

# SITUATING AND CONTESTING STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE IN COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH AND ACTION

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*Structural violence refers to social systems as well as the mechanisms through which they produce and normalize marginalization, exclusion, and exploitation. It is intricately tied to cultural violence, that is, systematic assaults on the human dignity and self-worth of individuals and communities. This latter violence operates through culture, language, ideology, and knowledge production in academic disciplines and in scientific canons. Cultural violence serves to justify, legitimize, mask, and naturalize both direct assaults on human beings and systems of oppression and inequality. This special issue highlights new approaches to interrogate the processes and mechanisms between individual and collective suffering and the macrosocial matrices in which the experiences are configured. In this introduction, we argue that an understanding of structural and cultural violence has significant potential for reinvigorating some of the longstanding but often under-engaged goals of community psychology. We explore the challenges facing community psychologists committed to social and transformative change towards wellbeing for all in a global context characterized by gross inequities, thereby establishing the context for this special issue on situating and contesting structural violence in community psychology.*

**Keywords:** *structural violence, cultural violence, community psychology, social transformation*

## 1. Introduction

This special issue takes up a set of challenges facing community psychologists committed to social and transformative change towards wellbeing for all in a global context characterized by gross inequities due at least in part to systems and structures of violence. Structural violence includes the production, maintenance, and reproduction of social inequalities and oppressions. The concept refers to social systems as well as the mechanisms through which they produce and

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normalize marginalization, exclusion, and exploitation along lines of “race<sup>1</sup>”, class, gender, ethnicity, nationality, and other invidious categories (Galtung, 1969; Farmer, 2003; Martin-Baró, 1994; Scheper-Hughes, 2004). Although racial, ethnic, and gender-based categories, among others, are systematically used to deprive certain groups of basic rights, and therefore are deeply implicated in considerations of human suffering, they are also the bases for social justice organizing that contests inequalities, marginalization, and oppression (Duncan & Bowman, 2009; Farmer, 2009; Scheper-Hughes, 2004; Yuval-Davis, 2006a). Some trace the use of the term “structural violence” to the renowned peace scholar Johan Galtung. Galtung (1969) advocated for an expanded concept of violence as “the cause of the difference between the potential and the actual” (p. 168); in other words, violence impedes the shrinkage of the distance between what exists and what could be possible. Structural violence is not always manifest and may be normalized and naturalized as status quo, obscuring circuits of privilege and dispossession (Fine & Ruglis, 2009). It operates by erasing social and political origins of psychosocial problems, instead of placing the blame on struggling individuals and communities for their problems (Scheper-Hughes, 2004; Stoudt et al, 2016). Common examples of structural violence include racism, sexism, poverty, hunger, discriminatory policing, and health inequalities.

Structural violence is intricately tied to cultural violence, that is, systematic assaults on the human dignity and self-worth of individuals and communities (Scheper-Hughes, 2004). Cultural violence operates through aspects of the symbolic sphere including culture, language, ideology, and knowledge production in academic disciplines and in scientific canons (Bourdieu, 1991; Galtung, 1990; Scheper-Hughes, 2004). Cultural violence serves to justify, legitimize, mask and naturalize both direct assaults on human beings and social hierarchies that regulate proper behaviors, language or “talk”, codes of conduct, and ways of developing and carrying out relationships. It is not only the ways in which violence is materialized that matters, but also the legitimation and naturalization of that use. The discipline of psychology, for example, is complicit in facilitating and legitimizing racial and class stratifications through a plethora of diagnostic labels. This medicalization of injustice has serious psychosocial and material consequences for those who systematically bear the brunt of such “diagnoses.” As community psychologists we are challenged to understand and document how structural violence gets “under the skin”. Fanon (1952/2008) characterized similar colonization processes in Martinique as epidermalization and others including the People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond have described it as internalized racial oppressions ([www.pisab.org](http://www.pisab.org))—capturing both the internalized racial inferiority of those who suffer marginalization and oppression as well as the internalized racial superiority of those who think they are passive witnesses, who benefit from and/or perpetrate structural and cultural violence.

Galtung (1990) characterized the different forms of violence in the following terms: “Direct violence is an event; structural violence is a process with ups and downs; cultural violence is an invariant, a permanence, remaining essentially the same for long periods, given the slow transformations of basic culture” (p. 294). Both structural and symbolic violence systematically

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<sup>1</sup> Quotation marks are used to indicate the deeply constructed nature of race—to mark its non-biological, non-genetic base and to underscore the ideological and institutional formations that hold the notion in place.

