The Water Wars: Latina, Black, and Native Hip-Hop Organizing in Minnesota

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The neon pink lights of the Cedar Cultural Center in South Minneapolis shine against the stark December winter night sky in 2018. The evening's performance, "Water: A Collaboration of Art and Music to Support the Movement Against Line 3," features hip-hop performances by Nataanii Means, Tufawon, and Maria Isa with a headlining performance by Peruvian, New York hip-hop MC Immortal Technique. The purpose of the evening is to raise awareness and funds to fight against Enbridge's oil pipeline, Line 3, set to destroy Anishinaabe homelands in northern Minnesota. As the venue opens to the public, a multiracial audience between the ages of twenty and mid-forties, enters the cultural center. There are avid hip-hop heads huddled together bobbing out to their favorite MCs in between white environmental justice activists smooshed inside their Patagonia puffer jackets, who rub shoulders with Native water protectors, and Black artists of all genres who have come to support their peers.

When Maria Isa enters the stage, her band quickly checks their equipment while seven-year-old Yolotl Epsinoza-Day plays the huehuetl center stage in front of the audience who stares and shouts as if awestruck by what they are hearing.[1] Yolotl, which means "heart" in Nahuatl, holds fiercely on the drumsticks, striking the upright tubular drum used in Danza Azteca ceremonies. Considered the heart of the music, the drum's rhythmic deep tones are a rallying cry. They are an opening to the ceremony of hip-hop medicine. When Yolotl finishes, a visibly pregnant Maria Isa, adorning her Atabey beaded necklace, walks to the mic and speaks to the crowd: "My

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tribe in Borikén didn't have water for a long time and still doesn't have a lot of clean water right now. So, I say we unify the tribes. The Dakota, the Anishinaabe brothers and sisters of mine, they came to Puerto Rico, to Borikén, to make sure that the water down there that we are drinking is clean. And if it ain't clean, we lettin' them know who's responsible for it and we bringing them clean water. So let's dedicate this to our ancestors tonight. Let's dedicate this to the mothers [long pause] Earth and to the future." Maria Isa turns away from the mic to check in with her band as the crowd cheers applause welcoming her to begin. She turns back, adjusts the microphone, preparing to sing. Maria Isa says, "Speaking of mothers, my mother is here tonight." The saxophone begins to play, drawing a long note before Maria Isa joins in.

The concert at the Cedar Cultural Center represents a vibrant Minnesota activist scene where artists are integral to organizing for change across multiple social movements in a state rife with injustice. In the national imaginary, Minnesota is often seen as the shining star of the nation for quality of life. In 1973, *Time* magazine published a cover story, "The Good Life in Minnesota," arguing that, whereas the rest of the nation was in chaos due to the Civil Rights Movement, Minnesota remained steadfast as a place for "fairness, honesty, a capacity for innovation, hard work, intellectual adventure and responsibility."[2] In 2015, *The Atlantic* published an article claiming Minneapolis as a "miracle city" due to its tax distribution and high quality of life. Minnesota and the Twin Cities usually rank number one for best bike trails and park system, hospital system, educational system, and the list continues.[3] In 2021, *U.S. News & World Report* ranked Minnesota as the second best state in the nation to live.[4] Despite these accolades, Minnesota also ranks as one of the worst states in the nation for Black quality of life. The 2020 murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police shattered the "good life" narrative, placing the Twin Cities on the international map for racial reckoning. Samuel Myers calls this the "Minnesota paradox," because the state exists as both the best place to live for white people and the worst place to live for people of color.[5] Minnesotans of color and Indigenous communities have nuanced strategies for navigating this paradox. For generations, they have mobilized for justice within the state through cross-racial and cross-tribal solidarity networks.[6]

In this essay, I analyze Minnesota hip-hop artists who employ aesthetic strategies, what scholars have termed "cultural organizing" to build transnational modes of solidarity.[7] Based on ethnographic research, I discuss the 2018 Balance the Nations hip-hop tour, which performed across the mainland United States and Puerto Rico. The tour's purpose was to bring awareness to water rights, specifically the impact of oil pipelines and water access after climate disasters such as Hurricane Maria. The three headlining artists for the tour were Maria Isa, a self-identified "Sotarican" (Boricua born in Minnesota) hip-hop artist, composer, and educator; Muja

Messiah, a Black Minnesota hip-hop artist; and Nataanii Means (Oglala Lakota/Omaha/ Navajo), a hip-hop musician, storyteller, and son of prominent American Indian Movement leader Russell Means.[8]

To frame the nuanced strategies for social change exemplified by these artists, I trace what I term "interdependent movidas"—small, mutually constituted, intentional gestures and actions grounded in intergenerational knowledge and forms of solidarity across all beings (including nonhuman) in an ecosystem. These interdependent movidas, when multiplied, can serve as building blocks for social change, in this case, between hip-hop artists organizing across geographic, tribal, and racial lines. I draw from transnational Third World scholarship to theorize the concept of interdependence to illustrate the multiple genealogies of thought that weave together to understand how we are all mutually constituted in a web of relationships. I pair interdependence with the Chicana feminist concept "movida" to address small-scale modes of solidarity. Chicana feminists, informed and in relationship with Third World and Indigenous scholars of color, theorize movidas as subtle tactics enacted to subvert injustice.[9] In this essay, I first provide an overview of the literature on interdependent movidas. Second, I discuss the background for Enbridge's Line 3 oil pipeline and Puerto Rico post Hurricane Maria, which are often not contextualized together. Third, drawing from interviews with Maria Isa, Nataanii Means, and Muja Messiah, I show how interdependent movidas are one strategy for movement building. Large-scale social movements, such as those that occurred after Floyd's murder, do not happen overnight. I argue that, by unearthing the small, quotidian moments of solidarity between Black, Latina/o/x, and Indigenous activists organizing in the Midwest, we can better understand how these interdependent movidas informed by intergenerational knowledges shape activists' worldviews. These worldviews then lead to supporting the connections necessary to mobilize for large-scale social change.[10]

Interdependent Movidas

In the colloquial sense, movida is a hustle, a set of moves during a game, or the actions at night. Movida accounts for movement. In Chicana/o/x studies, movida is an important concept to understand creative moves/movements. Movidas are used to describe a vast number of settings from how Latina/o/x students and teachers navigate educational systems[11] to how migrants adapt while crossing the border,[12] to how artists employ aesthetic moves to decolonize visual representation[13] as well as fashion.[14] According to Luis Urrieta, "A movida can be conducted individually or in collectivity and consists of multiple transactions that are planned and premeditated with a specific goal in mind."[15] Buendía and Meacham define movidas as "movements" and suggest "movidas allow Chicanas and Chicanos to recognize the severity of the unjust practices

of the white power structure and to unveil unseen relations and motives of power."[16] Aída Hurtado writes, "Movidas are used to subvert the potentially devastating effects of inscribing the body through race, class, ethnicity, ableness, and sexuality using humor, irony, visual display, political action, cleverness, wisdom, and small acts of resistance."[17] As hip-hop artists, Maria Isa, Naatanni Means, and Muja Messiah use their lyrics to create interdependent movidas that subvert intersectional oppressions.

