

(IN)DIFFERENCE TO SURVIVORS:
THE ANTI-VIOLENCE COMICS PROJECT

By

Henry Solares

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Committee Membership

Dr. Mary Scoggin, Committee Chair

Dr. Maxwell Schnurer, Committee Member

Dr. Llyn Smith, Committee Member

Rebecca Robertson, Program Graduate Coordinator

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ABSTRACT

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Henry Solares

Sexualized violence prevention at the university level can sometimes leave out the perspectives and needs of marginalized groups. Any endeavor into the field requires methods and frameworks that serve not only the needs of the researcher but also the knowledge builders involved. Postmodern ethnography articulates a need for contesting a positivist understanding of knowledge through use of alternative methods like novelized fiction, autobiography, documentary, and visual art. In conjunction, intersectional theory forces us to consider our place as researchers and the larger power dynamics within our culture. Through the use of ethnofiction and the comic art medium, the project was able to express some of the needs of marginalized groups without putting any would-be knowledge builder at risk. Ethnofiction uses traditional ethnographic methods to inform fiction that can provide more texture and richness than academic forms of dissemination, a reconsideration of ethnography. The anti-violence comics project found that comics have the potential to reach wider audiences than institutionally based forms of knowledge. Comics have the power to invoke aesthetic responses within a reader and provide enough abstraction to allow the reader to identify with the characters depicted within. The research project found that there is great potential in interdisciplinary work between the arts and the social sciences.

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THE PROBLEM

Sexualized violence on university campuses is a problem that has necessitated a range of mitigation and prevention techniques, with many strategies being limited in terms of accessibility. The focus of this thesis is the use, by the researcher, of an alternative method of sexualized violence prevention and support in relation to marginalized students on a university campus. There are organizations in the public and in the university that seek to prevent sexualized violence while also providing support, yet may only be accessible to some. The efficacy of prevention programs is considered but is not the focus of the thesis. The alternative method is in the creation of fictional but ethnographically informed comics that address barriers to access, marginalized groups, and the difficulties of survivorship. My research seeks to illustrate the struggles of marginalized groups as they navigate the university and assisting institutions, to get support for the sexualized violence they face. The problem is that marginalized groups face intersecting and co-constitutive forms of oppression and discrimination that complicate their navigation of the systems in place for survivors of sexualized violence.

The project focuses on the combination of a critical anti-violence framework and advocacy through student generated and informed comic books. Comics can reach wider audiences than any piece of institutional literature can; comics are a global medium. Institutional literature is often the only place that university students are informed of their rights and resources when it comes to sexualized violence. The institutional literature is

by nature; abrupt, bald, and staccato¹. In its built bureaucratic attempts to include all, we must be mindful that the institutional foundation is often rooted in narrowed perspectives that assumes who is worthy of support and visibility. What connection can be made between comics and violence prevention in the university context? Comics can be one pathway for advocacy and activism that could make prevention and non-organizational tied forms of community support accessible to the public in a trauma informed² manner.

Anti-Violence as a Framework

Anti-violence is an activist framework that communities and organizations engage in to prevent violence, of all kinds, from happening. Anti-violence operates within boundaries of institutional legal policies and norms when it comes to incursions on university campuses. The focus on university campuses from administrators and policy makers is the most visible³ form of violence, sexual assault. Sexual assault prevention is the manifestation of anti-violence ideals as opposed to reactionary and risk management focused understandings of sexualized violence. What that means is anti-violence is more concerned with prevention and contestation of violence towards all bodies, not just the marginalized. Marginalized bodies are often the least visible recipients of violence.

¹ Staccato is a form of musical articulation that results in rhythms that have detached notes and can seem harsh and out of harmony.

² Traumatic experiences, both singular and complex, influence or alter our perceptions and ability to navigate our lives. Being trauma informed, when it comes to sexualized violence, requires us to constantly evaluate the tools that we use and their potential for re-traumatization or perpetuating non-survivor informed narratives.

³ By visible, I mean the kind of violence which tends to cause the institution to get involved with a student directly and in a quasi-judicial manner.

Anti-violence is a movement that has many forms including first person storytelling, activism/advocacy, theoretical formations, policy lobbying, survivor support organizations, and institutional reform. Groups involved in anti-violence can be rape crisis organizations, student run advocacy groups, university committees, grant funders, bystander intervention organizations, and the like. Anti-violence groups, historically, had started through community-created organizations that sought to provide support and services to survivors when the government would not. Anti-violence groups have also been guilty of racism, transphobia, homophobia, and classism; through their denial of services, lack of relevant support, and dismissal of the unique needs that survivors of different backgrounds have. Ambivalence or indifference can be another intersection of oppression, so this is an attempt to make the invisible visible and provide space for those on the margins.

Violence Prevention in a University Context

“CHECK IT is a student led movement that’s about empowering us with the tools to take action when we see acts of sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking in our community and make clear to those who choose to commit acts of harm that it’s not acceptable.” (CHECK IT 2014)

Much of the literature available in the field of sexual assault prevention on university campuses is psychology based or developed within gender-based journals. For example, Victoria Baynard has written two particularly important articles, “*Bystander Education: Bringing a Broader Community Perspective to Sexual Violence Prevention*” (2004) and “*Who Will Help Prevent Sexual Violence: Creating an Ecological Model of Bystander Intervention*” (2011). Baynard is not only a researcher but also a high-level

policy consultant for the Department of Justice in determining whether or not, bystander intervention programs work. Baynard's work of legitimizing the anti-violence work through psychology and behavior is essential to note because it affects policy and practices at universities across the US.

Baynard argues that the psychological approach to ending sexualized violence is important as a main tool of advocacy and prevention. Within both articles, Baynard argues that community and cultural values have a strong impact on whether or not people seek to prevent or even discuss violence of any kind. Baynard's delineation of cultural values as important provides a place for anthropologists to enter the discussion.

Anthropologists like Jennifer Wies and Hilary Haldine with "*Anthropology at the Front Lines of Gender Violence*" (2011) are doing the work of studying violence prevention at the broad and global level. Baxi with her annual review, *Sexual Violence and Its Discontents* (2014), adds to the discussion and gives a more up to date analysis on anthropology's place in studying sexualized violence.

In both academic and bureaucratic based discourse on violence prevention, often the problem has been viewed in a binary and narrow sense, going on the assumption that violence only occurs between a man and woman, and it is only the woman who is the survivor. Violence can occur and be perpetrated by any gender identity but the majority of assaults are towards women and perpetrated by men (Black 2011). In recognizing that men commit a majority of assaults, many bystander intervention programs are marketed towards getting men to be positively encouraged to be active and conscious people towards matters of consent and assault such as the online undergraduate training

program, Real Consent (Salazar 2014, Choate 2003, Piccigallo 2012). As a normative layer⁴, many of the social marketing campaigns and programs meant to stop violence or at least raise awareness are focused solely on heterosexual men and women; in terms of who they are targeting for support and information. There are debates on what constitutes sexualized assault and consent, what preformed/performed gender roles produce, the complexities of consent as a concept.

Consent as a Key Concept of Anti-Violence

Tucked within violence prevention is the conceptualization of consent. Consent, in its most basic definition, is about voluntarily giving permission for an activity or a contract of some sorts. From an anti-violence perspective, consent is thought to be fluid, retractable at any time, and intentional. In addition, there is a large difference between affirmative consent and coerced consent. Am I jumping for joy for a sexual encounter? Or am I being held at the threat of violence (emotional or physical) in which I have no choice but to say yes? Another dimension of that difference is the lack of a no or silence, which in itself should not be deemed as a yes. Drugs further complicate the narrative especially since they alter our cognitive ability and make saying no potentially impossible; especially so when it comes to date rape drugs⁵.

The need to explore the concept of consent and how it is formulated is essential to this thesis because consent is culturally mediated and politicized. Anti-violence and violence prevention groups (on university campuses) see consent as more than a yes and

⁴ Like a film that is opaque and obscures complexity.

⁵ Drugs like alcohol, “roofies”, and GHB that are used to aid in the assault of people.

no. Yes, means yes until it doesn't, is a mantra to keep in mind because it contains the complexities of consent as it is perceived within anti-violence. Consent is more than a single affirmation but a series of affirmations (or not) within a relationship, short or long term.⁶ The ability to say no is an important distinction here because self-determination and sovereignty over one's body is not always a given. This definition is the product of advocacy and social interaction from survivors, organizers, and authors across decades at universities and conversations in the public eye aided by journalists and authors. It is a perspective of consent that seeks to inform policy for the benefit of survivors of sexualized violence.

Politics and Policy Within the University

“If you look at what makes the Department of Education and Universities change, it's not the law, because they can just ignore that. It's public scrutiny.” (Kang 2014)

Politics inform how legislation and policy is implemented and practiced. Policy does not live within a vacuum. Policy is dominated and dictated by those in power and the communities that hold them accountable (or don't). Policy wise, the key legislation when it comes to sexual assault prevention on university campuses, is Title IX. Which is as follows, “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance” (Education Amendments Act 1972). For its time, it was progressive and was devised as supplemental civil rights legislation to fill the gaps of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

⁶ The spectrum between one-night stands, casual sex partners, and long-term partnerships are included.

In its inception, its primary use was limited to sports equity in terms of university athletics and providing equal treatment/funding to women's sports programs (Anderson 2008). It wasn't until 8 years later that it would be used to address sexualized violence and sex discrimination. Two women were being sexually harassed at their university and had no institutional means to file a complaint. Thus, the two women, and their lawyer, had the idea to use Title IX as a way to force their university to make a grievance process because they felt that they were being discriminated against based on their sex (*Alexander v. Yale*). They didn't win their case but they got what they had wanted and more. A grievance process and Title IX being culturally and politically used to address sex discrimination. The time frame in which this case occurred, was during a big push for the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment, which was situated in a political climate in which women were fighting to be included within the protections offered by the civil rights act of 1964.

From there, Title IX would slowly be used in this way but it wouldn't be until the late 1990's that Title IX would be given more depth and the ability to institutionally support survivors of sexualized violence. Three supreme court cases would provide heft and teeth for the government to prosecute and hold universities accountable for not adhering to Title IX⁷ (Anderson 2008). Then, in 2011, the Obama administration would release what is now known as the first Dear Colleague Letter which provided clear interpretations of the law that universities were obligated to do things to prevent

⁷ *Franklin v. Gwinnett County Public Schools, Gebser v. Lago Vista Independent School District, Davis v. Monroe County of Education*

sexualized violence on their campuses. As time went on and transgender politics were given a larger platform and focus in the cultural mindset of America; Title IX was made to include gender discrimination. This happened not in the courts but through more Dear Colleague Letters, which dictated and outlined support for trans students experiencing harassment and violence.

Over the last few years and the most recent change in political leadership, we arrive on uneasy ground. In Tyler Kingkade's article, "Betsy DeVos Reveals Plan to Overhaul Obama-Era Campus Rape Policies", we see examples of power and regimes of truth that make the work of listening to and centering marginalized voices essential. The key note in the article is the reformation of a political and legal cornerstone of the conversation of sexualized violence on university campuses. The Dear Colleague letter written in 2011 (Ali) provided guidelines that informed the processes of all the universities in the United States when it came to navigating sexualized violence on university campuses. The reversal of said policies, is a declaration that the strongest survivor centered guidelines for the last 30 years were a mistake. Decades of activism and advocacy were thrown in a proverbial trash can because it didn't serve the mainstream discourse of survivors seeking to sully reputations.

Kingkade's offers a particularly insightful selection from a statement by Know Your IX, a victim's rights organization. "We firmly believe campus discipline must be procedurally fair to both survivors and accused students – but DeVos and the Trump Administration have given us every indication their goal isn't equality, but helping abusers and rapists avoid accountability" (Kingkade 2017). In a socio-cultural landscape

where there is direct knowledge and admission of men in power of their assaults, how can one expect that survivors will actually be heard or that there will be fair and equitable treatment in accountability processes? Or that the laws and policy understandings by officials and bureaucrats will be aligned with the “truth” of the low rate of false rape accusations (Lonsway, Archambault, and Lisak 2009) and the overwhelming reality that rape (among other forms of sexualized violence) goes underreported in the United States on university campuses (Sinozich, Sofi, and Langton 2014, Yung 2015).

Imbalances in Violence Prevention

“It’s undeniable that this movement is necessary – the academy remains a hostile site of oppression for people of color, LGBTQ people, and women. Yet, our campus anti-violence movement still lacks the critical element necessary to transform universities from places of rape culture and racism to places of safety: QTPOC voices and leadership.” (Rodriguez 2014)

A 2016 Bureau of Justice Study found that 21% of undergraduate women at universities experienced some form of assault and that non-heterosexual college females reported significantly higher rates than their heterosexual female peers (Krebs 2016). Here I take the perspective of using the term queer, the reclaimed word for non-normative desires. Queer women are subject to higher rates of violence but are not being included at the bases of any major study or program to prevent sexualized violence on campuses. There are not many resources about queer men or queer transgender/non-binary people to my knowledge and research. One of the complications within data and marginalized groups is the bias embedded in research towards normative

“bodies/identities”. Marginalized groups thus create vehicles for being heard that is often felt in small/community-based advocate literature.⁸

Women of color also face terrifying statistics when it comes to rape, “In the United States, an estimated 32.3% of multiracial women, 27.5% of American Indian/Alaska Native women, 21.2% of non-Hispanic black women, 20.5% of non-Hispanic white women, and 13.6% of Hispanic women were raped during their lifetimes” (Breiding 2011). Violence affects some people disproportionately and there are historic precedents for women of color experiencing violence in higher incidences. Colonists and slavers used rape as terror tool and ignoring said history is counterproductive to understanding how sexualized violence interacts with communities of color on university campuses today (Deer 2015, Harris 2017).

