

AFTERWORD: LATCRIT AT TWENTY-FIVE AND BEYOND—
ORGANIZED ACADEMIC ACTIVISM AND THE LONG HAUL:
DESIGNING “HYBRIDIZED” ADVOCACY PROJECTS FOR AN
AGE OF GLOBAL DISRUPTION, SYSTEMIC INJUSTICE, AND
BOTTOM-UP PROGRESS

FRANCISCO VALDES[†]
STEVEN W. BENDER
JENNIFER J. HILL

ABSTRACT

On the monumental occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary celebration of LatCrit (Latina and Latino Critical Legal Theory, Inc.) as a still thriving and persevering community of critical scholars and activists, this Article offers some reflections on where we have been, where we are now, and where we might go next together as academics and organizers of long-term collective action. Against the current disruptions of a global pandemic, aggravated by planetary climate collapse, disinformation campaigns, and the organized top-down sabotage of U.S. democracy itself, our community responses going forward must be both more democratic and decentralized than ever, as well as more coordinated and coalitional, utilizing the innovations of critical hybridized praxis and of systemic advocacy projects of social and academic activism. If we act in the ways and values this Afterword outlines, now and for the long haul, we can achieve tactical, operational, and structural gains long imagined and sought by our community and allies.

[†] Francisco Valdes, Professor and Dean’s Distinguished Scholar, University of Miami School of Law. Many, many thanks to the critical forefathers and foremothers whose gains we seek to protect and expand with today’s work, and to the organizers and editors of the LatCrit-at-25 conference and symposium who make today’s work possible. All errors are mine (or shared with my coauthors). Steven Bender, Associate Dean for Planning and Strategic Initiatives, Seattle University School of Law. Jennifer Hill, organizer and advocate, Advocacy Partners Team, and adjunct professor, Florida International University, Miami.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	774
I. CENTRALITY OF THE ADVOCACY PROJECT MODEL AS A KEY	
UNIT OF ORGANIZED ACTION	777
A. <i>The Critical Challenge: The Materiality of Power Versus the Promise of Principle</i>	780
B. <i>Now and Next: Understanding and Seizing Paradigms in Shift</i>	784
C. <i>Hybridizing Praxis: Designing and Executing Systemic Advocacy Projects</i>	788
D. <i>Taking First Steps: Building a Critical Hybridized Praxis</i>	792
1. The Annual Curso Crítico: “Teoría Crítica del Derecho y Justicia Social en las Américas”	793
2. The Monthly Critical Zoom Salon: Hospitality and Solidarity Gone Viral	794
3. The <i>Critical Justice</i> Monthly Events Series: Learning, Teaching, Doing.....	794
CONCLUSION.....	795

INTRODUCTION

What is next is more of the same. The struggle. But what is next is also something completely different. Because the mechanisms of oppression morph and evolve. And so must we. But we have an advantage, we are in this together. We struggle for communion. . . . We imagine, together. We envision, together. We act, together. And in unity there is strength.

—Saru M. Matambanadzo,
Jorge R. Roig and Sheila I. Vélez Martínez¹

So let us not return to what was normal,
But reach toward what is next.

—Amanda Gorman²

The formal theme framing this twenty-fifth anniversary conference must have seemed daunting to much of the far-flung LatCrit community. Imagining and embarking on an arc of struggle and progress spanning the next quarter century is a tall order at any time, but even more so during the

1. Saru M. Matambanadzo, Jorge R. Roig, & Sheila I. Vélez Martínez, *Foreword to LatCrit 2017 Symposium: What's Next? Resistance Resilience and Community in the Trump Era*, 9 UNIV. MIA. RACE & SOC. JUST. L. REV. 1, 44 (2019).

2. Amanda Gorman, *Amanda Gorman's End-of-Year Poem, 'New Day's Lyric'*, ASSOCIATED PRESS NEWS (Dec. 29, 2021), <https://apnews.com/article/entertainment-lifestyle-amanda-gorman-arts-and-entertainment-7dd183a6a13c7331110cff2affe4cc40>.

existential epidemics framed in the conference *Call for Papers*.³ It remains too early to tell whether we—the LatCrit community of today and tomorrow—can meet this vision. But the ferment the *Call* and conference generated was palpable even before the conference concluded. The opening plenary panel confronting the attacks on critical knowledge began the program with a sense of both timeliness and timelessness. Remarks by Mari Matsuda and Charles Lawrence as the Luminarias award recipients moved us all into a fresh sense of why we do follow and must follow their footsteps. Connecting these dots even further, the Jerome McCristal Culp, Jr. Memorial Lecture by Dean Emeritus Anthony Varona laid bare concretely how bigotry, neoliberalism, and raw power can hijack and deform higher education. And the comprehensive discussion on the *Critical Justice* textbook⁴ displayed in concrete terms how and why this new teaching–learning resource addresses, by design, the many issues, challenges, struggles, venues, adaptations, and applications covered by the conference panelists. The closing community forum reminded us again how our collaborative work is a transgenerational marathon that requires a toughness to match the toughest of times and the challenges they present for long-haul anti-subordination struggles.

Underscoring this last point was the occurrence of the conference itself: a virtual event hosting dozens of panels and proceedings, more than one hundred speakers, and countless related operations to ensure the same rigor, warmth, and openness that have become LatCrit hallmarks during these past twenty-five years of conferences, colloquia, workshops, publications, and other projects that comprise our wide-ranging programmatic activities. Large institutions and well-resourced groups had difficulty mastering the new means of virtual communication—and it was even more difficult for ragtag groups like us. Making the magic happen virtually this year was magic itself.

However, this complex undertaking—well into the second year of the global COVID-19 pandemic—was not our first foray into virtuality. Not only have many of us adjusted to Zoom-based teaching since the seismic changes of 2020 hit the world, as a community we also have reconceived or launched events tailored to the era but still consistent with the basics that keep us constant—our expressly shared goals, guideposts, and values as a multiply diverse community of academic activists and friends.⁵ Initiatives during this time, like the LatCrit Virtual Fridays series,⁶ not only kept our work steady but helped build our collective capacity for the

3. *Call for Papers: LatCrit 2021 Biennial Conference*, LATCRIT (Jun. 1, 2021), <https://latcrit.org/call-for-papers-latcrit-2021-biennial-conference/>.

4. See generally FRANCISCO VALDES, STEVEN W. BENDER, & JENNIFER J. HILL, *CRITICAL JUSTICE: SYSTEMIC ADVOCACY IN LAW AND SOCIETY* 1–2 (1st ed. 2021).

5. See Steven W. Bender & Francisco Valdes, *LatCrit XV Symposium Afterword—At and Beyond Fifteen: Mapping LatCrit Theory, Community, and Praxis*, 14 HARV. LATINO L. REV. 397, 401–04 (2011) (summarizing the community’s shared values).

6. See *Latest Past Events*, LATCRIT, <https://latcrit.org/events/> (last visited May 3, 2022).

larger-scale, complex, virtual gathering that marked a quarter century of LatCrit community, theory, and praxis.