In their historiography of Chicana social movements, Espinoza, Cotera, and Blackwell (2018) argue that movidas are "a submerged technology of struggle" that "illuminates a multimodal engagement with movement politics that included acts of everyday labor and support as well as strategic and sometimes subversive interventions within movement spaces."[18] Their scholarship challenges dominant historiography, which often excludes the "'minor' strategies and tactics embedded within and between larger movements."[19] Their invitation for a new type of historical analysis, "allows us to chart the small scale, intimate political moves, gestures, and collaborations that reflect the tactics women used to negotiate the internalities of power within broader social movements." Mapping movidas "identifies how they tracked and negotiated multiples scales of power within their homes, communities, organizations, social movements, and dominant society."[20] Taking up their call, this essay analyzes how hip-hop artists create modes of solidarity grounded in the intergenerational knowledge taught to them by their families who were active in the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s.

Although there are numerous enactments of movida, I build on the concept to unearth the relational connection that occurs during a movida by theorizing how interdependence, the mutually comprised nature of all beings (not just human), generates solidarity networks. Interdependence acknowledges the connections and often the reciprocal dependence between people, animals, ecosystems, and objects. Interdependence is a worldview (how you understand yourself in relation to other humans, nonhumans, and objects). It can also become a practice, interdependent movidas, when you actively choose to engage in a reciprocal dependency.

Whereas literature in the sciences and humanities continues to expand our comprehension of interdependence, Indigenous peoples have known, practiced, and furthered the concept. Interdependence is an Indigenous principle. Before Western science was able to prove that all living organisms—animals, plants, and soil—were connected, Indigenous people knew that all living organisms depend on one another.[21] Before Western feminists called for a turn toward interdependence as a strategy for an ethics of care, Indigenous peoples practiced an interdependent lifestyle.[22] Before community organizers furthered the concept as central to change making, Indigenous people kept interdependence alive, carrying it into the hearts, minds, and hands of each new generation.[23] For example,

Nataanii Means shares a lesson he learned from his grandmother, Twinkle Star, who told him, "If you took away all the things that crawl, nothing could live. If you took away everything green, nothing would live. If you took away the four-legged things that flew, nothing would live. If you took away water, nothing would survive. But if you took away the human being, everything would thrive."[24] Interdependent movidas, the subtle moves that link us all together in an inextricable dependent way, are steadfast.

Interdependent movidas counter dominant U.S. white culture that continues to uphold the national imaginary of the rugged individual who alone can survive, who alone can pull himself up by his bootstraps and succeed.[25] Feminist scholars argue that interdependence confronts the modern individualistic subject by calling for a worldview that centers relationality and interdependence.[26] Interdependency accounts for the gendered, racialized, and classed relations that necessitate an environment in which interdependency supports survival and a critical foundation for the ethics of care.[27] Audre Lorde argues, "Within the interdependence of mutual (non-dominant) differences lies that security which enables us to descend into the chaos of knowledges and return with true visions of our future, along with the concomitant power to effect those changes which can bring that future into being."[28] It is the uplifting of mutual differences that allows for solidarities to form and new possibilities for solutions to emerge.

Scientific research on interdependence offers insight into the intricacies of life's organisms within our world's capacious ecosystems to call for a shift in understanding how all living beings are not merely relational but "mutually constituted."[29] This shift is critical because, rather than focus on the relationship between independent things, it moves us to consider the dependent, at times, reciprocal, relationship. It is not the connection *between* on which we should focus when organizing, but how our understanding of the self and personal quality of life is dependent, impacted, and changed by other people and ecosystems and vice versa.

Community organizers adopt an ecological lens to explain systems of power and organizing strategies.[30] Minneapolis-based, Boricua cultural organizer Ricardo Levins Morales embraces the ecological framework to describe activism, stating, "We carry out our work in a cultural ecosystem." Levins Morales continues, "Cultural practice is a form of leadership, unelected and (unless we arrange otherwise) not formally accountable. What accountability we do have is that of an organism to its habitat; we have to fit in well enough to survive."[31] Community organizers, in this case artists as cultural organizers, who incorporate the concept of interdependence recognize how they themselves and their artistic productions circulate, impact, and depend on other beings in a cultural ecosystem.

Cultural organizer adrienne maree brown defines interdependence as "a mutual dependence between two things…or mutually reliant on each

other."[32] Put another way, interdependence means "no one is alone." She states, "Being interdependent is a series of small repetitive motions."[33] These small repetitive motions, known throughout this article as interdependent movidas, begin to build on one another, forming deeper, stronger connections. The web of interdependence combats meritocracy and the individualist belief of solo survival. As we grow deeper in our reflection on interdependence, we see that it isn't the "I" that makes for a full, vibrant life. It isn't the "I" that alone solves injustice. Rather it is the collective "we" in relation to all beings—human, animal, and even object—that produces a landscape ripe with possibilities.

Shifting to an interdependent worldview highlights how minute connections foster collective action. Social movements are not created swiftly. Rather, it is the movidas—a casual conversation about a social issue over the kitchen table or a poet at a reading professing a story that you thought only you experienced—that slowly build, multiply, and potentially can mobilize into large-scale collective action. Moreover, interdependence calls for a decentralizing of ideas. Not one person alone has all the answers. It is in the interdependent, reciprocal, collective "we" in which we have the resources, knowledge, and power to adapt, heal, imagine, and transform our world.

Cultural organizers, grounded in interdependent movidas, cultivate interdependence despite a neoliberal climate that rewards individualist notions of success to maintain the status quo. Movements do not start off as massive mobilization projects. Movements begin with small decisions, gestures, ideas. Building on Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's (Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg) work, I argue these small actions, interdependent movidas, assemble into what she terms "constellations of coresistance."[34] She calls for intentional relationship building between Black, brown, and Indigenous people. Constellations of coresistance decenter whiteness and white allies as the primary connection for organizing and bring together communities of color who are typically siloed from each other. Constellations, she argues, are a set of place-based relationships that "reveal theory, story, and knowledge representing a mapping of Nishnaabeg thought through the night sky and through time."[35] They are critical to radical resurgent organizing as both a form of knowledge production and a structural model for relationship formation. Constellations of coresistance represent one model for combating settler colonialism, racial capital, and heteropatriarchy. They can form into artist collectives or transform into large-scale protests. The Indigenous-led movement to protect water, from Standing Rock to Line 3 to water access in Puerto Rico, depends on interdependent movidas to combat oil pipelines and advance sustainable energy models.