Transgender, genderqueer, and non-binary people experience similar rates of sexual assault and misconduct as undergraduate females (Cantor 2015). If we connect that with the Bureau of Justice statistics of 21% of undergraduate women that means, there are two groups of gender identities that are experiencing violence at a rate of almost a quarter of the given population. There are limited options of support that are culturally sensitive. While TGQNB (Transgender GenderQueer Non-Binary) people do not make up a vast majority of students, they come from all racial backgrounds and thus may suffer additional intersecting forms of violence. Supporting marginalized populations is not a zero-sum game and what helps those at the margins will help those with more visibility.

⁸ Queering Sexual Violence, The Revolution Starts at Home, This Bridge Called my Back; are just a few titles that I feel fit within the description I provide.

The logic behind it is that removing barriers to access, supports everyone in their attempts to access services. Bureaucracy is never easy for anyone to access or navigate regardless of marginality but without cultural capital, a community of support, or benevolent/helpful institutional agents; marginalized groups experience the brunt of the cold and hard orchestra⁹ of institutional processes.

Voice, Tension, and Invitation

“Within the interdependence of mutual (nondominant) differences lies that security which enables us to descend into the chaos of knowledge and return with true visions of us future, along with the concomitant power to effect those changes which can bring that future into being. Difference is that raw and powerful connection from which our personal power is forged.” (Lorde 1984)

In drafting this thesis, a complex understanding of difference as a concept is used to frame attempts to transverse gaps in advocate and institutional forms of literature. Difference, in the Lorde-esque form, encapsulates the need to make efforts in prioritizing non-dominant voices and in the most vulnerable sense, inviting the proverbial Other to speak. Through the methods used in the thesis, I seek to only play the interlude to a symphony of voices with microphones put front and center for the faintest and most marginal. The project associated with this thesis seeks to make visible voices from the deep margins and openly invite survivors to know that their stories “count” and

⁹ Orchestras are filled with many instruments and instrumentalists, following a conductor, and playing their part. Large and small.

survivorship can take many different forms. I wished to show survivors that they are being heard without them being put at risk for retaliation. But the problem was how?

If the current tools of violence prevention were not addressing the needs of marginalized survivors, what could be done? Christina Linder and Jessica Harris would provide areas to start with *Intersections of Identity and Sexual Violence on Campus and Sexual Violence on Campus: Power Conscious Approaches in Awareness, Prevention and Response* (2017 and 2018). A power and historically conscious approach would counter tensions in knowledge, privilege, and the need to feature marginalized voices even if you don't identify with them all. The excuse of not knowing where the non-dominant voices "were" or waiting till a throw away paragraph to feature non-dominant voices in the thesis just wouldn't cut it. I researched and found voices, in speak outs, in interviews, in news articles, in research journals, in books, and even in comics. All it took was a perspective that acknowledged difference as an essential building block of advocacy.

As an applied anthropologist, I listened and wanted to do something. In formulating a plan to address the problem, I ran into an ethical and academic wall of sound¹⁰ when it came to working with marginalized groups. Responsibility, experience, and self-reflection indicated that any interaction with survivors of sexualized violence would necessitate a collection of support resources and knowledge that was not available

¹⁰ Wall of sound was the name for Phil Spector's studio sound design technique. It used layering and echo to achieve an overwhelming sonic scape (Moorefield 2010). Through digging into applied anthropological pasts and presents, I found a layer of abuses of power and privilege, but I also found echoes of advocate minded perspectives that would serve to contest said abuses.

at the time I was starting my research. As a graduate student without funding or assured access to survivor support services for potential knowledge builders, it wasn't feasible in any way. The risk of missing voices, distorting experiences or re-traumatizing would-be survivor-participants from already marginalized positions, was just too high. There had to be something else. I searched the knowledge depths to envision a future where people support each other in the face of sexualized violence. It would take a journey into feminism, applied anthropology, forms of power, and intersectionality to answer the question of how to support marginalized survivors of sexualized violence. In the end, I found comics as my tool, not of the master, but of the liberated and those yet to be.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Intersectionality as Theoretical Foundation

“I have come to see all of this from working in coalition: from my lesbian colleagues who have pointed out homophobia in places where I failed to see it: from my Native American colleagues who have said “But remember we were here first,” when I have worked for the rights of immigrant women; from men of color who have risked my wrath to say, “But racism *is* what is killing us. What can’t I put that first on my agenda?” (Matsuda 1991)

In order to understand the myriad and complex issues that marginalized groups face in their daily lives and finding ways to address those issues, I sought out a theoretical framework that would work. Intersectionality has long been a guiding factor in my praxis as a scholar and field worker. Intersectionality tasks us with looking at how multiple and interlocking forms of oppression and violence affects our lives. Rather than operate from a staccato minded perspective¹¹, I chose to consider any potential project under the lens of intersectionality. To best serve survivors, I would need to consider how the differences in their experiences weren’t aberrant but a reality of life. Differences alter how our bodies are perceived and treated by institutions and the public. Crenshaw, who coined the term worked in similar contexts of anti-violence and the history of the term is important to this thesis.

In 1991, Kimberle Crenshaw published an article in the Stanford Law Review, and that would later become a seminal and incredibly powerful document for law studies, cultural studies, women’s studies, sociological studies, and I argue now, anthropology.

¹¹ This is an allusion to keystone politics. A politic of thinking that relies on a logic if we solve this one _____ then all these other things will fall into place.

Her article, “*Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color*” discusses a plethora of important topics with domestic violence at its center. Crenshaw has contributed much to a theoretical perspective that has influenced many different disciplinary reflections in the recent years. She artfully showcased the complexity of identity politics, the racial and gendered dimensions of violence against women of color, how feminist and anti-racist policies have failed those who live at the intersections of identity, and how domestic violence organizations discriminate against the people they are supposed to be helping.

Crenshaw was not alone in this, Mari Matsuda was a fellow legal scholar of Crenshaw and in an essay written for the Third Annual Conference of Women of Color and the Law, outlined a concept of the interconnectedness of forms of subordination in the context of the need for coalition. Matsuda states that one form of subordination is connected to all others and that like many women of color before her have said, “No person is free until the last and least of us is free”. The research and applied work here are the decade’s long reverberation¹² of my intellectual predecessors. The sounds they made were absorbed in order to make new sounds for others to reflect on and potentially reverberate. Coalition was Matsuda’s rallying point and it is my opinion that we make more noise when we chant, sing, stomp, and clap; together.

Matsuda helped lay a foundational piece through her essay in the formation of a method that she employs to better organize and conceptualizing interlocking and co-

¹² Reverb is the sound that stays after a sound has been produced. The sound reflects and bounces off everything until it is absorbed into the ether.

constitutive forms of power. It is known as “Asking the other question”. “Asking the other question” is a method of pushing ourselves to see the other forms of oppression or subordination within issues and structures of interlocking forms of power. The key being pushing *ourselves* and not expecting others to do the hard work of explaining their interlocking plight. In addition, rather than it being solely *their* problems, “asking the other question” pushes us to see how issues that affect others are also *our* problems. Matsuda also would caution that intersectional work done casually would cause one to miss important complexities within issues.

What is shown through Crenshaw’s and Matsuda’s groundbreaking work is that anti-violence requires critical, reflective, and multi-modal perspectives in order to make sure all survivors are heard and supported. To be clear, Crenshaw wasn’t the only one to be on this track. For years and years thinkers like Gloria Anzaldua, Audre Lorde, Stuart Hall, and later, Dean Spade have found ways to critically interact with culture, identity, gender, race, diaspora, and their connections to power. Anzaldua’s understandings of borderlands (physical and societal) inform a need for unity. Lorde’s understandings of difference foreground the need to identify and celebrate difference. Stuart Hall articulates an understanding of diaspora that complicates simplistic nationalist understandings of race and identity. Finally, Spade contextualizes Foucault within the difficulties of rights and legal based frameworks for social change when it comes to transgender issues. All of their work supports and powers my drive to be intersectional and always attempt to “ask the other question” (Matsuda 1991).

Anthropology and Feminism, a Discipline's Relevance

“If there is a single thing, a common land that all of us are seeking, it is an anthropology without exiles.” (Behar 1995)

The history of anthropology had long delegated women to the sidelines of research both in the value of their academic contributions to the discipline and the value of studying women-based cultural practices. It was not until the second wave of feminism, that a feminist anthropology broke out from out of the enforced shadows and into the spotlight with the ethnographies and public writings by anthropologists, Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict (Aggarwal 2000). Feminism has had many definitions over the years but the most general description is “the theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes”.

Feminism has had multiple waves and paradigm shifts to reflect new and nuanced understandings of gendered, racial, sexual, and social equity. Feminist anthropology would not have a name set in stone for quite some time but it had adherents, even in the early 1900s. Elsie Clews Parsons was an influential, if not well known, precursor of feminist anthropology around this time period and did research on indigenous women and cross cultural gender taboos. She also practiced a polyphonic¹³ mode that included knowledge builders as co-observer, narratives of “prototypical” ceremonies, and reflexivity with past anthropological perspectives (Lamphere 1989). At a time where subjects including women weren't even on the keyboard¹⁴.

¹³ Polyphony means multi-voiced. This terminology is often used with musical textures and synthesizers.

¹⁴ Imagine an anthropologist of that era with their research spread across a 49-key piano, her work was being played on a 61-key piano. A whole octave of experience was missing from her contemporaries.

Feminist anthropology is also not just simply the “anthropology of women” as it framed itself in the beginning but much more than that. Marilyn Strathern, a prominent anthropologist, had denoted the relationship between feminism and anthropology as awkward, and there was a reason for that (Aggarwal 2000). Feminist anthropology was so concerned with gender (in the binary of male and female) in the beginning that they missed out on the power dynamics within feminist anthropology in terms of who was studied and who was studying. The third wave of feminism addressed this notion, not from the forefront of its adherents but from the “dark” corners of the philosophy. Women of color, in the 1980’s began writing about their contestations of feminism as something that sought for equality for women but could provide basic respect for women that weren’t white.

These feminists of color were seeking to hold the movement and philosophy accountable for the oppression that they face for being women **and** being queer/racial Other/disabled/poor. Feminist anthropologists would have to contend with the power dynamics and realities of unheard voices during this third wave. The contention would come from a postmodern rejection of objective observers and subjects. Works from feminist literary masters like Zora Neale Hurston, Maxine Hong Kingston, and Gloria Anzaldua were finding their ways into anthropology courses (Aggarwal 2000). Feminism was a chorus that couldn’t be silenced and would be welcomed into the folds of anthropology through an anthology known as *Women Writing Culture*.

To give context, *Writing Culture* was a key anthology of ethnography for quite some time and was incredibly symbolic of the masculinist and male dominated

perspectives within ethnography (and anthropology) at the time. The anthology did not feature sections or voices from/about, women and culture. Many feminist anthropologists at the time tried to submit work and were summarily rejected for one reason or another. In a truly radical response, a bunch of feminist anthropologists took being cut from said anthology as a challenge, so they made their own version of it, one that represented a broad range of stories and identities that made clear that women had something to say and add to the study of culture and humanity (Aggarwal 2000).

A Praxis for Those Who Work at the Margins

Feminist anthropology is adept at describing problems; structures of power, motivations behind gender-based violence, how racism works, etc.... That said, there is a difference between description and solution. This project focuses on the application of knowledge, which is where applied anthropology and my research comes in. Recently, anthropologists have found the need to make anthropology more relevant and more public (Rylko-Bauer et al. 2006, Van Willigen 2002, Low and Merry 2010). Historically, the applied side of anthropology had its roots in the colonization process with cultural anthropologists serving as experts in the understanding of the Other that was being subjugated and destroyed (Rylko-Bauer et al. 2006).

Applied anthropology should not seek to hide or dismiss its history steeped in colonial power dynamics because we can learn from the errors of the past and continue to reinvent our future as anthropologists. Anthropology moved forward and sought to let “the studied” speak for themselves and attempt to move away from colonial structures of knowledge and power. Out of a desire for change, action anthropology arose, radical

forms of collaboration between anthropologists and communities formed, and the institution of cultural brokerage surfaced. Which is a part of what Low and Merry state as, “American anthropology’s long tradition of speaking about crucial issues in contemporary society-exemplified by Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, and Franz Boas-[that] is still reflected in the work anthropologists do” (Low and Merry 204).

Language, Power, and Applied Work

“What is so perilous, then, in the fact that people speak, and that their speech proliferates. Where is the danger in that?...In society such as our own we all know the rules of exclusion. The most obvious and familiar of these concerns what is prohibited. We know perfectly well that we are not free to say just anything, that we cannot simply speak of anything, when we like or where we like; not just anyone, finally may speak of just anything (Foucault 1972).”

In understanding applied anthropology’s motivations, it feels necessary to explain a larger philosophical reasoning behind this project as well as other projects of this nature. If inaction is action, what compels so many of us to make the choice of ignoring or suppressing the plight of marginalized groups? Silence and speech articulate a violence far more potent than any single fist or gun because they have the power to shape our nation’s discourse on vulnerable groups of people. Discourse is a system of knowledge and power that creates and sustains socio-cultural practices, guided and managed by the prohibition of things we can say and things we can do. Silence and speech in the highest levels of power and visibility has the potential to dictate consciously and unconsciously what is and isn’t worth speaking about. Even if something is visible, if no one speaks about it, then it becomes invisible, “it is just the way things are” to quote a popular

aphorism. Satisfaction or acceptance of the status quo facilitates indifference and ambivalence which can be dangerous to marginalized groups.

