



OPEN WORDS: ACCESS AND ENGLISH STUDIES

Vol. 11, No. 1 (August 2018): 42 – 57

DOI: 10.37514/OPW-J.2018.11.1.04

ISSN: 2690-3911 (Print) 2690-392X (Online)

<https://wac.colostate.edu/openwords/>

Deliberative Acts in Reclaiming Hays Street Bridge in San Antonio

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The Hays Street Bridge in San Antonio, Texas is a reclaimed public space that the community may access for family gatherings, wedding photography, poetry readings, dance, and art exhibits. The bridge was assembled from several other bridge parts, including a bridge that once served as a lifeline to marginalized neighborhoods cut off from the city center. Without bridges like the Hays Street Bridge, access to those neighborhoods, where the railway and other blue-collar individuals lived and worked, would be difficult, placing undue hardship on the community, and the city as a whole. This bridge provided access to places of employment for many, but the site fell into disuse and disrepair and was slated for demolition. However, the community that surrounds the bridge complex decided to reclaim this bridge as a public space, and, by so doing, not only saved the bridge as part of engineering history but also turned the bridge into a symbol of the revitalization efforts in south San Antonio.

The community-motivated revitalization effort was in direct opposition to other forms of revitalization, namely gentrification, which is typically led by corporations or individuals from outside of a community. The San Antonio Southside community resisted city government and big business investor plans to bring the bridge down. They reclaimed the historic Hays Street Bridge as a public space first, and second, renewed its relevance as a lifeline to marginalized, low socio-economic communities. These goals were met with the help of *Puentes de Poder* (PDP), a public education program organized by the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center (EPJC). PDP generated enough community engagement to galvanize community resistance and help sustain this reclamation effort. The program deliberately employed a rhetorical

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ISSN: 2690-3911 (Print) 2690-392X (Online)

strategy, which I connect with Chicana feminism, to serve a culturally specific goal: save the bridge for our community. The EPJC used their resources through PDP to straddle two opposing worlds in the city of San Antonio--city governance and marginalized communities--by building public excitement and interest in the bridge and ultimately by engaging public deliberations across many communities. The community education initiated by the EPJC was a deliberative act to fight against a more massive bureaucratic structure, city government, and big business for the benefit of marginalized communities in south San Antonio.

I begin by defining deliberation and deliberative acts. Deliberation about public spaces tends to include people who hold power in a city, such as city planners, government officials, and experts employed by the city to conduct specific research. This deliberation is often “open to the public” or performed for the public in scheduled talks or town meetings, where the public is invited to give input or to watch and witness such proceedings. However, to participate, members of the public must know when meetings occur, have access to transportation, and be able to attend. Any restrictions to such conditions are a cause for concern because these restrictions make the process of deliberation accessible only to privileged people who have knowledge, means, and access to such public forums. Deliberative acts are different, in that these acts are not limited or designated to be effective only in such formal public forums where individuals with access and privilege are the only ones who attend. In other words, deliberative acts are different from deliberation because deliberation usually occurs with equal individuals who hold power. Deliberative acts span multiple communities and varying degrees of power. Deliberative acts involve “speech acts,” but are not limited to simple acts of speaking. Deliberative acts also may include all types of performance, including arts, photography, poetry, literature, and dance (Lyon 25). These acts are augmented by community education and allow for the performance of cultural difference as part of the deliberation process.

By adopting a Chicana feminist perspective, I investigate a culturally specific deliberative act, enacted by EPJC in its PDP effort to reclaim the Hays Street Bridge¹. Examining the ways community education programs augment deliberative acts offers us a rhetorical understanding of how marginalized communities access and claim power through enactments of self and performance. The EPJC provided a safe space through PDP for people to stand up through art, poetry, music, drama, and literature. They educated the community on the ways in which they, and people like themselves,

¹ The EPJC is a social justice organization in south Texas that serves and helps many different historically marginalized populations, who do not always have the same access to power or forums for public address.

