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Civic Disobedience: Anti-SB 1070 Graffiti, Marginalized Voices, and Citizenship in a Politically Privatized Public Sphere

Veronica Oliver

With neither national nor local-level discussions of Senate Bill 1070 adequately addressing bottom line issues such as marginalization, access, and civic engagement, an exploration of marginalized rhetorical acts can provide an informative lens for understanding challenges among marginalized people, their rhetorical tools, and their relations to public spheres. Through an exploration of anti-Senate Bill 1070 graffiti, this article examines how the practice of graffiti points to difference manifesting and playing out in the wider public sphere. It calls for scholars and activists to recognize graffiti as a rhetorical tool worthy of study and cross-cultural discourse.

The “Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act,” also known as Senate Bill 1070 (SB 1070), was signed into law by Arizona Governor Janice Brewer on April 23, 2010. This state-specific bill targeting illegal immigration was a response to “solve a crisis...the federal government has refused to fix” (Brewer). While the bill was initially presented as attending to the rising issue of Mexican drug cartels and “border-related violence and crime due to illegal immigration” (Brewer), it should be noted that activity on the Arizona border as a high-level safety threat has been questioned and subsequently contradicted by both Arizona border-town police officials and FBI crime reports (Wagner). Immigration bill SB 1070 has been widely criticized for specifically targeting the Hispanic population in Arizona, including the Department of Justice’s concern with probable violations of civil rights, such as the Fourth and Fifteenth Amendment (“Arizona’s Immigration”). Examples of these issues include “how ‘reasonable suspicion of immigrant status’ will be interpreted; and the narrow list of documents eligible to demonstrate lawful presence” (par. 6). While this judicial interruption of the bill signals how democratic ideals can assist in monitoring the level of power states and institutions have in accordance with civil rights, many continue to argue that this legislation unnecessarily criminalizes immigrants, supports racial profiling, and disregards more fine-tuned issues concerning families with mixed U.S. citizen status (Sexton et al.).

In response to criticism of the bill, Governor Brewer has stated that SB 1070 went through “vigorous debate,” where she “listened patiently to both sides” (Brewer), yet these statements reflect exclusive discourse among representatives on the issue, such as politicians, lawmakers, and civil rights groups. Equal civic engagement, where

the voices of everyday people (non-officials) are heard and reasonably considered, is seldom practiced in public policy decisions despite the wide-reaching effects on the very citizens who are impacted by them. With this in mind, one inherent question is how a targeted marginalized group can enter its voice in a debate that already situates it as having no citizenship status and, subsequently, rights to civic engagement. Since the passing of SB 1070, many grassroots organizations have campaigned against the bill through a variety of counterpublic forms of protest such as a “peaceful non-cooperation” gathering outside the Phoenix, Arizona courthouse (“Stop SB1070”), and vigils held outside of detention centers where immigrants await deportation trials as they face the “abuses and inhumane conditions” within (“ACLU”). Of course, such counterpublic tactics and the media coverage that follows garner visibility to these voices that are otherwise often not circulated and heard. That said, for purposes here I turn to one form of publically visible protest that received little attention. In 2010, anti-SB 1070 graffiti found in downtown Phoenix was given brief comment in the news, yet I argue for such political graffiti to be given more importance as a recognized form of civic engagement. In this article, I consider the contemporary significance of graffiti as a rhetorical tool that is carried out by the marking of physical spaces as forums for public dialogue. The importance of taking up this larger question through a discussion of anti-SB 1070 graffiti is that neither marginalized bodies nor their attendant rhetorical tools are often sanctioned equally in the public sphere (Cintron; Fraser; Moreau and Alderman; Young).