Sexualized violence is a taboo subject and is rendered invisible by pervasive and unspoken narratives of rape culture, victim blaming, and slut shaming. Rape culture being a collection of narratives that articulate assault within a very narrow framework of believability, dictate who is and isn't capable of being a perpetrator, and what survivors look like. (Broderick 2018) Victim blaming involves the attributions of guilt on the survivor's actions, lack of actions, or even how they are dressed. Rather than interrogating perpetrators making the choice to harm, rape culture is the assumption that there was something that the survivor could have done, to not have been harmed. Slut shaming is an interesting conflux of respectability politics, sexual repression/negativity, and gendered models of acceptable behavior. Slut shaming becomes a tool to further victim blaming and rape culture as womxn¹⁵ are painted as less than respectable and thus unworthy of the validity of their claims of sexualized violence. This cultural landscape needs to be contested.

It is the argument of the researcher that applied anthropological work operates on an understanding that things cannot just be the way they are. Applied anthropologists attempt to be cognizant of power structures, both visible and invisible, when seeking to understand issues and the people they affect. Doing so requires critical investigation, solution/mitigation strategy generation, and the provision of space for people to speak

¹⁵ This is not a typo, the x is intentional at this point in the thesis because rather than using the terms generated by other authors and their data, this is general discussion. The x within the word is trans inclusive.

their truth. When we work with and alongside marginalized people, we provide moments of visibility and disrupt discourses and narratives. Undoubtedly, nuances will be missed, narratives re-inscribed, and context displaced. That said, with the rifts in the harmony of silence, we can provide avenues for people to continue the work of living within the confines of our all-encompassing state and self-panopticons.

“Asking the other question” makes itself the most present here as a tool of social change because its focus is directly on the invisible and visible. That which we are, momentarily, unaware of. The oppression/forms of power we cannot see nor feel but are nonetheless present and productive. One cannot unravel every co-constituting form of power but the attempt in itself provides a chance to mitigate and support. Matsuda’s tool is about pushing ourselves to hold ourselves and others accountable and to be challenging discourse. By making things visible, we break through the walls of the panopticon and through communication and support, we help each other navigate the disciplines and punishments imposed on our bodies.

Aflush with optimism, there should always be reminders that there is no pure resistance and institutions of power rely consciously or subconsciously on “silent majorities” and “docile bodies”. We are trained to replicate our oppressions and the forces of power that act upon us. Often a gripe that surfaces from activists about applied work and working within the system, is that nothing can happen from within and those who try are simply giving in. Perspectives of total and complete disconnection from systems of power underestimate the reach and histories of discourses. An outright disengagement with real forms of power would be insufficient for social change,

separatism leaves room only for the separatists and not those still entangled within the system.

At the beginning of an earlier section, I featured an excerpt from Audre Lorde's speech, *The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House*. In it, Lorde solidifies the need to understand difference and I argue, asking the other question, "I urge each one of us here to reach down into that deep place of knowledge inside herself and touch that terror and loathing of any difference that lives there. See whose face it wears. Then the personal as the political can begin to illuminate all our choices" (Lorde 1984). Within this speech is a statement about refusing separatism, understanding the need for work within the systems of power we live, and doing the work within ourselves. This speech is often cheapened by the conceptualization that no work can be done from within. If that was it, she wouldn't have shown up to give the speech in the first place because she could recognize the need to make visible the invisible structures of power replicating themselves within the academic conference that was seemingly made to provide space (Schnurer personal communication 2019).

As Audre Lorde did with her speech at the conference, we have to show up in the institutions and weather the thunderous din of hegemonic discourse in order to make visible the suffering of marginalized and to hold those in power accountable. Institutions of higher education and institutions of law, both deserve this scrutiny because you can change the law and guidance of said laws but in the end our speech or our silence determines how it is followed or implemented. There is no other option, screw the binary,

to engage in truly radical efforts of support in the face of regimes of power, we must support each other; from the mainstream to the margins.

POST MODERN ETHNOGRAPHY RECONSIDERED

Each generation of anthropologists revises history, finding in the past precursors of present-day topics of intense debate and reformulation. But there is also a pedagogical goal in rethinking our history. Whose work gets taught and how it is connected to other traditions is critical to the shaping of anthropology for the next generation (Lamphere 2004).

Theoretical mediations considered, there is immense difficulty in the proper execution of lofty ideals of anti-violence, collaboration, and intersectionality. The applied work in practice needs appropriate tools. From me those tools would encompass traditional forms of research; interviews, ethnography, archival analysis. The tools would also include not so conventional tools like ethnofiction, comic creation, informal research primers, and interdisciplinary collaboration. All of which took place on a rural university campus in California. One of those tools is ethnofiction. Ethnofiction is the use of ethnographic research as the basis for fiction, for a variety of purposes. Historically, ethnofiction in anthropology has been most visible, unironically, within visual anthropology.

Film is one of the most popular forms of visual anthropology because there is a direct connection and it is not locked within literary regimes that limits access. However, one of the ethical boundaries of film lies with identification, of both the purpose and the danger. Ethics requires the protection of those being filmed for cultural reasons, for safety reasons, or for the potential of unfavorable representation. Film based ethnofiction has subverted this by engaging in collaborative and fictional representations that involve local people and contributors (Sjoberg 2008) (Rouch 1961-71).

Sjoberg is important for this work because although our mediums are different in terms of ethnography and dissemination, I also focused on marginalized groups. Sjoberg worked with transgendered Brazilians in Sao Paulo to create a film that utilized a “shared anthropology” using ethnofiction and film methodology pioneered by Jean Rouch¹⁶. The purpose and danger I mentioned before is about locating people in the places that they are living and capturing the “textures of their lives” (the purpose) but not an objective reality (the danger). This is navigated by Sjoberg who is aware that, “most transgendered Brazilians work as prostitutes openly in the streets to São Paulo, the community is fairly visible but equally difficult to gain access to, and as a heterosexual foreign man I was most likely to be perceived as a potential customer” (Sjoberg 2008). So while working with these individuals, he collaborated with them on the creation of an ethnofiction¹⁷ that mirrored their lived realities while at the same time not singling out the participants for retribution or violence.

Ethnofiction is not limited to film but also to literature and comics (only recently). In particular the mediums that are fixed to paper, have different limitations and benefits. Even though film has been the most visible that does not mean ethnofiction has not been used within anthropology. Zora Neale Hurston is of note with her folklore collection, *Mules and Men*, in which she engaged in ethnography and participant observation while utilizing fiction to contextualize the folk tales (Jirousek 2006). A framework that came with its own risks and challenges but for Zora, in her time, was the perfect tool for

¹⁶ The same Rouch being mentioned in the quote.

¹⁷ A structured and intentionally produced work of ethnographic fiction.

working with a tragically misunderstood and marginalized population (Black Americans in the time of Jim Crow). She did something none of the researchers of her time could do, which was to give humanity and credit to the richness of the Black American culture in contrast to things like minstrel shows and centuries of racist perspectives in media.

Hurston wanted to use her ethnographic research done in the Black American community to serve as a corrective to racist cultural representations in American pop culture (Harney 2015).

Hurston, in writing *Mules and Men*, had to confront a few different needs from her publisher, her mentor, her sponsor, and ultimately herself. In order to get published, assuage her mentor, and justify her expenses; she was put into the position of attempting to create something that was readable, academically informed, and relevant to her.

Hurston, in the 1930's, created one of the first instances of literary ethnofiction. It was a part of "her own project that sought to put scholars and the general public into conversation with one another" (Harney 2015). That said, Hurston would not be the last to interact with the tension between academic rigor, public relevance, and fiction as a tool.

In *Ethnographic Fiction: Anthropology's Hidden Literary Style* (1984), Nancy Schmidt catalogs a history of its use and makes the bold claim that as long as there has been ethnography there has been ethnographic fiction. Back in 1984, Schmidt made the call to action to re-evaluate the historical significance of literary ethnofiction within anthropology to remind us, that ethnofiction was one of the ways we could portray truths without portraying reality. One of Schmidt's most impactful examples is Hilda Kuper,

who did research/ethnofiction in South Africa around the 50-60's. Schmidt sources a particularly apt argument from Kuper for the strengths of fiction's use in ethnography in the following passage,

“No matter how deeply her experiences and reflections in the 'field' change her perceptions and enrich her personal life, she must strive to be 'objective' by the standards of her colleagues in the craft. The writer of fiction, on the other hand, is allowed greater freedom of expression and imagination. She is expected to personalize general experiences, permitted to develop her own style and eccentricities, and encouraged to avoid technical formulations and conventions in making her own commitments. Her ideas may change without the criticism of inconsistency and her characters may express contradictions without evoking acrimonious reviews by scholars of other schools. She need not explicitly distinguish between ideas and emotions and may deliberately use the ambiguity of words to extend the reader's perception. She does not have to prove "facts" or test hypotheses, she may allow vision to replace reality” (Kuper 1970, Schmidt 1984).

Sadly, Schmidt's call wouldn't be truly answered for quite some time but Kuper's and Schmidt's notes¹⁸ that they held onto didn't just fade into the abyss. They bounced back and one of the more visible forms of that reverberation was found with Didier Fassin. Didier Fassin in “True Life, Real Lives: Revisiting the boundaries between ethnography and fiction” (2014), explores the ways that ethnography and fiction have come together to better explain and understand human life. Fassin's article was the academic validation of the use of fiction and ethnography in conjunction to tell the truth

¹⁸ Imagine holding a piano key with the expression pedal down. A sonorous state of tone and reverb.

but not necessarily show reality. Ethnofiction truly shines as a tool for the explanation of complex socio-cultural dynamics at play in this university anti-violence context and in many others.

Ethnofiction allows anthropologists to use the tool of ethnography to depict the unsavory and the horrifying while protecting the identity of those the researcher met, interacted with, and spoke to. Ethnofiction acknowledges that even if you anonymize your knowledge builders, anyone “there” at your site of research would know exactly who, what, and when. The scripts featured here and the comics themselves, do away with attempting to depict reality, and try depicting the truth. The survivor stories depicted in the scripts and comics featured are not real but that shouldn’t make them any less impactful. The stories are true, in the sense that they address real life situations that people find themselves in because of the intersections of their identities.

The combination of traditional anthropological methods and both ethnofiction and comics can bring the original promise of postmodern ethnography to life. The contestation of the authenticity, objectivity, and truth are visible and present within ethnofiction and comics because of the question of “representing the unrepresentable” and of course, “asking the other question” (Hathaway 2011). What forms of representation are best suited for these issues? The previously cited piece was a deconstruction of Art Spiegelman’s *Maus* as postmodern ethnography by Rosemary Hathaway. Spiegelman was focused on telling his father’s story, his own story, his family’s story, and his people’s story of survival and trauma brought on by the Holocaust. We are apples and oranges but I am aligning myself with the task Hathaway mentions,

“of starting from a place of defeat: how can a single account convey the dynamic, multivalent, contested nature of any cultural group or phenomenon with any accuracy or objectivity?”

My project addresses this problem by understanding that one account cannot do so and thus must constantly be aware of those limitations. For me that meant, a solely academic release of the collection of incredible insights gathered from a range of sources would not be enough. My single account of the phenomena of anti-violence projects on a single university campus couldn't capture enough nuance I was finding within my research and ethnography. Now I do not claim that I captured all the nuance but I found a tool that would work with ethnofiction to satisfy the need to humanize my ethnographic work, that by necessity of context and subject sensitivity, would have to be abstracted. The tools in question, are comics which meet the requirements I had. Comics at the largest understanding of the term, since I was not raised on American comics but Japanese comics via manga and a chance encounter in a grocery store magazine aisle. This is important because comics are more than what the mainstream descriptions entail and are larger than just American/European interpretation and historical representations of the artform.

Comics, Icons, the Subterranean, and Anti-Violence

“Comics-hence-are just one of many keys to breaking down conventional society's standards of meaning” (Maggio 2007).

Comic art and comics can do this work because they have power beyond aesthetics and words, they reach deeper. Comics have not always been seen in a critical

light but they have the potential to do critical work. “Far from being a watered down, inferior substitute of “high” cultural art, they are distinct, alternative visions which reveal more about the fears, neuroses and power struggles of the populous than high art does.” (Schmidt 1992). Like Ronald Schmidt, I believe that they can show things that literature, cinema, or fine art cannot. They can have the depth and complexities of books but with the visual flow and appeal of films. But the comparisons made are not to equate or borrow credibility, as Alan Moore warned against, in an essay written in 1984, but to showcase comics and their strengths as an artform (Moore 2019). Comics are also useful because as Jordan Smith states, “comics have special advantage over prose narrative in that they appeal to an increasingly visual, globalized culture.... In other words, comics offer a visually-cued solution to the world’s confusion of tongues, reaching audiences who achieve pictorial literacy before textual literacy” (Smith 2008).

Scott McCloud is the authority on the potentials of comics and I defer to his definition of comics featured in his seminal, *Understanding Comics*. Comics are “juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer” (McCloud 1993). This definition is important because it expands the possibilities for comics and removes the tunnel vision that people have when it comes to comics. This definition is useful for the inclusion of how cultures the world over, with separate histories and understandings, have created comics; for pleasure, for information, and for the sake of expression.

McCloud did not stop at a proper definition but also played with fortissimo¹⁹ the realities of what cartoons and comics are important through his work, all of which I cannot cover. For me, his understandings and definition provided me with the ability to prove the power of comics in an ethnofiction and advocacy context.

McCloud's understandings of imagery and the utility of icons as images that represent a person, place, thing, or idea is directly related to anti-violence and postmodern ethnography. Cartoons²⁰ are the icons that seem to speak out the most because cartoons are abstracts of images that focus on specific details...stripping an image to its essential meaning, and an artist can amplify meaning in a way that realistic art can't. (McCloud 1992) Stated in another way, comics have the ability to reduce and distill complex stories and people into a more manageable form. Each line should progress the story, each panel must serve a purpose, and it has to all tie in together in a short number of pages. In its simplicity there is a hidden elegance. Most comics are not about realism and thus can be useful for portraying a broader range of representations of people and places.

