

UNIVERSIDAD SIN FRONTERAS

SAN ANTONIO CAMPUS
Class I: Decolonize!
(From Colonialism to Liberation)
April 9, 2013



Present: Luis Valdez, Mary Lou Mendoza, David Cruz, Chavel Lopez, Sandra Garcia, Lucha Lopez, Irasema Cavazos, Natelie Cordero, Martha Castilla, Julio Cesar Guerrero, Joaquin Abrego, Arturo Fuentes, Jose Cordero, Diana Lopez, Isidro Cruz.

Welcome

Chavel: I want to welcome all students here at the University sin Fronteras. Mi nombre es Chavel Lopez I am on the board of UNSF. I just became part of the board this year. On the San Antonio Campus Committee we have Irasema, Julio, Sandra and Joaquin. It's a different pedagogy of what the Internal Colonialism System teaches you. Emancipation Education is shared learning. Not where the teacher comes and teaches to an empty body. The method is that we are here learning together to liberate us from the oppression that colonialism has brought us. After we do a presentation we will conduct a round robin where we want everyone to participate. Everything we say and do will be taken down as a note. I am going to go ahead and start with a presentation and go ahead with a round robin. Please present yourself.

Joaquin Abrego - I work for SWU. I am an organizer and representative for school workers. The one thing I hope to get out of this course is an open and broader mind. I am always interested in learning.

Marth Castilla - Heart for the Neighborhood and UT Science Center I have heard about UNSF and I wanted to know more about it and the people involved.

David Cruz - I am self employed and I support the work the Union does.

Isidro Cruz - I am David Cruz, grandson of David Cruz.

Cesar Guerrero - I am new in town. I moved from Michigan a couple of years ago. I know about the work that Chavel and Ruben do. I am just trying to connect and contribute to the compañeros. I hope to learn from all of you about the local struggle and experience and hope we can educate one another.

Natalie Cordero - I am a special education teacher. My husband and I are from El Paso. The union is one of the closest things to home. We gravitate towards raza and the raza assemble at SWU. I want to get a better understanding from all of you and grow stronger.

Jose Cordero - We are volunteers of the union. We just came to help out with the union and share ideas with other people and knowledge.

Sandra Garcia - I am the Youth Coordinator at SWU. What I want to grab is the perspective from other people who know about the work and have lived it.

Irasema Cavazos - I have learned a lot with the Union when I joined. I am very much looking forward to hearing your experiences. Every ones story is so unique. I want to learn about decolonizing and how it affects your story. I am hoping to hear a lot and it will help us with the struggle for social justice.

Diana Lopez - I am the note taker. Please speak loudly and slowly.

Luis Valdez - I work with various organizations with youth and I want to learn some new exercises for communicating de-colonialism ideas to these youth outside of beaurocratic institutions.

May Lou Mendoza - I am here because I really believe we can learn for each other. I also want to learn about our own history and the position we are in.

Chavel: Thank You. I am going to start the presentation about Liberation and NeoColonialism.

What is colonialism?

Traditionally, colonialism is understood to refer to an area of the world acquired by conquering the territory or settling it with inhabitants of the nation holding it in control, and imposing physical control over the region and its population. There are two ways this condition may be terminated: the area may be freed of the control of the colonial power by allowing it to become an independent nation, or if the area is absorbed into the borders of the controlling nation.

The US began its history as a colonial possession of Great Britain and confronted two other colonial powers in contiguous areas during its infancy and contested France and Spain for control of that territory. After the American Revolution, gradually the European powers were expelled, and the new United States expanded its influence by absorbing the contiguous territories until it controlled the area it occupies today. The American experience is quite different from what normally characterized the European colonial tradition, as it was not until the late nineteenth century that the US entered the race for noncontiguous colonies.

Ironically, while racism or ethnocentrism has undeniably played a determinant role in both colonialism and imperialism and the powers that practiced them have been justly criticized for the practice, those who were its victims have generally not illustrated a much better record in their treatment of other races or ethnic groups over whom they have been able to establish control.