Although scholars such as Iris Marion Young and Nancy Fraser discuss broader theories of marginalization in relation to civic engagement, broad-based theories often do not focus on the controversial nature of specific rhetorical tools such as graffiti. As Elenore Long states, it is the local-level practices of civic engagement that offer a “model of local public discourse, one that fills the gap between descriptive accounts of situated literacy and more abstract theories of public discourse” (10). To be clear, larger theoretical discussions of marginalized voices miss the nuances of rhetorical practices working in the everyday to include the exigency of local political issues such as SB-1070 that have wide-reaching implications, as revealed in the prompting of other states creating their own anti-immigration bills following Arizona’s move with SB 1070 (Wessler). With neither national nor local-level discussions of SB 1070 adequately addressing bottom line issues such as race, access, marginalization, and civic engagement—which the passing of the bill and subsequent protest responses point to—an exploration of marginalized rhetorical acts, such as graffiti as civic engagement, can provide an informative lens for understanding challenges among marginalized people, their rhetorical tools, and the public spheres in which they work from and in relation to.

The remainder of this essay works in four major parts. First I offer a historical trajectory of graffiti for the purposes of locating it as a rhetorical tradition. While I do not attend to all forms of graffiti or all historical practices, some background provides a way to contextualize an argument for graffiti as an otherwise ignored rhetorical tradition. After establishing graffiti as a rhetorical tradition in its own right, I will

discuss the significance of anti-SB 1070 graffiti in order to theorize marginalized bodies, rhetorics, and citizenship. Here, I explicate the power of graffiti to connect physical public spaces and the interrelationship of marginalized bodies and rhetoric in what Jürgen Habermas terms the “larger public sphere”—that discursive arena where citizens come together to hold state power in check. I will bring my discussion into what graffiti can tell us about the current status of citizenship, and thus citizen engagement and the marginalized. In short, political graffiti such as that connected to Senate Bill 1070 offers a rich point of analysis concerning the ways that citizenship as a politics of difference is engaged in the everyday.

While the practice of political graffiti points to how difference manifests and plays out in the dominant public sphere, the final analysis for this project concerns how such work offers a space for what Krista Radcliffe calls *rhetorical listening*. As Radcliffe explains, rhetorical listening is “a trope for interpretive invention [which] signifies a stance of openness that a person may choose to assume in cross-cultural exchanges” (1). To arrive at such a stance, stakeholders need to recognize how whiteness functions invisibly at different levels in the public sphere; cross-cultural discourse necessitates that we recognize and listen to identifications that share commonalities and differences, opening a space for engagement (32). Radcliffe argues that “with such borderlands, rhetorical listening helps listeners analyze discursive convergences and divergences” which “helps listeners articulate. . . identifications and communicate about—and across—both differences and commonalities” (33). Through a consideration of rhetorical listening in relation to normative assumptions of public spaces and rhetorical acts, the final point of argument will explain the importance of recognizing graffiti as a rhetorical tool which can offer a space for rhetorical listening, as these gestures disrupt whiteness from functioning invisibly in the larger public (Radcliffe 4) by pointing to the absence, and even sometimes criminalization, of marginalized discourses in even the most public of spaces.

Graffiti as a Rhetorical Tradition

Ancient Graffiti

Graffiti has a history dating back to the ancient world, where it could be found “in amphitheatres where crowds gathered and in remote spots where they did not, on walls of buildings, on columns of stoas, on objects” (Baird and Taylor “Preface” xv). Although contemporary graffiti is usually understood as a public act, ancient graffiti was also created in less public spaces, such as “many homes, including [the] wealthy” (Benefiel 20). While the collection of essays in *Ancient Graffiti in Context* vary in how they define graffiti and the groups of graffitists and locations on which they focus, one element of graffiti—that of writing to an audience—is universal. With this in mind, although graffiti’s historical relationship to class is more contested than one might assume, one similarity between ancient and contemporary graffiti is how such work reveals that physical public spaces are inherently sanctioned for dominant discourses only.