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violate individual, economic, social, and cultural rights through exploitation, abuse, and epistemic violence built into institutional, cultural, and research practices (Farmer, 2003, 2009; Lykes, 2001). Both structural and cultural violence are inextricably intertwined with and causally implicated in social inequality and injustice (Farmer, 2003, 2009; Freire, 1970; Galtung, 1969; Martín-Baró, 1996). Community psychologists are committed to promoting social justice by fighting oppression and working to reduce social inequalities through addressing both the embodiments and performances of violence, as these are manifested as symptoms of human suffering and reflect its structural and intersectional roots in history and policy (Evans, Duckett, Lawthom, & Kivell, 2017; García-Ramírez, Balcázar, & de Freitas, 2014; Prilleltensky, 2014; Shinn & McKormack, 2017). Understandings of structural and cultural violence can inform both public analysis of the root causes of social problems and direct action, both of which are core components of social intervention in community psychology (Rappaport, 1977). We argue that an understanding of structural and cultural violence have significant potential for reinvigorating some of the longstanding but often under-engaged goals of community psychology (Dutta, 2016; Langhout, 2016; Trickett, 2015). Historically, community psychologists have demonstrated their appreciation of structural violence in terms of their writings about social inequality and oppression (e.g., Albee, 1999; Prilleltensky, 2003, 2012; Watts, Griffith, & Abdul-Adil, 1999). However, theory and research that directly engages the concept of structural violence is less common in the field and is often found in the work of those at the intersections of community and social, cultural, liberation, and/or peace psychologies (e.g., Christie, 1997, 2006; Lykes, 2001; Lykes, Banuazizi, Liem, & Morris, 1996; Sonn, Smith, & Meyer, 2015; Weis & Fine, 2012). This special issue represents an effort to demonstrate possibilities for re-centering structural violence in community psychology research, teaching, and practice.

The special issue has been shaped by liberation psychology, especially its emphasis on understanding and deconstructing the role of power and histories of colonization in shaping individual and community responses to violence(s) (Martín-Baró, 1996; Moane, 2009; Montero, 2007; Sonn & Lewis, 2009). Montero and Sonn (2009) defined liberation as “a process entailing a social rupture in the sense of transforming both the conditions of inequality and oppression and the institutions and practices producing them” (p.1). There are also other developments that provide support for a more significant engagement with structural violence. For example, the calls for decolonial enactments of psychology in the “global South” are concerned with engaging with and/or responding to structural and cultural violence in specific contexts and also disrupting hegemonic influences of Unitedstatesian<sup>2</sup> and Eurocentric psychology (see, e.g., Adams, Dobles, Gomez, Kurtis & Molina, 2015). In contrast to its exclusive use to refer to a geopolitical location, we use the term global South in this article to refer to communities and contexts dominated by systematic and unjust human suffering produced by global capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy, inclusive of communities and groups in the global North who

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<sup>2</sup> The term is a translation from the Spanish term “estadounidense” (see Gugelberger, 1996, p. 4, also Note 4, p. 119). It is used here rather than the more common “American” since this latter term reflects the appropriation of an identifier that includes all citizens of the Americas, that is, of Canada, Mexico, Central and South America, and the United States of America.

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continue to experience marginalization and oppression (Eisenstein, 1998; Esteva & Prakash, 2014; Hernández-Wolfe, 2013; Mohanty, 1991, 2003; Santos, 2007). Some critical scholars also use the term “two-thirds worlds” or “social majority” to draw attention to the vast majority of the world’s population who do not have access to goods, services, and overall quality of life (e.g., Esteva & Prakash, 2014). We note that neither term refers to a homogenous category. Both include epistemologies, experiences, and disparate power relations characterizing the relations within and between communities, societies, and nation-states. In these contexts, new approaches are being developed that are anchored in the voices of those who have been excluded and marginalized (see also Connell’s volume called *Southern Theory*, 2007; Santos, 2007).

One example from the global South of psychologists who have mobilized a politically engaged, relevant, and activist psychology is the Apartheid Archive Project (AAP)—a collaborative research project that documents personal stories and narrative accounts of ordinary South Africans in order to capture the ongoing reverberations of apartheid racism in South Africa (Stevens, Duncan, & Hook, 2013). The AAP interrogates racism as grounded in psychosocial processes (e.g., exclusion, negation, and inferiorization) as well as macro-political processes (e.g., historical, material, symbolic, and structural), thus elucidating linkages between structural inequities and individual suffering. The project simultaneously engages white subjectivities that benefitted from and were privileged during Apartheid and the various responses to post-Apartheid including accommodation and resistance. Another example is Researchers for Fair Policing, an intergenerational participatory action research project with and by youth of color. A collaboration of Make the Road New York (see [www.maketheroad.org](http://www.maketheroad.org)) and the Public Science Project at the City University of New York (see [www.publicscienceproject.org](http://www.publicscienceproject.org)), this initiative was developed collaboratively with multiple local actors engaged in community resistance to New York City’s “stop and frisk policies” that disproportionately targeted communities of color (see e.g., The Justice Committee [www.justicecommittee.org](http://www.justicecommittee.org), among others). Community organizers, young people, university professors, and students joined to study and respond to “what it means to grow up heavily policed in NYC” (Stoudt et al., 2016, p. 328) and to collaborate with young people in the production of their own knowledge about and responses to growing up policed. Both the Apartheid Archive Project and the Researchers for Fair Policing exemplify critical engagement with structural violence, mobilizing and producing perspectives grounded in transformative psychosocial praxis from the global South. Each initiative documents some of the ways in which structural violence installs and sustains inequalities that privilege some while marginalizing and oppressing others. Through naming and deconstructing some of the ways in which the identified “problems” are structural concerns, these projects document how all involved are affected—although some benefit while others pay a huge price.