Virulent nationalism has led to extremist attitudes, for example, the Arabs towards the Jews, and Jews towards Arabs, the Chinese toward Tibetans and Indians, Indians towards Pakistanis and Pakistanis toward Indians. While this list is incomplete, it is still impressive of the evidence that the power to abuse is confined to no particular race. Perhaps the problem lies not in racism per se so much as in the corrupting influence of absolute power over another people. Some historians

have attempted to identify racism as a phenomenon of one socioeconomic group exclusively or to whites versus other races, as though the problem would be eliminated if the world were socialist or the whites lost influence to the other races. They have not met the real challenge, which is that abuse rests with unrestrained power.

What is Liberation?

The idea of anti-colonial resistance or nationalism has oftentimes generated a very simplified logic about liberation. In this context colonialism is understood to be oppressive and unjust, dominating the lives of native or displaced peoples without their assent. Those seeking to redress this side of colonialism have tended to occupy a moral high ground, advocating that the most realistic solution was the removal of their colonial masters, hence the resort to self-determination, violent confrontations, and the creating of new national myths. Yet in the quest of reducing anti-colonial liberation to national independence, some of the starkest ironies have often been inflicted. In many cases anti-colonial liberation not only preserved pre-existing colonial mindsets, it substituted a native ruling class for the former colonizers without necessarily emancipating the indigenous working class.

The concepts of liberation and emancipation, therefore, paradoxically underscore the cycles of domination present in countless aspects of social life. What counts as oppression and domination? What makes issues like disease, hunger, poverty, and discrimination of race, sex, and sexual orientation a form of oppression through which liberation needs to be sought? Does the liberation of one group of people result in the domination of another? And why is it that redress to these forms of domination is often expressed through the recognition of “rights”?

One of the most interesting features of the Western Enlightenment is the belief that reason has liberating effects. This is because what came before the Enlightenment—medieval mindsets, feudalism, the all-encompassing embrace of the Christian worldview, mysticism, the inseparability of myth and reality—came to be surpassed by profound transformations in the way the individual related to others in a society, how knowledge and information were organized, and how time and historical events were understood to be continuous rather than cyclical. The enlightenment created the new sovereign subject, one who believed in the interminable nature of progress, the logo centrality of human thought, and empirical knowledge. Surrounding the new individual was the notion of rights; that in relation to the larger community the individual had as much responsibility for his or her actions in the community as the rights that were accorded to him or her. This is an important concept because it underscored the separation between individual and society and between church and state, and by so doing, proclaimed the fundamental autonomy and freedom of the individual.

In many ways the Enlightenment’s perspective on liberation is found in many dimensions: reason elevates the individual from the stifling and oppressive medieval worldview, the individual was believed to be the product of knowledge, and the individual’s liberties were protected by modern laws.

1. Liberation is both the undoing of the effects and the elimination of the causes of social oppression. The achievement of human liberation on a global scale will require far-reaching changes at the institutional level and the level of group and individual interactions. These changes will involve transforming oppressive behavioral patterns and “unlearning” oppressive attitudes and assumptions.
2. No one is naturally or genetically oppressive; no human being is born as an oppressor. No one is naturally or genetically destined to be oppressed; no one is born to be oppressed.

3. Oppression is the systematic and pervasive mistreatment of individuals on the basis of their membership in various groups, which are disadvantaged by the institutionalized imbalances in social power in a particular society. Oppression includes both institutionalized or “normalized” mistreatment as well as instances of violence. It includes the invalidation, denial, or the non-recognition of the complete humanness (the goodness, uniqueness, smartness, powerfulness, etc.) of those who are members of the mistreated group.
4. Differences in class, in social and economic power, in educational opportunity and achievement, in health and physical well-being, are the expression and result of institutionalized inequalities in opportunity. Such differences perpetuate and increase the social imbalances in power and thereby serve to maintain all forms of oppression.
5. Liberation is possible. It is possible to recover the buried memories of our socialization, to share our stories and heal the hurts imposed by the conditioning, to act in the present in a humane and caring manner, to rebuild our human connections and to change our world.

Chavel ask the participants:

What we will be doing now is going around and find out what we know about colonialism. We have 20 minute for Round Robin.

Round Robin #1:

Luis: All right. I will start not that you need to hear another male. Colonialism. I have had to try to figure this out for along time. My parents are from MX and I am from this space. What style of colonialism do I live under here in San Antonio. Tracing back the colonialism through Spain, The Moors and North Africa and the style of colonialism in this case part and even monotheistic believes. Is the style of colonialism that we live under correct? There are choices, good and bad. These binaries we live under where one nation is justified in creating borders or lines in the sand that creates war and justification of violence.