We owe this twenty-fifth anniversary gathering to the persistence and cooperation of the organizers and participants who designed an uplifting event amid the horrors of a fascist resurgence across and beyond the United States. In this resurgence, “white supremacy” is the overarching framing, neoliberalism is the enabling force, and anti-Blackness is the normative glue. The aim of this fascist resurgence, as always and even more so at this moment, is to suppress the development and application of critical knowledge in contexts of bottom-up organizing, advocacy, and coalition building. This resurgence demonstrates how entrenched, emboldened, and empowered the forces of systemic injustice have come to feel. Equally so, our twenty-fifth anniversary conference theme attests to our communal will, capacity, and potential to propel critical scholars, formations, and networks—and our alignment with grassroots movements—forward for another twenty-five years. At the least, these resources, commitments, and realignments point us toward innovative next steps that provide further stepping-stones toward “Critical Justice”—a materially and systemically more equal and more just world by, if not before, 2047.⁷

In this Afterword, and in this hopeful, open-ended, and practical spirit, we offer some core thoughts and basic steps that just about anyone can undertake to make a difference in this struggle for Critical Justice. As with all the LatCrit symposia afterwords of the past quarter century, here we discuss our (the larger LatCrit community) efforts as we see them: where we have been, where we are, and where we might go next. Unlike all previous LatCrit afterwords, however, we do not begin with an updated summation of our works, values, and trajectories because this year also occasioned the publication of the *LatCrit Primer*.⁸ Opening with a Foreword by Margaret Montoya and closing with an Afterword by Sumi Cho and Angela Harris, the *Primer* discusses the past twenty-five years—the underpinnings, vexations, aspirations, and current situation that contextualize our labors during these years—much better than we could here.

Moreover, and also unlike all other LatCrit afterwords, here we articulate a vision of life beyond, and with, the still-unfolding new realities of a “once-in-a-century” global pandemic—realities aggravated simultaneously by the press of planetary climate collapse, full-scale disinformation campaigns, and the organized top-down sabotage of U.S. democracy

7. Put as simply as possible, by “Critical Justice” we mean the material fulfillment of the Equal Justice promise for *all* in lived terms, and as measured from the bottom up. See VALDES, BENDER, & HILL, *supra* note 4, at 423, 521 (defining and laying out theory and practical steps toward Critical Justice).

8. See generally FRANCISCO VALDES & STEVEN W. BENDER, LATCRIT: FROM CRITICAL LEGAL THEORY TO ACADEMIC ACTIVISM ix–x (New York Univ. Press, 2021); *LatCrit Primers*, LATCRIT, <https://latcrit.org/publications/latcrit-primers/> (last visited May 3, 2022).

itself.⁹ Thus, while we have emerged from within and been shaped by the same “culture wars” LatCrit has previously confronted,¹⁰ today they rage like never before. Our responses must be both more democratic and decentralized, as well as more coordinated and coalitional, than ever before. We must both spread out in all directions as best we can, and yet remain in mutual, critical, and long-term collaboration. As we explain below, it seems that only the innovations of hybridized praxis can get us there.

Now is the precise time to leverage our gains in building critical insights and networks during the past twenty-five years and simultaneously seize the opportunities occasioned by the disruptions that the global pandemic has unleashed. Even as the ramifications of COVID-19’s disruptions unfold across the planet, we must innovate collaborations to leap beyond our previous gains despite the shoals of heightening bigotry, ignorance, and violence, both within and beyond the United States. This moment of multiple convergences and tectonic disruptions allows us not only to think beyond the box but also to leap ahead of the curve. If we act with agility and alacrity, now and for the long haul, we can achieve tactical, operational, and structural gains long sought by critical scholars, academic activists, social justice advocates, and organized communities. For the reasons we outline in this Afterword and its companion,¹¹ now is the time to take LatCrit’s well-developed approach to organized academic activism to the next level.

I. CENTRALITY OF THE ADVOCACY PROJECT MODEL AS A KEY UNIT OF ORGANIZED ACTION

To begin designing, building, and executing the kinds of hybridized projects and praxis that befit these emergent times, which we urge here, we can and should begin by rethinking and adapting the “advocacy project” model of social (and academic) activism to this historical moment; an age of continued injustice based on identity castes that we now know to be institutional, structural, or systemic. The work of the past quarter century and before has put this bottom line beyond any credible dispute. Entrenched identity castes that link race, sex, and other identities to class across generations cannot be minimized as mere or de facto coincidence.¹²

9. See, e.g., WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORG., STATE OF GLOBAL CLIMATE 2021 WMO PROVISIONAL REPORT 37, 41–42 (2021) (discussing the global COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing global climate collapse); see MAJORITY STAFF OF THE HOUSE COMM. ON THE JUDICIARY, MATERIALS IN SUPPORT OF H. RES. 24, IMPEACHING DONALD JOHN TRUMP, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, FOR HIGH CRIMES AND MISDEMEANORS 2, 31–32 (2021) (describing disinformation and democracy in the United States).

10. See generally Charles R. Venator Santiago, *Foreword: Countering Kulturkampf Politics Through Critique and Justice Pedagogy*, 50 VILL. L. REV. 749, 749 (2005); see generally Charles R. Venator Santiago, *Foreword: Countering Kulturkampf Politics Through Critique and Justice Pedagogy, Race, Kulturkampf, and Immigration*, 35 SETON HALL L. REV. 1155, 1155 (2005).

11. See Francisco Valdes, Steven W. Bender, & Jennifer J. Hill, *Afterword: LatCrit@25 and Beyond, Part II—Challenges and/as Opportunities: Centering “Hybridized” Advocacy Projects in Antisubordination Praxis to Connect Campuses and Communities for Material Long-Term Progress*, 20 SEATTLE J. FOR SOC. JUST. 1053 (2022).

12. See VALDES, BENDER, & HILL, *supra* note 4, at 1055–56.

Given this understanding, as well as the disruptions of all mainstream systems during the past two years, our adaptation must prioritize two key elements: (1) emphasizing systemic framings of analysis and action, and (2) hybridized project designs to do so. This emphasis starts with the recognition that history already has established varied forms of advocacy projects as a key unit or model for organizing and sustaining bottom-up struggles. We know from the histories and lessons of collective struggles for civil rights in varied contexts that bottom-up research and critical analysis must frame and shape project design and execution, intentionally leading up to strategy, action, and defense.

Systemic advocacy projects, anchored and guided by the insights and techniques of this critical knowledge, provide the template or vehicle for social action that we center here, both for academic activism and for social activism. Systemic advocacy projects strategically deploy critical knowledge to reconceive advocacy projects to target root causes of persistent, frequently collectivized, social problems—systemic problems.¹³ As we elaborate below, systemic advocacy projects use critical knowledge to retool and refocus advocacy projects—and advocacy itself—for systemic problem solving during an age of undeniable, escalating injustice that is institutional, structural, and systemic. Over time, and with diligence, this critical emphasis on systemic problems, advocacy, and solutions—coupled with hybridized designs for specific actions or projects—can take this form or vehicle of advocacy to the next necessary level.

By their very form, advocacy projects tend to decentralize and democratize action while enabling collaborations that are equally flexible and contextual. But to do so they rely on multiple forms of collaboration, from teams to coalitions, which make them costly and complex as well as powerful enough to force social transformations. They are necessarily flexible to be contextual and sustainable for the long term.

These features make advocacy projects (relatively) easily geared to focus on systemic problems and advocacy in particular contexts—on practical, actionable solutions to collectivized, persistent social problems, like group-wide poverty and its myriad repercussions, that are systemically correlated to identity castes in communities across the country and planet. Advocacy projects, as we outline below, are well-suited both to take advantage of current big picture developments, as well as to home in on systems to frame critical analysis, organize advocacy, and plan long-term actions. But advocacy projects also require lots of collaboration, which can (and usually does) create a need for lots of time, money, and other resources, both material and not, due to the demanding physicality and logistics of distance—until now, “thanks” to the paradigm-busting, still-unfolding ramifications of this unprecedented global pandemic.

13. *See id.* at 858.

Moreover, designing advocacy projects to maximize the benefits of technology and hybridity can help us achieve a formerly elusive aspiration: reducing our carbon footprint while maintaining the physical contact necessary to conduct present work, make future plans, and build relationships of trust and solidarity for the longer term. Until now, these objectives required costly travel that became increasingly irresponsible as knowledge about climate degradation became ever more available and undeniable. Until now, we had no alternative to become more environmentally responsible while maintaining the quality and quantity of interactions that our approach to organized academic activism has required.