## **2. Envisioning the Special Issue**

The subtle, naturalized, and all too often taken-for-granted quality of structural violence poses a serious challenge to community psychology research and action despite the field’s commitment to social change. Our journals contain many research articles that focus on the deleterious effects of structural violence (e.g., youth violence, “underachievement” among youth

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of color, school- to-prison pipelines, health inequalities, discrimination) without fully explicating or adequately elaborating the political, economic, social structural processes that facilitate, sustain, and/or undergird such outcomes. Structural violence is deeply ingrained in different societies and often reduced to “the way things are;” instances of structural violence become integral to the social fabric and are no longer questioned. These “everyday” situations echo Ignacio Martin-Baró’s war-time construct of “normal abnormality” (Martin-Baró, 1994, p.125). If we are to make good on community psychology’s commitment to transformative rather than ameliorative social change (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010; Prilleltensky, 2014), it is imperative to build on and develop new approaches to interrogate, confront, resist, and address structural violence through our research and practice, which include documenting critique and excavating radical possibilities. This desire motivated a number of us (Urmitapa Dutta, Joseph Gone, M. Brinton Lykes, Bradley Olson, and Christopher Sonn) to organize a symposium at the 2015 Biennial Conference of the Society for Community Research and Action held in Lowell, Massachusetts. Our goal was to illuminate how structural violence has been addressed either explicitly or implicitly through research and action.

Several examples were presented that illustrated efforts to engage structural violence in community research and action. Drawing on extensive collaborative research with several American Indian communities, Gone (2015) interrogated the trope of historical trauma that informs discourses of “mental health disparities”. Arguing that historical trauma involves an inward (e.g., personal experience or community life) rather than outward focus (e.g., unequal societal relations or constrained opportunities for economic viability), Gone proposed the concept of (post)colonial distress as a more viable way of confronting structural violence perpetuated against American Indian communities. In Lykes and Crosby’s (2015) presentation, we glimpsed how the “the everyday work of repair” (Das, 2007) with women survivors of violence and gross violations of human rights in postgenocide Guatemala requires attention to deep-seated structural impoverishment. They underscored the potential of using creative and embodied resources such as drawing, collage, dramatization, and body sculptures to elicit more complex and contested stories through which Maya protagonists who survived gendered and racialized violence during the armed conflict spoke to this everyday violence in their lives. Dutta (2015) approached the topic in relation to her critical ethnographic research of ethnic conflict in her home community—the Garo Hills region of Northeast India. Foregrounding the embodied experiences of youth as they witness, experience, perpetuate, and/or resist endemic ethnic conflict, she elucidated the sociocultural and political structures underlying normalized ethnic violence in Garo Hills. She presented the example of a youth participatory action research project and the radical possibilities such work hold for everyday peacebuilding. Sonn’s presentation was based on a participatory project (see Sonn, Quayle, McKenzie & Law, 2014) that sought to foster dialogue between young people of immigrant background and Aboriginal people in Australia. Drawing our attention to complex interconnections between cultural violence (coloniality) and structural violence (racism), Sonn demonstrated the liberatory potential of disrupting taken-for-granted narratives through participatory arts practice. The session concluded with Olson (2015) bringing our attention back to the structural violence in our own “backyard”—the deplorable and persistent history of APA’s involvement in and defense of

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interrogations at Guantanamo Bay, whereby psychologists have been involved in the torture of those positioned as cultural, religious, or ethnic “others.”

The session prompted conversations around structural violence and community psychology across domains of theory, research, and social and political action. The topic resonated with a diverse group of people working in a variety of contexts and issues, all of whom shared a commitment to dismantling structures and dominant discourses that produce and maintain injustice. This response reiterated our rationale for having organized the symposium—that conceptions of structural violence can extend community-based praxis to incorporate more sophisticated analyses of injustice. We (Dutta, Lykes, & Sonn) envisioned this special issue—*Structural Violence and Community-based Research and Action*—as a vehicle to explore some of these possibilities through critical interrogations of diverse forms of structural and cultural violence. As co-editors, we had several goals in mind when we undertook the special issue project. Primarily, we envisioned it as way to push the boundaries of community psychology research and action by including exemplars of theoretical, empirical, and/or practice-based explorations of how structural and cultural violence operate and/or are produced and reproduced in communities. We sought papers that would offer a glimpse into contexts and social formations that produce diverse forms of violence along with the ways in which practitioners and researchers in community psychology and allied fields confront, resist, and address structural and cultural violence. Thus in this special issue we reject what many have called “downstream” analyses and encourage instead what Weis and Fine (2012) call “critical bifocality” in which psychologists are challenged to document history, structures, and lives to construct an account that never severs lives or outcomes from history and structures.