The fantastical and pulp mythology behind comics gives it the ability to articulate different worlds and experiences with greater ease than film or literature. Of incredible productive power at play within comics and cartoons, is the potential of, "the cartoon [being] a vacuum into which our identity and awareness are pulled... an empty shell that

¹⁹ This is a term used within music notation to denote a need for to play with strength or passion, forte=strong.

²⁰ McCloud notes the distinction between comics and cartoons, cartoons are a style and comics are the medium.

we inhabit, which enables us to travel to another realm. We don't just observe the cartoon, we become it" (McCloud 1992). For the work within this thesis, this productive power was essential to tap into because through the abstraction and fictionalization of the marginalized characters within the yet to-be-explained comic project, the reader (the public) is able to put themselves into the shoes of the subaltern and dwell for a moment, in the subterranean. It entices the reader to ask the other question and see life from the perspective of a marginalized survivor of sexualized violence without the survivor having to give their story or have their trauma relieved and potentially contested by their audience.

When it comes to sexualized violence prevention and comics; one can depict the emotional struggles of survivorship that incorporate the abstract, we can visually show the warmth of a community that cares and supports, we can show the frigid wind of not feeling heard or believed, and we can create advocacy materials that were made by survivors for survivors without the disconnect of years and academically bound access. These moments of invisibility can be made visible to the everyday reader from any class background in the span of a few pages. By bringing these invisible moments to the light through the combination of art and writing, comics can have the power to disrupt and provide space.

The use of comics is intentional in terms of disentanglement from a solely academic or institutional perspective. Comics in their positionality of a historically low context can communicate some of the nuances of the research in ways that this thesis or any strictly academic endeavor can't. Some of the best and most insightful survivor

centered information has come, not from the institution or outside the institution but those working within. I am referring to the interviews I did with people doing anti-violence work on a small rural university campus. Which makes including their perspectives and information difficult due to the ubiquitous nature of the work I was involved in on campus and the people I was working with. Comics and fictionalization help translate their knowledge into something I can share with others without putting my institutionally based folx²¹ at risk (Scoggin personal communication 2019).

I had always known that I wasn't the only anthropologist to see the potential for comics and their ability to address complex situations and issues. I went looking to see if other anthropologists working in similarly difficult situations had found comics, or even fiction, as a tool. I was not alone in this endeavor and I ended up finding two examples of doing right by knowledge builders and also showing the reality of an issue; Bartoszko and Leseth's ethnographic comic and Hamdy and Nye's graphic novel.

Applied Anthropology and Comics in Practice

“Feminist anthropologists have argued that, due to their multiple and ambiguous strands of identification, women in the past used life histories, ethnographic novels, and other experimental genres that dissolved barriers based on race, class, and gender. [in the 1980s]” (Aggarwal 2000).

In “Public Space Information Accessibility, Technology, and Diversity at Oslo University College”, Bartoszko and Leseth articulated the potential for comics and anthropology with a focus on reaching a broader audience and respecting their knowledge

²¹ Folx is a gender inclusive form of describing a group of people that is intentional with its inclusion of an x to prevent the erase of those who identify apart or in between the gender binary.

builders. “This book, in both its form and content, breaks with the traditional way of presenting ethnography... People tend to better understand the complex issues when they are visible. Literally” (Bartoszko 2011). The comic they created follows in the feminist anthropological lineage of breaking down barriers by utilizing alternative forms of description and representation, intentionally or not. In doing fieldwork on potentially sensitive areas of study, these authors decided to ask the other question in an attempt to stave off “yet another report that nobody will read” and they created a free and accessible comic (Bartoszko 2011).

While the Bartoszko and Leseth anthropological comic book was short form, Hamdy and Nye would take the concept to a whole new level; the graphic novel level. “Lissa”, Sounding off at 304 pages, this behemoth of a visual text would masterfully incorporate two separate ethnographies, one on dialysis patients in Egypt and another on hereditary cancer survivors in the United States. Both would be combined into a fictional graphic novel that mediates on cross cultural friendship, the recent Egyptian revolution, and solidarity. “Lissa” would prove to me that one could handle serious and draining topics with deft and clarity. Comic art and culture could come together in powerful ways and even be used as a teaching resource; it included timelines of real events that inspired their academic work and their storytelling work, it had discussion questions, and contextualization of their research within the larger disciplinary field. For example, Lissa has many excellent spreads that showcase a nexus of emotional stress, physical anguish, and cultural symbolism relevant to the stories they are seeking to tell. Lissa found a way

to show what it can feel like to face the possibility of hereditary cancer and what life on dialysis can entail through the magic of comics.

Traditional Methods

“If you look at what makes the Department of Education and Universities change ... it’s not the law, because they can just ignore that. It’s public scrutiny” (Kang 2014).

In the beginning of the field work, the research was focused solely on the policy and legal ramifications that Title IX had on survivors from marginalized groups. My thesis would then change to accommodate what was still left to say from an applied/ethnographic perspective. Regardless, I desired to address power and voice without having survivors being made to speak about their experiences to me, anonymous or not. I also knew that anthropology had tools that could adequately understand the landscape of anti-violence on my university campus, Humboldt State University. The tools and methods I utilized were qualitative interviews, historical/media/archival analysis, participant ethnography, and ethnofiction.

The subjects of qualitative interviews were those who worked in an anti-violence capacity on a university campus. I selected four types of candidates; a student, an administrator, a prevention professional, and a community organizer/professor. I chose people who were already involved in violence prevention work. The benefit of having done so lies in the fact that these are people who deal with difficult situations daily and my questions would not be anything out of what they would typically get asked just doing their job. The student activist was insightful, the administrator was hostile, the

prevention professional was encouraging, and the organizer/professor was helpful.²² My IRB approval number for that part of the research was 17-145 and the date of approval was 02/23/2018.

The historical/archival/media analysis was a pathway into understanding the larger picture of how survivors of all kinds navigate the system. Through my exploration of materials and the use of an intersectional lens and the concept of “asking the other question” (Matsuda 1999), I was able to see the cracks that people fall through. For example, the concept that going to the police to file a report continues to not be a possibility for a majority of marginalized groups, since many have had incredibly negative experiences with police, historically and personally (Chen 2016). Or as another example, as a trans person, if you are assaulted and seek medical help or social support, you may be forced to use your dead name, be denied access to shelter, or even be subject to humiliation by medical staff (Patterson 2016).

The overall analysis of the three different types of sources situated the current state of anti-violence with a focus on particularly important or culturally informative letters, websites, news articles, court cases, and guidance documents. I gathered a collection of survivor-centered research, books, documents, news articles, reports, and guidance documents. Survivor centered research is important to outline because there is a spectrum of advocacy and one end simply seeks to keep the status quo and perpetuate rape culture. Those proved invaluable to understanding where I as a researcher could do field work that was purposeful and engaging in cultural change.

²² Thank you, Pina, Durian, and Mango; your words and time meant the world to me.

Once I had finished with the interviews and the research, I decided that a good fit for me would be to work in the field of sexual assault prevention and I decided to apply to be a part of HSU's bystander prevention program. I had experience organizing with CHECK IT in the past through a university job working at a cultural center. CHECK IT is a sexual assault prevention program that focuses on bystander intervention and long-term cultural change. I ended up getting an internship doing graphic design with the intention of possibly understudying the great artists that CHECK IT employs.

CHECK IT employs artists to create artwork and designs that provide the imagery for social change in terms of bystander intervention. CHECK IT operates from a social marketing perspective and the organization's leadership finds the value in art and its ability to reach people in ways that workshops and protests can't. Through stickers, sweaters, and pins emblazoned with sex positive/consent based/solidarity building phrases and imagery; CHECK IT explores multiple pathways to reach people. The artists and budding artists employed are given an opportunity to create materials for a social movement in a way that provides space for the quiet but passionate activist. In addition, sometimes they are tasked with creating materials that translate administrative and legal language in regards to violence prevention.

The training I was provided was helpful for situating myself in the long term and short-term goals of CHECK IT. For me, I was there to get a better understanding of the organization, its work, and to get some graphic design practice. During the course of learning design skills and going over Title IX legislation, I thought to myself there has to be a better way for people to know their rights. I decided that I was going to draw and

write a comic book during my internship as a way of translating legal and quasi legal documents into something anyone could read. The comic book was to serve as an informative and representative tool and 220 hours later, it was completed but it didn't feel complete. Matsuda's statement would linger in my head as the next semester came. Flashbacks to administrative meetings, hiring committees, survivor speak outs, and personal communications was stirring something in me. What else is missing? What else could I be doing? What other questions have I not yet asked?

After completing that work, I realized that there was still plenty to say about the realities of being a survivor on a university campus. I then decided to self-fund and self-publish a comic series that was not tied to the university as an institution. The purpose was to allow for a critical perspective of university responses and provide space for the expression of the complexities within anti-violence on university campuses. The scripts of the critical comic books address some direct examples of the "system and support organizations" not serving survivors from marginalized groups and at the same time, showcasing/representing a future of accountability, community support, and knowledge of what survivors navigate.

To summarize, the CHECK IT internship was my ethnographic participatory action, it was there that I experienced creating survivor centered and inclusive graphic/video materials for cultural change. Not only did I create buttons and art pieces with some "on brand" imagery (Figure 1) and focus, I also made some videos that were both informative and humorous. CHECK IT utilized social media and there was a need for the development of outreach videos and I was tapped for that work from time to time.

For example, I helped create short videos that discussed dating tips that were consent based and served as counters for heteronormative perceptions of how to date.

The social marketing perspective that we were operating from reminded me that representation was important to calling truth to power and giving the marginalized a voice. With power in the hands of those who would do away with survivor centered practices. I felt almost powerless working at CHECK IT during the tenure of the Trump administration, left and right, protections for survivors were being cast down and activism seemed to not be putting even a dent into the socio-cultural landscape. My amateur art probably wasn't helping either but I was grateful for the chance to learn.

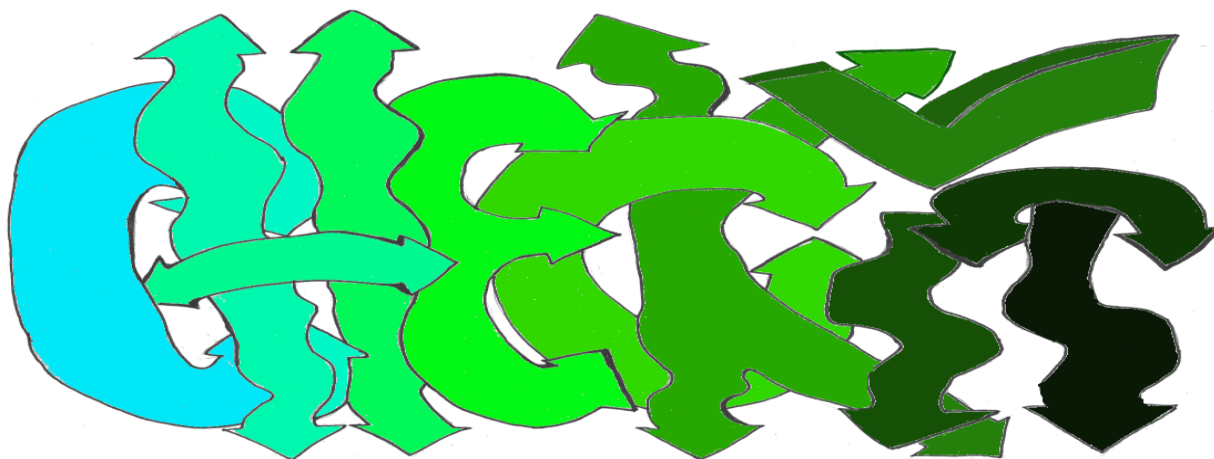


Figure 1 Wild style inspired interpretation of CHECK IT by Henry Solares.

I also met barriers in the creation of anti-violent and consent based materials, not from my supervisor, but from places like Marketing and Communication and Student Affairs. For instance, when trying to make informative films, we made them appropriate but often they had to be vetted by the Marketing and Communications department for

things that would harm the university's reputation. Standard fare but it was evident that even in the context of preventing sexual assault and creating advocacy materials, it had to fit within institutional boundaries of advocacy. One would not dare to criticize the university within social media or in the pursuit of advocacy. In conjunction, the Student Affairs office would oscillate from being helpful to being almost antagonistic in terms of providing information on policies and procedures. So even from within the university, there were barriers and that is given that the field site was a place of heightened awareness and respect for sexualized violence prevention.

That said, power is not absolute. Power produces reality, for better or worse. Voice is power and "for the tools of the master will never dismantle the master's house" (Lorde 1984), we may not get the chance to be heard in legislation at this moment, there is still more to do. Rather than to refuse participation within the system, it was paramount to show up and find a way to influence and change the conditions that perpetuate violence in our academic spaces and others. The cultural conditions that enable sexualized violence will not be overturned overnight but they won't be overturned unless we do something. The "something" in this case has to be accessible, it has to allow for the marginalized to speak for themselves without putting them at risk or claiming full understanding, and it has to be clear about its purpose. Voice is not only speaking truth to power in terms of protesting and making speeches but also in depicting futures where the impossible is possible. Hence the comics and the negotiation of postmodern ethnography that "asks the other question".

THE PROJECTS: IMPLEMENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This analysis chapter will focus on an explanation of the projects undertaken during the course of the writing of the thesis. There were two projects undertaken; the comic I made during my work with CHECK IT and the comic series I collaborated on with students from Humboldt State University's Art Department. I will do four slivers and examples from both comics, with the caveat that the comic pages provided are taken out of sequence and context. As of the completion of the thesis, both the CHECK IT comic and the collaborative comic series are unpublished and have yet to fully completed. The intention is to have all of them done and released as a series, with the CHECK IT comic, redone by a professional artist and reworked for the changed policy landscape.