Serendipitously, the very aspects of advocacy projects that have made them costly and complex during the past twenty-five years (and more) can now be reduced significantly and strategically due to the historic circumstances and opportunities of this moment. Most notably, these include transcending many of the material costs and logistical complexities of collaboration itself, beginning with the threshold and ongoing need for material resources simply to meet physically for the purpose of discussing, designing, developing, and operating collaborations; to ensure sustainability, these projects must then be affirmatively managed and grown across time and distance.

Given this still-unfolding backdrop and equipped with bottom-up insights forged during the past several decades by critical outsider scholars—“OutCrits”—of all stripes, we can now begin to refashion the basic form of traditional advocacy projects. By reshaping advocacy projects, we can take full advantage of the trends, disruptions, and convergences that mark this unexpected moment. “LatCritters” and allies must take aim directly at systems, not just symptoms, in all that we do from this point onward. And to maximize our capacity for organizing, planning, and acting, we must collaborate smartly, year-round, through hybridized projects that target those systems both directly and in context and that support or build the capacity of others to do the same.

In this moment, we think the *Critical Justice* textbook is central—or should be—to this timely, transformative work because it serves a timely and direct need; it organizes and presents the insights of critical theory as actionable knowledge for practical uses in varied projects and contexts.¹⁴ In assembling the insights of decades of scholarly and activist work, this resource expresses a worldview that no single article does, or really could, articulate as fully. This worldview recognizes the sources and problems of systemic injustice based on identity castes, but it also emphasizes why and how to fight back. Indeed, the core purpose of this new resource is helping learners, teachers, and other users draw from the critical bodies of

14. See *id.* at 8–9 (discussing key concepts of critical justice advocacy that are addressed in the textbook).

knowledge, which constitute the book itself, to better design and execute their own contextualized, hybridized advocacy projects.

The *Critical Justice* textbook therefore is geared both for critical comprehension of systemic injustice based on identity castes and for bottom-up organizing of “complex actions” against them—actions designed to get at the root of persistent social problems and devise executable solutions for the long term.¹⁵ Grounded precisely in the bodies of critical legal knowledge and advocacy developed before and during these past twenty-five years, this new resource specifically compiles, synthesizes, and presents in accessible form the critical, bottom-up worldview that explains the “Critical Challenge” of using law for justice—a Critical Challenge persisting across generations despite the foundational formal commitment to “equal justice, *for all*” under the “rule of law.”¹⁶

From start to finish, the book shows how the interests and powers of identities and groups determine social and legal outcomes regardless of contrary systemic claims, dodges, or promises—and how critically informed advocates and allies can collaborate to overcome problems that seem insurmountable. Principally, the book is a project designed to support local actions informed by critical awareness of historical legacies, present-day facts, and global patterns. Particularly, it aims to support advocates, activists, and communities engaged in bottom-up struggles to make law more just, wherever they may be. A dozen years in the making, the publication of this resource this year—in the middle of momentous times—is another sign of serendipity and opportunity knocking on our community’s door.

A. The Critical Challenge: The Materiality of Power Versus the Promise of Principle

Funding and other material resources are key both to top-down systems of subordination and to bottom-up struggles against them. For this reason, as the recorded history of today’s world systems amply shows, cross-generational elites (and successors-in-interest) have long hoarded all the key resources—including human resources—needed to entrench themselves as perpetual ruling classes. To ensure their privilege, enrichment, and rule, they have systematically sought to control every means of power by any means necessary—including through control over the material resources necessary to coalesce and mobilize collectively for sustained organized action.¹⁷

From our LatCritical perspective, we have long acknowledged how the constraints of physical space—the time, money, and other resources

15. See *id.* at 858–59, 957–58 (discussing how to diagnose, analyze, and approach complex actions).

16. See *id.* at 82–86. As conspicuously emblazoned on the front portico of the U.S. Supreme Court. *Id.* at 86.

17. See *id.* at 427–28.

needed to transcend it—represented a key limitation to our programs, projects, and praxis. Indeed, the unavoidable material costs and realities associated with every form of deep or long-term collaboration were an important factor prompting LatCrit to incorporate as a nonprofit two decades ago—enabling us to open and manage bank accounts, to retain surpluses for reinvestment in future projects, and to plan fiscally for the long-run to ensure we could sustain ourselves, and our autonomy, even over lean or difficult years. Sustainability, specifically in material terms, remains a constant existential challenge for every bottom-up project.

Thus, we know that time and money matter—both top-down and bottom-up. As the *Critical Justice* textbook details, this constant reality helps to explain the known legal and economic history of white supremacy.¹⁸ This unavoidable centrality of materiality—this inescapably material world of entrenched caste systems—illustrates why taking control of the tangible, economic, and otherwise material aspects of society and social relations is key to the creation and entrenchment of power in one group over other groups or society writ large. Over and using time, this supremacist process of dispossession, appropriation, and exploitation systematically took control of land and its resources, of people and their labor, and of everything that either Earth or humanity could be made to yield materially, to establish a particular legal and social order. Supremacist rules, relations, and processes do this in the name of “private” “property” while, simultaneously, further backing these instruments and systems of social and economic control with the power of its law and its monopoly over physical violence.¹⁹ During these past twenty-five years and more, scores of critical scholars, including LatCrits and ClassCrits, have explored and documented this knowledge. Thus, we now understand the nature of racial capitalism, our structural situation under its rule, and the political economy of it all.²⁰

In this everlasting, cynical power calculation, elites and their agents continue to take every possible advantage, tangible and intangible, in every contest, legal or extra-legal, precisely by hoarding and controlling materiality itself. Simultaneously, bottom-up groups and their allies continue to scramble, organize, and carry on struggling and demanding equal justice in, and equal access to, “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” including, fundamentally, the material aspects of life, liberty, and happiness.²¹ Though long denied, we know this long-pending demand for equal justice is well founded.

18. See *id.* at 1088–89.

19. See *id.* at 438–444.

20. See, e.g., Carmen G. Gonzalez & Athena D. Mutua, *Mapping Racial Capitalism: Implications for Law, J.L. & POL. ECO.* (forthcoming 2022) (manuscript at 2) (on file with authors); Marc Tizoc Gonzalez, Saru Matambanadzo, & Sheila I. Vélez Martínez, *Latina and Latino Critical Legal Theory: LatCrit Theory, Praxis and Community*, 12 *REV. DIREITO E PRÁX* 1317, 1320, 1335 (2021).

21. Gonzalez & Mutua, *supra* note 20, at 51; Francisco Valdes, *Foreword: Under Construction—LatCrit Consciousness, Community, and Theory*, 85 *CALIF. L. REV.* 1087, 1115, 1121 (1997).

Notably, the 1789 U.S. Constitution specifies that second among the basics of this social order would be none other than: “to . . . establish Justice.”²² And “Justice,” as proclaimed and promised more specifically from the portico of the U.S. Supreme Court to this day, is supposed to be “equal” “for all.”²³ In this set up, “the rule of law” is both the promise and the breach—with the breach enforced by the material power of economic elites entrenched through and by white supremacy.²⁴ White supremacy refers not only to “the self-conscious racism of white supremacist hate groups” but also to the “political, economic and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control . . . resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily reenacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings.”²⁵ On this hardwired basis, the system is designed to fail—to have principle always ready to be trumped by power.²⁶ This much we know from personal and historical experience, as well as from the accumulated insights of critical knowledge that we now possess collectively about systems, power, law, identity, and injustice. This bottom-up worldview simply was not articulable and