Framed by our individual and collective understandings of and praxis as community psychologists, we identified three interrelated goals. One was to see theoretical and methodological undertakings that appreciated, studied, and illustrated the links between individual experiences and the macrosocial matrices in which the experiences are configured. We asked that authors unpack the *processes* or *mechanisms* through which unequal and oppressive structures are internalized as individual experiences. Structural injustices are embodied, moving under the skin, and also resisted, negotiated or contested. Specifically, we hoped to see theoretical and empirical examination of how intersecting social axes are implicated in structuring social injustice. We were interested in pushing authors to simultaneously consider various social axes and expand our methodological repertoire of how that can be done. A second goal focused on intervention (theory and praxis) that is informed by understandings of structural and/or cultural violence that aim to disrupt, confront, resist, and address structural and/or cultural violence. We hoped to see articles that explored innovative possibilities for strategies of survival, protagonism, and social transformation. Finally, we sought articles that might critique and chart new directions in community-based research and action that emerge from these critical perspectives of analysis and engagement. Within these priorities, we hoped for papers that would move beyond positivist and postpositivist understandings of “scientific” research, to excavate the manifold ways in which structural violence is deeply ingrained in multiple sites in which community psychologists work, including the academy.

To achieve the goals outlined above, we called for papers from scholars, educators, practitioners, and activists interrogating community-based action and research through analytic framing and critique of cultural and structural violence. We were interested in interdisciplinary

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and transdisciplinary scholarship, especially from the global South, that would contribute to a critical, international, activist scholarship on community-based praxis. Research in the global South is systematically imbued with a recalcitrant particularity—which is in part a function of colonial, imperialist, and racialized legacies of psychology. Therefore, it was imperative that we did not reproduce the kinds of epistemic violence our special issue aimed to confront.

### **3. Global Perspectives: Contexts, Participants, and Authors**

This special issue brings together a diverse set of papers from around the world—Australia, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Haiti, Jamaica, Pakistan, and the United States. The compilation of articles is also diverse in terms of the disciplinary backgrounds of the authors. In addition to community and critical social psychology, authors have their disciplinary homes in anthropology, human development, sociology, and education, as well as areas of practice such as community arts and cultural development. The articles cover topics including human rights violations in postcolonial Jamaica; dynamics of exclusion and betrayal for young black people in Haiti and the United States; structural violence in the lives of Pakistani Christians; the accumulation of dispossession among Aboriginal people in Australia; state sponsored violence, gendered migration and Maya young women in Guatemala; and, structural violence in a sheltered workshop in the United States.

The authors who describe their social locations, occupy diverse positionalities, and hold varied and complex relationships to their community or research context. For example, Chaudhry conducts research in Pakistan, her country of origin, but from a privileged position that stems from her dominant status as a Muslim as well as her affiliation to a United States university. Ilyes brings a lens of interrelationality—a dialogic relation that is “structurally and temporally situated, both in the past, the present, and the future, challenging assumptions of individuality embedded in traditional research.” Bell relates to oppression from “a dichotomous social location,” critically conscious of the privilege stemming from her middle class, mixed race heritage in Jamaica. Yet the same embodiment, being Black in the United States, evokes discrimination. Sánchez Ares and Lykes are explicit about being human rights activists and the differential power afforded by their social positions as “mestizo and white, Galician/Spanish and U.S. citizens, and highly educated outsiders...” to the indigenous population with whom they partner. Notably, all the papers in this special issue espouse the value of activist scholarship, whether it is explicitly stated (e.g., Ilyes; Sánchez Ares & Lykes) or not.

Across these various contexts and issues, the papers reiterated the criticality of attending to subjugated voices, foregrounding the perspectives, stories, and experiences of those in positions of alterity, not assuming homogeneity at the margins but centering the deeply rooted critique and desire spoken from the periphery. For Quayle, Sonn, and van den Eynde, this meant identifying community narratives from the stories of Noongar elders through which they explicate their experiences of oppression in the postcolonizing Australian context. Chaudhry used a life history methodology to foreground Pakistani Christians’ description and analyses of the structural violence they face as a religious minority in Pakistan. Sánchez Ares and Lykes’ paper report on

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a collaborative photovoice project through which young Maya women in rural Guatemala were able to enhance and exchange their knowledge about migration and everyday violence against the Maya in Guatemala and in the United States, and its intersections with gender, poverty, and social class. Langtiw and Heidbrink's analyses of the betrayals of Haitians in the Dominican Republic and African Americans in the United States highlight the risks of silencing or talking over Black youth's local efforts of speaking truth to power through mobilizations such as Black Lives Matter in the United States and Reconoci.do in the Dominican Republic. We see a different iteration of voice in the papers by Bell and Ilyes. Bell's paper urges us to consider what happens in cases where oppressed people lose access to their voice "in the absence of listeners who valorize their voice," as was the case of community members of Tivoli Garden in Kingston, Jamaica. Ilyes performs and problematizes the voice emergent through her dialogical relationship with "The Boss's" letters, words through which we are invited into her lived experiences of and resistance to her "intellectual disability" as situated at the interstices of cultural and structural violence. Thus articulated and troubled, the notion of voice is louder than words or utterances and demands a listener. These papers underscore the multiplicity of voice, not simply as a generalized democratic process to be valued, but as a critical cultural performance of or despite the speaker's racialized, gendered, and class-based location. Significantly the articles in this special issue also resituate community psychologists as listeners, interlocutors, and/or intermediaries (Merry, 2006) in pragmatic solidarity (Farmer, 2003), and/or psychosocial accompaniment (Watkins, 2015) with the individuals and communities with whom they live, write, and/or work. The latter take on roles as archivists, historians, and collectors of stories not told in order to challenge and contest the dominant or "official lies" (Martín-Baró, 1996).