For the first comic, what I attempted to make visible in the initial comic was that you could show differences in experience with clarity and accessibility. The comic was 24 pages in total, fully storyboarded, drawn, colored, lettered, and researched by me. It took around 150 hours²³ because I hadn't drawn comics before, I only devoured²⁴ them in the past but I never thought I could draw well enough. After deluding myself enough, I summoned the courage to do the research on four different kinds of survivors and their barriers and create a visual resource for CHECK IT and the campus to get a closer understanding of what marginalized groups face when it comes to navigating sexualized violence. It focused on the resources that were specifically on campus and spent time

²³ Time spent just on the comic alone and not the internship.

²⁴ Consumption with a passion.

deconstructing rape culture myths/misinformation through the dialogue and the direct feature of resources and information about what is available to all students who experience sexualized violence.

The featured page of the initial comic book contests the flat depictions of identity that institutional and mainstream activist contexts necessitate (Figure 2). The first panel encases Lucinda in an armor of historical activism by utilizing a Brown Beret, which was worn by a Chicano activist group from the 1970's (Correa 2011). Chicano identity is a contentious concept because it has historically referred to Mexican Americans and has not always included those from central and south America. The second panel displays her socio-economic status and practicality due to use of a low-tech feature phone.²⁵ The third panel references not only religion through a reverent candle and some incense but also a connection to the symbolism of Chicana art and pro-indigenous identity. The panel is a referent to the complexity of what it means to be first generation, indigenous American, and to learn one's history from more than a common core perspective.

The fourth panel provides reference to an online-born meme from an old Simpsons episode from the 90's. The episode is "And Maggie Makes Three" from its sixth season. The panel is a remix of a frame in the episode in which a sign is posted at Homer Simpsons' work saying, "Don't forget, you are here forever". The episode is about him having to work full-time in order to support his newborn daughter, Maggie, which meant not being at home as she grew up. So, what he did was create a new phrase

²⁵ Lucinda has no time for the endless scroll and is fearful of social media due to the possibility of being "found" by ICE.

from those words, “do it for her”, by putting her pictures over the sign on different words. For the panel, I was signifying a personal/cultural understanding within the latinx community that no matter what you are doing or are fighting for, your family is at the center. Whether it is your family by blood or the one you have made, your family can be there for you and sometimes you must be there for them, even if it means going through hardship. To be clear, it does not excuse abuse but appeals to working through things like poverty, grief, loss, mental health issues, support, and substance use.



Figure 2 The first page of the comic book made for CHECK IT for Title IX awareness.

I never actually finished the institutional comic book because I felt that it could have been done better by a trained artist and in time, while writing the thesis, the information I had put on the comic book has either invalidated or changed. Something one can only know if they are in contact with key members of administration, students' affairs, or those who have their ear. I knew from the reactions from my peers at CHECK IT that the idea was great but the execution left a lot to be desired. So, I decided that I would try to find a way to get trained artists to collaborate on creating something deeper. So, I took the original four main characters from the first comic inspired by the research and developed their identities and struggles further with the complexity their stories deserved. In the initial comic book, the survivors faced their survivorship the way they are "supposed to" according to university procedures, resources, legislation, and policy on the subject. The initial comic book was a "best" case scenario; the resources available accepted all survivors, the legislation/policy in place protected all survivors, staff/faculty were aware, and no matter what the survivors ended up getting support of some kind.

For the comic book series, I wished to showcase that not everything goes well and that in the vast scope of violence on university campuses, marginalized people are pushed aside for catch all services and prevention ideas. It can be said that no one program, article, or piece of art will end violence but in the context of the university community; there are structural resources, community-based resources, and student generated resources that can provide a blueprint for social change. Each different source of information is useful and necessary to sustain but require different groups to contribute. The contributions of advocates, survivors that feel comfortable to speak, and sympathetic

administrators are all valuable and necessary to continue cultural change work being done on university campuses.

To be clear, there is no binary opposition between the initial comic book and the comic series. One could not have been created without the other. Like a snake devouring its tail in the symbolism of the ouroboros, institutional knowledge and community knowledge exists along the same plane. Advocates and academics traverse this plane together and should attempt to make the information accessible to those who would benefit. This thesis, as well as the applied work that I engaged in, serves to illustrate that the work of anti-violence has many options and venues to start dialogs, provide spaces, hear the marginalized, and enact socio-cultural change.

For the comic book series, I decided to spend more time in the planning stage with the creation of scripts (written by the panel rather than just a paragraph), the hiring of student artists, the education of student artists, and the attempt to find funding for the project so that students could get paid for their work. Each comic would be sixteen pages including the covers and auxiliary pages, be done by a separate artist with a different style, and focus on the story of a single survivor. Through the strengths of the comic artform, more nuance could be captured. In terms of a lingering power dynamic, the worries of putting CHECK IT and its reputation at risk would no longer be there. I was nervous of the potential for my institutional comic book to put CHECK IT in jeopardy because of something I depicted that was critical of the university, its staff, or the way it handles Title IX cases.

There were four proposed comics and four characters. Xochitl is the fat²⁶ North American indigenous woman who faces a history of murdered and missing indigenous women that are often neglected by mainstream media and legislation alongside dealing with a current stalker. Lucinda is a mixed heritage latinx genderqueer presenting woman that is undocumented and has to navigate harassment from her professor and everyday people. Scott is a black working class trans man that has to navigate domestic violence, casual transphobia, and institutional transphobia. Finally, the fourth character is called Yanmei, a Chinese queer questioning international student that survives sexualized violence around the same time that her mother dies and has to rally to stay in school and finish. Yanmei will not have accompanying pages because, as of this printing, a fourth artist has yet to be found to illustrate the pages. In addition, I have also yet to letter the comics as well but they still stand strongly on their own. The appendix has the full scripts included.

Analysis of the Comic Book Series

There can be no analysis of the comics we created without an introduction into the work that went into facilitating it. I wrote scripts, found artists²⁷, and together we crafted the comic books. The process involved getting all on the same page in terms of reading some relevant works into the latest and most accessible works of anti-violence and solidarity. In addition, I put together a collection of visual works that I thought spoke to

²⁶ Reclaimed use here, as a descriptor.

²⁷ With the support of my advisor and the collaboration of the Art Department.

the potentials of the work we were engaged in. Once we were on the same page, mindset wise, the process of co-creating the comic books could finally begin.

The next step was for the artists to choose the characters, draft some character concepts, story board, and start working on full pages. Often the artists would contact me with questions about the script and how to depict what I was describing. At times it was clear that some scenes had to be broken up into more panels, some scenes had too little description, and sometimes the artists wanted to try something bold and push themselves. The artists had free rein to shape the script with me because I wanted the comics to be about collaboration. In order to be truly collaborative, there had to be freedom for the artists to take risks but also a solid structure for them to fall back on if they needed support.

The following paragraphs are a look into some of the finer details and experiences that came from the creation process. A window into how comics, anti-violence, and asking the other question; came together to challenge narratives of survivorship both within and without. There was an electric jolt every time I saw the artists interact with the script and produce such empathic and stirring art. Having every comic illustrated by a different artist really played into the sense that you were getting a collection of insights into a broad range of a people. An anthology of sorts united by the theme of anti-violence, in its many facets and interpretations. The idea being that there was no one right way to draw and embody survivorship and community support but in many intersecting and complicated ways. We also showed that you could talk about violence and its consequences without having to replicate it, and thus avoid retraumatizing the reader.

Xochitl

Xochitl is representative of the hard work that indigenous women have put in to get things like VAWA²⁸ amendments passed to recognize them as worthy of support and funding for survivor resources. Xochitl is the only character to directly address the reader/audience, in a particularly powerful panel on Figure 3 at the bottom. This is necessary because indigenous womxn aren't always given platforms to be heard and although what I write won't be perfect, it approximates what I have heard/read activists and advocates say in different times and places about indigenous sovereignty, indigenous womxns' right to their body/self-determination, and the connections between the two (Deer 2015, McKenzie 2015). In regard to the script, I was writing for a color version and was still learning how to script for comic books. In the end because the artist had patience and was experienced, he took my terribly paced script and translated it into something that captured the story I was trying to tell while also being aesthetically pleasing.

The dialogue within Xochitl's script is purposefully heavy handed because I wanted there to be clarity on where I stood as an author and where the artists stood as the ones who could bring the perspectives and story to life. Sixteen pages isn't much to tell a story but the artist for Xochitl made great use of the gutter to help the reader get closure. The gutter is the space between panels and where we, as humans, combine two separate images and make them into a single idea. A process in which we, as readers, are filling in the blanks, we draft our own conclusions on the given information. Closure in this context, is the phenomenon of observing parts but perceiving the whole (McCloud 1994).

²⁸ Violence Against Women Act

The use of the gutter in this part of the comic is to incite a reflexive look into the reader for the complicity we may have in perpetuating systems of oppression. In the next section, I included an excerpt of the comic script and the associated illustrated page, to give an example what kind of work can come from collaboration. This is one of many instances where flexibility on my end led to the ability of the artists to truly bring the imagined world to life. To bring a future to our present, where indigenous women are given the platform to have their needs heard.

Script Excerpt from Xochitl's comic

Page 5/6: spread 3

Panel #1

It is indigenous week and we see Xochitl in a red dress. She has a microphone in her hand and she is surrounded by a bunch of men, women, and non-binary folx; they are all standing with her. "We want more than land acknowledgements, we want justice and accountability. We are tired of the "it was in the past, they were people I am not related to, we aren't white", it is shirking responsibility for your complicity in an oppressive state and legal landscape."

Panel #2

Then she looks into the readers eyes "each and every one of you has the power to change the culture surrounding sexualized violence in general and specifically for indigenous people."

Panel #3

We pan to the left over a sizable crowd, "VAWA was step in the right direction but its long history shows that we need more than just funds to support shelters, survivors, and hold perpetrators accountable. We need a cultural shift and only we can start that, no non-profit or government entity can force you to change, only we as the grassroots can. This is not a zero-sum situation, equity is achievable if we practice it in our everyday lives."



Figure 3 Page 5 (In)difference to survivors: Xochitl, Enrique Gandarilla, Unpublished 2019

Lucinda

Lucinda was mentioned earlier in the thesis, but you can see a stark difference in how she is depicted and what her back story is about. In the comic script, I did a better job of giving her depth and personality aside from her school, her passion, and her family. I feel like Lucinda was given the chance to be more human since I didn't have to write her story in 4 pages like I did in the comic book I drew. The artist and I took explicit time to discuss what she could look like. After some deliberation over text messages and the passage of a few weeks, I was sent an image and a page illustrating concept art for the character. This was a critical moment because this was my first look at Lucinda, in her early moments on the page.

As an example of the collaborative spirit within this project, I feature, as Figure 4, an illustrated page in the following page and a script excerpt right after. The script excerpt ponders more on the complexities of the situations faced by marginalized groups and an entirely different scene. In Figure 4, we have a purposefully partially colored page and the override of the gutter. The artist is articulating Lucinda trying to ignore someone that is attempting to harassing her and the passivity of the bystanders by shaping the rest of the page in tones of grey. Lucinda's hair is a subtle indicator of her larger outsider status on the bus and in the community. In addition, her exits and possessions are highlighted in color, her headphones and the bus stop pull line are illuminated. None of what I described was written in the script, but it was what the artist felt and expertly represented. The sense of dread and banality of harassment and bystander apathy was illustrated with both taste and style.



Figure 4 Page 4 (In)difference to survivors: Lucinda, Alison Pitts, Unpublished 2019

Lola: “Why hasn’t anybody said anything?”

Lucinda: “I am the only woman of color in the class and everyone else is afraid of him and for their grades. His class is a prerequisite for the program and there is no one else that teaches it.”

The above exchange from the script represents a tension at play in both the comic and academic/public circles of knowledge, since there has been much said about the experiences of women of color when it comes to interpersonal violence and structural violence. The repositories of said knowledge are tucked within required classes, academic books and articles; which are wonderful and in depth but are never the forefront of visibility. There are often hidden barriers under the surface. For survivors in the university context, academic success can pressure students to not seek help or disclose their harm in order to pass a class or finish their degree. Women of color are not often given the space to speak or be seen. Lucinda serves as the closest analog to the experience of undocumented first-generation students and is the personification of what I witnessed in my activism and participant observation.

Scott

As a non-binary identified researcher, I wanted to include someone who identifies as transgender as a lead within the comics. Non-binary identity is not the same as transgender identity but there are places where experiences overlap. A “coming out” of the gender closet we were put in by society and a struggle to be seen in the ways that affirm our chosen gender presentation. Scott says something critically important to the whole thesis in the final panel of his specific comic, “I feel as if sometimes, people think

they can write about black experiences or pain but unless you hear it from us, you just don't know." Scott is speaking at a conference about his experience in trying to navigate the university as a young black man.²⁹ I cannot speak authoritatively on experiences that aren't my own and Scott's line is a break in the fourth wall to remind the reader of that.

In Figure 5, the artist and I decided that for Scott's comic, we would choose an abstract route especially since some of the situations he faces in his story are complex. Within this page, he is escaping a domestic violence situation and attempts to access survivor support services but is denied because of his identification as a man. Scott is frustrated, scared, and angry because he can feel the icy chill of not being supported, his breath is visible like it is freezing, the car is icing up around him. This being is a comic, we can show that kind of abstraction and the sense of "being there" and feeling what he might be feeling at that moment.

It was here that the artist was able to tap into their skill in drawing abstract textures and using only greyscale to communicate richly illustrated scenes. This scene was stirring for me because it is localized by the second to last panel. It shows how the artist went out of their way to photograph and get a reference for the area I described and balance that locality with intentional abstraction through the tendrils of misery and the frost of apathy. It was with this artist that the series was able to get experimental without being alienating or disorienting. The artist utilized the conceptualization of the cartoon and its iconography, like McCloud stated, to reach the reader.

²⁹ Scott identifies as a black man and presents on the gender binary as a male. Scott must contend with the complexities of living as a black (trans) man on a university campus while surviving both structural and interpersonal violence.



