

“In Lak’ Ech (You Are My Other Me):” Mestizaje as a Rhetorical Tool that Achieves Identification and Consubstantiality

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This paper explores how the discourse of mestizaje works rhetorically around three common lines of argument that align with Kenneth Burke’s theory of consubstantiality. Using the historical example of Afro-Cuban rights in post-independence Cuba and the current example of Arizona’s ethnic studies controversy, the author analyzes the use of mestizaje’s rhetorical topoi by disempowered populations. Further, the author complicates the rhetorical use of mestizaje by arguing that the ambivalent nature of consubstantiality allows mestizaje to be used to oppress as well as to fight oppression. Traditionally defined as the mixture of indigenous and European peoples, mestizaje has often been studied as a measurement of miscegenation and a political discourse that crafts national identities. The author takes a different approach in arguing that mestizaje is a rhetorical tool with common lines of argument that can be manipulated to achieve a desired end.

During the fight for Cuba’s independence, the concept of mestizaje—the racial and cultural mixing of European and colonized peoples—permeated the Cuban national consciousness. Throughout much of Latin America, mestizaje allowed Latin American *libertadores* to use the idea of a racially mixed nation to mobilize a homogenous people against Spain and to craft a national narrative of unity. In Cuba, mestizaje had the power to unite a diverse people to achieve cohesive action. By highlighting racial mixture and unity, mestizaje contributed to the construction of independent national narratives and was deployed to unify, mobilize, and ultimately construct the Cuban people.

Yet, mestizaje has a paradoxical nature; it can alternatively be seen as a discourse of unity or as one of authenticity. In promoting racial mixture, mestizaje can also deemphasize race and disregard racial inequalities. In fact, the discourse of mestizaje was later used by the Cuban government to disenfranchise Afro-Cubans who did not want to surrender their racial identities and accept a subordinate place in Cuban society. The ambivalent position of mestizaje allowed oppressive factions to silence marginalized populations who were victims of racial discrimination. In turn-of-the-century Cuba, the government argued that Afro-Cubans seeking to redress racial discrimination were indeed unpatriotic because they were choosing to identify as black instead of as just Cuban.

Thus, mestizaje has often been studied as a paradoxical discourse of miscegenation that continues to craft Latin American identities. Left unexplored, however, are the productive possibilities of the paradoxical space that mestizaje creates. Because of its ambivalence, mestizaje provides a variety of possibilities for the production of arguments. The discourse of mestizaje can be used alternatively to argue for the equal position of diverse groups in a society or for the loss of difference to assimilation. Therefore, opposing groups can adopt the discourse of mestizaje to advocate multiculturalism or to privilege a dominant culture.

In this paper, I contend that mestizaje is a productive rhetorical tool that can be manipulated to achieve multiple and often opposing ends. Furthermore, I argue that the discourse of mestizaje works rhetorically around three common lines of argument that align with Kenneth Burke's theory of consubstantiality: advocating for racelessness, highlighting the indigenous, and promoting equality. Using the historical example of Afro-Cuban rights in post-independence Cuba and the current example of Arizona's ethnic studies controversy, I analyze the use of mestizaje's three rhetorical *topoi* by marginalized populations who want to relate to those in power while maintaining their distinctness. Furthermore, I contend that the ambivalent nature of consubstantiality allows mestizaje to be used to oppress as well as to fight oppression. In my discussion of independent Cuba and my analysis of the Arizona controversy, I discern

how both dominant and marginalized groups utilize the concept of mestizaje to achieve different ends. I analyze these two seemingly different moments in time because they illustrate striking similarities in the manner in which dominant and marginalized populations adopt a rhetorical stance of mestizaje to achieve opposing political aims. Understanding mestizaje as a rhetorical means toward political ends allows for critical analysis of how mestizaje is deployed to create fluid spaces tolerant of diversity, rigid spaces based on essentialist notions of identity, and many things in between.