## **4. Theoretical and Methodological Contributions to Special Issue Goals**

### ***4.1 Understanding the links between structures and individual suffering***

In mapping out this special issue project, we were keen on theoretical and methodological undertakings that explicated the links between individual and collective suffering and the macrosocial matrices in which experiences are configured. The various papers offer diverse and innovative ways of understanding the mechanisms and processes through which unequal and oppressive structures are embodied and performed as individual experience. Chaudhry uses the lens of structural and cultural violence to examine the pervasive violence and oppression that mark the daily lives of Pakistani Christians, as a religious minority group in Pakistan. She accentuates these linkages by foregrounding the analysis of Pakistani Christians as they explicate how institutional and cultural policies and practices impinge upon and constrain their day-to-day life. Crucially, Chaudhry's paper highlights the importance of intersectional analysis. Following Third World and women of Color feminist theories, she demonstrates how the lived experiences of Pakistani Christians are mediated by intersecting axes of class, caste, gender, and educational background. Sánchez Ares and Lykes show how young women's understandings of transnational migration shape their fears, aspirations, hopes, and dreams. Through their engagement with various images of their daily experiences that the youth themselves produced through



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photography, the authors showed how these young Maya women understood and experienced racialized gendered discrimination as it intersects with state violence and migration. Within their participatory project they utilized intersectional theory (Anzaldúa, 2012; Crenshaw, 1991) to “situate Mayan migrants at the interstices of indigeneity, gender, class, and state power as they grapple with how their subjectivities and circulations of power are continuously negotiated...”.

Quayle, et al.’s paper draws on stories of Aboriginal Elders shared as part of a community arts project to explore how Aboriginal people make sense of colonial and racialized oppression and the psychosocial legacy of historical and continuing oppression in post-colonizing Australia. Guided by theoretical and methodological tools from liberation psychology, decolonizing methodologies (Smith, 1999) and Fine and Ruglis’ (2009) work on circuits of dispossession and privilege, the authors elucidate the accumulation of dispossession as narrated by Aboriginal Elders. These community narratives capture the manifestations of structural, cultural, and direct violence, that have been unleashed on Aboriginal people by paternalistic and assimilationist policies. Quayle, et al. mobilize these narratives to challenge dominant (White settler) cultural narratives that minimize, deny, or silence Aboriginal people’s histories of dispossession. Their work underscores the importance of listening to and sharing stories from positions of alterity as a means of understanding how colonial oppression is embodied in everyday experiences. Bell’s paper in this issue is an interesting contrast to that of Quayle and colleagues, where we see Aboriginal Elders discussing the psychosocial impact of dispossession on their subjectivities. Synthesizing insights from psychoanalytic social theory, depth psychology, postcolonial thought, and liberation psychology, Bell turns to historical silences in the face of gross human rights violation in Tivoli Gardens located in Kingston, Jamaica. Bell shows us how diacritical hermeneutics (Kearney, 2012) may be employed as an interpretive methodology to mobilize unarticulated experiences and latent meanings of social suffering. In trying to understand the linkages between macropolitical structures and individual suffering, Bell underscores the criticality of attending to silences along with speech emanating from positions of alterity. Understanding the ways in which individuals and communities suffer under oppressive regimes, she argues, has the potential to expand the possibilities of psychosocial work with people whose subjectivities are discounted by dominant narratives.

Ilyes takes up a much-understudied area of psychological research and even less so within community psychology, that of people labeled as “intellectually disabled”. She situates the arts-based Alternative to Employment (ATE) program that she developed in what she describes as a warehouse or factory-like institution designed to provide vocational training for those previously diagnosed as intellectually disabled. The program brought artists and their families –those not labeled as intellectually disabled– to a shared space in which she and The Boss, a participant in ATE, developed a dialogic relationship over time. Drawing on Opatow’s (1990) theory of moral exclusion, Ilyes illuminates how the deinstitutionalization movement heralded by, among others, community psychologists not only failed to address the structural exclusion of the intellectually disabled but invisibilized or naturalized their exclusion in community-based housing and day programs. The Boss’ voice emerges in the radical reimagination of the sheltered workshop as an assemblage with potential for job, poetry, and love despite the official “container” in which she was sealed. Ilyes’ careful analysis of some of The Boss’s writing as well as her critical

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positioning and interrogation of herself and this work exemplifies the uncomfortable reflexivity (Pillow, 2003) that is essential for a liberatory and critical community psychology.