J. A. Baird's exploration of graffiti found in Dura-Europos at a time when the city was occupied by the Roman military reveals how these personnel marked public spaces where they were stationed with their "name and title" (57-58). Although not examining the possible ideological implications of these military markings, Baird does note how such acts reflect "tak[ing] possession of particular spaces" (56), perhaps revealing "restriction[s] on who might be able to make their mark in such spaces" (59). This question of physical spaces and sanctioned discourse has been approached by other archaeologists and historians who have affirmed the use of ancient graffiti as a subversive tactic by "groups who are otherwise marginalized", such as Pedro Paulo A. Funari who explains that "certain types of pictorial graffiti in Pompeii express aspects of popular culture through caricature thereby critiquing existing power structures and replacing them with alternate narratives" (Baird and Taylor, "Introduction" 11-12). Additionally, Alexei V. Zadorojnyi's discussion of ancient literary figures' attention to graffiti, such as Lucian (AD 125 – after AD 180), reveal the transgressive nature of such acts. In Lucian's *Mimes of the Courtesans*, for instance, two female characters, Chelidonion and Drosis, "realise [*sic*] that their graffiti need to infiltrate the public space in clandestine ways, at night. Chelidonion's graffiti will be an act of private, very infrapolitical disobedience but it is still a breach of societal authority" (Zadorojnyi 113). Here, Zadorojnyi's reading of Lucian connects physical public spaces to dominant ideologies, where marginalized others, in this particular case women, do not belong.

Contemporary Graffiti

If ancient graffiti suggests that physical public spaces are inherently marked by dominant political ideologies and that those who are not sanctioned to mark such spaces are transgressing norms, then shifting attitudes and reactions to contemporary graffiti further link such transgressions with marginalized bodies and their attendant rhetorical tools.

One of the earliest public artifacts discussing graffiti is the 1971 *New York Times* article, "'Taki 183' Spawns Pen Pals," where one greek [*sic*] teenager with the tag name "TAKI 183" became the focus of an editorial covering a then growing trend of tagging one's name and street number on subway trains and throughout the city ("Taki"). When the article was written graffiti was "a violation...barred only by Transit Authority rules, not by law" ("Taki"). Here it is suggested that graffiti (at least tagging) was, at this point, regarded as an act of youthful indiscretion as opposed to civil disobedience with "...teen-agers from all parts of the city, all races and religions and all economic classes" caught in the act ("Taki"). Although this *New York Times* article first places graffiti as an act that is not raced, classed, nor gendered, both the use and association of graffiti would soon become a discourse marker for marginalized others, subsequently leading to its criminalization by law, as many marginalized individuals took to graffiti as an avenue for identity expression. As Tricia Rose notes, graffiti has often been used as an expression of those individuals who otherwise belong to a marginalized group. Therefore, although "the writer credited with inspiring the movement, Taki 183, is

a Greek teenager who lived in the Washington Heights section of Manhattan”, Rose argues that “the vast majority of graffiti writers are black and Hispanic” (41-42). Graffiti, explains Rose, provided marginalized individuals a means for “claiming territories and inscribing their otherwise contained identities on public property” (22). The cultural rationale for graffiti, then, is that it offers a space for communicative bridges among marginalized communities separated by geographic space and simultaneously serves as an avenue for “disseminating [their] public performance” (Rose 43). In terming graffiti as a “public performance” in relation to otherwise marginalized identities, Rose suggests graffiti as an inadvertent rhetorical tactic that reaches the wider public through situating and circulating the writer’s already raced, classed, and gendered identity, and subsequently their representative voice, into the space of the wider public where historically it has otherwise been underrepresented.