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have been excluded from the process of shaping their own neighborhoods. PDP is a community education project steeped in deliberative acts that ignited the public deliberation which surrounded Hays Street Bridge. In an interview, Travis Sparks, lead engineer involved in the restoration of the Hays Street Bridge, states, “It is through their [EPJC] action that people got involved and were able to reinterpret the history of the bridge”(NCPTT | *Texas Dancehall Preservation and the Restoration of Hays Street Bridge (Podcast 30)*). We can learn about the role that community educational spaces and deliberative acts play in the process of public deliberation by examining the ways community education programs, like PDP, augment deliberation to expand ideas about public spaces through deliberative acts.

Community Actions as Deliberation

Coalition building and bridge building are important ideals from Chicana feminists. These ideals add to my understanding of deliberation and expand my rhetorical repertoire on what constitutes a deliberative act. Chicana feminist perspectives help me to see that community actions as forms of deliberation in which people resist and claim spaces by saying, “*we are here!*” Chicana feminists often use performance and artistic expression to gain access to public fora from which they were previously excluded, speaking back to the dominant culture that may not always be interested in hearing about the oppression of marginalized people. Thus, I connect how the EPJC, like Chicana feminists, provided a space for deliberative acts through PDP, giving marginalized people in the city of San Antonio access to public forums that not only allowed them to speak of their cultural difference but also change the world around them in significant ways.

In *Deliberative Acts: Democracy, Rhetoric, and Rights*, Arabella Lyon defines deliberative acts as speech acts, performance, or performativity that enact difference or perform cultural difference with the aim of transforming the material world in structural or formal ways (25). One of the benefits of deliberation is that it is not persuasion; yet, it is a more suitable concept for the twenty-first century because it emphasizes action (Lyon 25). Deliberative acts do not try to engage rhetors and interlocutors across a power divide as traditional persuasion does. In deliberation, no one person is “right” and the other “wrong,” and no argument ensues where one person “wins” as the other individual’s mind changes. Instead, as Lyon suggests, deliberation denotes a long and careful process of discussion and consideration; it enacts careful movement through thought; and, requires that everyone have equal power to access public space. Instead of trying to engage across a power divide

deliberative acts are implemented to build bridges and form relationships, so that those with and without power are acknowledged, as Lyon observes. Deliberative acts eliminate the argumentative stances so that a true deliberation in a literal public space can occur, especially in culturally significant places in the community, such as a centralized park or a social media platform. Unlike the traditional process of argumentation, deliberation is an action and such actions must be performed. Within a community, performance offers an opportunity to express cultural identity.

The PDP program was a tool for the EPJC to enable the expression of community cultural identity by offering ways for marginalized groups to access rhetoric as deliberative acts in part to engage community action. I build on Lyon's notion of deliberative acts, expanding our understanding of what "speech acts" are, to include not just speech but other forms of community actions. This syntactical change from "speech acts" to "actions" offers me an opportunity to investigate *all* actions that perform cultural identity in the EPJC's effort to save the Hays Street Bridge with their PDP program. The PDP represents a program that does not necessarily whitewash difference but draws attention to cultural difference, creating a "we" and an "I know you" moment in the community to bridge power dynamics and cultivate relationships between marginalized groups and those who hold power in the city of San Antonio.

As actions that perform cultural identity, deliberative acts as part of community engagement create a specific kairotic moment that can help to successfully reclaim spaces for public use, case in point Hays Street Bridge which was slated for destruction. Through the deliberative acts enacted by the PDP program, the EPJC empowered a community into action to create a safe space for marginalized communities by giving them access to the deliberation process. The EPJC has a reputation in the San Antonio community for building bridges and coalitions. One of the ways in which the EPJC built bridges between Black and Latinx communities affected by Hays Street Bridge was by holding a series of workshops through the PDP program. The flyer, reproduced in Figure 1, was distributed throughout the community and listed the goals of the workshop, which underscore the need to "meet for deep understanding and knowledge" as well as a recognition of "what makes a space public." By focusing on such an abstract term such as "public" and by acknowledging those communities who reside within the marginalized community, the flyer speaks to audiences that typically do not get to explore such questions "outside of the college classroom." Thus, the EPJC uses the flyer to embrace the ambiguity of the term "public" as well as to embrace the duality of mind. The flyer acts like a catalyst or a bridge to augment deliberation and ignite deliberative actions by individuals in marginalized communities. These individuals and communities are empowered to be part of a process that

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previously excluded them. As a result, many diverse groups in San Antonio came together to voice concerns about the Hays Street Bridge.