22. U.S. CONST. pmbl.

23. See VALDES, BENDER, & HILL, *supra* note 4, at 82.

24. As a modern-day identity ideology, white supremacy asserts the inherent and collective superiority of persons deemed white, Christian, and usually gender-conforming and heterosexual, principally from regions or nation-states of North or West Europe—frequently called “Anglo Saxon” and sometimes “Aryan” or “Nordic”—and more generally also described as “caucasian” persons and groups. This asserted group supremacy typically is also attributed to God, Nature, Personal Choice, or Destiny—attributions that conveniently provide the claimed justification for white groups to enslave, exploit, and govern all nonwhite, or otherwise inferior, persons and groups ranging from Muslims to Jews. This inherent group supremacy must be guarded through criminalization (and punishment) of “mixture” (in Spanish, *mestizaje*) that, under U.S. supremacist ideology, would pollute and weaken the “master race” and its collective domination of society. Globally, two countries are generally recognized as having pioneered white supremacy as legal architecture: first, the United States (from 1619 through colonial times, and then from 1789 through today); and second, Germany between 1931 and 1945. On the United States, see A. LEON HIGGINBOTHAM, JR., *IN THE MATTER OF COLOR: RACE AND THE AMERICAN LEGAL PROCESS* (1978) and NIKOLE HANNAH-JONES, *THE 1619 PROJECT: A NEW ORIGIN STORY* (Nikole Hannah-Jones, Caitlin Roper, Ilena Silverman, & Jake Silberstein eds., 2021); on Germany, see JAMES Q. WHITMAN, *HITLER’S AMERICAN MODEL: THE UNITED STATES AND THE MAKING OF NAZI RACE LAW* (2017) and RICHARD J. EVANS, *THE COMING OF THE THIRD REICH* (2004). Rhodesia, later South Africa, was generally considered a third paradigmatic example of a “racial state” organized around white supremacy, until the 1990s downfall of the apartheid legal regime. DAVID THEO GOLDBERG, *THE RACIAL STATE* 112 (2002) (Stating that in these (and other) examples, racial states “employ physical force, violence, coercion, manipulation, deceit, cajoling, incentives, laws(s), taxes, penalties, surveillance, military force, repressive apparatuses, ideological mechanisms, and media—in short, all the means at a state’s disposal—ultimately to the ends of racial rule . . . which is to say, to the ends of reproducing the racial order, and so representing for the most part the interest of the racial ruling class.”). For an authoritative articulation of this ideology from a U.S. lawmaking perspective, see the 1956 “Southern Manifesto” issued by members of Congress after *Brown v. Board of Education*, 102 CONG. REC. H3948, 4004 (daily ed. Mar. 12, 1956). For an updated rendition—also from the United States—dressed up and reframed as “Great Replacement Theory” (in which nonwhites threaten the supremacy of whites through sheer numbers) see the Buffalo, New York, mass murderer’s May 2022 white supremacist “manifesto,” which repeats the same racial ideological substance as the congressional “segregationists” of 1956. See Nicholas Confessore & Karen Yourish, *A Fringe Conspiracy Theory, Fostered Online, is Refashioned by the G.O.P.*, N.Y. TIMES (May 15, 2022).

25. Frances Lee Ansley, *Stirring the Ashes: Race, Class and the Future of Civil Rights Scholarship*, 74 CORNELL L. REV. 993, 1024 n.129 (1989).

26. See VALDES, BENDER, & HILL, *supra* note 4, at 189–94, 199–200.

defensible as such twenty-five years ago precisely because bottom-up knowledge had been kept suppressed, marginalized, and delegitimated.

This systemic design ensures a “Critical Challenge” of using law for justice. All justice seekers inevitably confront this challenge in which justice perpetually eludes law, backed by top-down economic power and advantage. This represents a disconcerting and perplexing experience in a system that loudly promises “equal justice” but is designed to fail in the fulfillment. This systemic set up, and the complex contradictions of its Critical Challenge, have been a fixture of settler colonialism, Western imperialism, and, now, neoliberal globalization.²⁷ During the past five-hundred-plus years, the capacity of elites to dominate society through their combined control of law and economy thus has been a fixture both of world systems and of identity castes.²⁸ A recent advocacy project of the sort we urge here, the 1619 Project, documents this point well,²⁹ as do the bodies of literature excerpted in the *Critical Justice* textbook. The current disruptions of the ongoing global pandemic—and their massive dislocations of social and personal habits—are unlikely to undo these deeply rooted patterns and their systemic fundamentals alone.

But these disruptions and their realignments, combined with the convergences also outlined here, provide a truly unique opening for LatCritical collaboration and action—one of those rare but true paradigm-shifting moments. The current lineup of historical circumstances invites us to use this moment proactively to develop the capacity to transcend the costs and obstacles of physical time and space to build the momentum—and the ultimate capacity—to take on the entrenched world order bequeathed to us by colonialism, imperialism, and globalization. Starting now with small but intentional and collaborative steps, LatCrit networks can spearhead a timely effort to build our capacity to organize and mobilize across the constraints and logistics of geography, physicality, and materiality.

The course of the programmatic transitions we outline here necessarily will reflect the course of the pandemic and its seasonal waves, both local and global. But LatCrit theory, community, and praxis can function, even in the years and decades of flux that lie ahead, as a supporter and incubator of others and their advocacy projects. Using the critical bottom-up focus on systems and hybridity that we urge here due to the unique circumstances and opportunities of this historical moment, LatCritters can take our collective work to the next level for the long run—even as we leverage our own capacities to simultaneously amplify the work of others, both within the academy and throughout our communities. This twin focus on systems, and on the opportunities enabled by hybridity, enhances our capacity to connect on campus resources and off campus resources to strengthen both and to increase our joint and several capacities for

27. See *id.* at 1055–56, 1088–89.

28. See generally *id.* at 1057–58, 1068–69.

29. See generally HANNAH-JONES, *supra* note 24, at 166–67.

sustainable organized action. Creatively and self-critically, LatCrit and allied scholars must make this the moment of actionable innovation that answers some of the key questions or seemingly intractable challenges that critical theorists of many stripes have been posing or facing for so long. The stage, as we explain below, has already been set for us to begin this next level of collaborative, programmatic work.

B. Now and Next: Understanding and Seizing Paradigms in Shift

For decades, even before LatCrit's emergence in 1995, critical conferences and conversations were peppered with questions and debates searching for practical ways to make critical knowledge more accessible and actionable beyond relatively rarified realms of academia. Early efforts included creation and use of various abridged and simplified forms of illustrated texts, perhaps most commonly PowerPoint presentations, to break down "theory" for easier comprehension.³⁰ The perennial question was, How do we transcend academic contexts into social streams? And the point of this aspired reach was clear: to make critical insights more accessible and actionable by social actors in varied contexts.

The question remains, but converging circumstances have changed the landscape to enable, if not force, multiple kinds of paradigm shifts across law and society. These ongoing shifts, with their deep disruptions of "business as usual" for everyone, open new opportunities for LatCrit and allied scholars or networks to reconceive and retool our approaches to—and the scope of—organized academic activism as we have known it since LatCrit's emergence in the mid-1990s. We now can and must combine gains and strengths from our decades of experience before COVID-19 with the new social realities, technologies, and opportunities that the pandemic has wrought to accomplish goals that old, heretofore entrenched, paradigms had stymied.

Before exploring some opportunities of this historical moment, we pause for a brief reflection: perhaps in understandable eagerness to spread the growing body of critical knowledge beyond academic confines, early critical theorists associated with various schools' genres were generally unprepared. Without doubt, those early sustained efforts were right in setting our collective sights on transformative goals beyond the academy. But perhaps our bodies of knowledge and critical networks were not sufficiently developed to make that move. Perhaps we had to first comprehend the situation more fully, historically, and contextually—to map our way through the system's puzzles and complexities and to consolidate our own positionality within it more self-critically—before we could simplify anything for anyone else.

30. Overview: *LatCrit Teaching and Pedagogical Resources*, LATCRIT, <https://latcrit.org/teaching-resources-overview/> (last visited May 4, 2022).

