible

says obey the law;"[38] in other words, moral behaviour means compliance with the laws of the state. Ultimately, empathy overcame the reservations of those reluctant to challenge the legal system with respect to undocumented immigrants, and the organization moved forward with its paralegal program, the only one of its kind in Harrisonburg, filling an urgent need.

DREAM Activism

Simultaneously, however, the negation of state power remained in play for Harrisonburg Mennonites specifically through a refusal to perform nationalism. This refusal was clearly visible in EMU-sponsored events surrounding activism around the DREAM Act, which was under consideration by Congress at the time of my field work. Shortly after I left the area, the bill was defeated and then-president Barack Obama signed an executive order known as DACA, Deferred Action on Childhood Arrivals, which accomplished some of the same goals, but did not carry as much legislative weight. The scope of DACA was less than what the DREAM Act had aspired to. But while the promise of passing the DREAM act was yet alive, tremendous organizing energy emerged to promote it.

Walter Nicholls identifies three essential elements in the ideological framing promoting the DREAM Act: innocence, exceptionalism, and symbols of nationalism.[39] These frames work to reduce the sense of threat or danger that is constantly deployed in public discourse in relation to immigrants of colour, and to emphasize notions of merit.[40] However, in Anabaptist circles, the nationalist frame becomes irrelevant as a means for establishing good moral character or worthiness for legal immigration status. Thus, DREAMers and allies at EMU predominantly deployed a discourse of humanism, while also reiterating only the framing elements of innocence and social citizenship or exceptionalism. This strategy appears to have been effective insofar as EMU students and faculty broadly became active advocates for the DREAM Act, filling the city council hall during the vote to endorse the DREAM Act, busing to Washington, D.C., to participate in marches, and writing letters to the local paper.

A close look at the discursive framing at EMU around the DREAM Act shows a consistent message of humanist solidarity through a biblical lens. A chapel presentation at EMU in April 2010 included music, testimonies from DREAMers, and a short theological reflection, all oriented around the thematic topic of

"Pilgrims."[41] Inside the chapel, several elements gestured towards EMU's ethos of Christian multiculturalism: quilted patchwork banners (evoking Germanic-ethnic Mennonite heritage) hung on either side of the stage, with EMU's mission and vision statement stitched on in black letters. Alongside commitments to academic excellence, visible in the mission and vision statements are commitments to diversity, social justice, compassion, nonviolence, and inter-cultural learning. The music chosen for this particular chapel session reflected these priorities. The chapel opened with a popular South African hymn sung in Zulu and English (*Siyahamba*, or We Are Walking) by an all-white choir, and ended with a traditional hymn titled "Strangers No More" which includes the chorus:

> For we are strangers no more, but members of one family;
> strangers no more, but part of one humanity;
> strangers no more, we're neighbors to each other now;
> strangers no more, we're sisters and we're brothers now.

It is worth noting just how clearly and consistently the message in the hymn is echoed in the sign of welcome described at the beginning of this paper: "No matter where you are from, we're glad you're our neighbor." In this framing, the receiving communities are not merely hosts who are welcoming guests, but co-inhabitants and equals.

Given how deeply this discursive framing was rooted in religious practice and scriptural analysis, it is notable that a more loosely structured DREAM Act coffeehouse and open forum event soon after provided a less religiously scripted contrast to the chapel. Nonetheless, the discourses and narratives in this less formal space were still always dialogically engaged with the Anabaptist orientation. While the predominant frame was compassionate humanism, participants continued to refuse, or at least avoid, engaging with nationalistic frames in their advocacy for DREAMers.

The event prominently featured DREAM activist and EMU alumna Cassandra, who enumerated a litany of difficulties experienced by undocumented immigrants living in the United States and seeking integration through social citizenship:

> I wanted to volunteer for the Boys and Girls Club, I wanted to be a Big Sister, and even for that I needed to have a social security number . . . even to go to Wal-Mart and exchange something you need a US government ID . . . and a lot of people live in fear. People have to drive, and go to work, go to school, go to the grocery store, and you know a lot of people do not have a driver's license, and it's hard, just to get pulled over from not having a light or something, and you know families are

> being broken apart because of this. So something has to really happen, and that's why we're here fighting for the DREAM Act and hopefully comprehensive immigration reform.[42]

Other Latinx students, including David and Julia, spoke of the personal hardships and traumas they themselves had experienced while crossing the US-Mexico border without documents. The only gestures towards nationalist discourses were embedded in the explanation of the technical aspects of the DREAM Act requirements, including the fact that military service can be an alternative to two years of higher education. All of these speech acts served to further the line of argument for compassionate humanism, as well as the "hard-working immigrant" trope (the exceptionalism that is part of the DREAM Act framing).

In 2007, Mennonites were well-represented at another event, a panel discussion on immigration hosted by the Minute Men of Herndon, Pennsylvania, who saw themselves as defending the US from invasion and primarily targeting Latinx day labourers. The self-proclaimed Minute Men had come to Harrisonburg in hopes of establishing a local chapter of their organization and they hosted a panel discussion framed as civil discourse in order to recruit interested members. The two men who spoke on the panel on behalf of immigrants were both Mennonite; one Latino (Carlos), and one white (Nick). The audience was mixed in terms of political affiliations, and the atmosphere was tense. At one point, Carlos called on a young Latino man (Andrés) in the audience to recognize him for his military service, fulfilling the three frames deployed by DREAM Activists: youth (innocence), exceptionalism, and nationalism. Andrés received a round of applause and courteous thanks from all the panel members. This deployment of nationalist framing, while inconsistent with Mennonite values, was effective in this predominantly non-Mennonite crowd. Perhaps more powerful, however, were Carlos' closing words: "They're human beings, they're human beings, they're human beings, they're human beings. They're mothers, fathers, children. Ask yourself, when Jesus said love your neighbor, who is my neighbor?"[43]

Discursive analysis of this event reveals that these humanizing words were the most powerful and effective moment for shifting public discourse in that room that night, for humanizing the other, not predicated on any economic calculus or point system for "deserving" or "undeserving" victimhood. It was the precursor to "No matter where you are from, we're glad you're our neighbor."