To help establish the PDP program, the EPJC adopted five specific steps. These steps align with what Chicana feminist Gloria Anzaldúa's refers to as *el camino de la mestiza*, or the mestiza's way. This path involves a series of steps that helped the PDP program serve as the catalyst for community engagement, igniting a deliberation in new places and new communities traditionally kept out of the deliberative process. In a later section, I go into further detail on how each step correlates with the PDP program, but for now, let me quickly introduce the steps. The first step in *el camino de la mestiza* is to take inventory and discover from where all the different "baggage" (Anzaldúa 104) comes. The second step is to "put history through a sieve" (Anzaldúa 104) to discover what is truth and what is fiction. The third step is to communicate a "conscious rupture with all oppressive traditions of all cultures and religions" (Anzaldúa 104). The fourth is to document the struggle so others have access to it. The fifth step reinterprets history and, using new symbols, shapes new myths, and adopts new perspectives towards the dark skinned, women, and queers (Anzaldúa 104). This last step is very particular to Anzaldúa's work; however, it expands when used by different mestizx and latinx communities. By adopting the steps from *el camino de la mestiza*, the EPJC used the PDP program to augment deliberation because the program acted as a catalyst for community engagement, bridging power gaps between communities of power, such as city governments where deliberation about public spaces normally occurs, and the marginalized communities that were directly impacted by the bridge closure. This augmentation of deliberation paves the way, so to speak, for the historical structure to be saved for both communities, those with power interested in preserving history and those without power who were interested in saving their communities. PDP empowered the voices of marginalized communities of color to engage in deliberative acts because it gave these individuals safe spaces where their identities were accepted and validated within the dominant discourse.

Reclaiming Hays Street Bridge through Community Engagement

Two discourses were present in the preservation of the Hays Street Bridge: those with power in community who use their expertise in deliberation and represent the dominant discourse and those who used deliberative acts which represent the subordinate discourse. The first discourse, that of expertise, was utilized by experts who get involved and petition city governments or other entities who have control for the preservation of historic places and spaces based a perceived importance to specific

histories. These individuals called on the preservation of the Hays Street Bridge as part of engineering history. The deliberation of the dominant discourse was ignited when well-known Texas engineer, Douglas Steadman, identified the historical significance of the truss structures of the bridge and was able to get the bridge designated as a historical engineering landmark through the American Society of Engineers. Those without power in a community and who organize to serve the community, like the EPJC, represent the subordinate discourse. The discourse was utilized by the communities that surrounded the bridge, members who called for its reclamation as a public space. Both discourses were instrumental in saving the bridge; however, the subordinate discourse enacted by the EPJC through the PDP program is what I see of value as deliberative acts from cultural community action.

Those who were part of the reclamation of Hays Street Bridge as a public space were not unaware of the discourses at work in the preservation of the bridge. In his podcast interview, Travis Sparks, chief engineer on the Hays street bridge restoration project, attributes its restoration to the grassroots organizations: “[P]eople have got to want to keep their old bridges and that’s really the essence of keeping them and saving them even in the face of opposition from powerful entities like the state DOTs [Departments of Transportation] or the Federal Highway Administration, or the municipalities, or the railroads; whoever [sic] is pretty determined to replace things.” This emphasis on the community and organization is the non-legalistic rhetoric that aided to save the bridge. As Sparks notes, community support played a vital role.

With the PDP program, the EPJC created a space where the community could come together to critically engage the dominant discourses at hand. Once the space was created, the community was given an overview of the discourses and power structures at work so that those affected members of the community could understand how the power imbalance was affecting their choices, or lack of choice, and what they could do that have say in the public deliberation. The combination of community education, deliberation, and *el camino de la mestiza* enacted by the PDP program created a space for culturally specific performances of deliberation to take place. To stir up community interest, the PDP program provided anyone with an internet connection the legal material, such as court documents about the bridge, that can often be hard to locate. In addition to efforts to educate the community, the PDP program initiated a media campaign to generate local media coverage about the bridge. PDP made sure the local communities were educated on ways that other communities had successfully dealt with similar situations. The community was then asked to share their specific stories and narratives of how they fit into the history of the city to reframe the discourse not just as a legalistic discourse, but as a community discourse. These acts

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built momentum, spreading community-wide engagement that eventually culminated in the successful reclamation of the Hays Street Bridge as not only a historical designation but also as a public space for all to access.