Water Wars: The Line 3 Oil Pipeline and Hurricane Maria

To kick off his set at the Cedar Cultural Center, hip-hop MC Immortal Technique holds the microphone close to his mouth. The heaviness of his breath cascades against the microphone. Behind him, a large screen projects the word "WATER" with the letter "A" designed as a modern tepee graphic. Immortal Technique turns to the DJ, then back to the audience and says in a deep voice drawn from his gut, "Ladies and gentlemen, the water wars have already begun." The DJ drops the beat, and the crowd, as if in a collective holding of their breath, waits in silence for him to spit his opening bars.

Water wars. In the twenty-first century, the struggle for clean, accessible water is one of the greatest challenges. When it comes to water access, Maria Isa states, "We're facing the reality that water is the new gold. Whether it is here in Minnesota, in the Dakotas, or in Puerto Rico, getting access to water for our people is insane."[36] Working-class Indigenous, Black, and Latina/o/x communities, whether organizers or not, are often in the crosshairs on the front lines of environmental racism.[37] Their neighborhoods serve as dumping grounds for municipalities' undesirable utilities while their bodies endure harsh chemicals from ground toxins and air pollutants.[38]

Under neoliberalism, the accessibility of clean, safe water continues to decline.[39] Muja Messiah says, "We used to say don't go drink the tap water in Mexico, but now it's a crisis everywhere. You know, thirty years later, you look up, and tap water is a thing of the past. You know, now it's all bottled, and that's a problem. Whether it's Flint or the northside of Minneapolis, or Mexico, we need to protect our water."[40] Cultural organizers who work to protect water across North America combat myriad structural issues. Oil pipelines and climate chaos disasters, such as hurricanes, will continue to wreak havoc on the most marginalized in our nation unless we transfer to a post–fossil fuel economy.

Eighty percent of the biodiversity remaining on Earth is on Indigenous land. Yet the struggle to maintain a healthy ecosystem free of international corporations' fossil fuel projects continues to plague tribes throughout Turtle Island. The repair and expansion of oil pipelines such as Keystone XL, the Dakota access pipeline (DAPL), and Enbridge's Line 3 not only harms the natural ecosystem, but also destroys cultural ecosystems. Indigenous water protectors argue that oil pipeline projects further the dispossession of Native sovereignty by violating U.S. signed treaties and destroying Indigenous sacred cultural sites.[41] Militarized police serve as the brute force beholden to corporations rather than everyday citizens and the environment. In addition, workers employed to build, repair, and expand oil pipeline systems are often transient workers who live in mobile "man camps" or "boom towns." These temporary housing encampments

repeatedly have been the site for sexual violence and, at times, sex trafficking of local Native women. The movement for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and relatives (#MMIW) weaves together with the fight to protect water. From an Indigenous perspective, all relatives—women, two-spirit people, children, and water—face violence when, often rural, economies open their lands to man camps.

In 1991, Minnesota experienced the largest inland oil spill to date.[42] More than thirty years later, the state's dependency and welcoming of corporate oil remains intact. Originally built in the 1960s, Enbridge's Line 3 is a thirty-four-inch-wide oil pipeline that extends from Alberta, Canada, to Superior, Wisconsin. Now part of Enbridge's mainline corridor, the new line, what Enbridge misleadingly calls a "replacement project," would actually build a new thirty-six-inch pipeline across thirteen miles in North Dakota, 337 miles in Minnesota, and fourteen miles in Wisconsin. The project in Minnesota would invade one-fifth of the world's fresh water, cutting through more than 200 bodies of water, including the headwaters of the Mississippi River and Lake Superior.[43]

Similar to Standing Rock, Indigenous women lead the movement to stop Line 3 in Minnesota. These public-facing acts of mobilization are undergirded by interdependent movidas.[44] On November 13, 2020, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency approved a water-crossing permit, and one month later, on December 4, the Public Utilities Commission rejected a petition filed by White Earth and Red Lake nations to halt the project. Enbridge, which had already been building despite not having authorized permits, now has formal approval for construction. There continue to be court challenges to Line 3 by the White Earth, Red Lake, and Mille Lacs Native nations; the Minnesota Department of Commerce; the Sierra Club; Youth Climate Intervenors; Honor the Earth; Friends of the Headwaters; and others. Indigenous lead organizations, such as the Giniw Collective, organized a week of action in March 2021 and a coalition of Indigenous youth and organizers went to Washington, D.C., for a day of action on April 1, 2021, to urge President Biden to shut down DAPL and stop Line 3. Despite multiple forms of direct action, Enbridge completed its construction, and Line 3 is now operational.

The water wars are not limited to oil pipelines. Globally, climate chaos disasters are on the rise. Entire communities are forced to evacuate, and some are never able to return to their homelands.[45] The World Health Organization estimates that we are living in an era in which more people are migrating due to climate-related factors than ever before. In North America, climate disasters include persistent wildfires and prolonged droughts along the West Coast, intense storms that cause flooding in the Midwest, and hurricanes along the East Coast and the Caribbean. Deregulated capitalism, racialized poverty, and Native dispossession perpetuate injustices associated with climate disasters, making the crisis most unbearable for working-class, Black, Latina/o/x, and Native communities.[46]

In September 2017, Puerto Rico was hit by back-to-back hurricanes, Hurricane Irma and then, a few weeks later, Hurricane Maria, which was the worst storm in more than eighty years. Hurricane Maria made landfall as a category four storm, had winds up to 155 miles per hour, and two feet of rain in some places, wreaking havoc on the 3.4 million Puerto Rican U.S. citizens living on the island. For more than a year, some places on the island did not regain power, and access to clean water remained limited due to electrical outages and faulty generators. The collapse of water sewage systems, treatment centers, and testing sites for water quality enhanced water-associated health risks.[47] The hurricane disaster was further exasperated due to Puerto Rico's debt crisis.[48]

Although Hurricane Maria intensified water issues on the island, water inequities were rampant prior to the storm. The Natural Resources Defense Council, an international nonprofit advocacy group, issued a report in 2017 stating that Puerto Rico had the worst drinking water violations in the entire United States. In 2015, 99.5 percent of the population received drinking water with severe violations. A total of 545 health-based violations occurred in 201 out of 406 of Puerto Rico's water systems. Some of these infractions included lead and copper violations, combined disinfectants and by-product additions, and failure to protect against groundwater pathogens. These violations can lead to cancer; reproductive health risks, including miscarriage; gastrointestinal distress; and potentially life-threatening infections.[49] Climate chaos disasters intensify with failed utility systems, deregulation of corporations, and poorly run infrastructures. Hurricane Maria illuminated the danger of not investing in local municipalities, especially in rural areas.[50]

After the storm, activists on the ground mobilized quickly to create short-term solutions while calling for long-term systematic change. Due to limited cell phone service and electricity outages, communication between the mainland and island was difficult. Maria Isa said at a press conference held in St. Paul a few days after the hurricane, "Any Puerto Rican around the world right now is just in extreme devastation because we cannot communicate with our families."[51] When lines were up and calls were able to go through, Puerto Ricans feared the supplies being sent through the federal government would not reach them, especially those in working-class, rural areas. Nonprofits and community organizers throughout the Puerto Rican diaspora coordinated efforts to bring water, food, and other necessary supplies to the island. For example, the cop watch nonprofit, El Grito de Sunset Park in Brooklyn, New York, worked with the Hennessy corporation to secure a warehouse to collect and store resources.