Race, Identity, and Power

Many analyses of mestizaje have focused on the connections among race, identity, and power that mestizaje evokes. Historical examples illustrate how national identities based on mestizaje were used to differentiate Latin Americans from their supposedly racially homogenous opponent, Spain, and from indigenous and African populations they perceived as racially inferior. Florencia Mallon, in “Constructing Mestizaje in Latin America,” explains how in different historical moments, Latinos have internalized mestizaje to gain power with the strategic adoption of authenticity and, paradoxically, with the strategic expression of marginality.¹ The former framing of mestizaje uses the concept of mixed race as the official discourse of national identity; the mestizo is framed as the authentic citizen. This representation of mestizaje allows access to power by defining a nation against an excluded Other. The strategic expression of marginality, on the other hand, claims power from its opposition to racial dualism. Mestizaje becomes itself a rejection of the essentialist and normative need to belong to a specific race.²

In “Latina/o Identity Politics” Linda Martín Alcoff underscores how mestizaje also has allowed for the contemporary creation of a transnational

1. Mallon, “Constructing Mestizaje,” 173.

2. *Ibid.*, 171.

Latin@³ identity in the U.S. that emphasizes how the group is racially different from the dominant population, while disregarding the group's inherent racial and ethnic differences.⁴ In the 1960s and 70s, a unified Latin@ identity rallied collaboration against discriminatory policies in the U.S. However, even though the discourse of *mestizaje* has been evoked to fight racism, some scholars have warned about ignoring its exclusionary implications. Lourdes Martines-Echazabal, in "Mestizaje and the Discourse of National/Cultural Identity in Latin America, 1845-1959," contends that *mestizaje* has failed to challenge the racialist thinking that encourages binarism.⁵ Instead, *mestizaje* has created a third type of racialism, the synthesis of the binary, the racialized *mestiz@* subject. Martines-Echazabal argues that in post-independence Latin America, *mestizaje* carried with it deep political, racial, and class interests that sought to shape national identities through the exclusion of "inferior" races.⁶

Presenting a similar critique, Cristina Beltran, in "Patrolling Borders," argues many advocates of *mestizaje* set up rigid definitions of identity by positioning the *mestiz@* against the unified European.⁷ For example, Beltran posits that Gloria Anzaldúa's "new *mestiza*" depends on static oppositional others. Beltran claims the "new *mestiza*" is "a dominant narrative of subjectivity in which some subjects represent multiplicity and insight while others signify unenlightened singularity."⁸ Because Anzaldúa positions her new *mestiza* as the "bridge" between the communities she inhabits, she implies the stability of those communities.

3. I am using the @ throughout the text to signal the rejection of stable gendered subjects in the construction of identities. With this choice, I am not privileging the male (as the Spanish language is designed to do) or the female or even the male/female binary. The @ acknowledges all subjects regardless of gender. Furthermore, the @ creates a visual impact that draws the reader's attention to the purposeful rejection of gender binaries. As Sandra Soto comments in *Reading Chican@ Like a Queer*, the @ draws our attention "with its blend of letters from the alphabet on the one hand and a curly symbol on the other hand, a *rasquachismo* that at first sight looks perhaps like a typo and seems unpronounceable."

4. Alcoff, "Latina/o Identity Politics," 100.

5. Martinez-Echazabal, "Mestizaje and Discourse of National/Cultural Identity," 24.

6. *Ibid*, 30.

7. Beltran, "Patrolling Borders," 601.

8. *Ibid*, 604.

Thus, many writers have critiqued claims that mestizaje challenges racist exclusionary thinking. Mestizaje's paradoxes unveil a complex political identity construct, not the panacea for racial discrimination. Nevertheless, mestizaje's continued presence in Latin American and Latin@ discourses encourages further investigation of its role in contemporary Latin@ identities.

Mestizaje, Identification, and Consubstantiality

In *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Kenneth Burke stipulates his theory of identification as it complements the more traditional view of rhetoric as persuasion. Burke argues, "You persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, *identifying* your ways with his."⁹ Thus, identifying with one's audience is, according to Burke, crucial to successful and persuasive communication. Burke's theory of identification assumes that a group desiring change must find a way to identify with those who have the power to enact the change. Speaker and listener must share some common ground, at least within the life of the argument being made. Identification makes the audience more receptive to the message of the speaker. It converges, if just for a moment, the interests of both groups.

The convergence, although significant, is not absolute. Burke argues that two persons, or groups, can be identified along some principle or aspect of themselves, but this does not erase their distinctness. He states, "A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is *identified* with B."¹⁰ Burke terms this type of identification without assimilation as "consubstantiality."