Deliberative Acts in PDP

The rhetorical moves implemented by the PDP program are culturally specific deliberative acts that focus on the importance of community education. These moves aid in creating a safe space where deliberation can occur and where community excitement and understanding of what rhetorical agency is as well as how it is developed and used. To help with these goals, members of the EPJC relied on Chicana feminism. For instance, in 2015 the splash page for the Hays Street Bridge on the EPJC website described the bridge as a "public education project" to "create a space for people to meet on an ongoing basis to build an understanding of the reasons behind the struggles our communities face" (EPJC). This declaration aligns with *el camino de la mestiza*. Thus, the PDP program is an alternative education project for the community that, much like *el camino de la mestiza*, helped the latinx community (or other marginalized communities) come into consciousness to understand the controversy surrounding the Hays Street Bridge. In the next few pages I will analyze each step on *el camino de la mestiza*, manifestation of a culturally specific deliberative act, and how it was enacted by the EPJC in the PDP project in the rhetoric surrounding Hays Street Bridge.

Step One: Taking Inventory

An important part of empowerment is for members of marginalized communities to become aware of and acknowledge the existing power structures that affect their lives. As a community education program, PDP offered a safe place for community members to confront and recognize the difficult observation that power distribution is not always equal let alone equitable. "Taking inventory" cannot be done in isolation; there must be a cultural safe place for this recognition to occur. Taking inventory of and discovering the different "baggage" that each party brings to a rhetorical situation is the first step on *el camino de la mestiza*. By taking personal inventory and discovering the types of strengths and weaknesses, each individual rhetor as well as different parts of the community bring to the discourse, the power structures that move in a city are not only visible but hopefully acknowledged and understood by those that are being affected.



Figure 1: Puentes de Poder Flyer

Education is important so that individuals and communities can understand their own struggles as well as those of others around them. The first step on the road of *el camino de la mestiza* is examining our baggage or “taking inventory.” Taking inventory means deciding what we know and what we need to know. This step that includes a deliberative pause is often taken for granted because it seems to happen without effort. However, in problem solving if we do not put in a conscious effort and we omit this step in the process of deliberation, then the results often result in hastily made decisions. The PDP helped the community to collectively take inventory by offering classes that guided participants to consider the different questions about power, communities, city planning, and public spaces that they should be asking regarding the Hays Street Bridge. The program offered participants a way to answer questions such as: “Why are some parts of town poor while others are rich? Why are some voices given more access to the political process? How can we change these things?” The answers to these questions were ones that the participants in the community created together as a group through deliberative acts and public

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engagement. A college campus has historically been such a safe space where students are expected to critically analyze the world around them. The EPJC flyer in figure 1 points out that for many individuals who do not attend college, there is no such space or place where they have the chance for critical analysis and observation in their daily lives. The EPJC acknowledges the lack of space for critical analysis in Figure 1, paragraph 2, line 1, noting "while we get to explore these questions if we have access to college classrooms, we seldom get the time or the space in our daily working lives." The PDP itself became the vehicle that created a deliberative space where the community could engage in sifting through their baggage.

Step Two: Separating Truth from Fiction

One of the ways that the PDP put history through a sieve and separated truth from fiction was to expose residents to stories of what communities can do when they pull together. The entire project was kicked off on 23 March 2013 with a screening of the documentary on the bridge itself, *The Garden*. The documentary narrates the story of an urban farm that began as a community garden in Los Angeles. The farm was created and worked on by the Latinx community until the owner of the land decided that the community could not use it anymore. It describes the diverse ways the community came together to try to save their garden. The story was meant to inspire residents as well as let them know that, through organizing, people who feel marginalized and powerless can take on forces that threaten their communities and environments. The EPJC used PDP as a rhetorical strategy throughout six sessions that focused on the Hays Street Bridge as a case study. Focusing on the bridge allowed space for community members, as well as activists and historians, to weed out the truth from the fiction in the discourse surrounding the bridge.