Conclusion

The commitment of Mennonites to social justice for transnational communities in Harrisonburg, Virginia, runs deep. Time and time again I saw Mennonites showing up in uncomfortable spaces to stand in solidarity both publicly and in the interstices of bureaucratic back halls with little thanks and less recognition, out of compassion and love for people made vulnerable by their migration histories. Mennonites interpreted at medical appointments, spoke up at town hall meetings, created scholarship funds, and turned out in droves at the annual Relief Sale. Their own persecution and migration history as Anabaptists hung in the background, a tapestry of pain that provided understanding and unity in the journey.

At the same time, I wonder whether the Anabaptist orientation of refusal to engage with state power could be a kind of voluntary self-sequestration, and whether that sequestration—that ability to opt out of the dominant narrative—is itself a form of (white) privilege? And if so, how effectively are Anabaptist institutions leveraging that privilege on behalf of the most vulnerable? In this paper I sought to suggest that the German ethnic identity rooted in a history and narrative of migration and persecution created possibilities for engaging with new Latinx diaspora communities with solidarity and compassion, in productive and powerful ways. The fact that this identity is specifically white may be a facet that needs to be more fully unpacked.

As the recent political developments across the United States have made clear, much work remains to be done for full inclusion of immigrant communities of colour. Nationalism and nativist rhetoric have reached a shrill pitch of expression in public discourse, and racially motivated hate crimes proliferate.[44] In this vitriolic context, Anabaptists of all kinds strive to live in accordance with profound ethical commitments and "welcome the stranger."

Notes

1 Shelby Mertens, "A Warm Welcome: Signs By Church Become Popular In City Yards," *Daily News-Record*, 5 November 2016.

2 A growing literature designates this demographic phenomenon as the "New Latinx Diaspora." See for example Elzbieta Godziak and Susan Martin, eds., *Beyond the Gateway: Immigrants in a Changing America* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005); Victor Zúñiga and Rubén Hernández-León, eds.,

New Destinations of Mexican Immigration in the United States (New York: Russell Sage, 2005); Stanton Wortham, Enrique G. Murillo, Jr., and Edmund T. Hamann, eds., *Education in the New Latino Diaspora: Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Westport, CT: Alex Publishing, 2002).

[3] See Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power* (Edinburgh Gate, Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman, Ltd., 1989); James Paul Gee, *Social Linguistics and Literacies: Ideology in Discourses* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991); Bonnie Urciuoli, *Exposing Prejudice: Puerto Rican Experiences of Language, Race, and Class* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996).

[4] Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures," in *Power/Knowledge*, ed. Colin Gordon (Brighton: Harvester, 1980), 78-108.

[5] Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage, 1997).

[6] Leo Chavez, *The Latino Threat: Constructing Immigrants, Citizens, and the Nation*, 2nd ed. (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013).

[7] Gee, *Social Linguistics and Literacies*, 142.

[8] Gee, 144.

[9] See for example Edmund Hamann and Jenelle Reeves, "ICE Raids, Children, Media, and Making Sense of Latino Newcomers in Flyover Country," *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 43:1 (January 2004): 24–40.

[10] Laura Zarrugh, "The Latinization of the Central Shenandoah Valley," *International Migration* 46:1 (February 2008): 19–58.

[11] Micah Bump, "From Temporary Picking to Permanent Plucking: Hispanic Newcomers, Integration and Change in the Shenandoah Valley," in *Beyond the Gateway: Immigrants in a Changing America*, ed. Elzbieta Godziak and Susan Martin (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005), 137–176.

[12] See for example Marta Tienda and Faith Mitchell, eds., *Multiple Origins, Uncertain Destinies: Hispanics and the American Future* (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 2006); Victor Zúñiga and Rubén Hernández-León, eds., *New Destinations of Mexican Immigration in the United States* (New York: Russell Sage, 2005); and Jorge Durand, Douglas S. Massey, and Fernando Charvet, "The Changing Geography of Mexican Immigration to the United States: 1910–1996," *Social Science Quarterly* 81:1 (March 2000): 1–15.

[13] Zarrugh, "Latinization of the Central Shenandoah Valley."

[14] "LEP Student Enrollment Statistics 2006-2007," Harrisonburg City Public Schools, accessed 30 September 2006, http://staff.harrisonburg.k12.va.us/~dbenavides/EnrollmentStatistics0607.html.

[15] The increase in the city itself was 644%. The census reported 481 Hispanic residents in Harrisonburg out of a population of 30,707 in 1990, and 3,580 out of 40,468 in 2000. Rockingham County had 546 out of 57,482 in 1990, and 2,221 out of 67,725 in 2000. U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990 Census of Population, *General Population Characteristics: Virginia*, Table 5: Race and Hispanic Origin, https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1990/cp-1/cp-1-48.pdf; U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, *Profiles of General Demographic Characteristics: Virginia*, https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/dp1/2kh51.pdf.

[16] Penny Kidd, interview by author, 4 April 2008.

[17] Raymond D. Fogelson, ed., *Southeast*, vol. 14 of *Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. William C. Sturtevant (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 2004).

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