Although never strictly an issue of “juvenile delinquency,” a discourse shift occurred with new policies that “reconstructed [graffiti] as a central reason for the decline in quality of life in a fiscally fragile and rusting New York” (Rose 44); graffiti was emblematic of an environment that was “uncontrolled and uncontrollable” (Glazer 4). Rose points out former Harvard Professor Nathan Glazer’s 1979 article, “On Subway Graffiti in New York,” which “argues that the significance of the graffiti ‘problem’ was in fact its symbolic power” (44). As Rose continues:

According to Joe Austin and Craig Castleman, Glazer’s ‘out of control’ rhetoric was instrumental in solidifying the image of graffiti writers as the source of New York’s civic disorder and tarnished image, effectively displacing the more substantial and complex factors for New York’s decline onto an unidentified band of black and Hispanic marauders. (Rose 44)

Here, Rose, along with Austin and Castleman, suggest that Glazer’s notion of graffiti as “out of control” “symbolic power” is linked to the problem of whose symbolic power graffiti is attributed to (Rose 44). To be clear, this act of “civic disorder” is attributed not just to graffiti itself but the assumed identities of the writers (Rose 44). Rose suggests that graffiti became a symbol for marginalized voices, one that dominant ideologies sought to contain. Relatedly, approximately ten years after “Taki” was written, the work of African-American street-graffiti-writer-turned-gallery-artist, Jean-Michel Basquiat, was celebrated and raised to the level of culture (Rose 46). By shifting his work from graffiti and the everyday streets to high art and exclusive galleries, his political messages were simultaneously contained and commodified away from everyday circulation.

Anti-SB 1070 Graffiti

Scholars have discussed a rationale for gang-related graffiti (Cintron), gang graffiti as inner- and intra-related group discourse (Adams and Winter), and graffiti as a cultural expression of inner-city marginalized groups (Rose). That said, so far there has not been a detailed discussion placing graffiti as a rhetorical tradition spanning time

and cultures, legitimizing it as a rhetorical tool against reductive notions of criminal acts and/or intentions. In addition, there has not been sufficient discourse on graffiti that connects the criminalization of graffiti with civic disorder and disobedience in connection to graffitiists' assumed raced, classed, and gendered identities. That is, while graffiti has been an act carried out by bodies that are raced, classed, and gendered, it is the illegality of the act in accordance to the assumed identity of the graffitiists that makes the act a transgression, where the act itself is often the result of a public sphere that sanctions some voices over others. Anti-SB 1070 graffiti provides an associative link between criminalized acts and criminalized bodies when those acts and bodies disrupt spaces and expose what it means to draw borders and make bodies and their attendant rhetorical tools illegal.

With acute marginalization of certain people in the public, especially those whose citizenship status is in question, it is reasonable to consider anti-SB 1070 graffiti as produced by those most affected by the bill. As Catherine Squires reminds us, when marginalized groups act in a public sphere in response to oppression, “[their] responses...emerge not only in reaction to oppression from the state or dominant public spheres, but also in relation to the internal politics of that particular public sphere and its material and cultural resources” (448). With a Latina/o population (illegal or otherwise) neither equally part of the discourse proceeding nor after the signing of an immigration bill targeted at their population—and with subsequent rhetorical moves to further marginalize the voice of this group, such as banning the teaching of ethnic studies in Arizona’s K-12 classrooms (HB 2281)—anti-SB 1070 graffiti was a result of both the already existing marginalizing practices concerning civic engagement and the rhetorical avenues available as a result.

SB 1070 prompted plenty of graffiti, yet the way such work often circulated in public reflects how public spaces have civic borders that reflect appropriate spaces and forms of expression in relation to marginalized voices. For example, the anti-SB 1070 mural *We Are Human* created by Francisco Garcia, was part of a series of locally sanctioned murals, this one created in the back parking lot alley of Universal Hair Salon in Phoenix, Arizona (Lawton “Alley”), making such work confined to a limited space for circulation, raising the question of what local public(s) received this anti-SB 1070 dialogue.

Shortly after SB 1070 was signed into law, non-sanctioned graffiti was found in downtown Phoenix (Reynolds).