One of the continued issues for organizers and relief workers was the mistrust of the federal government. Finding networks of trusted relatives and activists throughout the Puerto Rican diaspora was vital

for ensuring money and supplies were sent to specific communities. Local groups such as the Coalición de Boricuas en MN and Puerto Ricans in Minnesota organized drop-off centers for donations. St. Paul Foundation's El Fondo Boricua, a fund originally established by Maria Isa's mother, Elsa Vega-Pérez, in 2005 to empower the Puerto Rican people in Minnesota and on the island, served as a key funding source for community organizations working on relief efforts. El Fondo Boricua, now run under Maria Isa's leadership, funded organizations such as Taller Salud en Loíza, which provides health services mainly to working-class people; Visit Rico, an agricultural farming network; and Los Pleneros de la 21, an Afro-Boricua cultural preservation organization. On the mainland, El Fondo granted funds to the University of Minnesota Puerto Rico outreach team, Rock Steady for Life Waves 4 Water relief, and several others. El Fondo Boricua also supported resettlement efforts, partnering with Comunidades Latinas Unidos en Servicio, a Twin Cities advocacy and service organization. Due to the horrible conditions, thousands of people left the island. Between 2017 to 2018, the Puerto Rican population had a net migration loss of 123,000 people, compared with fewer than 6,000 people annually between 2000 and 2009.[52] Although there is not an exact number of how many climate migrants arrived in Minnesota, it is estimated that more than 300 families have migrated to the state, joining the 13,000 Puerto Ricans already living in the state.

The struggle to obtain clean, safe water will be an ongoing fight for communities around the globe if sociopolitical conditions do not change. Climate disasters will increase as governments partner with international corporations to deregulate protections for the environment. Community activists, in this case, hip-hop artists, serve as vital cultural organizers to educate, gather resources, and intervene in water policies and practices that harm Black, Indigenous, and Latina/o/x populations. Artists' small-scale actions, their interdependent movidas, produce intentional solidarity models for creating small actions for change.

Balance the Nations Tour

Cultural organizers employ aesthetic strategies to combat injustice. Contemporary hip-hop artists draw from a long legacy of solidarity and political action within the genre.[53] Based on interviews with the three headlining artists, Maria Isa, Nataanii Means, and Muja Messiah, I argue that their tour and music are examples of interdependent movidas based on intergenerational lessons taught to them by their families and elders in their communities. Informed by these lessons, the artists build mutually constituted relationships through their hop-hop performances. These performances serve as a bridge for others, who perhaps do not have the same interdependent worldview or guidance from elders in their community. The messages within the music invite listeners to

reflect, learn, and even engage with their own traditions about which they might not know. These interdependent movidas that unearth the existence of local solidarities allow for larger connections for social movements to be possible.

The impetus for the 2018 Balance the Nations Tour came from previous years organizing against oil pipelines and mobilizing for Indigenous rights. Prior to the tour, Maria Isa, Nataanii Means, Muja Messiah, and other artists performed in Colorado for the Denver March Powwow. After that concert, several of the artists and curators traveled to Standing Rock to take part in the direct actions. Once the struggle at Standing Rock dissipated, the focus shifted toward Line 3 in Minnesota and Puerto Rican relief efforts after Hurricane Maria. The eight-city tour was entirely self-funded by the artists. Occasionally, the artists would use ticket and merchandise sales for gas, lodging, food, and small stipends; however, the majority of the funds went directly to the pipeline front lines and relief efforts. The name for the tour came from Nataanii Means' album, *Balance the Nations*, recently released in 2018. Nataanii Means states, "'Balance the nations' is not just about human beings balancing our self within our other nations, it's about the balance with the water nation, with the four-legged nations, with the ones that can swim and crawl."[54]

Mainstream U.S. cultural values do not recognize the multiple nations as indicated by Nataanii Means. Instead, systems of oppression—settler colonialism, heteropatriarchy, and racial capitalism—foster a cultural milieu of rugged individualism that strives to segregate humans from each other as well as from nonhuman relatives. Interdependent movidas as a worldview and intentional practice subvert the siloes of systemic oppression by generating modes of solidarity across difference. Reflecting on the tour, Maria Isa says the purpose was "being able to balance our own miseducation and recognizing the similarities" among each other. She continues, "We are placed with all of these borders and judgments. Society tries to separate us." In this context, interdependence as a worldview and practice is not readily available or even rewarded. Maria Isa challenges this segregation by stating, "They know once [we know] those borders are made up, once we recognize that as people, we form ourselves [together] through the drum. We are on the same rhythm and the same beat. That [rhythm] can eliminate their hate and greed."[55] Along similar lines, Muja Messiah says, "You know you have a lot of things going on between Black people with colorism. You have Black people who don't know about Afro-Latino culture, or you have Latin people who do not accept their Africanisms. I think it's good to show solidarity… We get individualized with our cultures, and we tend to separate ourselves, and in the end, we are all nonwhite, we are all victims of white supremacy. It's very important to show that solidarity. I just feel like it's people who have

suffered, felt the pain; it's my duty to be there for them, especially Native artists. Since this is Native land, I always have a soft spot for anything I can do to provide my efforts and my time to help their situation. I'm always down."[56] To have all three artists with different racial and cultural backgrounds—Latina, Native, and Black—come together to perform was an example of interdependent movidas. Nataanii Means says, "To do the tour with Maria and Muja was really huge because it was compiling all these different nations [together] instead of just linking North American Indigenous tribes saying like me and somebody else like Anton [another Indigenous artist]. It made it powerful because Maria is Taíno and Muja comes from a very unique background that is still Indigenous in the way [that] he thinks. I mean you know how he thinks. It's very next level, very close to the way Indigenous people think. Bringing them to communities in North America as well as bringing me to their land where they are really well-known, introducing my lyrics and ideologies to Puerto Rico, there is a balance that all three different worlds need to have."[57] To practice interdependence requires an intervention in our values, way of thinking, and acting. The Balance the Nations tour's headlining artists draw from intergenerational lessons taught to them by their families to create interdependent movidas, forming relationships across tribal affiliation, race, gender, and geographic location.

