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Ayotzinapa #43 Disappeared in Headlines: discursive recognition, awareness, erasure and violence in popular media production

How does one incident simultaneously become both a symbol of recognition and awareness and one of erasure and violence? How does physical and metaphorical violence against individual bodies and social indigenous body translate in media discourse to simultaneous recognition and/or erasure of being human?

This research performs a critical analysis of the media discourse surrounding a single incident, the kidnapping and disappearance of 43 male students from Raul Isidro Burgos Escuela rural de Ayotzinapa on September 26, 2014. Media images and text of the forced disappearance of the Mexican students communicate and camouflage state related violence. A critical analysis of select media focusing on the #43 students, reveals how narratives whose purpose is to inform the public actually minimize epidemic like violence occurring as a result of transnational neoliberal projects. Thus, media serves the ends of a neoliberal state seeking to disempower and disappear those who stand in the way of economic and political modernizing initiatives. Those most vulnerable to state violence include women, indigenous and mestizo peasants, elders, youth and social justice. This research contributes to the fields of American Studies with further implications for the fields of Latin American Studies, Chicana and Chicano Studies, and media and popular culture critique.

Mexico, in particular the southern state of Guerrero, has a very long history of violence dating back to the colonial period. Spanish colonialism followed by 19th century Mexican independent movements, and violent revolutions of have left a deeply rooted mark of state violence and public revolt. In the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution (1910) state officials sought to create a national identity based on a shared vision of a “new” regime. Although socialist influences were evident in the 20s, 30s and 40s in the areas of labor, education, and economic nationalization projects, by the 1950s many of the economic and political initiatives stimulated by the Revolution were rolled back. Land distribution and rural schools that sought to “modernize” indigenous and mestizo peasants and villagers became de prioritized as the national government pursued economic policies to modernize Mexico’s economy. Basic support for land and educational reform efforts came to a halt by the mid-twentieth century.

What was the shift by mid-century that caused the closure of these ideological schools? Why has the violence escalated to the point of massacres and mass gravesites of murdered students and teachers in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century? What I am strictly interested in, and what I hope to develop and discuss in this paper is the notion of recognition and body politics. Who warrants recognition of humanness, human rights and social justice? How does violence to the body both physically and metaphorically cause erasure? In order to answer these questions, I will conduct a news outlet and social media study of the Ayotzinapa #43 incident to determine the discourse and importance given to unidentified “other” bodies uncovered in mass graves unrelated to #43.

I will conduct a brief analysis of historical accounts through newspaper articles concerning violence against students and teachers in Mexico, specifically focused on the region of Guerrero. The examination of these collections beginning in the late nineteenth thru the twentieth and into

the twenty-first century, I hope will give me an insight that addresses Mexico's social, political and economic change over time. I will also utilize local, national and international news outlets such as CNN, BBC, Al Jazeera, etc. as well as contemporary social media such as Facebook, Twitter etc. to examine the discourse surrounding Ayotzinapa #43. Methods derived from the fields of American studies, literature and critical studies including rhetorical analysis, narrative analysis and textual analysis make it possible for me to clearly understand the formation of identity and body politics as well as the power relations that fall into the discourse of recognition.