Figure 5 Page 9 (In)difference to survivors, Brandon Vegh, Unpublished 2019

CONCLUSION

The characters and their lives are works of fiction, but they speak to real life experiences and imagined futures of joy and love in the face multiple forms of violence. Both scripts featured are full to the brim with dialog that interacts and deconstructs barriers to service at the intersections of race, gender, and power. Each and every line in the script was written to point to a potential reality where survivors who face violence at higher rates and with less visibility, are supported in the face of ever-changing legislative and policy-based barriers. Representation means nothing if the intersections of power and identity are not addressed. People are not props to dress up stories, exotic and erotized others, or mere plot points; the comics may be fiction but the comics are a chance to speak truth to power.

Both comic book projects made it possible to negotiate the duty of applied anthropology work in its desire to improve lives through understandings of culture. The comic book projects satisfy feminist anthropological motivations by attempting to always ask the other question and challenge structures of power in terms of gender and race. Ethnofiction lives up to the great ethical challenges of working with and advocating for survivors of sexualized violence. Comics are not only art but vehicles to heal and inform not only the readers, but everyone involved in the process of creating a comic book; the writers, the pencilers, the colorists, and the editors.

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APPENDIX

Xochitl Script:

We are introduced to Xochitl and what they are about. Xochitl is our self-identified fat femme indigenous woman and she serves as the voice of concern about stalking, a relatively underdeveloped concept in the anti-violence sphere. We get a look at how we as a society routinely deny indigenous women space and safety.

The angle is nonlinear storytelling and postcolonial theory in play.

Indigenous sovereignty is tied to a right to self, land, and culture. There has to be a reflection on the historical and present tensions on indigenous land management. We also ain't trying to copy any indigenous art or recreate cheesy indigenous art that you see on bad t shirts. We are contesting the noble savage and dying Indian tropes of indigenous portrayal.

Page 1/2:

Panel #2

We see Xochitl and her mom in a car, Xochitl is 10 and in a car seat. We see her mother 30 and her older brother talking 18, Xochitl is looking out the window minding her business. "No te preocupes momma, vamos al otro lado mejor sin la violencia, yo la oyo por años y yo se que no era fácil de dejar nosotros padre."

Panel #3

Xochitl is focusing on the horizon in the distance. Her mother and brother are still talking. "Piensas que no necesitamos hablar de eso con Xochitl aqui?" Huitzilli (her mother)

"Ella sabe momma y no es su culpa. Usted me diceo que stamos correanedo para elle, verdad?"

"Si mijo, es la verdad."

Panel #4

Xochitl is looking the moon in the sky. Her brother and mother keep talking.

"Te amos nino s, mas del mundo y yo quiero que ustedes buscan un vida mejor que mio. Ay dios, quién lo puede creer que todo esto va passar?"

Panel #4

Xochitl is looking at the head rests of her brother and mother

“Madre, siempre usted trabajado duro para nosotros y tovia estas aqui con nosotros, que mas puedes pied y todavia estas aqui, haciendo algo para nosotros”

Page 3/4: it

Panel #1

Xochitl is 18 and is at her high school on a computer looking at schools. She mumbles to herself, what is this school about? Their website is all sunshine and shit but what's it really like? I'll check some tags.

Panel #2

She has her phone out and is scrolling through instagram.

Okay this is starting to look better and like it actually has weather. Hills stairs and umbrellas? Wtf?

Panel #3

She stumbles upon the check-it page.

This seems cool, it says they have a website, whoa there are actually women of color in their stuff.

Panel #4

She gets up and then leaves. I've seen enough, HSU is a strong maybe, it'd be nice to get away from the heat.

Page 5/6: spread 3

Panel #1

It is indigenous week and we see xochitl in a red dress. She has a microphone in her hand and she is surrounded by a bunch of men, women, and non-binary folx; they are all standing with her. “We want more than land acknowledgements, we want justice and accountability. We are tired of the “it was in the past, they were people I am not related to, we aren’t white”, it is shirking responsibility for your complicity in an oppressive state and legal landscape.”

Panel #2

The looks into the readers eyes “each and every one of you has the power to change the culture surrounding sexualized violence in general and specifically for indigenous people.

Panel #3

We pan to the left over a sizable crowd, “VAWA was step in the right direction but its long history shows that we need more than just funds to support shelters, survivors, and hold perpetrators accountable. We need a cultural shift and only we can start that, no non-profit or government entity can force you to change, only we as the grassroots can. This is not a zero sum situation, equity is achievable if we practice it in our everyday lives.”

Page 7/8: spread 4

Panel #1

Xochitl is on an enduro motorcycle, she is thinking about seeing her family after being in Humboldt for a while. She thinks about life with her hair blowing in the wind and feeling free; the joy of having self-determination and of being seen and heard.

Panel #2

She is with her family and she is smiling wholeheartedly. They are sharing a meal, think corn, beans, squash, and some chicken soup with amaranth as its rice. She is telling them about the campaign that she is helping to run on campus on stalking awareness and her recent trip to Washington dc to discuss the realities and past histories of violence against indigenous women.

Panel #3

It's a close up shot of her and her brother.

Her brother jokes with her, “who gives a shit what Washington thinks, what are they even going to do? You shoulda told me and I would’ve kicked their ass”.

Xochitl says “I didn’t do it for the government or America, I did it so that other indigenous women would know they aren’t alone and they matter. I also talked about how it's not just people who are the loudest doing the best work, staying alive and being true to ourselves are the best things can do to honor our ancestors.”

Panel #4

Her and her brother are laughing cheerfully.

“Wow, that’s deep sis. If only they taught you stuff like that in college. It's so sad, what a waste.”

“Ugh you are so annoying!!!.”

Page 9/10: spread 5

Panel #1

Xochitl is at a bar with a little dancing area, she is enjoying a drink with her friends. People are dancing and a Filipino guy (Danilo) is getting his groove on to that new P-LO. He is dressed in a white t shirt, some skinny jeans, a cool denim hat

Panel #2

Xochitl joins him with a drink and he smiles. Xochitl is a cute dress and has a blue makeup motif. Think blue lipstick, teal smoky eye, and some raspberry eyeliner.

Panel #3

They are dancing together and her friends are smiling on while watching them.

Panel #4

She leaves with his number on a napkin.

Page 11/12: spread 6

Panel #1

Xochitl is being followed by an ambiguous shape, it is daytime, and she is walking on the top of the stairs that connect the central parking lot to the mcc area. Think of it as an angled shot from the top of the stairs down. Xochitl is in an HSU hoodie and sweats.

Panel #2

She is in the library studying on the third floor looking out into the rest of the south campus in a window seat in a crop top and shorts, a few seats down is the same ambiguous shape.

Panel #3

She is getting on her motorcycle and the shape is sitting in a car with the lights on.

Panel #4

Xochitl is sitting at the depot for a beer with a few friends and the same ambiguous shape is playing pool.

Page 13/14 spread 7

Panel #1

Xochitl is trying to talk to the title ix person but they glimmer with a hint of the shape that followed her.

Panel #2

Xochitl is seen at the HSU campus police talking through the glass window and two of the people there have a hint of the ambiguous shape.

Panel #3

We see her at the Latinx center and she is talking to two people, one that looks normal and another with a hint of the ambiguous shape.

Panel #4

We see her looking at a line up photo of the ambiguous shape one her phone. ‘

Page 15

Panel#1

Xochi’s apartment in Arcata, it’s a small studio. This is an outside shot

Panel#2

Xochitl is sitting at a table with a friend in her apartment. It isn’t bare, it has stuff on the walls, and looks homey.

Panel#3

Close up on Xochitl and she is mad as hell.

Panel#4

She is talking to her and says “I had a panic attack when I saw his picture in the email and I knew he was following me.

Panel#5

“I kept telling everyone and they didn’t believe me”, she says looking distraught.

Panel#6

Her friend looks at her with love and care.

Page 16

Panel #1

Xochitl is older now, like 15 years older, in a pantsuit and is sitting at a table with her daughter (she is 10 and looks just like her).

Panel #2

Danilo, him also 15 years older) is cooking in the background and frying up some lumpia. Filipino “egg” rolls, deep fried, and delicious.

Panel #3

Her daughter has the same faraway look her mother did in the car.

Panel #4

Her daughter looks at her and asks about her presentation today. “Mommy what are you gonna talk about today”?

Panel #5

Xochitl looks lovingly at her daughter and says “I am going to talk about a new program I got going that is going to help people in college with some of the bad stuff that I went through.”

Lucinda Script:

We are introduced to Lucinda and what she is about. Lucinda is the one who tries to navigate the Title IX cacophony and we get a better look as to why it doesn't serve undocufam.

Lucinda is a mystic punk; combat boots, Chicana tattoos, and plays Brujas and Bones. She has a boyish and slender frame (co decided by the comic artist).

The angle is highly structured and clear, it is cold but inviting, like iced tea on a hot day.

Act 1

Lucinda is a 25-year butch latinx woman who moved from the Inland Empire, she has a lot of family back home but here is where she has had the opportunity to be herself. At the same time, she navigates the isolation from her community. She experiences harassment from her professor because of her identities and we hear her express frustration about bystanders, isolation, and the complexity of mixed immigration status households. BNB is how she makes it through the week.

Act 2

Lucinda finds herself at wits end and decides to try talking to the Title IX person about the harassment that she is experiencing and what her options are. What we find is that her options aren't all that great and she doesn't really know what to do because there seems to be no way out of it.

Act 3

Lucinda hits a wall and drops the class, she feels shame for making her time at school go longer. She goes on with her life and doesn't "do" anything about it because it shouldn't be on her. Again, she returns to her BNB group for support.

Page 1:

Panel #1

We see a femme version of Lucinda waiting at a bus stop, being whistled at/harassed, the sidewalk is sizzling almost on fire but there she is cold as ice. Think of a hot and dry desert day. At this point she has no tattoos and has long plain straight black hair, she is just sitting with the feeling of eternity bearing down on her.

Panel #2

It's a nightmare and we see Lucinda wake up with cold sweats and afraid. It is dark and she is in what seems to be her own room. She is in boxers and a masc a shirt.

Panel #3

Lucinda looks at her arms to check if her tattoos are still there.

Panel #4

Lucinda runs her hand through her beautiful dyed hair in an undercut.

Panel #5

She looks out her window, she lives near Ginutoli so it's not that active. It's a full moon and it's a bit rusty looking.

Panel #6

Lucinda lays down and stares up at the roof, it has little stars like a kid would put up.

Page 2

Panel #1

It is morning time and Lucinda is on the bus heading towards school. She has her headphones in.

Panel #2

Lucinda is looking at a picture of her family at a kermesse, it's a mother, a father, and a brother, the brother is holding bunny ears over his mom's head "George is such a clown."

Panel #3

She looks up and sees a familiar face. A man is giving her a look, he is in preppy style.

Panel #4

She looks back down at her phone, he moves closer.

Panel #5

She flips down on her screen and he is closer.

Panel #6

He is sitting next to her and he is trying to talk to her. She is clearly uncomfortable.

Page 3:

Panel #1

Two white women look on and another white woman is pretending she isn't seeing what is happening.

Panel #2

Lucinda, looking justifiably angry, asks what he wants. The man says, he likes that she looks different and that he wants to take her out.

Panel #3

Lucinda gives him a death stare and says not interested, she is sweating.

Panel #4

He keeps trying to talk to her and is getting in her personal space.

Panel #5

She abruptly gets up and pulls the yellow cord.

Panel #6

We see her walking towards the BSS building

Page 4:

Panel #1

Luci is in room 310 and is sitting in her seat with her tattoos showing and she is daydreaming out the window.

Panel #2

Luci is trying focus but finds it hard to. She is the only woman of color in the class and feels isolated; there are Latinx and Asian men there. The class is full and the screen is down, there is a film on.

Panel #3

The professor gives her a dirty look and asks "are you paying attention? I am talking about your people, the ones who stay here on the US dime".

Panel #4

He then says “don’t get your blood boiling, I know how fiery Latinas get.” some laughs echo in the room and one can see a latinx man laughing as well.

Panel #5

Luci bites her tongue and grips her hand on her pen.

Panel #6

Luci breaks the pen.

Page 5

Panel #1

We see Luci wearing some intricate charms, has a molcajete, and putting on face paint.

Panel #2

We see her carry them to her front porch

Panel #3

A car pulls up, it’s a 2005 Honda civic.

Panel #4

“Get in loser, we are going spell slinging!” Luci is smiling at Rita. Rita is white, femme, fat, and is covered in wiccan stuff, she is wearing a dress and is smiling.

Panel #5

“So, Rita, how many people can make it today?” Luci says as she gets in the car.

“Everyone!” Rita exclaims

Panel #6

“I will put on some spooky tunes then! Are we ordering west side or was I supposed to bring something? Andrea should know by now that I can’t cook...remember the chilaquiles incident?” Luci states.

Page 5

Panel #1

There are six people all in different witchy costumes, it's a diverse group, and we see them in a typical DND set up.

Panel #2

Andrea welcomes everyone and points to the DM for the night, Lola. "Are you ready for some brujas and bones!!!!"

Panel #3

Lola is thin and short black woman dressed up in a very witchy look. She does a twirl for the crowd.

Panel #4

She is sitting and starts to explain the situation. "Hope you brought out all your character sheets and are properly kitted for forest warfare, things are about to get a little bit hellish in the Blood Redwoods!!!!"

Panel #5

Luci is seen laughing and smiling. Rita blows a cloud of dust into the table with other people's eyes closed.

Panel #6

Luci does a little science trick with her molcajete, it smokes.

Page 6

Panel #1

We see her enter room 310 again and she takes her seat by the window.

Panel #2

The professor drops her paper down and it has a dramatic flourish around a zero.

Panel #3

Luci crumples up the paper and mumbles this is bullshit.