Interdependent movidas are grounded in intergenerational knowledge passed down through family and kinship networks. Nataanii Means, Maria Isa, and Muja Messiah come from long legacies of family activism. They grew up in movement work. They were raised to be movement makers. Their families set a precedent that activism was an integral part of daily life, not a separate entity one occasionally dipped into. Nataanii Means states, "My father was Russell Means, and he collaborated a lot with the Brown Berets, the Black Panthers, the Indigenous freedom Puerto Rican Liberation Movement. He went down to Nicaragua to fight with the Miskito Indians, you know in actual war." He continues, "In order to do solidarity work, you have to remove your ego and your victim mentality of 'I have it worse' or 'my people have it worse.' It took a while for even our tribes to do this. We have historic beef that goes back for generations. At Standing Rock, we had to put aside our differences for a bigger cause, for our water. For movement work, for us to move cohesively, we have to remember the purpose, remove our ego and remember what this is for; it is for the earth."[58]

Similarly, Muja Messiah was taught solidarity from his mother. "My mom always enforced into my thinking a kinda Fred Hampton situation. I always existed in a rainbow coalition, and I always felt empowered by more diversity… It wasn't powerful to me to have just a Black situation or all men. I needed women included. I need different races, other cultures. I want to hear what they have to say. It matters, and I was thrilled by other food, cultures. I grew up with Liberians, with Laotians. I grew up with Nige-

rians, Mexican people." Reflecting on his racial identity development, Muja Messiah says, "Well, I went through my racial identity crisis really young because I was mixed. I wasn't Black enough for my Black friends, and my white friends called me nigger. I read the *Autobiography of Malcolm X* and became the most militant Black person, and my mom didn't like it. My white dad was a deadbeat dad who I rarely seen, so I resented him, and I resented white people. My mom never liked that. She never talked bad about my father. She never allowed me to talk bad white people, about anybody. Um, except Donald Trump." Muja Messiah's mother learned to mobilize against systemic oppression from her years as an activist in the Civil Rights Movement. "My mom was involved in the Civil Rights Movement, and she had friends down South who got locked up by the FBI, but she never let that cross over into a wide variety of hate for white people. It was always focused on the system. It was focused on certain individuals… I'm 44 now. You know, once I got over my racial identity crisis and my daddy issues, her early ways of teaching came back. I understand why she implemented those lessons. Your distrust for a system shouldn't carry over for your hate for an individual no matter what."[59]

Maria Isa's mother, Elsa Vega-Pérez, a longtime activist and philanthropist, established with other community leaders several Twin Cities institutions, including El Arco Iris Center for the Arts, Casa Esperanza center against domestic violence, and Academia Cesar Chavez school. She served on national boards, including on the board of directors for the National Urban Fellows. Throughout her years organizing, Elsa brought Maria Isa along, and these experiences shaped Maria Isa's outlook. Not only did Maria Isa learn practical skills for organizing, such as how to facilitate a meeting or how to cultivate donor relationships, Elsa taught her the connection to Borikén, connection to their culture through music. Maria Isa says, "Although I'm not on the land and I'm here [in Minnesota], Borikén is in my blood. My connection is through the drum. I am able to have that with me every day even if I'm not outside and not on the land where I'm from."[60] Hurricane Maria became a turning point for the Perezes. Elsa said it was time for Maria Isa to "carry the torch" and take over El Fondo Boricua, the fund she established years prior to support the Puerto Rican community. This transition serves as an important tactic for interdependent movidas. Rather than hold on to formal leadership positions, Elsa's intentional transition to uplift the next generation, in this case her daughter, indicates the importance to think beyond the individual self.

Interdependent movidas are cultivated in intergenerational spaces in which elders, younger adults, and children are able to learn from one another. One of the most memorable moments on tour when the intergenerational lessons came full circle was at the end of the tour when the artists were in Puerto Rico. After they performed, Maria Isa brought

everyone to Loíza, a rural town heavily impacted by the hurricane. The artists were doing relief work, passing out musical instruments and water filtration supplies. Oscar Lopez Rivera, one of the leaders of Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional Puertorriqueña and a political prisoner released after President Obama granted him clemency in May 2017, was with the hip-hop artists and other relief workers. Maria says, "It was such a sacred moment for us amongst hostility and concern. It was still sacred because we showed the survival of who we are internationally as tribal people and the resistance of how our tribes are still existing."[61] Nataanii's father, Russell Means, worked with Lopez Rivera in the 1970s. When Lopez Rivera and Nataanii met, Nataanii reflects on the experience being a "sacred moment" when he felt the lessons from his father continue into the present. Means says, "To be able to go to Maria's home in Puerto Rico, we went to the rain forest, and she told us about creation stories and sacred sites. It was beautiful. Man, it was really beautiful. It strengthened a new generation of young people that are carrying on the torch, carrying on the legacy of what my father was a part of and what her people were a part of." For Maria Isa, the circle to carry on the legacy was complete at that moment on tour. She says, "That connection between Russell Means' son and Oscar Lopez Rivera and the children of Loíza showed us, even though it was crazy taking planes from here [and there], getting trapped in blizzards, and now being in beautiful weather…it showed us we can't stop. Whether it was 500 years of being on the land where a woman was buried where we were standing, to Oscar Lopez Rivera who had been locked up for thirty years, or Russell Means who had died fighting for his land and his people. The seeds of that are what continues to be watered and rooted and growing. That was a very big part of closing the Balance the Nations tour for us." These intergenerational lessons cultivated the artists' worldview of interdependent movidas. Intentional small actions of solidarity serve as tactics for combating systemic oppression—in this case, around water rights—to carry on the legacy of their families and community elders.

Interdependent movidas manifest in aesthetic practices, such as hip-hop that has a legacy of cross-racial and transnational solidarities. As younger movement makers, the Balance the Nations headlining artists employ hip-hop as a contemporary genre for cultural organizing. Maria Isa says, "You know, hip-hop being our, I mean, I can't even say 'our' generation cause it's been around for fifty years, but being that it is contemporary, we are able to connect to a lot of the folks who don't have the same ties and grounding and mentorship and influence of their tribes that we do. You know Nataanii with the folks he has. My mom who made sure that our culture is still evident and alive and being educated even if we are thousands of miles away from our land. Our culture of hip-hop that we grow up in is able to be a platform and a connection for the next

generation who may not have the same connection to their tribe or may not be educated upon what they have survived." Hip-hop functions as a platform to bridge the gap widened by systemic violence, which disconnects people from their communities' cultural survival tactics.

Yet not all of the community elders support this genre. Nataanii Means reflects on what he has been told by some members of his community. He says, "Our own people, our older people, they tell us you shouldn't be into hip-hop. You should be learning your ways, your songs and everything. Why are you doing that? It's a Black thing. They condemn us sometimes for doing this type of stuff." Here, the reference to hip-hop as a "Black thing" indicates a white supremacist logic that promotes that anti-Blackness can exist among Indigenous communities and people of color. To form relationships across racial difference requires an interdependent worldview to combat anti-Blackness to find connections and commonalities without reducing historical and sociopolitical experiences.