Step Three: A Conscious Rupture

Another session that was meant to cause excitement around the bridge was a session about the history of "land grabs," with examples of current land grabs along with a screening of the 1991 film, *City of Hope*. *City of Hope* is a fictional film about land development in an American city. The developer is encouraging an owner to set fire to his apartments to make room for a major commercial development. In the film, the owner experiences the different power dynamics, corruption, and politics of city government. Both sessions that included screenings of *The Garden* and *City of Hope* represented the sieve where the community was able to sift for themselves through

fact and fiction and filter what they knew as a group. Both sessions were two parts of a single whole as facilitators highlighted what tends to be remembered and erased from history and public memory as well as who usually gets marginalized.

Community education is usually aimed at informing the community about an issue as well as gaining media and other kinds of attention. Another important part of PDP was the panel discussion on economic development that included politicians, educators, and community organizers. Panels are typical rhetorical fora employed by community activists. According to a guide created by Action.org, a panel is a community forum where anyone can attend. It is comprised of a group of experts who speak on a topic followed by a question and answer session. It is designed to allow people to learn about an issue and to recruit activists. The guide notes that “community forums can be a very effective way to raise awareness in your community and to get people involved in an issue” (*action.org*). So, the third session was not one that was a unique cultural expression; rather, it represents a common rhetorical move in activist communities.

The fourth session was culturally specific because it focused on gentrification, which often disproportionately affects people of color. This fourth session took place at the EPJC and included a film screening of the 2012 film, *My Brooklyn*, followed by a discussion with the director. *My Brooklyn*, a documentary film, portrays the perspective of a person involved with gentrification: “Director Kelly Anderson’s personal journey as a Brooklyn gentrifier” (*IMDB*). What makes this panel unique is that the director in her documentary and discussion is performing her own journey as a gentrifier and allowing people to question her about it. By performing from her cultural perspective, in this case as a gentrifier, she is performing a deliberative act that allows people to recognize the other and draw connections between her experience in Brooklyn and the controversy surrounding the Hays Street Bridge in San Antonio. The EPJC not only facilitated this moment of bridge building and recognition, but also had its representatives document this rupture as part of the rhetorical moves of *el camino de la mestiza*.

Step Four: Documenting the Rupture

A narrative session called *Eastside Stories* was held on 5 October 2013. This event consisted of community leaders, artists, engineers, historians, and community members gathering to share stories about the bridge to gain more widespread community support for the fight against the City and for the preservation of the bridge per the original agreement. To continue to inspire the community and draw various

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members together that could not attend the event in person, it was recorded and made available to the public for viewing by NowCastSA. NowCastSA is a non-profit organization dedicated to local news and information that "works similarly to public television" (*NowCastSA*) to "promote and facilitate an inclusive civic conversation by empowering neighbors to identify common issues and share information through education, training, community news, events, and multimedia" (*NowCastSA*).

It is the sharing of *testimonio*² and *memoria*³ of the struggles surrounding the bridge that became deliberative acts, performative events that facilitated moments of recognition allowing for greater understanding of the different members of the community. It is through the community engagement and understanding that is produced through the rhetorical acts of *testimonio* and *memoria* that deliberation is augmented. PDP invited speakers from various cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds to speak about the history and impact of the bridge on the community, underscoring how their history and stories were valued alongside those of the bridge. By valuing the story of the people and tying them to the history of the bridge, the railroad, and the city brought the community together, giving equal importance to each. The rhetorical use of *testimonio* and *memoria* drew together the African American, the working-class people of color, railroad history, and engineering communities and united them around the single focal point of Hays Street Bridge.