Panel #4

The professor hears her and makes a comment, it is seen on the page as white noise.

Panel #5

Luci fumes but thinks “I just need to finish this damn class, I am almost done.”

Panel #6

Luci is looking at the PowerPoint on the board.

Page 7

Panel #1

We see her sitting on one of the benches looking out from the BSS.

Panel #2

We see her looking at her anth 305 book

Panel #3

Lola opens the door and she is looking onto Luci.

Panel #4

“You look like you got your curandera powers zapped.” says Lola as she sits next to Luci.

Panel #5

“Oh Lola, I aint magic and neither are you. Besides isn’t that a stereotype?”

Panel #6

“Yeah, it’s a played out one too.”

Page 8

Panel #1

“What’s wrong babe?” -Lola

“I am being harassed by Mr. Peterson in my ANTH class and I don’t know what to do.”

The two are still sitting on the metal bench and the sun is slowly going down.

Panel #2/3

“Why hasn’t anybody said anything?” Lola

“I am the only woman of color in the class and everyone else is afraid of him and for their grades. His class is a prerequisite for the program and there is no one else that teaches it.”

The two continue to sit as it gets darker.

It is sun set now.

“I see, that is not a good situation, if you feel stuck just drop the class. I know everyone is always up in arms about being tough and seeing shit through but it ain’t worth it, he aint worth it. They are just going to label you as hostile and angry if you try to fight back.”

Panel #4/5/6

It is dark.

“I just don’t want him to win, isn’t there anyone I can talk to about it?” -luci

“You could go the title ix route but that is kind of risky. You could file a complaint but then he would know it was you. Legally he can’t retaliate against you but his unethical ass could find a way.”

“Just imagine if he found out I was mojada. How do you know all this anyway?” Luci

“I have been through it here but I stuck around because I wanted to finish my degree. I did it the hard way and got accommodations so I could take a class online.” - Lola

“I see, well thanks for listening and commiserating. It reminds me of the time, you just broke up with Jack, and we got wasted and talked shit about him all night. Ha.”
dark but light radiates from inside the BSS.

Page 9

Panel #1

We see Luci walking across the UC quad.

Panel #2

She ducks into the title ix office

Panel #3

Luci is sitting and waiting to speak with the title ix lady.

Panel #4

Luci finally gets into the room and we see her and the title ix officer talk.

Panel #5

Luci leaves, mad and annoyed.

Panel #6

Luci crumples up the paper she was given and heads out.

Page 10

Panel #1

A few days later

She is seen at the BNB table. The others are having fun.

Panel #2

She is trying at the same time but the other ladies can see she isn't that into it.

Panel #3

Rita starts by asking "what is wrong?"

Luci breaks down into tears, "Mr. Peterson put his fucking hands on me and I haven't shaken off the feeling."

Panel #4

The ladies look on with loving care and rage. "Do you want us to do anything? Protest? Indiscriminate vandalism? A lumberjack/el lenador article?"

Panel #5

Luci says "no its too risky, I don't want the attention, I just wanted to tell somebody. I can't tell my parents because they would say I was asking for it because of the way I look. I love them but they don't understand me. It wasn't assault but it still made me feel so wrong." It is a close up on Luci.

Panel #6

Sarah says "it wasn't you fault and how you feel is valid."

Luci says "thanks for being there y'all, it is just so stressful because this is my life and I am just trying to do right by my family by going to school."

Page 11

Panel #1

6 months later.

We see Luci tabling for know your nine in the UC quad.

Panel #2

Rita stops by and asks “Can I sit?”

Panel #3

Rita and Luci are sitting together. “How are you doing?” - Rita

“I am doing good. Did I tell you the Anth department hired a woman of color to teach the ANTH 304 class?” Luci

Panel #4

Rita looks ecstatic “finally!!!! Wait does that mean you can finally take that class again?”

Panel #5

Luci gives a shit eating grin.

Panel #6

A person comes up to the table and luci starts talking to them about their rights!

Page 12

Panel #1

Luci is in the class with the new anth teacher. It is room 310 again.

Panel #2

The teacher starts of the class with clear and concise rules about classroom behavior and what an equitable classroom looks like.

Panel #3

Luci is blown away and looks on in disbelief.

Panel #4

The teacher goes on and reminds people it’s not about political correctness but societal equity. “You can’t change the culture unless you start from the ground up.”

Panel #5

The class looks incredibly uncomfortable at the statement.

Panel #6

Luci feels heard and looks on as the teacher moves on.

Page 13

Panel #1

A few weeks later

Luci is in class and there is a picture of a hijra identified person. Someone makes a seemingly transphobic and racist comment.

Panel #2

Luci looks on in disgust but also at her professor.

Panel #3

The professor is caught off guard but tries to call the person in, as professionally as possible. She says “this is a teaching moment if I ever saw one.”

Panel #4

Time goes on and it’s the end of class when everyone leaves, Luci drags her feet to see if the professor was going to say anything else.

Panel #5

The professor asks Luci to leave and luci sees its the person who made the comments.

Panel #6

Luci goes on in appreciation of seeing someone get called in and not out.

Page 14

Panel #1

Luci is seen sitting with her friends at the table getting ready to play another round of BNB.

Panel #2

Luci is looking happily at the group.

Panel #3

It is Rita's turn to be the DM so she starts with "Are you ready to face the most maniacal villain you have ever seen? It is Lord Dallardo and he commands an army of, you guessed it, human sized rats!!!!"

Panel #4

Rita says "Dallardo's rat envoys attacking the party at their camp, what will our defenders of all that is dark and unholy do?"

Panel #5

Luci smirks and says I have an idea. "Cast bolt of accountability!"

Panel #6

Luci rolls the die and lands on a 20. Rita exclaims "the bolt arcs and hits all rats for 10 points."

Scott Script:

We are introduced to Scott and what he is about. Scott is a 19-year-old trans man from the East Bay. Scott serves as our example for when support services don't seem to accommodate black and/or transgender individuals. Navigating domestic violence. The angle is abstract and ethereal, it is reminiscent of Basquiat with the Haitian art influences on blast.

Act 1

Scott navigates the world as a working-class black man in a rural county. He works as a dishwasher in the dining halls at Redwood State University and his coworker was one of the people that saw him transition. We see his coworker actually look out for him and support him, he is latinx. Scott and his coworker like to go kayaking together. Scott goes through his day with a smile on but when he gets home, we see him navigate domestic/sexualized violence with his white femme cis partner.

Act 2

Scott makes numerous attempts to access services in the county but is denied because of his complex identities. Scott drives back home for support.

Act 3

Scott with the help of his family, makes it through the semester.. When he comes back up for school, he decides he will do a workshop on the black experience in seeking services during the Collective Thoughts on Race. He is given the space to express his frustrations and cry about how difficult it can be and how it isn't right how he has to do a workshop. People don't argue with him, they just listen and do something about it. It ends with him on a kayak looking out into the bay.

Page 1:

Panel #1

We see Scott looking into the bay from his kayak, he is looking at the eureka Samoa bridge.

Panel #2

We share another moment with him and he is thinking about his life and what he wants, how he wants to be happy and positive but nothing happening in his life gives him the chance to do so.

Panel #3

He turns behind because he can hear/see his coworker Rogelio paddling on over and he asks what he is thinking about.

Panel #4

We see Scott look directly at Rogelio and say “nothing just zoning” but an abstract haze of emotional cacophony occupies his headspace/thought bubble

Panel #5

We pan to Rogelio and he makes a cheerful smile with the bay in the background

Panel #6

Rogelio starts paddling back with a worried face and falls in.

Page 2

Panel #1

We see Rogelio and Scott pack up the kayaks onto Scott’s beat up Datsun pickup truck They talk about washing off and Scott talking about how he was nervous in the changing room at the aquatic center. Rogelio comforts him by saying he was there if anybody wanted to start some shit.

Panel #2

Scott reminds Rogelio that he isn’t a savior and that what happens if he isn’t there? Or if that happened how it would read in the paper? Rogelio stops arguing with him and accepts his answer; offering to say something about it the clerk.

Panel #3

Scott and Rogelio head into to work and we can see them gab and smile as they wash dishes together. Scott thanks Rogelio for going with him, Rogelio gives a shit eating grin “back in Honduras they’d talk shit about us hanging out, it’s not like we aren’t on the same team right?”

Panel #4

Scott’s face turns into a worried scowl and says, “it ain’t always feel like that”. Scott reminds Rogelio about that the few organizing events where it felt like the latinx peeps were trying to play the oppression Olympics and didn’t respect my pronouns. Rogelio

looks around and both ways to see if anybody else is there, “damn it wasn’t just me then? I should’ve said something, I’ll say something next time.”

Panel #5

The other workers come in and one decides to single out Scott with some harassment.

Panel #6

The other person makes some casually transphobic comments while they start washing dishes and the other eggs him on. The other people are white and brown.

Page 3:

Panel #1

We see Scott fume, the thoughts swirling above his head, red, and infuriated.

Panel #2

The words of the men are white noise, with a lone voice being heard, its Rogelio’s. “You hearing this shit?”

Panel #3

Scott turns to Rogelio and says, “Now’s your chance cabrone, just don’t make me bail you out” Rogelio laughs.

Panel #4

Rogelio proceeds to confront them and tries to call them in, “OYE, that’s not right.” You can see Scott in the back squirming.

Panel #5

Scott makes his way over and comments as well. The others seem agitated

Panel #6

The supervisor comes in and breaks up the simmering discontent.

Page 4:

Panel #1

Scott is looking at his door, it seems normal enough, it's a house in sunny brae, the entrance is overgrown and a little green. Its dark and the porch light is incredibly dim. A light is on and a grotesque shadow lingers.

Panel #2

We are still looking at the same door except he is holding the knob this time and the door disorients, the door gets hazy not demonic hazy nor melting but gaseous/nauseous.

Panel #3

He opens the door, the haze is blowing away and in clarity, we see his partner; a conventionally attractive white woman.

Panel #4

He is about to talk when she cuts him off, asking where he was and who he was with?

Panel #5

He has a screwed look on his face and says that he was kicking it with Rogelio and went to work. She accuses him "are you fucking him? You always say you are kayaking but I know you are lying. Do you think I am stupid? I know how you look at him."

Panel #6

The haze starts to expand from beneath her. Scott responds, "first off I had a hard day and I just got home babe, why are you doing this? Second he is my best friend, I have known him since I got here, even before my transition, and it hurts that you are accusing me of stuff I haven't done. I'm with you aren't I?"

Page 5

Panel #1

The fight continues, his partner has a stick in her hand, and looks irritated. The haze starts enveloping the panel borders as well.

Panel #2

The haze obscures their fight further.

Panel #3

It is now to the point where they are just blobs.

Panel #4

The haze envelops the next two panels in white smoke.

Page 6

Panel #1

Scott is seen in his car, tears in his eyes, and seems to be hurt.

Panel #2

We see his thoughts fill the truck cabins empty space.

Panel #3

Scott opens his wallet

Panel #4

Scott takes out the Domestic violence card with a teardrop on the card

Panel #5

He types in the number on his phone

Panel #6

We see him on his phone nervous and shaky.

Page 6

Panel #1

We get a close up of Scott's face and he speaks "hello?"

Panel #2

Side by side we see another white woman on the phone asking if he is in current danger or if he has moment to speak, and calls him ma'am.

Panel #3

Scott is taken aback, "Excuse me ma'am but I am a guy."

Panel #4

We see her again disgruntled "There is no need to be hostile, I am here to help you."

Panel #5

Scott "I am not being hostile, I just want to make sure you point me in the right direction"

Panel #6

The lady asks "what his crisis is" with the same nauseous cloud seeming to occupy her frame

Page 7

Panel #1

The cloud seeps from her panel into his. Frustrated but still willing to cooperate, he starts to tell his story. "Well me and my partner got into a fight tonight and she had accused me of sleeping with my best friend who happens to be a guy."

Panel #2

"Well are you gay?" lady

Scott, "why does that matter? And no by the way. Anyways, she is really jealous of my friendship and tries to make disparaging remarks about my friends. This is confidential right?"

The windows freeze up in the car as he shivers in nervousness.

Panel #3

"Yes" says the lady

Scott, "Well I am trans and that's why it's a big deal, that she is hostile to my friends, they are all I have and it's hard to disclose that kind of thing because I don't want to be attacked."

The cloud backs up for a second and the car stays icy.

Panel #4

"Did you call the police?" said the lady

Scott: The police aren't who I go to, they don't make me feel safe and harass me on the street, one humiliated me by mis gendering and harassing me while my friends were in the car.

The car gets even more icy,

Panel #5

"Are you willing to make a report?" said the lady

No, I just want someone to talk to about this because I don't know if it's a rough patch or....abuse.

Panel #6

“Okay then, I don't know how I can help you then, we provide counseling and support but only to those who are cooperative. People like you aren't who we serve anyways”
Scott “what do you mean cooperative? I called you for help? It wasn't easy for me to do that.”

Page 8

Panel #1

“Well we don't have space for you at our shelters because you are a man and we only have space for women, unless you want to, just don't expect anyone to follow your pronouns. In addition, we could offer you support but victim witness only gives money to those who cooperate with police.

Panel #2

The car freezes over as it rains outside softly.

Panel #3

Scott bites his lip and asks “well can I at least talk to someone else?”
The lady hangs up abruptly

Panel #4

Scott is in even more tears and the icy cloud envelops the car, his head hits the steering wheel rim.

Panel #5

We get a zoomed outlook and he is chilling out up by one of the sunny brae streets that goes into the hills overlooking the hills and it is surprisingly clear.

Panel #6

The car is frosted and he falls asleep.

Page 9

Panel #1

There is a tapping on the window and it is a resident of the house that he is parked outside of, it is day time .

Panel #2

with clear skies, we see the same view of the car except its melted.

Panel #3

It is a brown lady, and we see him rolling down his window.