Figure 1: Garcia, Francisco. *We Are Human*

Unlike Garcia's sanctioned graffiti, this graffiti was, of course, anonymous. For purposes here I argue that it is the very anonymity of this illegal act of public transgression that



Figure 2: "Anti-SB 1070 Graffiti Popping Up in Downtown Phoenix"

most closely connects the issue of a bill on citizenship status to underlying issues of marginalized bodies and the circulation of their assumed representative rhetorics in the wider public. To be clear, it is the way that illegal rhetorical acts such as graffiti, which are now often associated with and carried out by bodies that are marginalized at intersecting forms of oppression, play upon the notion of citizenship status, where issues of legal/illegal rhetorical acts speak to marginalized bodies and their attendant discourses as already situated as illegal. In "The Fight Against SB 1070 and Why Graffiti Needs to be Involved," Matthew J notes the parallels "between the culture of graffiti and the citizens affected by...SB 1070," where "both entities are considered 'bad' by the mainstream ([graffitists] are called 'vandals' while migrants are dubbed 'illegal')... both [are] judged...on appearance..." (J). Although Matthew J calls for graffiti as an important form to use to "speak out against the bill," he also explains how "many 'big name' artists declined to be part of this project due to the fact that 'graffiti is not well respected' and any participation from our culture could, 'do more damage than good'" (J). Here, Matthew J's point reflects a public sphere that creates categorical differences among acceptable and unacceptable rhetorical tactics while simultaneously pushing some to use the unacceptable forms as available, creating a double bind for some, such

as undocumented immigrants, who want to have a voice in the public sphere but face legal action if they do so, with or without graffiti as the rhetorical tool of choice.

Other than the photo from “Anti-SB 1070 Graffiti Popping Up in Downtown Phoenix,” representative examples of anti-SB 1070 graffiti can be found only through the ABC 15 Arizona TV newscast redistributed on Jay Reynolds’ written online coverage of the issue. The newscast explains that these “[anti-SB 1070] messages are showing up on everything from stop signs to a mural on the side of a building” (Reynolds). Examples include the words “No More Police State” sprayed in dark paint on the back of a sign, and a black stencil that reads “1070” below the word “STOP” on a stop sign. While the graffiti was produced just months after SB 1070 was made into law, Reynolds’ media coverage only minimally nods to anti-SB 1070 graffiti as a protest tactic. Instead, Reynolds’ interview with Chiara Elie, manager of Alta Lofts in downtown Phoenix, a building affected by graffiti, focuses on the effects of graffiti on the property values of this downtown loft residence. Elie does make one comment about SB 1070 when she argues that anti-SB 1070 protesting voices can be carried out in ways other than graffiti (Reynolds). Here, Elie inadvertently emphasizes the double bind of the wider public sphere that would both dismiss the rationale behind such graffiti as a rhetorical tactic, and elide the fact that the undocumented have often been tied to a capitalist economy with illegal immigrants either adding or taking away from the system (Beltrán 597), which the Alta Lofts in Phoenix perhaps represent.

In *Angels’ Town*, Ralph Cintron explores the various ways that the marginalized Latina/o population in his study vie for “respect under conditions of little or no respect” (164) to include graffiti produced by and for local Latina/o gang members. As Cintron explains, graffiti proves to be “an important narrative ‘tactic’ available to gang members for the public expression of their subjectivities [which are] constantly being suppressed by the public sphere” (176). Of course, for Cintron it is not about promoting gang activity or locating such activity as either the only or specifically Latina/o response to oppression, but rather he considers how this activity and its attendant rhetorics are avenues of resistance to practices that simultaneously marginalize through geographic, economic, and civic isolation. For Cintron, the act of gang graffiti signals a way to “claim metaphorical ownership (or, to use one of the street terms, “rulership”) over public spaces” (175). This “ownership” is part of a “shadow system” that, as a tactic, mimics the system world through partial appropriation, while separating itself from such systems (Cintron 175). Elenore Long explains that “in mimicking the mainstream culture, or system world, the shadow system protects the difference between itself and the system world, and claims this difference as its identity” (137). Finding a safe space for identity formation and expression in the wider public is certainly a dilemma for those whose public status hinges on documented citizenship. In this sense, anti-SB 1070 political graffiti can be understood to be working from the position of a shadow system as it both “mimics” the ways discourses are circulated across publics as well as shelters its identity by exploiting the difference between dominant discourses and those that are otherwise marginalized.