Mary Lou: As Chavel was reading I kept thinking about high school. I grew up here and lived all my life here. I remember hearing these words and the Anglo version of the way it was explained. They came in and took over. You that are here right now we are taken over. We are helping you but we will tell you how to do it. The word colonization and colonies are two different things. And the teacher uses colonizing and colonialism in the same breath. Colonizing was working together and colonialism is something bad. Now that I am grown up I see things difference. Teachers were inaccurate. I want to get the real story and what is the difference between colonizing and colonialism. I would get in trouble for questioning when I was in school.

Sandra: What I was learning about Colonizing. I never really picked it up. I always considered it in families. When a man runs the home and everyone does as he said. Liberation is challenging and not doing what he does. In reality now it is more liberating at my home because my mother and everyone is treated as an adult.

Martha: I really need to understand what it is. I know that it is something connected to oppression and not the best way to live. Someone taking over the land . I have encountered people who know about it and are really defensive and don't have space to grow. On the other end I see people who what to know but something gets in the way. Working with people I want to understand if it's still happening and where and how do we do it.

David: It's a tough topic to explain what it means. What I remember as a youth when I got involved in Chicano movement. We used to say that Chicanos were colonized twice. Once as Chicanos colonized by Spanish and as Chicanos we are indigenous. Then we lost the land and lost the tradition and lots of people terminated and became third class citizens and not even human. On the Mexican side we were just being settled supposedly and they take Mexico and then the US takes over this territory. Not only did we loose indigenous traditions and ways of living. Now that the Europeans invaded we lost our religion and language and traditions. It's a double blow. That is

the way I understand. It's a very complex thing. On the perspective of your mother she speaks up and that is part of liberating our self. It takes educating our self as people to understand our leaders that come before us and struggle the same things that we talked about today. My interest is to learn more about those that have contributed. Key works like the right to self-determination.

Isidro: I don't really know what it is and what it teaches. It's difficult to explain and understand.

Cesar: I think colonization is straight taking over from one cult to another. Invasion and a position of taking over resources you want to justify it but it is what it is. Colonialism; is just what you want to call it. The act of colonization is taking over a culture by force and in the end. I come from Mexico in mid 60s. In Chicago I was out with two friends and one was born in TX a Chicano and the other was born in MX and brought up in the states. I was a new comer. We were hanging out and then the guy from TX says this weekend I will go to the game. The other guy from MX say the weather will be nice I will just tan. I thought my English is not too good but you can't do that. You are already brown. I didn't say anything but the other guy from TX says you don't tan you are already brown. This guy who came from Mexico was educated in the states and applied the values and lifestyle of gringos so he saw his gringo friends tanning and thought he can do the same thing. When you see yourself as someone other than brown, when you are brown, your mind has been taken over by someone else. You do not see straight. We got involved with Cesar Chavez and campesinos and my TX friend said everything you talk about what you are doing it sounds like you have been brain washed. I listen to him and think you are right. We are given the system, to where we start to be like the system, and yet we know we have different stories.

Natalie- I agree with what everyone said.

Arturo Fuentes - I used to be a North West Vista instructor of Humanities. All of this intertwined with religion. To me colonialism is like the movie the Matrix. We live our lives, get up, dress, and work. We live our lives but we are being conditioned but this is how we came to be. When Keanu Reeves takes the blue pill he is exposed to this different world. This happened to me at 15 years old. Anything to do with Chicano was not good. Occupied America opened my eyes like Keanu Reeves. You see how it really is. When you learn your history it's just the beginning. You keep learning about where the money comes from. When you learn, it puts the sprit in you to keep teaching. We can go on but even here we live on occupied land, if you think about it. Why is there a border? We have to decolonize the system.

Irasema: It started way back in Europe where it was a sense of superiority. They look at indigenous people with no shoes and living freely and minimalist but they have been living that way successfully for thousands of years yet they looked at themselves as better. The Europeans felt they had to dominate others. We have to stop and think that this superiority has polluted the earth. Indigenous people for thousands of years lived in harmony with earth. The sense of superiority treats others as less, as in less than. We are not superior to nature. This is what we are learning. How are we invested, what are we doing? I deal with women and find myself thinking; how did I loose my voice and how many times did I give in and said "Yes Master." We all have a voice and this is where we learn. We are not inferior we all have a voice.