Nataanii Means understands the hip-hop genre as integrally connected to Indigenous forms of expression. His action to make a link between his traditional cultural practices and hip-hop is an example of an interdependent movida. Nataanii Means tells of a conversation he had with DJ Young Native about the five elements of hip-hop: breaking, DJing, graffiti, lyricism, and knowledge. Nataanii Means states, "Like you compare it [hip-hop] to our ways. You have break dancing. That is our dancing. That is what we have always done. We mimic certain birds, certain birds in mating season, or the buffalo, whatever we mimic, the spirits or the star people who came to us long ago. That's one of the elements we do. And then you have the DJ, the beat, the person that makes the beat. That's our drumbeat. Then, you have graffiti; that's art. We have cave dwellings, we have pictographs on rocks, they are all over. Now, we do rug work, pottery. That's our graffiti. And now you have the MC, the storyteller. The storyteller in Indigenous societies, I know in Lakota and in Navajo cause I'm from those two tribes, being an orator is looked at as being someone in high society because you are able to tell stories, you are a knowledge keeper. In the wintertime, when it is appropriate to tell certain stories, you keep them alive for younger people to tell. You tell us these stories to remember our ancestors and the ways of back then. And the fifth element is to have knowledge. And, uh, you know that is wisdom for us. That is what wisdom is. To aspire to have wisdom when you are old. To be wise. So, when I think about why hip-hop, why art, we have been doing that for centuries."

Interdependent movidas allow for individuals to share vulnerabilities with others; be affirmed in their experiences; and in this process of seeing one another's affective responses, heal. Nataanii Means says, "I think about what happened in New York City with the Black and Puerto Ricans when they first started doing hip-hop. It was just their ancestral

knowledge coming out of them, you know, after years of suppression. That was the way their spirit was telling them to get it out of them. That is very sacred. So, I hold hip-hop as sacred because it is something that I related to as a kid along with learning my sacred songs and ceremonies. I can do all of that and do hip-hop. You know, I can do both. And both can be separate. Or they can be brought together. Either way, it is good medicine is what we say. It is good medicine for the people."

Each of the headlining artists view hip-hop as a form of medicine for their generation and future generations. Maria Isa states, "We are movement makers, right? Or we are at the front lines. I think all of us were feeling really choked up [about] Line 3, the hurricane, and the debt crisis in Puerto Rico. Our way to be medicine folks is through music and hip-hop. The Balance the Nations tour became a way to not only perform, but give medicine to our people through art. Like our generation shows up to our shows outside of the powwow to recognize that you can continue the rituals and practices of our people through contemporary art like hip-hop. And the connection of folks being able to celebrate being survivors is what we saw in each location and what connected us all." Reflecting on their performance in Denver, Muja Messiah says, "When we performed in Denver, it was cool to perform in front of a room full of Native people who, after the show, came up to me and not just for being a good rapper, but for the message. It's not every day you get to perform for a predominant 95% Native crowd. To see that, they saw that I felt their pain and they felt my pain, and we all came together; that was very empowering. And, you know, I'm friends with a lot of those people today. I continue to have relationships with a lot of Native brothers and sisters, more than I have ever in my life, in my personal life, because of that tour."

For the artists, hip-hop as a form of cultural organizing serves as a bridge to connect other young people to traditional practices and knowledge. They each acknowledge that their families and connections to community elders allowed them access to understand, learn, and engage with their culture's traditions and rituals. For other people, however, who might not have these types of familial kinship networks or access to community elders, the artists believe hip-hop could encourage members of their communities to want to learn more about their cultural heritage and traditional practices and, in turn, become more active in their communities' struggles. Maria Isa says, "They can reflect to the beats and the lyricism and also to get a desire to want to learn who they are. 'Oh man this is me? I can learn more about me by connecting with these hip-hop artists?' I [as an artist] can open up a gate or maybe shed a light to something that this country has tried to rip up from our people."

The Balance the Nations tour was a platform to highlight the fight against Line 3 and the Puerto Rican relief effort. Despite coming from different races, regions, and cultural upbringings, their shared interdependent

worldviews provided a space for them to mobilize together as cultural organizers. Counter to mainstream environmental justice movements that see humans as saviors to the natural environment, the Balance the Nations artists' consciousness is shaped by the integration of all the natural elements and the principle that life begins and ends with water. Even though they have different cultural stories and spiritual beliefs, at the heart, there is the understanding that all life is interdependently connected. Maria Isa states, "As a Boricua in the Taíno Borikén culture, water is first. Atabey is mother. Atabey is life, and Atabey's children is what creates a balance in this world; thus, one of her children being Huracán, god of chaos but also balance because you need a storm to do a limpia [cleansing]. When it comes down to water, that is the number one rule. We cannot breathe, we cannot live. Being that I'm here on this Dakota land, if my brothers and sisters of that tribe are fighting for their right to be able to hold onto their land, their ritual, and their riches, which is also their water, it doesn't matter what region we are in, what language we speak, what our background is. It comes down to doing the right thing, which is holding on to the most sacred thing, sacred ritual, which is water."

Nataanii Means states, "When you begin to learn these Indigenous words, you learn that these words are not just words. They are concepts. They are like a whole teaching in one word. When we say *mni wiconi*, they say water is life, but see it's not really. When we say *mni*, it is an embodiment of life. So, when you say *mni wiconi*, you are saying life is life. Our concept for the word for water is life because we realized how important it is. It's how we were born. It's what keeps us alive. If we honor it, it honors us. As a lot of people in the Caribbean know and on the coasts, water is gentle, but it is also fierce. It can take life as well as it gives life. As human beings, we have to understand its balance." It is the conscious embrace of balance that allows these artists to come together to use their aesthetic skills as hip-hop MCs to unify, educate, and organize across differing social identities and borders.

And the Drum Beats on: Conclusion

On January 20, 2021, newly elected President Biden signed an executive order revoking the March 2019 TransCanada Keystone Pipeline permit. A few months later, on March 15, former New Mexico Representative Deb Haaland, an enrolled member of the Laguna Pueblo nation, was sworn in as the secretary of the interior, making her the first Native American to hold the position. Her confirmation represents a historic shift for U.S. governance, Indigenous rights, and environmental justice. At the same time, one leader, one elected official, cannot solve the climate crisis. Although government policy and historic cabinet appointments are positive steps toward change, the struggle for water access and rights remains.

Since the Balance the Nations tour, Nataanii Means, Maria Isa, and Muja Messiah continue to create and curate hip-hop music; however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they have each had to pivot. Since statewide shutdowns and gathering restrictions, the artists find themselves having to produce in makeshift home studios and learn new platforms to perfect the virtual concert. The necessity to have to pivot, however, is not new. As movement makers, cultural organizers, they employ intentional tactics to carry on the lessons they have learned and use their aesthetic abilities to build interdependent movidas.