This shadow tactic is important, for part of the double bind faced by marginalized groups whose citizenship status and subsequent rights to equity in civic engagement is at

issue is that certain tactics risk reifying problematic assimilation narratives, countering calls for equity. This is Cristina Beltrán's point when she notes how one result of the 2006 immigration reform marches was that both pro- and anti-immigration discourse linked Latina/o citizenship with laboring bodies, whereby re-inscribing Latina/o citizenship status according to labor and thus economic capital. Beltrán states that "By taking to the streets and claiming space and rights, immigrants and their allies created relational spaces of freedom and common appearance where none existed before" (597). Yet, as Beltrán points out:

Lacking from both [pro- and anti-immigration] accounts was virtually any recognition or appreciation of the profoundly political character of the events of 2006. When faced with the extraordinary and unanticipated fact of noncitizen mass protest, both pro- and anti-immigrant forces tended to shift the focus away from the unexpected quality of these activities, reverting to more recognizable discussions of legalization, naturalization, and employment. (597)

Here, assimilation, or "membership," and thus citizenship is constructed as constitutive of labor contributions, so while pro-immigration activists were unwittingly contributing to the notion of the potentially exploitive nature of Latina/o labor, anti-immigration activists were perpetuating the image of this group as an "ever-growing economic and cultural threat" (Beltrán 596-597). With this in mind, anti-SB 1070 graffiti suggests a discourse move against appeals to citizenship through assimilation. And, such work should also be understood to be different than the more defiant and closed-to-the-wider-public tactical system found in Cintron's discussion of gang-related graffiti. While anti-SB 1070 graffiti can be understood to be a tactic that mimics the system world, unlike gang graffiti, such a tactic seeks out discourse with the larger public as opposed to serving as a closed dialogue system produced and read by members only. This follows the point made by Karen L. Adams and Anne Winter whose research on gang graffiti in Phoenix, Arizona argues that such acts are "about membership in a group" where gang members address each other as well as those in rival gangs to "reinforc[e] their reality" (341). Group solidarity is certainly an inherent part of any type of graffiti that draws attention to issues of belonging in relation to groups affected by intersecting forms of oppression. However, gang graffiti closes itself off from the larger public, whereas political graffiti, such as that related to anti-SB 1070, suggests a direct move to produce dialogue with the wider public. This is because gang graffiti is difficult to read for outsiders of that community (Adams and Winter 341). In contrast, the very nature of political graffiti is that it is to be read across publics—political graffiti demands the attention of wider publics in ways that gang graffiti only indirectly does. One aspect that does connect gang-related graffiti with the more overt acts of public dialogue inherent in political graffiti is that, similar to Cintron's analysis, these acts have a socially situated rationale, and therefore I argue should be considered a rhetorical tool worthy of further exploration as both emblematic of and used by otherwise silenced voices.