Langtiw and Heidbrink explore the removal of Black youth from social spaces in two distinct contexts –Haitians in the Dominican Republic and African Americans in the United States– to argue for the interrelationship and globalization of human rights violations that contributes to the marginalization and exclusion of certain groups of people from the human polity. Through critical historical analyses of Black youth in each of these contexts, they not only document the failures of public policies to ensure these youths’ rights to health, education, and wellbeing but also the dramatic ongoing and prevalent attacks on Black youth in these two contexts. They document the structural and cultural violations of their rights and argue that these youth have been “betrayed by agents of the very systems upon which they rely for survival”. As importantly, they argue that despite these attacks youth are organizing, joining together to resist these multiple forms of racialized injustice. They caution community psychologists to critically analyze this “institutional trauma betrayal” or risk the ongoing marginalization of Black youth as well as the failure to ally ourselves with the important youth movements that resist and seek to transform this betrayal, including, for example, the Black Lives Matter movement in the United States and Reconoci.do in the Dominican Republic.

#### **4.2 *Criticality, Interventions, and the Creation of Alternative Settings***

In this issue, Hernandez and Galletta use structural violence as an analytical device to show how circuits of dispossession “become operational through the loss of public protections”. They use a community case study approach drawing on different disciplines including law, economics, sociology, and social psychology to illustrate structural violence as a phenomenon based in historical processes and moments that set up the present and future realities, as well as the opportunities for communities that continue to be excluded. The authors build on the work of Galtung and Farmer connecting it to Opatow’s theory of moral exclusion. Their article highlights the dynamics of privilege and dispossession as enacted in school closures and the pivotal role of mobilizing cultural explanations that work to sustain white privilege. Crucially, this piece documents the slow violence inherent in the erosion of public spaces. Sánchez Ares and Lykes’ project makes visible through feminist infused participatory work the networks of power and forms of structural violence that impact upon young women’s lives. Much of the migration literature emphasizes the migration of young men – or of girls and young women who travel with them. They show the various everyday ways in which a group of Maya young women not only resist these forms of everyday violence but how they envision and perform alternative survival strategies. This participatory project is an example of the creation of safe settings in which young women can not only exchange previously silenced knowledge about their hopes and aspirations but also unpack the various forces that constrain these life choices.

Quayle et al.’s paper is a deliberate intervention that chips away at dominant cultural narratives that pathologize Aboriginal people and represent them as problems to be “fixed.” They not only amplify the voices of Aboriginal Elders but also turn the focus on to whiteness/coloniality and its implications for the material and psychosocial realities of Aboriginal people. In doing so they disrupt the cultural violence that distorts, silences, and

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constrains the psychosocial possibilities of Aboriginal people through language, policies, culture, ideology, and empirical social science. Bell's paper troubles the notion of "unspeakability" in trauma theory, which is often deployed to explain the apparent voicelessness rendered by traumatic experience. She offers a theoretical intervention, a way of comprehending how oppression structures people's psychosocial worlds. Rather than assuming "unspeakability", Bell interprets silences through the lens of what Martín-Baró (1996, p. 188) called the "social lie", which refers to reality that is aligned with the dominant class and which "puts a ceiling on the growth of social consciousness". Intentionally attuned to participants' interior life as well as the historic and psychosocial conditions that shape their subjectivities, Bell punctuates community members' silences with tentative interpretations to attend to what has been rendered invisible by oppressive structures. Ilyes disturbs the waters of deinstitutionalization and community-based responses to the intellectually disabled while urging us to rethink not only these interventions but also the diagnosis as a performance of structural and cultural violence. She further demonstrates how an arts-based program provided her the opportunity to listen deeply, de-construct, and co-construct knowledge(s) alongside one woman who resisted these multiple and intersecting forms of violence over nearly a lifetime. Taken together these articles cross transnational spaces with rich particularity-in-place and demonstrate how circuits of dispossession that cut across national borders are reconstituted through struggles that are distinctive yet intersectional. They make visible:

(T)he slow violence of institutionalization, how immigration became illegal, and the sacred knowledges of elders while contesting the perverse epistemological violence of the "official story," exposing the pathology of coloniality and white supremacy, animating trauma, and contesting categories that hollow the soul (Fine, personal communication).

### **4.3 *Emerging Questions and Future Directions***

The articles in this special issue offer directions in and for community psychology and community-based research and action that are informed by analyses of and responses to structural and cultural violence. In this section, we discuss some ways in which these papers map critical directions for community psychology research and action.

First, all the papers in the special issue offer a critical analysis of the historical, sociopolitical, and cultural contexts in which their work unfolds. The authors do not simply describe the "background" context that is typical of much postpositivist and psychological research. Instead they foreground the context; their analyses illuminate, confront, and dismantle the interlocking systems of racism, colonialism, neoliberalism, classism, ableism, and/or sexism that shape those contexts. This unapologetic centering of specific community or cultural contexts represents a marked departure from postpositivist conventions that place a high premium on generalizability. These papers also demonstrate and elucidate the importance of interrupting epistemic violence inherent in hierarchical binaries such as local-global and particular-universal. The cultural critique in these papers unsettle taken-for-granted assumptions by shedding light on

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obscure circuits of power and social control—a vital step towards deconstructing mechanisms of structural and cultural violence. They illuminate the multiple contexts in which and processes through which those deemed deficient, unworthy, unreliable or disposable turn a critical gaze back on the knowledge producers and speak truth to power. Thus we view the papers in this issue as forerunners, charting different ways of centering contexts, mapping power, and articulating alternative positionalities.