For example, in 2021, Maria Isa started a coffee business, Cayita's Coffee Cart, importing coffee from the island to Minnesota. She travels around the Twin Cities in her camper-style coffee cart selling espresso and cafecito with a percentage of the proceeds going to El Fondo Boricua for Puerto Rican relief efforts. On an unusually warm spring day, I visit Maria Isa at her pop-up event in a parking lot at a south Minneapolis charter school that centers Latina/o/x history and culture. Alongside the coffee camper, a few venders sell earrings and homemade skin care products. The parking lot is overflowing as the school hosts its first community vaccine drive. Next to the parking lot, where the camper is parked, Maria Isa positions two bomba drums on a small patch of grass. She teaches the small multiracial crowd, who occasionally remove their masks to sip coffee, a song about the legacy of enslaved Africans resisting colonization on the island. The crowd claps and sings in a call and response style as vaccine patients pass by. My almost one-year-old daughter hangs onto the side of the drum while Maria Isa plays the rhythms that have been passed down generation after generation. Maria Isa's daughter, Loíza, named after the one of the small towns on the island, is there along with Maria Isa's mother. It is these everyday moments, small actions, that teach the next generation how to enact interdependent movidas. As both a worldview and intentional practice, interdependent movidas allow all nations—human and nonhuman—to live in a reciprocal balance.

Notes

1. Maria Isa Pérez-Vega is a self-identified "SotaRican" (Puerto Rican and Minnesotan) musician and actress. She was trained in traditional plena and bomba music from international recording artists in the mainland United States and the island of Puerto Rico. She owns her own record label and has released more than ten albums and EPs. Maria Isa is also an arts educator with the nonprofit organization Twin Cities Mobile Jazz.

2. Greg Wierzynski, "Minnesota: A State that Works," *Time*, August 1973.

3. Derek Thompson, "The Miracle of Minneapolis," *The Atlantic,* February 2015. http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/the-miracle-of-minneapolis/384975/ March 15, 2015.

4. "Minnesota #2 Overall Ranking," *U.S. News and World Report*, 2021. https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/minnesota.

5. Samuel L. Myers, "The Minnesota Paradox," 2021. https://www.hhh.umn.edu/research-centers/roy-wilkins-center-human-relations-and-social-justice/minnesota-paradox. January 6, 2022.

6. Kate Beane (Dakota) reflects on the uprising after Floyd's murder. She writes, "We all knew this moment of reckoning was one rooted in a shared history of being marginalized and victimized simply for being who we are." Kate Beane, "George Floyd Was Murdered on Dakota Land," in *Sparked: George Floyd, Racism, and the Progressive Illusion* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2021): 428-434.

7. Cultural organizing is an emerging field within social movement theory that highlights the intentional intersection between art and activism (See Paul Kuttner, "What Is Cultural Organizing?" 2015, https://culturalorganizing.org/what-is-cultural-organizing/). February 15, 2022. Chicana/o/x studies scholars and artists term this "artivista" (see Martha Gonzalez, *Chican@ Artivistas: Music, Community, and Transborder Tactics in East Los Angeles.* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2020).

8. Robert Hedges, aka "Muja Messiah," is a Minneapolis-based rapper who has released more than ten albums and EPs. He has won numerous awards, including best hip-hop artist in 2009 by *City Pages.* Nataanii Means grew ups in Chinle, Arizona, and studied at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico. He is an international recording artist and uses his music as a form of activism to tell the story of Indigenous people.

9. Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987). Dionne Espinoza, María Eugenia Cotera, Maylei Blackwell, eds., *Chicana Movidas: New Narratives of Activism and Feminism in the Movement Era.* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018).

10. Although I describe solidarity between Black, Latina, and Indigenous artists in this essay, these racial and ethnic categories are not fixed or mutually exclusive. The racial and cultural identities can be shared across groups. I choose to frame the solidarity in this way because the artists I analyze trace their particular political consciousness from the Black Power Movement, the American Indian Movement, and the Young Lords Movement taught to them by their families.

11. Sylvia Mendoza Aviña, "'That's Ratchet': A Chicana Feminist Rasquache Pedagogy as Entryway to Understanding the Material Realities of Contemporary Latinx Elementary-Aged Youth," *Equity & Excellence in Education* 49, no. 4 (2016): 468–79. Luis Urrieta, *Working from Within: Chicana and Chicano Activist Educators in Whitestream Schools* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2009).

12. David Spencer, "Movidas Rascuaches: Strategies of Migrant Resistance at the Mexico-U.S. Border," *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 35, no. 2 (2010): 9–36.

13. William Calvo, "The Politics of Color (Re)Significations: Chromophobia, Chromo-Eugenics, and the Epistemologies of Taste," *Chicana/Latina Studies Journal* 13, no. 1 (2013): 76–116.

14. Sara Hinojos and Aída Hurtado, "Rasquache Domesticana: Technologies of meXicana Self-Fashioning," *Chicana/Latina Studies Journal* 21, no. 1 (2021): 58–91.

15. Urrieta, *Working from Within*, 170.

16. As cited in Urrieta, *Working from Within*, 168.

17. Aída Hurtado, "Visuality, Corporality, and Power," in *Mexicana Fashions: Politics, Self-Adornment, and Identity Construction* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2020), 162. Hurtado warns that these subversions can also be taken up by hegemonic forces through what she terms "pseudo-movidas" that "can be visual sleights of hand designed to disrupt to some degree, but ultimately to reinscribe the existing technologies of domination" (163).

18. Espinoza, Cotera, and Blackwell, *Chicana Movidas,* 2.

19. Ibid., 3.

20. Ibid., 11.

21. Robin Wall Kimmer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* (Minneapolis: Milkweed, 2013).

22. Devon Abbott Mihesuah, *Indigenous American Women: Decolonization, Empowerment, Activism.* (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2003). Waziyatawin and Michael Yellow Bird, *For Indigenous Minds Only: A Decolonization Handbook* (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2012).

23. Winona LaDuke, *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life* (Boston: South End Press, 1999).

24. Nataanii Means, interview by author, Minneapolis, October 31, 2020.

25. Tom Malleson, "Interdependency: The Fourth Existential Insult to Humanity" *Contemporary Political Theory* 17, no. 2 (2018): 160–86.

26. Anya Daly, "The Declaration of Interdependence! Feminism, Grounding and Enactivism," *Human Studies* (2021). Margaret A. McLaren, *Women's Activism, Feminism, and Social Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019). Danielle Petherbridge, "What's Critical About Vulnerability? Rethinking Interdependence, Recognition, and Power," *Hypatia* 31, no. 3 (2016): 589–604.