Graffiti and the Dominant Public Sphere

To understand both the rhetorical rationale and function of graffiti, it is important to consider how the dominant public sphere functions at the level of everyday practices. There are two levels in which to understand the public sphere. On one hand, the public sphere can be understood as a literal place of discourse. Here I follow Catherine Squires' definition of the public sphere as "a set of physical or mediated spaces where people can gather and share information, debate opinions, and tease out their political interests and social needs with other participants" (448). On the other hand, the public sphere can be understood as actual physical or geographic spaces that often normatively, albeit invisibly, serve as a discourse canvas or landscape. This in part follows Henri Lefebvre's argument that physical or abstract space is "inherently political" (Brenner and Elden 358). What connects the public sphere of both Squires and Lefebvre is that both are normalized in their production and circulation of situated knowledges and rhetorics. This is Fraser's point concerning the public sphere of discourse that is normalized as white, middle-class, and male (113-114; Squires 450). Concerning abstract space, Neil Brenner and Stuart Elden explain Lefebvre's "'territory effect'—the state's tendency, through its territorial form, to naturalize (at once to mask and to normalize) its own transformative, intensely patterning effects upon sociospatial relations" (354). Specifically, Brenner and Elden conclude that "while the political illusion of transparency permeates all dimensions of state space..., it is tied in particularly central ways to territory, which may be viewed as its site *par excellence* (372). As a function of the state and therefore part of the dominant public, the "territory effect" can be understood as public space that is inherently politically patterned to represent and foster white, middle-class, and male voices.

Further, public spaces circulate discourses that demand our public attention, working on us consciously or otherwise. As Michael Warner points out, "Your attention is everywhere solicited by artifacts" that call for an audience (7). Warner sets the study of "publics" against the larger more ephemeral backdrop of "the public" to demonstrate that there is no "one" public, but rather a set of text-based circulating discourses that are organized as a body (68). Warner observes that publics are called into being by self-address. "'Run it up a flagpole, and see who salutes,'" he muses (114). What the self-reflexivity of a public means for the study of graffiti is that dominant discourses circulate by the very nature of texts. However, political graffiti creates a space of dialogue that inserts itself into the otherwise normative dominant discourse of the public sphere. Squires explains how marginalized groups, "people of color, women, homosexuals, religious minorities, and immigrant groups have created coexisting counterpublics in reaction to the exclusionary politics of dominant public spheres and the state" (446). Such exclusionary measures necessitate different responses or rhetorical tactics based on "given existing political, economic, social, and cultural conditions" (Squires 448). This follows Long's point on how Warner's discourse of "poetic world making" means that marginalized groups "formulate oppositional identities, alternative discourse, and competing worldviews..., resisting the exclusionary norms of rational-critical

discourse and creating a space for performative world making” (249). The poetic world making of political graffiti works to disrupt the otherwise normative circulation of the dominant public sphere in such unassuming physical public spaces, where this disruption points to the presence of these spaces as normative while simultaneously pointing to the absence of marginalized rhetorics.

Political graffiti, then, disrupts everyday publics by use of topoi. As Long notes, “topoi are the commonplaces through which ideology structures the interpretive landscape of a given location, creating ‘a very tight knot of emotion, reality, and ideological interpretation’” (Cintron qtd. in Long 138). By disrupting the everyday topoi of the physical public landscape, political graffiti “invoke[s] simultaneously both itself (counter discourse and absence of voices) as well as the opposite (a dominant public sphere discourse that is normalized in the everyday)” (Long 138). Taking off from Habermas’ notion of the public sphere, Cintron states:

Within the restricted public sphere, not even contesting parties represent the entire realm of contestation that cycles throughout a society. The breadth and depth of contestation does not become aired partly because not all the varied voices have been certified, sometimes literally, to speak in such a public sphere. (175)

While political graffiti is not the only tactic used by those whose voices are marginalized to one degree or another in the public sphere, the rationale for such acts can be understood to correspond to the ways in which marginalized voices are often afforded little capital, often do not circulate to wider publics, and are undervalued in terms of civic engagement. The overture of political graffiti does the dual work of both elevating such voices into the circulation of a wider public as well as pointing to the fact that such voices are devalued. By marking public spaces, political graffiti questions who owns public spaces, and thus who and what belongs in such spaces.