Second, the papers in this issue bridge diverse disciplinary standpoints to develop innovative theories or methodologies to engage structural and cultural violence, illustrating transdisciplinary approaches to community-based research and action. While many community psychologists posit transdisciplinary research as ideally suited to creative problem solving valued by the field (e.g., Christens & Perkins, 2008; Stokols, 2006), a review by Neal, Janulis, and Collins (2013) indicates that the field's cross-disciplinary endeavors are far from ideal. The papers in this special issue thus make an important contribution to community psychology by demonstrating diverse possibilities of engaging within and across multiple disciplines to create new research methodologies and theorizing. Psychology has strong foundations in colonialism and imperialism, and has an ongoing attachment to postpositivist methodologies (Bhatia, 2002; Bulhan, 1985; Martín-Baró, 1994; Okazaki, David, & Abelman, 2008; Stevens, Duncan, & Bowman, 2006; Teo, 2005). In order to examine how structural and cultural violence operate and/or are produced and reproduced in communities, we recognized the need to draw on and to look beyond the narrow limits of psychology for exemplars of the work we sought to represent here—something that was reinforced as the issue took shape.

Third, the papers in this issue elucidate the importance of engaging complex machinations of power as integral to interrupting structural and cultural violence. They offer distinct illustrations of what it means to adopt a lens of “critical bifocality” from educational research (Weis & Fine, 2012):

A way to think about epistemology, design, and the politics of educational research, as a theory of method in which researchers try to make visible the sinewy linkages or circuits through which structural conditions are enacted in policy and reform institutions as well as the ways in which such conditions come to be woven into community relationships and metabolized by individuals (p. 174).

Rather than an exclusive focus on studying “down” steep gradients of power as is typical of psychology, these papers interrogate dynamic workings of power to make claims about what is designed to be invisible or imperceptible (e.g., racism, patriarchy, neoliberalism, and colonialism). Taken together, the papers in this issue make a compelling case for community psychology to tackle the colonality of power defined by Maldonado-Torres (2007) as “long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations” (p. 243; also see Quijano, 2000). In order to reinvigorate community psychology's longstanding goal of social transformation, we need to move away from traditional, apolitical notions of power and explore ways in which we can interrogate, illuminate, and interrupt invisible and insidious workings of power in the academy and beyond. In other words, we have to dismantle those disciplinary norms of community psychology that are still

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tethered to colonial and racist foundations of European and United Statesian psychology. As we take on this challenge, we have much to learn from the struggles of and theories and methods outlined by decolonial feminism, Women of Color feminisms, and Third World feminisms (e.g., Collins, 1998; Hurtado, 1996; Mohanty, 2003; Pillow, 2003; Villenas, 1996; Visweswaran, 1994; Wynter, 2003; Yuval-Davis, 2006b) and the powerful scholarship by authors from colonized and postcolonial worlds (e.g., Connell, 2007; Fanon, 1986; Smith, 1999).

Finally, the various papers point to the important matter of ethics beyond the typical considerations of confidentiality, anonymity, and beneficence. These are important, but there are broader considerations including the politics of location, the politics of representation, and knowledge production processes within which ethical relations and notions of justice are produced (see Serrano García, 1994; Sonn, 2009). Equally critical are considerations of our obligations to circulate stories that resist and dismantle dominant discourses. These issues are reflected in the careful attention authors give to positionalities, processes for ensuring collaboration across different facets of projects, prioritizing the stories of participants and collaborators, and also wrestling with the tensions and challenges produced by enacting dialogical or relational epistemologies and ethics in research and action. These epistemologies are anchored in mutuality, connectedness, and social justice and a recognition that knowledge production is always also about expressions of power and privilege. An ethical stance thus requires ongoing attention to what is at stake, a collective engagement with questions of praxis such as: of whom, by whom, for whom, on whose terms, and in what ways. The papers in this issue urge us to reposition our ethical commitments within the broader sociopolitical, global context of our everyday lives.

When we circulated the call for this special issue, we expected papers that would critique existing work in community psychology and community-based research. However, this was not treated directly in the articles we received. The pattern we observe in the articles included in this special issue could partly be a function of the diverse disciplinary orientations of contributing authors but could also be indicative of a shift in the wider field of community psychology as evidenced by the recent edition of the *APA Handbook of Community Psychology* (see Bond, Serrano-García, & Keys, 2017) as well as recent conferences. For example, at the 2016 International Conference on Community Psychology held in Durban, South Africa (see <http://iccp2016.co.za>), there was an emerging emphasis on crafting new terrains and roles—a move that is certainly informed by a critique of existing disciplinary norms but which moves beyond a critique of absences to proactively forge new ways of enacting ethical and just community research and action.