Panel #4

She asks how he is doing and what he is down in front of her house.

Panel #5

Scott looks deep into her eyes and says you wouldn't believe me.

Panel #6

The lady says "try me"

Page 10

Panel #1

We see Scott drive down the sunny brae lane, past his house, past the 101 interchange

Panel #2

We see him stop by the marsh exit and look out into the marsh from the 101.

Panel #3

He has his phone out and there are several missed calls, texts, and voicemails all from Thea. He ignores all of them and sends a message to Rogelio, I am heading back home for a bit, can you tell our boss that I had a family emergency and have to drive down immediately.

Panel #4

Scott takes a deep breath, sucking in the scene literally

Panel #5

We see his phone again, and Rogelio responds with “I love you man and you know I got your back. Hit me up when you can, Thea called me and left me some strongly worded messages, what you want me to do?”

Panel #6

“Leave her on read.” flowers start to grow on his panels.

Page 11

Panel #1

We see him driving down through the redwoods, in his beat-up Datsun with his kayaks in the bed.

Panel #2

His parents are preparing a meal in a cramped kitchen

Panel #3

Plantains are frying in a pan of oil.

Panel #4

Black beans are being dolloped on a plate.

Panel #5

A rice maker activates.

Panel #6

It’s an inside view of a door with the door bell ringing.

Page 12

Panel #1

We see a full view of Scott, a bit bruised, and looking extremely tired. Scott is saying his mom with tears in his eyes.

Panel #2

We see his parents hug him.

Panel #3

His dad is incredibly worried and his mom tells her husband to draw up a bath and to use one of her bath bombs.

Panel #4

We see them sitting on the couch, his mom asks, “what happened?”

Panel #5

His dad is seen with a bath bomb in hand looking worried, I got the bath ready for you son and we made some food, if you are hungry.

Panel #6

Scott is seen crying again on the couch.

Page 13

Panel #1

Scott is seen in a bathtub with green water and a fizz in a corner, his skin sparkling, healing.

Panel #2

Scott’s thoughts fill the small bathroom, a giant haze with the warmth of home melting the icy nausea.

Panel #3

He sits down with his parents and eats a meal in a small apartment in the East Bay. There are a lot of pieces of Haitian ephemera.

Panel #4

The dad starts with, “I thought she seemed nice but I guess people aren’t always who they seem.”

Panel #5

We see the mom and she say “I don’t blame you for staying as long as you have, it isn’t easy to leave those situations, especially since love tends to complicate things. I love you son and remember, no matter what we will be here for you even if you go back to her.

Panel #6

Scott looks better, a smile wrinkles across his face.

Page 14

Panel #1

A few months later

We see Scott at the CTOR (CDOR) in front of a white board in a small but packed class room.

Panel #2

“Thank you for listening to my presentation on supporting people of color in anti-violence. I just wish this work didn’t have to fall on me.” It is another shot of him just talking, he is in plain clothes, a white t shirt, some blue denim skinny jeans, and a mustard hat backwards.

Panel #3

We look out into the crowded room, there is a wide range of people looking on, but no one says anything; they look attentively. “It wasn’t easy to make this presentation and I hope that you learned something.”

Panel #4

“Thank you for actually listening and giving me a chance to speak without drowning me out with the “buts and the really”? I feel as if black people don’t get enough spaces on campus to talk without people whining about not being included. We need spaces to speak freely about our experiences. I feel as if sometimes, people think they can write about black experiences or pain but unless you hear it from us, you just don’t know.”

Panel #5

People clap and we see Rogelio smiling in the back with his hand up.

Panel #6

Scott is out on the bay again with Rogelio

Cover page depends on the artist but should be done once they get a feel for the character

Yanmei Script:

We are introduced to Yanmei and what they are about. Yanmei is a young woman from a Zhangzhou suburb in China and experiences sexual assault on campus and must navigate the mire of being an international student and a survivor. Yanmei is a photographer and her mother recently died after her assault. She had a really strong connection with her mother and her father's relationship is good but it's different. Yanmei is on her second year of schooling in the US (4th year standing) and is an established student and member of the community. Yanmei made friends with different groups, in particular she helps run a well-liked photography Instagram (ready gram) account with her two friends who are dating, Donnie and Juan.

Act 1

In media res, we see Yanmei self-medicating at night. We see Yanmei go about her normal life meeting her friends, going to classes, and taking pictures. Weekly updates on her Instagram. We see her stop and cry both by herself and with her friends. We see her write letters to her mother. Texts from dad checking in on her, with lots of love. The act ends with us seeing her go to a counselor.

Act 2

The interaction is difficult. Yanmei is navigating her self-medication, her unit load, and speaking with a counselor. We get texts from dad and facetimes about picking out funeral stuff. We see her write another letter to her mother, tears soil the letter. We see her speak to the CIP about figuring out course load stuff. She speaks out at a take back the night event. Donnie and Juan are her natural supports, so we see them in the crowd. The updates stop for a hot minute.

Page six act two

Act 3

Yanmei is seen getting her diploma and hugging her abroad family goodbye. Yanmei gets home and breaks down in tears, talking to her family about her experiences of survivorship abroad. Her dad and Grandma are a bundle of tears. Yanmei sleeps for days. Gets up and starts sending out applications. The Instagram updates trickle in.

Page 11 act three

Character descriptions

Donnie = fat white guy, he is Juan's partner. He is a survivor and is femme, long hair, cute makeup.

Juan = latinx guy, masc. and in shape, not chiseled. Think dark skin, big nose, jet black straight hair, and brown eyes). Clean cut hair cut, tapered fade kind of deal

Yanmei = tall large pretty Chinese woman, is a stylish femme dresser, think hip street clothes. She is fat, double chin and all. This is clearly stated because I am trying to have positive fat representation in a story that has nothing to do with her weight (a common trope in fat representation in media).

Mia = athletic black woman with a tapered fade afro flat top, femme as heck, awesome makeup skills

Page 1:

Panel #1

Late night, an iPod touch is dark, moon light glints upon it.

Panel #2

Same scene except the iPod shows up the facetime sign and it says dad.

Panel #3

Yanmei has it on her shoulder and she has a bottle of liquor nearby.

Panel #4

Yanmei is happily talking to her father, not quite slurring, but almost forced in her joy in speaking with her father.

Panel #5

Yanmei is pretty even without make up and is fat and tall. We only have the iridescent glow to give us a glimpse of her.

Panel #6

We see her crying with her father as she glows in the pale iridescence.

Page 2

Panel #1

We see her prone, from the face view and she has a camera. throw in some lens flare.

Panel #2

It is early in the morning and it is a shot of the Arcata marsh. Birds flying, shimmering water, low tide etc.

Panel #3

It is her again and she is looking down the sights. Focusing on an egret looking for food.

Panel #4 bigger

The scene changes abruptly, it is a mixer scene, dark and moody. She is there and sitting at a table, it's in a dorm like setting.

Panel #5

Looking down the sights again and the egret is gone

Page 3:

Panel #1

An Instagram post of a marshy scene, it has a lot of likes, and it is a submission to an Instagram titled new2humboldt, and under submissions; her handle is yanmeidothatish.

Panel #2

Still at the marsh, Donnie is seen sunbathing with sunglasses on. The little kind with the little slats, more for fashion than any kind of protection.

Panel #3

Yanmei kicks his shoe. "I'm ready to go."

Panel #4

Donnie pulls down his sunglasses. "Cool, just tell Juan, he is doing his thing and has headphones on."

Panel #5

Juan is doing a kickflip, he is in baggy blue dickies pants and a black t shirt.

Panel #6

Juan skates over to Yanmei.

Page 4:

Panel #1

Yanmei is looking at Juan and says “I’m ready to go home”

Panel #2

It is a shot of Juan close up, in his face. “Let’s get in the car then.”

Panel #3

Yanmei is in tears, you can see them glint, the tear tracks are clear, it is more of a standing sob. “I mean home home.”

Panel #4

Juan lets out an empathetic tear. “Do you need a hug?”

Panel #5

Yanmei is in his arms. Donnie looks on with sadness in his eyes.

Panel #6

Donnie is there as well, hugging onto the both of them.

Page 5

Panel #1

We see Yanmei writing a letter in Chinese characters onto some nice stationary.

Panel #2

The letter reads

Dear Mother,

I miss you. I am in such pain now that you aren’t here and I can’t help but cry all the time. I went through something and I don’t know who I can talk to about it. I think that you would be the one but you aren’t here anymore.” (no English translation, just the characters themselves, an insider cultural edge)

Your daughter,
Yanmei

Panel #3

The scene widens and she is sitting in the CAPS office.

Panel #4

She looks up and the counselor tells her to come in.

Panel #5

She is sitting in a chair, looking anywhere but the face of the counselor.

Panel #6

It is a shot to the phone in her pocket vibrating.

Page 6

Panel #1

The counselor is looking at her and starts off with the typical cordial but oblique look of scanning and intrigue.

Panel #2

Yanmei is looking back at her and says “I had a really negative experience at an international student mixer and then I lost my mother. I don’t know what to do. I am drinking a bit at night to help but I can’t take time off from school since I am an international student.”

Panel #3

The counselor looks confused, “That sounds like a lot. What do you mean you can’t take off time from school?”

Panel #4 bigger

Yanmei looks defeated as she says “I want to be at home burying my mom or I just don’t want to have to go to school for a little bit. I am just tired all the time; my good friends Juan and Donnie help me get out but it is just so hard. International students can’t go below full-time units due to visa/exchange requirements.”

Panel #6

“I am so sorry to hear that but I am glad that you have friends that are there for you. Do you want to talk more about either your mother or your negative experience at the mixer?”

The counselor looks endearingly.

Page 7

Panel #1

Yanmei is in an office and it is just her and CIP coordinator, in the international student's spot.

Panel #2

She has her phone out and it shows texts from her dad. They are loving and supportive.

Panel #3

A photo of the death announcement is received.

Panel #4

The CIP coordinator looks at Yanmei on her phone. He looks concerned.

Panel #5

A notification for Instagram pops up, new2humboldt posted a new story

Panel #6

It switches to a new2humboldt post of the night time farmers market in Eureka, Donnie is looking cute. Submitted by eseldiablojuan.

donzomatic commented. “My boyfriend is just so talented. :D”

juliopaintslife commented “that's my brother right there on the camera, he out here flexin his composition skills”

Page 8

Panel #1

Sometime later that week

It is a night shot of the plaza. There is a sizeable crowd encircling the where the McKinney statue used to be.

Panel #2

It is a shot with Yanmei and Donnie and Juan near some railings and you can see the bars in the back.

Panel #3/4

split it with a shot of her face and shot of her pockets

Yanmei is looking serious and her pocket is buzzing (coming from her phone)

Panel #5

A woman is speaking to the crowd. (nondescript)

Panel #6

Yanmei looks at her phone, more messages from her dad, "just checking in".

Page 9

Panel #1

Yanmei is sitting uncomfortably in a chair, one of those KBR chairs with green fabric and a dark brown metal. (you could include Donnie and Juan next to her)

Panel #2

Looking up at the stage, she sees a femme male survivor speaking out.

Panel #3

Juan is on stage with the microphone and telling his survivor story.

Panel #4

A sign says Fight for the night!

Panel #5

Hard cut to the mixer scene again but darker

Panel #6

She is looking at her shoes, she has cute but with mildly worn athletic shoes on, think adidas ozweegos

Page 10

Two weeks later

Panel #1

It's a backyard party. It is a lucky night in Arcata where there is no wind and it isn't freezing. Imagine some string lights, people smoking, people drinking, it is well-lit.

Panel #2

Yanmei is in a corner sitting at a table. It is well lit and she is sitting next to Mia, talking.

Panel #3

A bottle is nearby in the table with an ashtray.

Panel #4

Yanmei is blushing. "I hope you don't mind but I am nervous. I have never done this before and I don't want to waste your time."

Panel #5

Mia is looking with a sparkle in her eye. She has a joint in her hand. She says "At the least, I like talking to you, tell me more about photography. I mean at the most we could always make out."

Panel #6

Yanmei blushes.

Page 11

Panel #1

It is still night time and we see Yanmei with Mia still, similar initial party shot but it is just them now and a few others now.

Panel #2

They are smiling and talking (nondescript).

Panel #3

The bottle is empty and the roach of the joint is in the ashtray.

Panel #4

Donnie and Juan are holding hands and walking over. Donnie is high femme as usual and Juan is working class masc as per usual.

Panel #5

They speak with Yanmei, saying they are hopping in an uber.

Panel #6

It is a shot looking at Mia and she is smiling and says call me.

Act 3

Page 12

Panel #1

Yanmei is getting her diploma

Panel #2

Yanmei takes a selfie

Panel #3

Yanmei gets to her dorm and all of her stuff is packed and ready to go.

Panel #4

On her table is a letter from Mia. We know because it has Yammer's name (in English) in calligraphy (American) and the card is handmade. From Mia, in pretty calligraphy.

Panel #5

Yanmei blushes again

Panel #6

Yanmei lets out some tears

Page 13

Panel #1

Yanmei is back in Zhangou in her family's home.

Panel #2

Yanmei is surrounded by her family. Think father, a brother, a sister, and grandma.

Panel #3

Yanmei is smiling weakly.

Panel #4

Yanmei starts crying.

Panel #5

Her family hugs her.

Panel #6

They all cry too.

Page 14

Panel #1

Yanmei is seen talking to her grandma alone.

Panel #2

Grandma looks at her with great concern, “what’s else is wrong my dear?”

Panel #3

Yanmei states plainly “I was sexually assaulted in America and I felt like I couldn’t tell you guys with everything going on with mom passing.”

Panel #4

Grandma starts to cry “oh dear, my sweet little child”

Panel #5

Yanmei and her grandma are crying.

Panel #6

It is a shot of her family household.

Cover page depends on the artist but should be done once they get a feel for the character