Moreau and Alderman argue how anti-graffiti rhetoric carried out by institutions or organizations such as Graffiti Hurts “seeks to justify the erasure of graffiti, and in so doing it reinforces exclusionary representations of culture, community, and landscape” (106). More specifically, “Organizations such as Graffiti Hurts play a critical and often unquestioned role in not only vilifying graffitiists but also justifying broader, exclusionary ideas about political identity and what counts for citizenship” (Moreau and Alderman 121). I wish to expand on this point made by Moreau and Alderman. Anti-SB 1070 graffiti not only challenges the exclusion of certain groups as part of the discourse of the public sphere, but also links the criminalization of bodies that are “othered” (immigrants) with the criminalization of graffiti as an act of civic disorder. More precisely, the illegalization of bodies in tandem with the illegalization of graffiti as an unrecognized or criminalized rhetorical tool prompts questions about what I call *civic disobedience* in relation to who is legal or authorized—whose voice counts—as a citizen in the larger public.

Gloria Anzaldúa explains, "Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*"(25). As a law about territorial borders, SB 1070 naturalizes both literal and ideological spaces as a divide between citizen and noncitizen. The privatization of the public sphere as a space for civic engagement goes beyond constitutional categories of legal and illegal citizenship, moving towards nativism and the ownership of both ideological and literal-physical spaces. In a system closed to counter-discourse and supported by nativist ideology, how might graffiti, an undervalued and criminalized act, cleave open a rhetorical space of cross-public engagement?

Conclusion

In "The Space for Rhetoric in Everyday Life," John Ackerman uses Henri Lefebvre's spatial theory, where social space is "both a field of action...and a basis of action" (Lefebvre qtd. in Ackerman 86), to argue the value of exploring the rhetorical nature of social spaces, or "sites," as such "spaces are the result of someone's design and rendering" (86). While Ackerman's focus is on architecture and the creation and existence of social sites (91), his call to "extend our fluency in rhetorical situations and agency in order to address the historical and material attributes of social space and everyday life" (85) can be applied to the study of graffiti as a rhetorical tactic. Graffiti exists, of course, in social spaces that are already constructed architectural and/or geographical sites, and therefore graffiti can be understood to be a response to these constructions. Thus, similar to Ackerman's call to bring lived spaces into the discourse of "rhetoric, composition, and literacy" studies (85), here I have argued for graffiti to be given recognition and importance as a rhetorical tactic worthy of study.

How we, as scholars, go about such study has its own complications. For of course, it can be argued that a study of political graffiti and marginalized voices can further complicate the position of these groups when graffiti is understood as a criminalized act. Yet, while such work can complicate already vulnerable identities, it does so largely because of the way graffiti is situated as a criminal act without a rationale and absent of rhetorical meaning outside this view. Lorraine Higgins, Elenore Long and Linda Flower state that "rhetorically grounded community literacy opens up a unique space where intercultural partners can inquire into and deliberate about problems, working toward both personal and public change" (10). This type of intercultural inquiry is often a space that needs to be created, for as Linda Flower explains, "A public (like a community) is constructed, not found—a symbolic space that comes into being when issues of mutual concern call people into existence as a public, and some people accept the invitation" (3-4). If spaces need to be created, there needs to be some cue for opening up intercultural dialogue. Yet, in privatized discourse spaces, spaces for intercultural inquiry are not readily made, which is why I argue for community literacy scholars and those interested in engaging the public through cross-cultural dialogue give importance to political graffiti as a rhetorical tool. Through a consideration of *rhetorical listening* and cultural logics in relation to normative assumptions of public

spaces and rhetorical acts, the final point of argument here is to consider rhetorically listening to our assumptions about graffiti, and in doing so, to cleave a space for engaging graffiti as a rhetorical tool worthy of exploration. To be clear, I seek here to connect Ratcliffe's work on rhetorical listening with the role that scholars in community literacy and social activists might play in directing attention to graffiti as a rhetorical tool. Recognition and discourse on graffiti as a rhetorical tool can aid in bringing the rationale behind political graffiti into the very public dialogue that these acts seek, creating the potential for fostering cross-public engagement; a site for considering the "commonalities and differences" that shape identities and identifications (Ratcliffe 32), as much as their attendant rhetorical tools (Squires 448).

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