The uniting of diverse communities through the rhetorical acts of *memoria* and of *testimonio* took place at Lockwood Park at the PDP event called *Eastside Stories*, which included talks that were deliberative acts rooted in *mestizx* consciousness. The event included stories told by invited speakers from varying cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. Invited speakers included founding members of the Hays Street Bridge Restoration group Nettie Hinton, Gary Houston, and Douglas Steadman. B.L. Mier, San Antonio Railroad History Museum; Rosemary Catacalos, 2013 Poet Laureate of

² *The Sage Handbook of Social Science Research* defines *testimonio* as "first-person narration of socially significant experiences in which the narrative voice is that of a typical or extraordinary witness or protagonist who metonymically represents others who have lived through similar situations and who have rarely given written expression to them. *Testimonio* then is the "literature of the nonliterary" involving both electronic reproductions, usually with the help of an interviewer/editor, and the creative reordering of historical events in a way that impresses as representative and "true" and that often projects toward social transformation. (1119)

³ *Memoria* is the Spanish word for memory, but it is more than memories. In his piece "Memoria Is a Friend of Ours," Victor Villanueva notes that *memoria* in our Western rhetorical understanding is the mother of the muses, the most important of rhetorical offices. He notes that "memory is tied to voice" and that having a voice or having your voice heard is particularly important to people of color. Villanueva mentions some of the many academics of color that write about the "connections between narratives by people of color and the need to reclaim a memory" (12) as well as the need to reclaim a memory built through generations.

Texas; John Knight, retired engineer from the Texas Department of Transportation; and San Antonio residents Steve Cervantez, and Beatrice Valadez.

The historically working-class community and those of people of color were engaged in the history of the bridge by the introduction of the first speaker, Nettie Hinton. Ms. Hinton is a woman of color, who shared her memories as a fourth-generation Eastside resident. Her stories were those of an African American woman growing up in the Jim Crow segregated South while living in the neighborhood that surrounded the Hays Street Bridge. She reminded the listeners that she is the descendant of an emancipated slave and detailed her family's purchasing of property, as well as detailing some of the unrecognized history of the area as a rich multicultural community. She also spent time illuminating the role of Chinese merchants in the area. As a person of color, she shared her *testimonio* and *memoria* of the bridge.

Another person invited to share a story was B. L. Mier from the San Antonio Railroad History Museum. The members of the community that are interested in railroad history is diverse, but the representative who spoke, Mr. Mier, is a white gentleman who shared from the perspective of a railroad enthusiast and read some accounts of what happened on the railroad. His testimony was not personal in nature, nor was it true *testimonio*. His rhetoric reflects dominant cultural understanding of the Western rhetorical concept of legalistic testimony. He provided testimony or evidence of the importance of the bridge by highlighting its role in the railroads.

Legalistic rhetoric was provided by John Knight, a retired engineer from the Texas Department of Transportation. He provided the history of the railroad, those who lived and worked on the railroad, and the importance of the bridge in the railroad community. His testimony veered into *testimonio* when he explained the importance of the bridge to allow the free flow of traffic when trains were stopped on the tracks, sometimes for up to thirty minutes.

However, one of the most important talks was given by Douglas Steadman, who interrupted the community perception created by the media to highlight different truths that unknown to many people in the community. The EPJC documented this struggle by video, making them available online. Steadman's narrative detailed the donation of the land by BudCo, and the origination of the restoration group. He told the assembled people how the City agreed to accept the land and hold it for public use and then later, the new city council agreed to sell the land to a private brewery for development in exchange for \$800,000 in taxpayer money. He also noted that the "Esperanza [EPJC] group have been very helpful in our putting our case before the community and the city, and we are now involved in a lawsuit to see that property

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returns to its rightful owners." By "rightful owners," he is referring to the public who owns the history.