Burke's theory of identification and consubstantiality illustrates how mestizaje works rhetorically. Mestizaje creates a space where distinct peoples can identify with one another along a line of shared interests. During Cuba's war for independence, for example, Cubans of all races shared

9. Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, 55.

10. *Ibid.*, 20.

the desire of a new sovereign republic. Diverse peoples aligned along this shared interest framed the independence struggle as a mestiz@ struggle and the new Cuba as a mestiz@ nation. However, while the discourse of mestizaje encourages identification, it also allows for consubstantiality. For example, although Cuba's diverse populations had aligned along shared interests, each segment of the population still maintained its distinctness. Therefore, once Cuba's independence was attained, each group was again prompted to act upon its individual interests. Afro-Cubans saw that the new Cuba did not fulfill its promise of equality and demanded an end to their discrimination.¹¹ Significantly, Afro-Cubans did not abandon the Cuban identity forged on mestizaje. The mestiz@ Cuba simultaneously allowed for identification and distinctiveness.

The concepts of identification and consubstantiality are crucial in understanding mestizaje as a rhetorical stance since they create a realm of ambivalence—simultaneous congruity and distinctiveness—that can be politically productive, especially for marginalized populations. These populations must often simultaneously identify with and challenge their audience in order to achieve their political or social goals. For example, in their struggle for equality, Afro-Cubans had to highlight their “Cubanness” while challenging the dominant notion that race-based identities were unpatriotic. Thus, the rhetoric of mestizaje can be used to identify speaker and audience, building a common ground to achieve the speaker's goals. Mestizaje can also be deployed to affirm a separate self-hood between speaker and audience, as was the case with Afro-Cubans who continued to embrace their African roots as part of their identity. Subaltern populations can gain agency within this ambivalent space that allows them to align with their audience while affirming their individual group identity.

Conversely, dominant groups can also find a productive space in mestizaje. Mestizaje allows dominant populations to minimize differences and gain consensus from common ground. Because it helps to build

11. Portundo Linares, *Los Independientes*, 12.

identification, mestizaje can be a powerful rhetorical stance with which to mobilize diverse groups toward a common goal.

Topoi of Mestizaje: Three Rhetorical Lines of Argument

Aristotle defines *topoi* as lines of argument that commonly lead to persuasion. He argues that *topoi* “are applicable in common to questions of justice and physics and politics and many different species [of knowledge].”¹² *Topoi*, then, can be understood as commonplaces that reoccur in all sorts of arguments. However, although *topoi* can facilitate in the recognition of rhetorical patterns when we see a variety of arguments being made along similar lines, they do not become platitudes. On the contrary, *topoi* allow speakers to identify successful lines of argument so to adapt them for their own means.

The three *topoi* of mestizaje help achieve identification and/or consubstantiality between speaker and audience. However, as rhetorical lines of argument, each *topos* incorporates underlying assumptions that argue a particular view of the world. As such, each *topos* can empower and disempower, include and exclude. Therefore, speakers do not often use all three *topoi* to position themselves in a space of mestizaje, as that would give rise to logical contradictions in a speaker’s argument.

Advocating for Racelessness. This particular *topos* deemphasizes the importance of race behind the idea that a racially mixed world is a more harmonious world. Some of the foremost proponents of mestizaje developed this particular *topos* to construct national narratives where racial differences were supposedly secondary to national identities. José Martí evokes the raceless *topos* of mestizaje to stipulate how he envisions the new independent Cuba. He argues, “It is the similarity of character... that commands and prevails in the formation of parties. An affinity of character is more powerful than an affinity of color.”¹³

12. Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 45.

13. Martí, *Selected Writings*, 320.

Martí's words outline the idea of a raceless and egalitarian Cuba. However, after independence, raceless mestizaje helped the Cuban government to disregard racial discrimination. For Martí, the erasure of race would bring peace to Cuban society. However, the notion that racelessness would lead to peaceful coexistence disregarded the preconceived racial hierarchies that were deeply imbedded in Cuban society.