Since then, the various “schools” of critical legal theory and the various “approaches” to social justice advocacy have produced an array of critical insights and vocabularies sufficient to challenge the origin fables of the United States (and similar former colonies) as a colonial settler state designed to function as a racial state.³¹ For instance, the knowledge, concepts, and vocabularies necessary to unpack, understand, articulate, and back up the factual substance of this previous sentence was unavailable to us in previous decades and eras. These schools and approaches—in tandem with other knowledge producers around the world—have built up the substance of critical knowledge so that it no longer expresses just a critique of a too-clever status quo, but also a cogent, bottom-up worldview that stands on the right side of history—both past and future. The three of us have learned at least this much during the many years of collaborative work to publish the *Critical Justice* textbook, which, effectively, is a compendium of this groundbreaking, multigenerational work.

In fact, all but a handful of the many articles excerpted or referenced in *Critical Justice* were published well within these past twenty-five years; previously, this knowledge remained unproduced. Not that long ago, the critical schools of legal theory and the social justice approaches to legal practice simply did not exist. Most importantly, these still-unfolding, critical insights and vocabularies increasingly enable a fully articulable and actionable bottom-up worldview, which makes us increasingly capable of navigating systemic deception and distraction to chart the pathways of equity and equality.

With the growth of knowledge and the passage of time, we understand better how white supremacy, white grievance, and white fragility combine to make equal justice for all impossible—both legally and literally—specifically in reaction to demographic realities addressed below. Now we understand how neoliberal elites and market rationales have been used to justify continued unequal material outcomes, to increase precarity, to co-opt forces of organized resistance, and to reduce the political efficacy of marginalized groups—including, now, the capacity to access critical knowledge and comprehension of law and society. We understand that today’s “Big Lies”³² about democracy are no different, both as culture and as calculation, as were the previous racialized (and gendered) iterations of the same inculcated ignorance, unbridled avarice, and supremacist bigotry that (still) envelop U.S. residents today. Like so many others, we understand the difference between voter suppression and election integrity in much the same way we understand the difference between formal legal equality and “equal justice for all.” With our ever-greater capacity for comprehension and collaboration, we also can increase our capacity to

31. For more on the Schools and Approaches, see VALDES, BENDER, & HILL, *supra* note 4, at 42–46.

32. *See id.* at 46–47.

match and check the morphing of supremacy and privilege, whether as law or culture. We intend to do so.

However, this relatively recent, knowledge-based capacity to express a principled worldview—one that is firmly grounded in the promise and principle of equal justice for all—coincides with key facts and trends of U.S. demography. This convergence of bottom-up knowledge and bottom-up numbers has thus become a defining convergence of this moment, for it has panicked and revived white supremacy among gullible or bigoted groups as if the nation must be destined to relive the Jim Crow era in perpetuity. During these past twenty-five years, while we were busy building critical knowledge and networks, the country's very makeup was also changing³³—perhaps even more rapidly than the knowledge we were working to produce and disseminate—as white supremacy reorganized itself to reassert the racial state despite demography and democracy.³⁴ During these two-and-a-half decades, LatCrit scholars and allies (in the United States) understood fully that most of us live in a country evermore plural, even if not evermore just, and perhaps ever less democratic.

We know these demographic facts helped to spark and stoke the anticritical hysteria of this moment because supremacists publicly chant their fears of being “replaced” specifically by nonwhite and Jewish peoples. Even now, this hysteria is being manipulated to justify not only obscene inequalities and scandalous injustices, but also to win elections—as well as to steal them—using racial dog whistles and bull horns.³⁵ Not long ago, twenty-five years ago or so, these same venal tactics lost elections and disgraced politicians of any stripe.

Such are the perils and opportunities we face in these United States of America in these times. Such is the character of the zeitgeist that spawned the current anti-Critical Race Theory (CRT) hysteria initially *as law* by a Trump-era Executive Order in 2020, even as the COVID-19 and its myriad disruptions were becoming nationally and globally pandemic.³⁶ Such is the character of the zeitgeist—both legal and social—as the spate of crude laws designed to suppress plural democracy and critical knowledge continue sweeping the United States from coast to coast.³⁷ Here, and in the coming months, years, and decades, we thus aim to forge

33. See generally Nicholas Jones, Rachel Marks, Roberto Ramirez, & Merarys Rios-Vargas, *2020 Census Illuminates Racial and Ethnic Composition of the Country*, U.S. CENSUS BUREAU (Aug. 12, 2021), <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/08/improved-race-ethnicity-measures-reveal-united-states-population-much-more-multiracial.html> (revealing the United States as more multiracial and diverse than past measurements); see also Margaret E. Montoya & Francisco Valdes, *Afterword: “Latinas/os” and Latina/o Legal Studies: A Critical and Self-Critical Review of LatCrit Theory and Legal Models of Knowledge Production*, 4 FIU L. REV. 187, 189 (2008) (addressing the demographic “surge” of Latina/o/x/e residents).

34. See *supra* note 24 and sources cited therein.

35. *Id.*

36. See Exec. Order No. 13,950, 85 Fed. Reg. 60,683 (Sept. 22, 2020).

37. For example, in 2021, North Dakota outlawed teaching in K-12 schools how “racism is systemically embedded in American society and the American legal system to facilitate racial inequality.” H.R.J. 1508, 67th Leg. Assemb. (N.D. 2021).

practical ways of responding to the trends, developments, disruptions, and convergences that we face as we convened for, and then reflected on, this anniversary conference.

And so the LatCrit twenty-fifth anniversary conference gathered amidst three seismic trends, disruptions, and convergences, and their still unfolding realignments of life at macro and micro levels. In no particular order, these include: (1) the known, and feared by some, demographic trends toward a decidedly diverse and plural society in the foreseeable future; (2) the sudden yet complete and sustained disruption of the world order by this still-ongoing “once-in-a-lifetime” pandemic—including the sudden normalization of new technologies like Zoom—as well as the systemic repercussions it continues to catalyze, ranging from the “Great Resignation” of 2021 to the “Striketober” workplace activism occurring at precisely the same time as this conference;³⁸ and (3) the slow, fitful, yet steady development of critical knowledge, insights, and analysis—efforts which began as bottom-up critiques of the entrenched status quo, but which have accumulated during the past quarter century or more to become a fact-based, principled, and undeniable worldview. To seize this moment of shifting paradigms, global disruptions, and life in extreme flux, we turn to a hybridized and reframed reconception of an old practice that not only taps into, but also exploits, these big-picture trends, disruptions, developments, and convergences. Below is our blueprint to align LatCrit theory, community, and praxis with the ongoing realignments taking place before our eyes and below our feet.

The first two of these realignments are well-known already. The first, demography and its trends, has been much noted, foretold, and analyzed going back to the days before LatCrit’s emergence in the mid-1990s.³⁹ The second, this still-unfolding once-in-a-century globalized pandemic, is intimately known, even if its repercussions and adaptations continue to morph. Also well-known is that these realignments are here to stay, along with the attendant panics and hopes that they spread. Mindful of all this, and critically hopeful as can be, we therefore devote our space and attention here to the third—the evolution of critical knowledge and networks in recent decades, as well as on the convergences of all three to enhance local–global capacities for sustained organized struggles against entrenched systems of subordination.

38. See generally Derek Thompson, *The Great Resignation is Accelerating*, THE ATLANTIC (Oct. 15, 2021), <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2021/10/great-resignation-accelerating/620382/>; Steve Flamisch, *#Striketober Becomes #Strikesgiving*, RUTGERS TODAY (Nov. 2, 2021), <https://www.rutgers.edu/news/striketober-becomes-strikesgiving>.

39. D’Vera Cohn & Andrea Caumont, *10 Demographic Trends Shaping the U.S. and the World in 2016*, PEW RSCH. CTR. (Mar. 31, 2016), <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/03/31/10-demographic-trends-that-are-shaping-the-u-s-and-the-world/>.