Chavel asks the participants: What is Liberation and how do we decolonize?

Round Robin #2

Cesar - My sister worked at a hotel where many Latinos worked. This women from Colombia says "I don't think my husband loves me any more because he does not hit me any more." This woman has been colonized to this degree; to think that violence is love. How do we help this person change

her mindset, to say he loves you he does not hit you. But yet father and son hit her too. 25 years of oppression. How do you change that idea? It is important to learn these skills. 1) Liberation is to become aware that the conditions are not rights. 2) You analyze, find the skill to analyze this condition. If this is wrong what is write? 3) Then you compare and internalize and take action. Awareness, Analysis and Action, these are important tools of the process that can be applied to anything. This is a clinical approach to help someone.

Natalie - There is a formula to oppression. I was challenged to look at a more global form of oppression. If you are able to decipher what is going on in each space then you move forward. Resistance to find out what is going on. Resilience by gathering our thoughts and coming up with a plan. Marching, FB and other resources are important parts to find out.

Lucha - You have to liberate yourself. Then teach your children what really happened. Be right with who you are and what you stand for.

Arturo - Liberation is galvanizing the people. In 1992 in Africa when someone was being beat it sparked a feeling. In 2006 all these marches for immigration rights caused a feeling. To liberate we have to vote in people that have our interest not corporate politicians. I voted for Julian Castro, now I have 50/50 mixed opinions on him. He has betrayed ideals that I thought he represented. Never give up always push forward. Keep your eyes on the prize.

Sandra- I liked the AAA theory that Cesar talked about.

Irasema - I was reading the *Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan. It's interesting how things can be used against us. "I will help you. You are too soft. I will take care of everything for you" That is the mystique, that it's for your own good that I am doing this. And then they have a break up and he says you did nothing and never worked, so everything belongs to me. He kept her limited, because she is delicate. They used things like that when I went to school. Why do you want to study algebra it's not for you, where are you going to use it? in the field. We are all equal we should all have the chance to achieve. We all need the same opportunities. No one should stop us from achieving what ever we want. It is a battle and sometimes we should be aware and watchful that they don't do this and cripple us "for our own good".

May Lou: Liberation is a personal, community, national story. Being a survivor of domestic violence you are brain washed into doing because you can't. Breaking free, liberation happens one person at a time. You listen and allow for hope: The action. We can talk about it and listen but it is in the action. From my end outward that is how liberation happens.

Joaquin - I would like to have more liberation in what I do. To enjoy what I am doing no matter what it is. In my work, workers work for an institution with walls and borders . My members, the people I represent, are scared into their jobs. A lot of us are the same way. They are afraid to loose their jobs. Afraid to lose their jobs because its true if they do they cannot feed their family.

Mary Lou: Not me. When I met Southwest Workers Union I learned, I do not have to be afraid to loose my job.

Marta: Liberation is big! It starts with us doing it ourselves. Liberation should not be painful. In domestic violence women allow the men to treat them that way. First thing she says, he is the father of my children and I do not want to leave this. It's about liberation of men. Individual liberation is when you realize you have abilities and a gift. Liberation from capitalism is another form of liberation. You are a slave to consumerism and realizing that it is stupid to work hard and go buy \$200 shoes. When people fear change it implodes. The fear comes from within. Until we learn and understand among ourselves then we can teach. We have to understand it for ourselves.

David - On liberation one of the things is you have to start questioning the status quo. You accept or don't but you have to start critically thinking about it. I read Simon Bolivar y dice - "Nos dominan más por engaño que por la fuerza"

Cesar: The difference between freedom and liberation. Freedom someone gives it to you and liberation is taken, I decide.

Small Group discussion on:

What are the conclusions on Internalized, Colonialism and Neo Colonialism? Are they good or bad? How do we tear the systems down?

Round Robin #3:

Mary Lou: In our group oppression comes in so many different names and forms. As we are reading the root of everything goes back to the definition of church leaders "What God Said" The holy book: I am the holder of what god said. You are less than. Classification of power, the power is mine because I hold the book. Adam and Eve in the beginning and the woman was held responsible for the decline. You messed it up. It was the woman.