Similarly, Mexican intellectual José Vasconcelos exemplifies the rhetorical *topos* of racelessness in *La Raza Cósmica*. Vasconcelos writes, "A mixture of races... will lead to the creation of a type infinitely superior to all that have previously existed."¹⁴ For Vasconcelos, mestizaje does not only erase race and racial tensions, but ushers a new era of humanity. Yet, this new era would not be without racial hierarchies. Vasconcelos theorizes a mestizaje not of equal mixture, but of cultural surrender and assimilation, where "the Indian has no other door to the future but the door of modern culture, nor any other road but the road already cleared by Latin civilization."¹⁵ Accordingly, Vasconcelos' mestizaje asks that the Indian surrenders his/her culture to modern civilization, while he does not ask much from the "white man" but to "look for progress and ulterior redemption in the souls of his brothers from other castes."¹⁶

Highlighting the Indigenous. Another *topos* of mestizaje argues that highlighting the indigenous helps counter the hegemony of the Anglo-dominant world and move toward a more egalitarian society. In *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Anzaldúa describes a postmodern mestiz@ consciousness in which "you are neither *hispana india negra española/ni gabacha, eres mestiza, mulata*, half-breed/caught in the crossfire between camps/while carrying all five races on your back."¹⁷ While Anzaldúa advocates for mixture, she also emphatically reclaims the indigenous side of her identity, a side that has been quieted by the hegemony of Standard English and European-American culture. By highlighting the indigenous,

14. Vasconcelos, *La Raza Cósmica*, 31.

15. *Ibid*, 16.

16. *Ibid*, 16.

17. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, 216.

Anzaldúa is challenging the dominant narrative of the Americas that privileges the Anglo and positions the indigenous in the periphery.

However, it must be added that Anzaldúa's embrace of the indigenous is not naïve. While she reclaims the indigenous and advocates for people to "stop importing Greek myths and the Western Cartesian split point of view and root [themselves] in the mythological soil and soul of this continent," she also critiques her indigenous heritage for silencing the queer in her. In *Borderlands*, Anzaldúa reclaims her queer subject position, another side of her identity silenced by hegemony.¹⁸

Similarly, Damián Baca, in *Mestiz@ Scripts, Digital Migrations, and the Territories of Writing*, adopts a rhetorical stance of mestizaje that highlights the indigenous to call for a paradigm shift within the study of rhetoric. Baca wants the study of rhetoric to find a new center in what he calls "Mestiz@ rhetorics," the rhetorical traditions of ancient Mesoamerica. He writes, "My hope is... to point to literacy practices that might actually be prioritized in increasingly diverse classrooms of twenty-first century America."¹⁹ By privileging Mesoamerican rhetorical traditions Baca employs the *topos* of highlighting the indigenous in order to disrupt the dominant order in academia that centers Western European traditions. Similarly to Anzaldúa, Baca is adopting a rhetorical stance of mestizaje that privileges the indigenous part of the mixture. Baca contends:

If in place of theorizing rhetoric and writing based on a Western narrative, mestiza consciousness is advanced as a point of origin, scholars might be encouraged to think about, practice, and teach rhetoric in ways that are directly responsive to comparative developments of writing, both past and present, from Olmec hieroglyphs to Aztec pictography to present-day Mestiz@ codices.²⁰

18. Ibid, 90.

19. Baca, *Mestiz@ Scripts*, 3.

20. Ibid, 30.

Evidently, Baca's "mestizaje" does not completely embrace racelessness or even mixture. The indigenous is the most salient element of mestizaje in Baca's analysis.

Both Anzaldúa and Baca highlight the indigenous to provide a counternarrative to the dominant discourses of society that relegate the indigenous to the margins. By highlighting the indigenous and de-emphasizing the Anglo, a kind of balance is restored, or at least attempted. It is a purposeful rhetorical choice on their parts, which aims to empower the disenfranchised indigenous cultures, knowledges, and epistemologies.