C. Hybridizing Praxis: Designing and Executing Systemic Advocacy Projects

Advocacy projects are already used as a well-developed and flexible device for organizing collective actions in varied social, legal, political, or economic contexts. Thus, when centering advocacy projects as a key form of organized bottom-up action in this historical moment, we describe the form as “old” only because, as we discuss below, LatCritters and many others have been doing “it” for a quarter century already—and others even before (and during) this time. For example, many of our longstanding LatCrit projects, ranging from the South-North Exchange and the Student Scholar Program to this conference and the accompanying Faculty Development Workshop, qualify as advocacy projects.⁴⁰ And as such, we have confronted, through that (ongoing) work, the same structural and material obstacles, burdens, and costs that all bottom-up advocacy projects similarly and perennially face.

And as the *Critical Justice* textbook makes more broadly clear, achievements like the establishment and administration of legal clinics by specific persons or groups in particular places and times represent another kind of advocacy project as bottom-up praxis. Similarly, accomplishments like creating worker cooperatives, developing micro-banking sources accountable to local communities, the recognition of marriage equality as a lived reality, and other transformative social changes also have emerged from collective enterprises that have functioned as advocacy projects—whether consciously conceived as such or not at the time. But now—precisely because we have sufficient critical knowledge to articulate and defend a compelling world view—the new technologies and ongoing disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic allow us to break out of academic confines. We can support in new, innovative ways the rising—and struggling—generations of students, activists, and organizers, many of whom are representative of the same demographic trends that supremacist ideologues and their followers fear so very much.

Put more broadly, now is the moment to go global and local at once; critical networks like LatCrit can and must get, as they say, “glocal.” Indeed, this ambition is elemental to LatCrit theory, community, and praxis, and always has been.⁴¹ Critical networks can incorporate glocalism in both theory and through ambitious actions that build on the past quarter century’s programmatic portfolio of projects. This project portfolio has helped create a sustained year-round zone of democratic safety for scholars and activists to work on both individual and collaborative projects.⁴² Yet, our community projects have always been limited by the obstacles and costs

40. See, e.g., *South-North Exchange (SNX)*, LATCRIT, <https://latcrit.org/latcrit-conferences/south-north-exchange-snx/> (last visited May 4, 2022).

41. See generally Berta Hernández-Truyol, Angela Harris, & Francisco Valdes, *LatCrit X Afterword—Beyond the First Decade: A Forward-Looking History of LatCrit Theory, Community and Praxis*, 26 CHICANA/O-LATINA/O L. REV. 237, 265 (2006).

42. See Montoya & Valdes, *supra* note 33, at 194–200.

of time and distance—and by our perennial lack of the material resources needed to traverse them in the cultivation of community, solidarity, and coalition year-round, and for the long term.

The twin focus on systems and hybridity that we urge here enables us to enhance our existing (and new as discussed below) projects as a critical collective praxis. Moreover, by training our attention on systems and contexts, and by helping us to transcend or better manage the basic material limitations of bottom-up advocacy this reconception of advocacy projects rooted in critical knowledge also promotes our capacity to act glocally—implementing hybridized, systemic projects focused on the local context and in active relationship with global and globalizing actors and contexts. After these twenty-five years of exertion and experimentation attempting to bridge the material divides of time and space in self-sustaining terms, the pieces may now be falling in place for us to achieve what we have long sought.

We begin by inviting you to understand LatCrit itself—that is, our portfolio of projects, our forty-some published symposia, our several community books and readers, our ongoing and evolving activities—to constitute, as one whole, an “advocacy project” of the sort we outline below, and that we center in the *Critical Justice* textbook. The LatCrit experiment is but one example of a template for sustained, organized, collaboration; it is an organic example of “different” folks coming together with a commitment to shared values who then work at it in pragmatic and value-laden ways that require imagination, risk, and humility—and that entail conflict (sometimes) as well as will (all the time)—for the longest of hauls. Building on this conception of our past gains to align our future work with the big-picture developments we have highlighted here requires us to reconceive the design and execution of existing and new projects or partnerships.

This hybridized reconception of advocacy projects is designed specifically for systemic advocacy in support of organized bottom-up struggles. This reconception of advocacy projects thus prioritizes six keystones about which all LatCritters and allies, as well as lawyers and other advocates, must be intentional to make a difference now and for the long haul:

1. Anchor project design and execution to local bottom-up experience and struggle;
2. Employ critical insights and practices from the critical schools and advocacy approaches (and relevant other sources) to supplement local bottom-up knowledge and leadership;
3. Account for the complex roles of identities, groups, interests, and power within systems and contexts to diagnose persistent social problems and devise solutions for them;

4. Pursue three-layered goals⁴³ to advance and defend sustainable increments of bottom-up progress toward systemic transformation, both in terms of law and of culture;
5. Tailor virtuality and reality to amplify the reach and impact of three-layered plans and goals; and
6. Cross campus-community borders continually and strategically to likewise ensure maximum reach and impact for three-layered plans and goals.

These six features, as a set, are designed to target the interplay of neoliberalism and racial capitalism in systemic terms both on campuses and throughout communities, and to highlight the interconnection of the two. In this way, these six features also highlight how and why systemic advocacy projects must intentionally cross on and off campus divides to build bottom-up power for antisubordination struggles.

Each of these six defining features is detailed in the *Critical Justice* textbook. But here, the point must be put more direct and simply: despite the tumult of the moment—and because of it—we must incorporate these six basic elements into our projects as a steady, principal priority. At the same time, our ongoing programmatic work, and the infrastructure we have built through it, also must continue to be grounded in the fundamentals that cohere us as a diverse community based precisely on shared anti-subordination values and goals.

We therefore must reconceive old forms for new times even as we continue to stay anchored to the functions, guideposts, and other fundamentals that have kept us mostly even-keeled through the turbulence of these past twenty-five years.⁴⁴ We must launch the paradigm shifts that we noted above in principled and accountable ways—true to the fundamentals we share as well as accountable to the communities we inhabit or support. We must be nimble in this moment of great flux while staying grounded. Focusing on systems and hybridity in context, we must reconfigure our own projects critically to maximize the systemic antisubordination possibilities of today and tomorrow, both in law and across society, as we leverage ourselves, both individually and programmatically, for long-term progress.

As with any significant transition, we must not only anticipate and plan for setbacks but also for increments and phases of progress. Perhaps each increment may seem unremarkable viewed outside of a larger plan. But each increment can and should be designed as a stepping-stone to the next. For example, LatCritters might begin this transition to hybridized projects with some all-virtual steps while we set up different kinds of

43. See VALDES, BENDER, & HILL, *supra* note 4, at 612–615 (outlining the three-layered goals integral to advocacy project design).

44. See VALDES & BENDER, *supra* note 8, at 112–13 (detailing these values and fundamental guiding principles).

“blends” for different projects or contexts leading up to a pre-planned level or blending of hybridity that is most effective for, or tailored to, that project. In some instances, we will want or need to set up local in-person “anchor” sites or other regional “hubs” of in-person gatherings tailored to keep material costs and logistics to a minimum while leveraging and maximizing the benefits both of virtuality and of in-person activities.

Over the next two or three years, the LatCrit community should (and already has begun to) review our entire portfolio of projects in order to transition our programmatic work, in light of the big-picture trends, disruptions, convergences, and realignments we outlined above, to emphasize the importance of systems and hybridity at this juncture of our own history. Over these next couple of years, a collective sense of heightened and sustained intentionality, persistence, and collaboration will be key to this complex process. Moreover, we hope this understanding of these twenty-five years of LatCrit collaboration and innovation *as an advocacy project* can and will help others—whether academics or not—to imagine more concretely how varied projects can be organized flexibly for sustained social activism in varied places or settings. We hope that spelling out the six key features needed to reconceive advocacy projects for today and tomorrow will help LatCritters and social justice advocates everywhere take current efforts to their next level.