## **5. Concluding Remarks**

Although not timed deliberately, this special issue emerges in the wake of a seemingly global re-assertion of colonial and imperial regimes as evident first and foremost in the massive and growing gap between the 1% and the majority population in the United States and in the constrained choices reflected in the presidential elections. The latter have unleashed a vitriolic

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marginalization of migrants, Muslims, and people of color and predatory misogynist objectification of women. Despite the possibility of shattering the glass ceiling through the election of a woman as president of the U.S., activists, anti-colonial organizers and peacemakers cannot take much solace in the multiple ways in which the woman candidate has positioned herself within and alongside powerful economic and political forces that offer the global South very little hope for social transformation. European countries as well as Australia seem to rival the U.S. for first place in closing their borders to the millions of refugees and asylum seekers fleeing war and economic desperation in African countries, the Middle East, and Latin America. Meanwhile U.K. citizens voted to leave the European Union in part due to policies, which, despite growing E.U. limits on receiving refugees, seem to reflect more of an “open door policy” than those of the U.K.

Recent events in the global South suggest equally disruptive circulations of power. In South Africa there have been ongoing protests and calls for the transformation of educational institutions. Despite the arrival of democracy in 1994 in that country, lives of a majority of the Black population continue to be marked by poverty and income disparities reminiscent of Apartheid South Africa. Student movements such as #Rhodes Must Fall and #Fees Must Fall are protesting against fee hikes that make higher education inaccessible to many, and calls to decolonize universities including curricula and teaching practices have been met with violence and the closure of major universities. In India, repressive, neoliberal, and conservative regimes continue to reproduce and exacerbate widespread exploitation, displacement, and violence against religious minorities, Dalits, and tribal groups; the ascendancy of Hindu fundamentalism is poorly disguised by claims of a secular nation. At the same time, radical transgressive people’s movements (e.g., National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights <http://www.ncdhr.org.in>, Adivasi Resurgence, and #ChaloUna) have emerged to fight against state repression and violence, but also to emphasize subjugated people’s assertion and resistance—the power to narrate their own stories. Elsewhere, the unpredicted outcome of those who exercised their suffrage within Colombia and rejected the historic peace accord negotiated by the country’s president and Nobel Peace Prize winner Juan Manuel Santos and the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People’s Army) followed on the heels of the recently elected Filipino President Rodrigo Duterte. Despite the latter’s resistance to 21st century overtures of imperial and economic power, his “war on drugs” has resulted in the murder of over 1,000 Filipinos and accompanied by his outright rejection of human rights. We are also reminded of the ongoing struggles for survival and human and land rights of indigenous peoples around the world. Their struggles are borne out of a history of colonialism and dispossession, its continuities, and the enduring human suffering it has produced. At the time of writing among those we are witnessing are the civil resistance by the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe that has been met by uncivil militarized responses from police and security firms, while in Australia Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to fight for self determination and social justice including a Treaty that can aid in this and other processes.

These are some of the global-local dynamics shaping everyday contexts in which we as community psychologists are partnering with individual and communities “on the margins” and with whom we seek to generate knowledge “from the bottom up” through which they contest their oppression while pressing for transformative change. We are increasingly living in a world characterized by a state of exception, which, “contrary to the old forms of state of siege or state

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of emergency, restricts democratic rights under the guise of safeguarding or even expanding them” (Santos, 2007, p. 57). The erosion of civil, political, and cultural rights disguise structural violence with nationalism and rationality, rendering it legitimate. These realities challenge us to rethink what it means to be critically engaged researchers, educators, and activists in these troubling times whence contemporary and historic structural and cultural violence are being played out on a global/translocal stage. Rather than generating more prescriptive guidelines or criteria, community psychologists are called to pay close attention to the motives, concerns, and knowledge brought to the research process (Gordon, 2011; Swadener & Mutua, 2008). In many cases this entails centering ways of knowing, doing, and being that have been marginalized, silenced or excluded and engaging each other through processes of intercultural dialogue, critique, and translation that decolonize and expand our ecologies of knowledge (Santos, 2007; Sonn, 2016).

As community psychologists we must also critically interrogate the subjectivities of those among us with privilege, that is, those who benefit from whiteness, from educational, economic, and gender privilege and who, while working alongside or accompanying the communities centered in this issue, need to critically and reflexively expose the processes and mechanisms through which structural and cultural violence have seeped into our skins, sustaining and benefiting us and being performed as internalized superiority. Critically interrogating structural and cultural violence implicates each of us, challenging us to interrogate the subjectivities of elites, how our views of “Others” constrict the latter’s life options. Such interrogation may lead to ruptures of these privileges, and when and if they do, facilitate relationships among *nos-otras* (Anzaldúa, 2012), energizing or enabling cross-community and cross-context organizing, social movement building, policy that transforms, and/or radical collective experiments such as those emerging throughout the world.

Each of the contributions in this issue offers a modest attempt to reconceptualize the theory and praxis of community psychology alongside one or more groups of people with whom the authors have partnered to reduce social suffering and press for a more equitable social comity. Pending are a range of further challenges that might move the field of community psychology and community psychologists towards repositioning ourselves as suggested here and in some of the articles in this issue. We hope this special issue is the first of many provocative, critical conversations about the possibilities engendered by community psychology in the face of direct, structural, and cultural violence and a humble recognition of its limits.

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