Promoting Equality. Martí in his essay "My Race" explains racial equality as one of the most important characteristics of mestizaje. He writes, "No man has any special rights because he belongs to one race or another; say 'man' and all rights have been stated."²¹ Recent scholars of mestizaje have framed it as a way to achieve equality in our increasingly transcultural society. For example, political theorist John Francis Burke discusses how a mestiz@ consciousness provides a sound approach with which to resolve the political and cultural clashes of our modern world. Burke writes:

This experience of cultural combination that recognizes the contributions of the intersecting cultures yet does not culminate in assimilation suggests a framework by which the nation's multiple groups in a heterogeneous age can mutually engage one another as equals and can contribute to the overarching political consensus without having to shed their heritages as the price of participation.²²

Burke posits mestizaje as the space in which U.S. society can move "beyond the *unum-pluribus* divide" to find a space in which cultures encounter each other as equals, without privileging one culture over another.²³ In practice, this egalitarian mestizaje takes the shape of, for

21. Martí, *Selected Writings*, 318.

22. Burke, *Mestizo Democracy*, 10.

23. *Ibid*, 49.

example, allowing “the flexibility to use as many languages in a decision-making forum as are necessary to generate genuine consensus on issues.”²⁴ For Burke, *mestiz@* consciousness rejects the exclusive either/or binary thinking and encourages a “both and also” mentality that equally values the perspectives of a diversity of peoples.

The three aforementioned *topoi* constitute *mestizaje* as a rhetorical tool that can achieve identification and consubstantiality. With these three *topoi*, *mestizaje* can be appropriated by various seemingly opposing movements, infused with other rhetorical ideas, and used to craft arguments, create subject positions, or describe ideologies. As such, *mestizaje* is a rhetorical means for political ends that can be used to fight against oppression and also to oppress. In the next section, I illustrate how these three rhetorical *topoi* of *mestizaje* have been deployed within the discourse of Arizona’s ethnic studies controversy.

HB2281 and Rhetorical Mestizaje

The Arizona House Bill 2281, commonly known as the Ethnic Studies Ban, was signed into law on May 11, 2010. The bill prohibits public school classes that fit at least one of the following categories: “(1) promote the overthrow of the United States government, (2) promote resentment toward a race or class of people, (3) are designed primarily for pupils of a particular ethnic group,” or “(4) advocate ethnic solidarity instead of the treatment of pupils as individuals.”²⁵ The Tucson Unified School District’s (TUSD) Mexican-American Studies (MAS) program was found in violation of the latter three stipulations of HB2281 on January 1, 2011. The MAS program was disbanded, teachers reassigned, books collected, and students placed in more traditional classes.

Predictably, HB2281 has created a divided culture in Tucson. The proponents of HB2281 have argued the law works for equality in education. Meanwhile, civil rights activists, teachers, and students have vociferously

24. Ibid, 207.

25. State of Arizona, *HB2281*.

protested what they see as a discriminatory legislation. The amount of discourse that has accompanied the pro and con sides of HB2281 provides a rich field in which to analyze how race, identity, and legislation interact in the current political economy. I contend that rhetorical uses of *mestizaje* have driven much of the discourse surrounding HB2281 by allowing the two primary opposing sides of the controversy to refer in their arguments to the convergence of race, identity, and legislation that the bill creates.

HB2281, racelessness, and equality. To analyze the discourse that supports HB2281, I consider how the writers of the bill and its supporting documents adopt a rhetorical stance of *mestizaje* around two main *topoi*: advocating for racelessness and promoting equality. The language of the bill, for example, readily rejects raced-based differentiation of students. Clauses three and four of the “Prohibited Courses and Classes” section of the bill promote the disregard of race by prohibiting courses that target “pupils of a particular ethnic group” or that “advocate ethnic solidarity.”²⁶ With these two statements, the proponents of HB2281 are constructing public education as a raceless space in which, similar to Martí’s notion of independent Cuba, racial identification is less important than other identity constructs. For Martí, Cuban national identity was more important than racial identity. For the public school system constructed through HB2281, individual identity is what trumps over racial identity. Indeed, the section of the law titled “Declaration of Policy,” which includes the law’s rationale, states that “public school pupils should be taught to treat and value each other as individuals.”²⁷ Thus, the language of the law attempts to erase race in the public school system. This rhetorical position of advocating for racelessness allows proponents of HB2281 to build their argument on persuasive grounds because it echoes an important theme in U.S. political discourse of the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

The proponents of HB2281 have manipulated the rhetorical *topos* of racelessness to construct their argument as one against racism. In many interviews, Arizona Attorney General Tom Horne, one of the most vocal

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

advocates of the law, has repeatedly evoked the language of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech to support his claim that the MAS program is racist. In an interview on the CNN program *Anderson Cooper 360°*, Horne disparages the MAS program for "[dividing] students up by race."²⁸ Borrowing from King's language, Horne states, "what matters about a person is what does he know, what can he do, what is his character or hers, not what race was he born into."²⁹ Horne's argument is based on the assumption that since as a country we discourage racial discrimination, all awareness of race-based differences should be eliminated. This rhetorical move is similar to initial uses of *mestizaje* in Latin America, when national identities crafted on *mestizaje* worked rhetorically to erase difference while simultaneously disparaging claims from victims of race-based discrimination. Within this rhetorical position, groups experiencing race-based inequities are deemed unpatriotic and/or racist because they are bringing race into the forefront of discussion.