Step Five: Reinterpreting for Inclusion

The PDP used performative action to reinterpret for inclusion. Performative action is another rhetorical strategy that can be used to initiate community engagement. The session of PDP billed as a "Performative Action Event" occurred directly on the Hays Street Bridge. Called *Right to the City*, the performative action was designed to inform and engage the community with a discussion of alternative solutions as well as dance performances by well-known activist dance groups and artist/activists including Zombie Bazaar⁴ and artist/activist Fabiola Torralba⁵. The event foreshadowed other performance related public events that would take place on the bridge in the future. It was literally the corporeal bodies of these dancers, their flesh, that which created the public space of the bridge and created an idea of the community as empowered. Torralba described her dance as one that demonstrated the "power of story and the power of people coming together" stating that she "facilitates opportunities for movers of all backgrounds to create and engage in issues that affect their everyday lives" (Torralba). The dance and performative work of reimagining the space for inclusion is exactly what the U.S. Department of Arts and Culture⁶ (USDAC), says that culture and art do for the greater public. I end this section with the USDAC tagline "Together, we create the world we wish to inhabit." This tagline is a statement of values that include the following self-evident truths: "Culture is a human right. Culture is created by everyone. Cultural diversity is a social good and the wellspring of free expression. Culture is the sum-total of public, private, individual, and collective action. The work of artists is a powerful resource for community development, education,

⁴ Zombie Bazaar call themselves a "Panza Fusion group." Originally a duo that has grown to a "troupe of 11 womyn," Zombie Bazaar fuses tribal belly dance with various other genres. Their website also states that they are a "fusing of talent, creativity and homenaje a su cultura Xicana," making it clear that it is the cultural Xicana that led to the creation of the dance troupe. The term "Xicana" here is used to signify the queer Chicana feminist ideology. The group is dedicated to activism and "luchando por la causa [fighting for the cause] through movement" ("Zombie Bazaar Panza Fusion").

⁵ Fabiola Torralba is an artist and activist who declares she is "choreographer, educator, and activist" who is dedicated to "the transformation and empowerment of our communities" ("FabiolaTorralba").

⁶ Their website states "The US Department of Arts and Culture (USDAC) is the nation's newest people-powered department, founded on the truth that art and culture are our most powerful and under-tapped resources for social change. Radically inclusive, useful and sustainable, and vibrantly playful, the USDAC aims to spark a grassroots, creative change movement, engaging millions in performing and creating a world rooted in empathy, equity, and social imagination."

healthcare, protection of our commonwealth, and other democratic public purposes” (“The USDAC”)

Conclusion

By examining how the EPJC in the PDP project not only brought the community into the discussion but also augmented the deliberation, we can learn how to reframe argument for inclusion of people who are marginalized and historically kept out of deliberation. Inclusion was critical to the success of reclaiming a historical bridge. Inclusion is also critical for our success in a multicultural world. In this case study, I noted how saving bridges for history is often difficult because few people are interested and affected by engineering history. However, many people were affected by lack of access to public space and to pieces of history of marginalized communities. It was by allowing culturally specific forms of deliberation and community engagement that the bridge was saved.

I explained the ways that the community education program augmented the deliberation process and how the steps of the process of *el camino de la mestiza* came together to give new life to the marginalized communities who live and work near the Hays Street Bridge in San Antonio. I have also outlined the rhetorical contribution of Chicana feminists who have demonstrated one of the ways that community engagement can be an agent of social change by using a rhetorical process called *el camino de la mestiza*/the mestiza way. I analyzed the process by examining the community education project called *Puentes de Poder* (PDP) project to understand how creating a space for public education where people gain a deep understanding of how their community is being affected by decisions as well as finding a space for that community to come together to vocalize their needs.

Community education is a significant part of the culturally specific deliberative acts enacted by latinx and mestizx communities like the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center (EPJC) that use culturally specific strategies such as *el camino de la mestiza*. It is organizations like the EPJC that make safe spaces for the community to come together and find voice. Their community education project enabled deliberative acts that ruptured traditional approaches to activism as well as conventional strategies for community engagement. It is the new understanding of the significance of the bridge in the community creates new narratives. The Hays Street Bridge is now a symbol of community power in San Antonio. It represents a daily reminder of how the entire community with all its intersectional and multicultural perspectives came together and engaged in deliberative acts. Those acts fueled interest in the bridge and gave members

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of marginalized communities a safe center from where they could speak back to power. Community education empowered marginalized groups to negotiate with the public discourse of politicians and community activists. PDP and the EPJC created a space where the people are empowered and find the strength and understanding to act and stand firm in the face of large bureaucratic systems that are not meant to work in their favor.

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This peer-reviewed essay was previously available on Pearson.



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ISSN: 2690-3911 (Print) 2690-392X (Online).