27. Khatidja Chantler, "Independence, Dependency and Interdependence: Struggles and Resistances of Minoritized Women Within and on Leaving Violent Relationships," *Feminist Review* 82 (2006): 27–49.

28. Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 2007): 110-114.

29. Kriti Sharma, *Interdependence: Biology and Beyond* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015). Sharma argues, rather than understand humans, animals, plants, and objects (what she calls broadly "things"), we need to make a shift from seeing them as isolated to inescapably interacting. Second, there needs to be a shift then from seeing things as interacting to "mutually constituted" (2).

30. P. W. Speer and J. Hughey, "Community Organizing: An Ecological Route to Empowerment and Power," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 23, no. 5 (1995): 729–48.

31. Ricardo Levins Morales, "Community Art as Medicinal Practice," *Writings on the Art of Social Change* (Blog, 2011). https://rlmartstudio.wordpress.com/2011/08/26/community-art-as-medicinal-practice/. February 10, 2020.

32. adrienne maree brown, *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Shaping Worlds* (Chico, CA: AK Press, 2017), 83.

33. brown, *Emergent Strategy,* 93.

34. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resurgence* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2017).

35. Simpson, *As We Have Always Done,* 212.

36. Maria Isa Pérez-Vega, interview with author, Saint Paul, October 31, 2019.

37. Luke Cole and Sheila Foster, *From the Ground Up: Environmental Racism and the Rise of the Environmental Justice Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2000). Dorceta Taylor, *Toxic Communities: Environmental Racism, Industrial Pollution, and Residential Mobility* (New York: New York University Press, 2014). Mary Pardo, *Mexican American Women Activists: Identity and Resistance in Two Los Angeles Communities* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998). Hilda Lloréns, *Making Livable Worlds: Afro-Puerto Rican Women Building Environmental Justice* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2021).

38. In South Minneapolis' East Phillips neighborhood, environmental racism impacts the primarily working-class, Native, and people of color neighborhood. East Phillips is home to Little Earth, the United States' only Native-preference housing project. The neighborhood has some of the highest rates of asthma among children in the state and also was formally part of the "Arsenic Triangle," where local companies produced arsenic pesticides that contaminated parts of the neighborhood. See Ted Schettler, "The Case for East Phillips," *Science and Environmental Health Network,* 2020. https://www.sehn.org/sehn/2020/9/3/the-case-for-east-phillips. February 16, 2021.

39. Julie Sze, *Environmental Justice in a Moment of Danger* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2020).

40. Robert "Muja Messiah" Hedges, interview by author, March 13, 2021.

41. Nick Estes and Jaskiran Dhillon, eds., *Standing with Standing Rock: Voices from the #NoDAPL Movement* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019).

42. On March 3, 1991, the largest inland oil spill in U.S. history occurred in Grand Rapids, Minnesota. The Kalamazoo River spill in 2010 is often noted as the largest, but the Line 3 rupture in Minnesota spilt 1.7 million gallons of oil. Due to the eighteen inches of ice on the Prairie River, a tributary of the Mississippi River, the spill was more easily contained and did not travel downstream as rapidly if there were no ice.

43. "The Largest Inland Oil Spill in U.S. History Happened in Minnesota," (StopLine3.org.. 2017) https://www.stopline3.org/news/2017/3/6/appy-anniversary-the-largest-inland-oil-spill-in-us-history-happened-today-in-minnesota. March 10, 2018.

44. Tara Houksa (Couchiching First Nation) attorney and founder of Giniw Collective has for years organized on the front lines, leading activists in direct actions. For example, trained activists can be seen on social media "locking down," a tactic by which a water protector chains herself to equipment to create a work stoppage. Alongside Giniw Collective, Winona LaDuke leads Honor the Earth, a nonprofit to raise awareness and financial support for Indigenous environmental justice. On the Fond Du Lac Reservation, two-spirit activist Taysha Martineau openly opposes Line 3 even though her tribe's governing body, the Reservation Business Committee, approves of the project. Martineau founded Gitchigumi Scouts, an Indigenous-led resistance group that dedicates its time to community support, mutual aid efforts, Indigenous rights activism, and searching and patrolling for Missing Murdered Indigenous Women and relatives.

45. Simon Behrman and Avidan Kent, *Climate Refugees: Beyond the Legal Impasse?* (New York: Routledge Press, 2018).

46. The February 2021 winter storms caused millions to be without power and water for weeks in the U.S. South in states such as Texas and Mississippi. Mayor Chokwe Antar Lumumba of Jackson, Mississippi, stated, "We were not ill prepared, we were ill equipped" and argued that working-class neighborhoods of color faced the worst of the storms where climate disasters illuminated the aging infrastructure. These storms serve as yet another warning of the harmful, and even deadly, effects of climate chaos.

47. Carmen Heredia Rodriguez, "Water Quality in Puerto Rico Remains Unclear Months After Hurricane Maria" (*PBS*, June 14, 2018.) https://www.pbs.org/newshour/health/water-quality-in-puerto-rico-remains-unclear-months-after-hurricane-maria. January 10, 2021.

48. For a discussion on Puerto Rican debt and its connections to U.S. imperialism see Linda Backiel, "Puerto Rico: The Crisis Is About Colonialism, Not Debt," *Monthly Review*, October, 2015): 11–5.

49. Natural Resources Defense Council, "Threats on Tap: Drinking Water Violations in Puerto Rico" (Issue paper, 2017) 1–7.

50. A 2018 FEMA report indicated that, as of May 2018, 4.8 million households impacted by the hurricanes and California wildfires registered with the agency. More households registered from these climate disasters than the previous ten years combined. FEMA also reported that strategic planning for disaster is a necessary step in order to mitigate catastrophe. For example, in the mainland United States, FEMA was relatively prepared for the hurricanes, yet in Puerto Rico, FEMA found that its planning assumptions gravely underestimated hurricane impacts with the planning assumption that only fifty-three percent of the population would be impacted by storms when actually 100 percent of the population was impacted. See Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), "2017 Hurricane Seasons FEMA After-Action Report" (2018).

51. Peter Cox, "We Communicate with Our Families: Puerto Ricans in Minnesota Push for Aid" (*Minnesota Public Radio.* September 22, 2017).

52. Antonio Flores and Jens Manuel Krogstad, "Puerto Rico's Population Declined Sharply After Hurricans Maria and Irma" (*Pew Research Center*, 2019).

53. Juan Flores, *From Bomba to Hip-Hop: Puerto Rican Culture and Latino Identity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000). Reiland Rabaka, *The Hip Hop Movement: From R&B and the Civil Rights Movement to Rap and the Hip Hop Generation* (Washington D.C.: Lexington Books, 2013).

54. For more information on *mni wiconi* philosophy see Edward Valandra, "Mni Wiconi: Water is [More Than] Life," in *Standing with Standing Rock: Voices from the #NoDAPL Movement* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019): 71-89.