In addition to framing their argument with the rhetorical *topos* of racelessness, the proponents of HB2281 also use the *topos* of promoting equality to persuasively craft their argument. John Huppenthal, Arizona Superintendent for Public Instruction, uses the *topos* of promoting equality in the "Statement of Finding Regarding Tucson Unified School District's Violation of A.R.S. §15-112," where he summarizes how the TUSD MAS program violated parts of HB2281. Huppenthal finds TUSD in violation of sections A(3) and A(4) of the law, the clauses that forbid courses "designed primarily for pupils of a particular ethnic group" or that "advocate ethnic solidarity." He argues that the MAS program is designed primarily for Latin@ students. He also claims that the program advocates ethnic solidarity in that "curriculum and materials repeatedly emphasize the importance of building Hispanic nationalism and unity in the face of assimilation and oppression."³⁰ Huppenthal frames his argument as one that promotes equal education for all; courses that focus on the educational

28. Horne, interview.

29. Ibid.

30. Huppenthal, *Statement of Finding*.

achievements of one ethnic group are in violation of U.S. notions of equality. Similarly, his claim that MAS emphasizes “Hispanic nationalism and unity” creates an argument that promotes equality, as it implies that all students should relate to each other equally and without special concern for those with similar ethnic backgrounds.

By using the *topoi* of promoting racelessness and equality, the proponents of HB2281 build identification between themselves and their audience, the U.S. American people. Because these two *topoi* have also been important in the construction of U.S. national identity, they serve to hinge the pro-HB2281 argument on foundational U.S. ideologies.

Opposition, indigenouslyness, and equality. The opposition movement to HB2281 has been very active on the street, in the media, and in the courtroom fighting against the end of the MAS program. Former MAS students and teachers, social activists, scholars, and local politicians have staged protests, colloquia, and popular events to raise national awareness of the law, challenge its legitimacy, and analyze its broader implications. Although the extent of the opposition’s work is vast, significant portions of their argument have been constructed around two rhetorical *topoi* of mestizaje: highlighting the indigenous and promoting equality.

Highlighting the indigenous has been an idea present throughout the MAS program, from its curriculum to its fight against HB2281. As see in the documentary *Precious Knowledge*, MAS teachers use indigenous Mesoamerican concepts to teach critical thinking and reflection. For example, some MAS literature courses start the day with the bilingual poem “In Lak’ech” by Luis Valdez.³¹ This poem develops the Mayan concept of *in lak’ech*, which translates to “you are my other me.” This poem uses the indigenous concept to teach reflection and brotherhood. Other MAS courses use the Aztec deities of *Tezcatlipoca*, *Quetzalcoatl*, *Huitzilopochtli*, and *Xipe Totec* to teach critical reflection from a Mesoamerican position.³²

31. Palos, *Precious Knowledge*.

32. *Ibid.*

Protests against HB2281 have also invoked indigenous traditions. For example, when HB2281 was being processed through the Arizona legislature students and activists took on a ceremonial run from Tucson to Phoenix to demonstrate their disapproval of the bill.³³ The 115-mile run began with the singing of traditional indigenous songs. During the run, runners took turns carrying indigenous ceremonial staffs and some wore indigenous clothing or headbands. This ceremonial run connects the HB2281 opposition movement to Mesoamerican indigenous peoples and is a challenge to the Arizona legislature that privileges Anglo-American ways of knowing.