Joaquin: A ton of info. I already felt like the time is gone. Developing a tolerance through experience. Personally I was taught anti-racism when I was young. I was taught to support gay rights, to love the land as a child. For me that is what I would do when I had a child or a friend. If you are my friend you are my family. I surround people with everything I have. To me that is my personal process.

Marta: All three are bad because they are a form of colonization. We talked about how capitalism was brought in. All about racism and one race acting like they are better than another. The ability to gain income and being competitive is a form of racism. It is in their interest that we stay the way we are.

David: We discussed Neo Colonialism. It is an indirect control through military presence, treaties and arrangement. There are different organizations that include and exclude some for the benefit of putting pressure in their favor to further imperialism. It is based in a form of indirect control.

Cesar: We talked about the understanding of the colonizing period. And while internal colonization comes in place colonization is not very present but they have established a form of internal colonization. Internal colonization is what we feel inside. We may live anywhere but we are colonized internally everywhere. How do we overcome being oppressed by media and others is how we overcome our own internal state of colonialism.

Lucha: We talked about the US using the military and corporation to control other countries. Puerto Rico is a colony but not really part of the US.

Arturo: Joaquin said something about brothers when you are a Chicano. Goes back to Carnalismo. The image of shaking hands. You can chip away elements of colonialism. Religion is not bad on its own but it is how people use it. Such people who say "If you don't vote for this person you go to hell." I believe in clothing people and helping them. When we decolonize our minds we chip away generations of self-oppression. Also realize the self-loathing aspect. Media, music uses negative images of being black, a women etc... The younger generations still use types of colonial language in relating to itself. The thing is we have to get further and the other forces out there will not stop. It's either kill or be killed. Not that I support violence. The Black Panther's are about defending people, no violence and they established health care facilities and having different

options. When I was teaching women's liberation in college I would tell the girls to get an education. What happens when your boy dies or leaves? You still have kids to watch over.

Irasema: The country that colonized is not there in Mexico, but their influence is, by favorable treaties and funds. They use the value of the dollar to pressure countries to do what they say. Be in favor of what US companies do or we will hold aid hostage. That is Neo-Colonialism. They are not there physically but still have control. Original colonial Spaniards and the English think they have, so they are privileged, but they stole all they have. Since they are rich they think they are privileged and have authority. They think they have this because of their super authority but they stole it. They brought slaves and stole riches from Mexico. Stolen lives, property and resource and use that to oppress. Now people admire the thief because of supposed value.

Luis: Religion has been noted. I was discussing binaries on the grounds of it being a common theme The Book. Like in the Old Testament, good/bad, genders like male and female, nature/us. Not a justification but a license to plunder. Our thinking of good and evil of linear time, patriarchy the creator as male, domination of women because she deserves it as mother of earth. The separation gives license to oppress. This is the separation we live under. Hegemony is when people get together and create institutions. Santa Rose will not pull the plug on you because it is their belief. The binary system is created there. The solutions are circular discussion, shared power and exposing oppression. It's always the first step to decolonize but it means discovering how others are oppressed. It comes down to the binary you and me.

Chavel: Thank You. We just discussed colonialism, neo colonialism. Next we will write a one page reflection on how we begin to decolonize. Round Robin Discussion Ends.

Participants write a one page reflection on the class and give it to Chavel.

Chavel: This has been the first Universidad Sin Fronteras class at the San Antonio Campus.

One Pagers

Sandra Garcia

Class 1

I feel in order to feel liberated; I think people need to get educated. That creates awareness that we are actually colonized in many levels. Once you have been educated, you are more willing to notice what is wrong and what is right. I feel this starts a spark that creates a fire and once this fire has started you just know you have to take action. You will have to continue to educate yourself so you can never fall into an oppression or oppressor. Stay liberated my friends.

Julio Cesar Guerrero

How do we begin to decolonize

Since its been explained that colonizing is the imposition of a foreign culture to an indigenous people, by virtue of stealing natural resources, wealth, labor and culture. It is important to assess what abstract or concrete assets do indigenous people have that cannot be stolen and use that to build a decolonizing movement. For instance, culture which includes values, language, music, food etc. are cultural elements that are being commercialized by the white system. We should take some of the richness back and use it to teach our community about ourselves hence begin in the process of decolonization this could be done in community centers, community councils, intra and interstate network etc.