We thus emphasize the long-term hope and big-picture vision that we share here: to be vital twenty-five years hence, in 2047, LatCrit, as a hybridized advocacy project focused on these six features, also must aim deliberately and programmatically to help inspire and support any bottom-up formations including allied projects, critical coalitions, and organized social struggles that connect campuses to communities. This heightened sense of connection can help ensure the bottom-up integrity of critical knowledge and also can help ensure the deployment of this critical knowledge in local communities and contexts that build solidarity between scholars and activists. This intentional pursuit of connection across the borders of space and time can empower grassroots initiatives as well as make the existence of universities and the results of legal training more accountable and useful to local communities.

To illustrate, next we briefly survey three hybridized programmatic initiatives that LatCrit already has begun—new or reconfigured initiatives directly responsive to the developments and opportunities of this moment. These new initiatives, so acutely informed by the zeitgeist of this moment, also provide concrete examples to guide our reconsideration and reconfiguration of existing (or new) projects for critical knowledge production and organized academic activism. Modest and nascent as they are, they nonetheless show the way forward.

D. Taking First Steps: Building a Critical Hybridized Praxis

With the opportunities and challenges of this zeitgeist on our collective minds, the LatCrit twenty-fifth anniversary conference inspired and launched (at least) three hybridized initiatives that we outline here. These initiatives are underway, due in great measure to the Board-and-Friends Retreat also inspired by this conference, held in December 2021.⁴⁵ This retreat—two months after the conference—illustrates the new possibilities and their advantages; our capacity to conduct this subsequent event expeditiously is helping us expedite the three initiatives below. Learning progressively as we proceed, we can note how the initiatives inspired by this conference and developed during the Retreat illustrate the same timely, compelling, opportune points.

Of course, the retreat and initiatives outlined below point only to some initial ways in which some critical bottom-up actions are only now possible due to technologies normalized during the extended COVID-19 pandemic—most notably, Zoom.⁴⁶ But this call to build a critical hybridized praxis from our current portfolio, infrastructure, and networks is more than using Zoom indiscriminately.⁴⁷ This nascent praxis begins with using Zoom and related virtual meeting technologies strategically and intentionally, in tandem with other technologies, resources, and innovations, to extend the reach of our work beyond our previous grasp. It requires a deliberate, contextual redesign of collaborative projects to enhance collective capacities for knowledge, organization, and activism. Along the way, this project-by-project blending can also enhance community and solidarity specifically to support critical studies and their defenders from every and any attack.

For good reason, both of these points—the strategic use of technology to amplify the social impact of systemic advocacy projects, and the cultivation of solidarity as a central feature of project design and execution—are key elements of present-day practices for systemic justice.

These organic developments provide some concrete clues to, and some hopeful glimpses of, the collective future we must create and embrace for ourselves—and with others—if critical studies and knowledge

45. During the past twenty-five years, LatCrit convened a Board-and-Friends Retreat only a handful of times, usually when complex and consequential community choices faced us. Like other LatCrit events or projects, this retreat gathered in diverse locales ranging from Miami and Denver to Vieques, Puerto Rico. Until 2021, these retreats were entirely in person, although in some instances some folks participated by phone call.

46. For this reason, the December 2021 Retreat was only the beginning of a longer-term community process that will review not only the projects and issues we touch on here, but also larger issues relating to strategic planning in light of today's still-unfolding big-picture circumstances, as well as our own values and capacities.

47. In using virtual meeting technology purposefully and consistent with LatCrit values, we must be aware that technology does not even out power: at the same time that it enables new opportunities for LatCrit initiatives, it makes new gains and elite strategies possible too for preserving the subordinating status quo of systemic injustice. See *infra* Part II (concluding section below details other shortcomings and risks of hybridity).

are to endure and prosper going forward, not only within U.S. borders but beyond them. The three initiatives below represent only a few steps to begin marking forward pathways to 2047.

1. The Annual *Curso Crítico*: “Teoría Crítica del Derecho y Justicia Social en las Américas”

This transnational open course will be offered online in Spanish to students (and the general public) throughout the Western Hemisphere every January over seven days with a consortium of participating schools or organizations.⁴⁸ Course staffing will blend Global South and Global North faculty, materials, issues, and priorities with the constant aim of teaching critical legal theory as actionable knowledge.⁴⁹ This course will emphasize equally the connection of theory to practice and vice versa, as well as the interconnection of South–North castes, struggles, and destinies.⁵⁰ The first *Curso* was held January 21–28, 2022.⁵¹ Although this inaugural offering was virtual, future offerings anticipate the creation of an “anchor” site—where a small core of faculty and students gather for the *Curso* duration—and from where the larger virtual event is hosted.⁵²

This new initiative builds on the many efforts we collectively have undertaken during past decades to bridge South–North divides—divides maintained by the lack of material resources needed to bridge them in human, physical, collectivized terms. But, as already noted—and as this first example illustrates—the new possibilities transcend the old limitations. This new project not only illustrates the transition to hybridity, but also how this transition can enhance exponentially our capacity for programmatic actions. Not until now, under these new structural circumstances, could a project conceived in October be launched in January; previously we would have devoted at least a year to building the material resources. Instead, we are concentrating our critical attention and combined resources directly to developing a rich, sharp, sustainable program that takes advantage of hybridity to target systemic injustice.

These points are underscored by recalling the Critical Global Classroom—a LatCrit study-abroad program that took dozens of students and faculty across two continents and four countries—Chile, Argentina, Brazil, South Africa—during a six-week period in June and July.⁵³ This program, currently not active precisely because of its material complexities

48. See *Summer Course: Critical Theory of Law and Social Justice in the Americas*, UNIVERSIDAD ALBERTO HURTADO (Dec. 15, 2021), <https://derecho.uahurtado.cl/noticias/curso-verano-teoria-critica-del-derecho-y-justicia-social-de-las-americas/>.

49. See *id.*

50. See *id.*

51. *Teoría Crítica del Derecho y Justicia Social en las Américas* [*Critical Theory of Law and Social Justice in the Americas*], UNIVERSIDAD ALBERTO HURTADO, <https://derecho.uahurtado.cl/web2021/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/brochureverano.pdf> (last visited May 4, 2022).

52. See *id.*

53. See *Critical Global Classroom*, LATCRIT, <https://latcrit.org/teaching-resources-overview/critical-global-classroom/> (last visited May 4, 2022).

and costs, was designed to achieve aims similar to (though not identical) to those of this new *Curso*: building South–North relationships, projects, and networks to advance and defend critical knowledge, antistatist activism, and bottom-up solidarity. The dormancy of the Critical Global Classroom due to material realities beyond our control, and the viability of the *Curso* as a result of the paradigm shifts and possibilities now unfolding, encapsulate jointly the main points of praxis and opportunity that we highlight here.

2. The Monthly Critical Zoom Salon: Hospitality and Solidarity Gone Viral

Born of a yearning for the in-the-flesh LatCrit community suites of the pre-pandemic conferences, this monthly virtual gathering was suggested during the virtual suite held nightly during the twenty-fifth anniversary conference. This salon meets virtually on the first Sunday evening of each month and begins with a brief chat on some topical matter that can provide initial fodder for substantive conversation. The first salon met November 7, 2021, hosted by Hugo Rojas, who addressed the Chilean constitutional crisis (and how it might relate to global trends, including in the United States). Spirited exchanges ensued.