Indigenouness becomes a repeated line of argument for the opposition to HB2281, a *topos* with which they can challenge some of the claims made against them and their curriculum. For example, the website for the student group United Non-Discriminatory Individuals Demanding Our Studies (UNIDOS) embraces the indigenous, and in particular the concept of *in lak'ech*, to rhetorically craft a position that builds consubstantiality and negates the possibility of racial resentment within MAS courses. The group argues that since MAS classes are based on the principle of *in lak'ech*, which implies that anything I do to you, I do to myself, then “there is no room in an Ethnic Studies class to ‘promote resentment towards a race or class of people.’”³⁴

By utilizing *in lak'ech*, the opposition movement places itself on the same ground as the advocates of HB2281 and builds identification with the U.S. American people. Yet, by highlighting this indigenous concept and adopting other indigenous traditions, they emphasize their distinctness from the Anglo Arizona legislators who proposed the bill and from the majority of U.S. citizens. Thus, members of the opposition movement emphasize the indigenous in order to build consubstantiality between themselves and their audience. Consubstantiality allows students and activists to appeal to their audience by highlighting their shared human and spiritual conditions while remaining resistant to the overall goal of

33. Ibid.

34. “Myths Challenge.”

dismantling ethnic studies programs. By maintaining their distinctness from their primarily Anglo audience, the opposition to HB2281 reinforces the idea that ethnic studies programs are necessary to ameliorate an education system that wrongly assumes the cultural homogeneity of the U.S. American people.

The website from Librotraficante, on the other hand, emphasizes the *topoi* of equality as a way to rhetorically frame its argument against HB2281. Librotraficante, a Spanish compound word that translates to “book trafficker” or “smuggler,” is a Texas-based group that travels around the country disseminating the books prohibited by HB2281. Books including Sandra Cisneros’ *House on Mango Street* and Luis Alberto Urrea’s *The Devil’s Highway* were allegedly banned from TUSD classrooms because they were used in MAS courses. Librotraficante provides a creative demonstration of protest against HB2281. Yet, the argument crafted by Librotraficante is based on the same *topoi* of mestizaje being used by the proponents of the law. Case in point, the Librotraficante manifesto claims:

We profess Quantum Demographics, which *embraces deep links between cultures* that seem disparate at first glance. We want and need to study our own history so that we can then study other histories more fully. *We do not strive to exclude others from our history* or to deny others their history. We strive for the day when we all know our own stories to such an extent that we can see *the links and bridges to the stories of others*.³⁵

By highlighting the connections between different cultures, Librotraficante is basing its argument on the equality among all peoples. This rhetorical move also allows Librotraficante to build consubstantiality. Although the group believes in deep connections among all peoples, the group also emphasizes the importance of knowing individual histories in order to understand those connections. Consubstantiality is particularly

35. “The Librotraficante Manifesto.”

important to Librotraficante's argument in this example because it lets the group advocate for the inclusion of diverse histories in public education, a claim that disrupts the intellectual legitimacy of HB2281. By building consubstantiality, Librotraficante highlights the value of ethnic, racial, and cultural difference while simultaneously reinforcing the commonality among cultures.

Conclusion

Peter Wade's complex definition of *mestizaje* helps to understand how *mestizaje* provides a path to Burke's identification and consubstantiality. Wade writes, "Nationalist ideologies of *mestizaje* contain and encompass dynamics not only of homogenisation but also of differentiation, maintaining permanent spaces, of a particular kind, for blackness and indigenusness, and creating a mosaic image of national identity."³⁶ Of course this "mosaic" is often neither static nor peaceful. Still, the ambivalence of *mestizaje*, in that it creates the opportunity for simultaneous homogenization and differentiation, approximates Burke's consubstantiality and serves as an effective rhetorical stance for marginalized populations and dominant groups alike. In the case of HB2281, opposing sides of the controversy have used the ambivalent space that *mestizaje* creates to produce convincing arguments for and against the law. Both sides, however, have as yet failed to embrace their commonalities in *mestizaje*. On the contrary, the controversy has reached a stalemate. Still, I contend that the rhetorical power of *mestizaje* may help resolve the debate. Rhetorically, *mestizaje* creates a space in which we can all stand as equals while we hold on to our different cultural identities. This paradoxical position leaves room for a united national identity that incorporates various cultural histories and knowledges while championing the U.S. ideology of individualism. Thus, with the idea of *mestizaje*, U.S. students can carry with them their cultural selves, their individualities, and their group identities.

36. Wade, "Rethinking Mestisaje," 240.

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