Natalie Cordero

Today was very informative. I enjoyed listening and engaging in such a reluctant topic outside the university setting. Although the topics were borderline mind provoking, everyone seemed to grasp

the idea their own way. I am normally the one in class advocating for chicanismo and being brown and proud. It felt good to hear the same phrases from others: a sense of connection. I anticipate learning more and grasping an understanding from those that have lived the movement longer. We are all a community and no one person's voice is more important than the other. Explaining a different pedagogy outside the classroom through various lenses.

Arturo Fuentes

How to begin to De-colonize

The process to begin the de-colonization effort starts with the individual. The person must come to the realization that the existence and life that he/she is living has come and been paid with a price. In examining this social reality, colonization has grabbed a hold on the chican@ population as a whole, extending to the individual level. If we are to save ourselves and as a humanity as a whole; we must educate ourselves as to whom we really are! Not by the American Education System as "Hispanics" etc. We must go back to "our roots"; seeking literature that is of our cultural heritage (whether it is mexicano/chicano) We must liberate our minds and begin in the mental, emotional and spiritually healing process as we naturally accept the way GOD created the different segments of humanity, notably us as "Raza" "Chicanos"

Irasema Cavazos

How do we begin to decolonize?

I have learned that to decolonize we first have to become aware that the things we say and do are being affected by our colonized mind. We have to analyze every aspect of our lives in a very candid and factual way.

After this analysis we see how we have and still are being oppressed and how even we are participating in the oppression of others. Once we come to this realization we must take action to cease our participation and then create opportunities for others to have the same realization on their own.

It is this action, the first of many that takes us towards liberation.

David Cruz

How do we begin to decolonize?

Question the status quo. Question that which is accepted as true. Be a critical thinker. Read alternative materials, newspapers, books from other countries and other parts of the world. Listen to music and theatre from as many places as possible. Analyze as best as you can the information. Experience where you can by traveling to different places. Study and Study.

Martha I. Castilla

How do we begin to colonize?

I came to your class to learn more about colonization and liberation and the work of the Universidad sin fronteras. It was quite interesting to hear everyone's comments and understand a little about their perspective. So with the experience I have had in working with people for the past 30 years; I think that the first step is to educate on our history and how we got all these institutions and systems and how the people in control came to be in control. The need to educate on the wonderful, peaceful loving race we are and how the core of who we are has been trampled with and we have lost our history, our sense of being and our identity and I know it is difficult to bring information like this to people; they don't want to hear any more bad news about us. They want to hear solutions and our plans for change. So we cannot open a can of worms without options or an alternative! That just has a lot of people hurt and angry and that causes more internalized oppression!

Mary Lou Mendoza

We begin to de-colonize by starting with the self. It is in the recognition of one's own oppression that the move to decolonization begins. Once the self is aware of its own internal colonization and oppression, one must formulate how to extricate itself from the oppression. From there, if one shares the story of oppression and the realization of the internal colonization and encourages and inspires others introspection, there is a chain effect. If one approaches one person at a time offering the opportunity to learn how to identify oppression and internal colonization modeling and relating the story of one's own realization we begin the movement - one person at a time - one realization at a time and one plan of action.....multiply the process a million times and you have a revolution of the oppressed - and a mass release of internal colonization.

Luis V.

How to decolonize?

- explore the separation from self / nature.
- acknowledge the trauma from this legacy of separation.
- discuss the trauma with I and I to validate and explore the process of separation.
- Identify indigenous practices which interrupt the colonial process/paradigm.

Ex. - for male dominator, egotistical, violent, macho oppressor - perhaps a deconditioning agent such as psychedelics (mushrooms) to expedite the process

Ex. - ceremonies designed to acknowledge our connection to the earth.

Joaquin "Muerte" Abrego

How to decolonize?

I don't know where to begin.

I always think of the children and elders first. I'm not really sure why. Maybe cause in my experience those people mean a lot to me. My grandparents and my nieces. I don't have children yet but if I did I would make sure to start there. I would start at home. Teaching them to celebrate differences. For example; Race, gender, religion. Showing them the tools necessary for positive growth. In the process I would teach myself. Liberate myself.