In historical LatCrit context, this monthly gathering is today’s virtualized iteration of the community suite traditions that occasioned so many important conversations, collaborations, and relationships of increased understanding, trust, and solidarity. Like its in-person original, this iteration is just as informative, engaging, and fun. Although virtuality is not equal to reality, it helps to bridge the difference between the maximum gains possible under ideal conditions of sustained face-to-face projects and collaborations versus the nothingness of inaction due to public health, environmental, or other material conditions that shape our possibilities, tactics, and strategies and, ultimately, our capacities for timely action. Hybridity—imaginatively used—can help to create and sustain a better whole of personal and collective praxis. Like other new initiatives sketched here, this project illustrates how LatCritters can reconceive and reconfigure existing projects to maximize the possibilities of this historical moment that allow us to “play around” with reality and virtuality like never before.

3. The *Critical Justice* Monthly Events Series: Learning, Teaching, Doing

Designed to help interested teachers and students make the most of the *Critical Justice* textbook, this monthly series combines online, hybrid, and in-person activities depending on the circumstances or the context of a particular event. The *Critical Justice* coeditors (the three authors of this Afterword) will host events like Syllabus Development Workshops to produce usable syllabi for specific faculty in specific courses or settings, as well as more general events tailored to conceptual, pedagogical, or other questions that teachers, students, or other users may bring up. The first of

these events occurred virtually in November 2021—just one month after the conference, illustrating yet again how the circumstances of this moment demand that we reconceive critical praxis and organized academic activism to focus on systems, maximize hybridity, and connect on campus advocacy projects to off campus advocacy projects.⁵⁴

This initiative is a direct follow-up to the *Critical Justice* textbook—itsself a project that also responds to the circumstances that demand systemic frameworks and hybrid designs in our projects and advocacy. This textbook, and the online modules that will supplement and update it over time, provide a large, topical platform from which LatCrit (and other) projects can leverage existing knowledges and skills for adaptation to specific applications. For this very practical reason, we consider *Critical Justice* central to the demands and opportunities of these times—it provides a new, adaptable resource directly responsive to the importance of context-focused advocacy projects framed for systems and designed for hybridity during these uniquely disrupted times. Now, this events series will help ensure that *Critical Justice* reaches those who need or want it.

While we can trace the roots or goals of each of these new or reconceived initiatives to moments or conversations before the twenty-fifth anniversary conference, it was not until then that they coalesced into community projects. These organic collective leaps, advanced greatly during the Board-and-Friends Retreat two months later, show (again) the power of community and collaboration as critical praxis through the blending of virtuality and reality. These three initiatives both reflect and respond directly to the pressing circumstances of their creation. They exemplify twenty-five years of critical experiments and self-critical reflections on advocacy projects as a personal-collective form of antisubordination praxis. Each, on its own, can (and should) be understood as an advocacy project itself because each of these new, hybridized initiatives, is, in operational fact, just that—just like every project in our community portfolio.

CONCLUSION

Experience before and since our twenty-fifth anniversary conference confirms, for us, that hybridized, contextualized, systemic advocacy projects—actions designed intentionally for systemic problem solving—lend themselves to the needs of this age. For this reason, we have focused on the possibilities of hybridized praxis and the necessity of systemic frameworks. Systemic advocacy projects enable advocates and organizers to connect the dots between the micro and the macro, the immediate and the long term, and the local and the global. Systemic advocacy projects also help us, and we think can help others, to connect the dots between the material and the intangible, while helping us (and others) to ameliorate the

54. LatCrit Latina/o Critical Legal Theory, *LatCrit Virtual Friday Series: Critical Justice Textbook Workshop*, FACEBOOK (Nov. 1, 2021), <https://www.facebook.com/LatCrit/posts/2357277421073182?>

need for material resources to take our collective, programmatic work to the next level. Systemic advocacy projects enable intentional, programmatic glocality in design and in execution.

As we show more fully in the *Critical Justice* textbook, the flexibility and intentionality of systemic advocacy projects thus can enhance bottom-up capabilities in fundamental terms. Systemic advocacy projects enable advocates and activists everywhere to better identify systemic patterns, as well as systemic particularities, across “different” contexts to frame solutions that promote both immediate ameliorative priorities as well as longer-term transformative relief. Context-based systemic advocacy projects, grounded intentionally in the critical knowledge of the critical schools and advocacy approaches, provide an adaptable, actionable framework for diagnosing complex, multifaceted social problems, and for strategizing bottom-up solutions for the long haul. Adding strategic, contextual hybridity to act on the possibilities of this historical moment increases our capacity to organize, plan, and cultivate the trust and solidarity necessary for sustained, organized struggle. Today calls out to us for systemic advocacy projects that use hybridity proactively, innovatively, and contextually to amplify social impact across multiple local-global contexts.

We must note that hybridity presents dangers and has limits. Some individuals and groups are largely left out—those who lack internet access and those who lack time, especially time uninterrupted by caregiving and other duties and those who prefer to develop relationships face-to-face. For many, work schedules limit their participation, and work or living conditions may heighten dangers because of intrusive monitoring or threats of retaliation. Many who are unhoused or in situations of excessive control or violence may find their ability to build and sustain relationships limited online as in person. The lack of proficient and easily available interpretation can curtail communication, particularly for those who speak languages not widely known. And, opposition will continue to be intransigent, omnipresent, and better-resourced. Opponents will be highly motivated to carry out surveillance, hack systems, mine information, disrupt or discredit organizations, and distribute misinformation. We must prepare ourselves. And there are actions that still are better done—or must be done—face-to-face, which may include voting, strikes, house calls or organizing meetings, protests, or other actions. Critical hybridity is just that—a hybrid approach that is designed and executed for maximum social and environmental effectiveness. Critical hybridity in the design and execution may allow us to democratize and expand our networks and coalitions and intensify the impact of our advocacy in systemic terms.

For LatCritters, the most challenging redesign consistent with the dangers but opportunities of hybridity is likely to be Campo Sano, our community campus and retreat center near Orlando, Florida. Established in 2011 with Board and community resources, Campo Sano was intended to become a hub of its own in pre-COVID terms: it was and is the

quintessence of a “bricks and mortar” project—steeped in materiality and its complications—presenting opportunities to expand and enhance our programmatic work. Whether—and if so how—to reconceive Campo Sano as a hybridized hub for today and tomorrow will entail a deliberative process that was barely begun during the December 2021 retreat. As we acknowledged there, this unique community asset also can enable unique community possibilities as we reconceive advocacy projects in general and redesign our own portfolio of projects specifically.

Focusing back on the multiply diverse community that we are today—and have been since the 1990s—we therefore close this anniversary Afterword with this forward-looking emphasis on reconceived, redesigned, context-focused advocacy projects, supported by local as well as far-flung communities of knowledge and action. Taking this key step now can help LatCrit and OutCrit formations, and allies, finally go global in sustained and sustainable ways. As the follow-up steps since the conference and retreat already have begun to show, this programmatic path can and will help us transcend the costs and constraints of time and space, which have bound us so unyieldingly since we came together in 1995.

Fixing our sights on systems and our imagination on hybridized projects as a personal and collective praxis can ground and guide us through the following steps, and years, as envisioned by the twenty-fifth anniversary conference theme. If we shift smartly and timely along with the shifting paradigms of the moment, we can carve out new, immediate opportunities for the LatCrit community (and related networks) to support bottom-up struggles now, both on campus and off campus. By reconceiving advocacy projects in systemic terms, as well as by hybridizing our praxis as a whole, we can increase our collective capacity to cross many kinds of borders, and to better navigate the complex demands of enduring progress. Recognizing that extreme big-picture flux probably lies ahead, we must be ready to adjust, adapt, and realign to stay steady, remain grounded, and make or defend progress. The paradigm shifts already in place point us decidedly toward systemic frameworks and hybrid designs to increase our capacity for organized and sustainable academic activism, both on campus and beyond. These ongoing shifts, as we elaborate more fully in a companion text, bring with them both challenges and opportunities that require our immediate and continual attention precisely because the social and legal landscape surrounding us is new, volatile, and inevitable.⁵⁵

55. See Valdes, Bender, Hill, *supra* note 11.