APPLICATION/COVER SHEET
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES RESEARCH FELLOW

Academic Year 2012-2013

Due Date: Applications must be reviewed by Chairs and submitted to the Office of the Dean by January 21, 2013. Please attach a CV to the application.

Name: Martha D. Escobar
Rank: Assistant Professor
Department: Chicana and Chicano Studies

Title of Proposal: Criminalization of Latina Migrants and the Construction of Irrecuperability

Semester Fellowship to be held: Fall 2013

Abstract/Project Summary - Attach proposal, not to exceed 5 double-spaced pages (including objectives, methodology, and anticipated outcomes).

I am submitting this proposal to revise my book manuscript, Criminalization of Latina Migrants and the Construction of Irrecuperability, which the University of Texas Press offered a contract for. The study centers the criminalization of Latina migrants who increasingly find themselves targets of the state. If awarded the fellowship, I will use the semester to complete the revisions for the manuscript. This includes updating it with recently published relevant literature, including changes in immigration and incarceration policies that affect incarcerated Latina migrants, revising the theoretical framework for chapter six, “Emancipation is Not Freedom: A Reflection and Critique of Advocacy Abolition,” and rewriting the conclusion.

Additional Budget Request, not to exceed $5,000: Attach budget (include travel, student employees, equipment, supplies, research-related materials, conference participation, teaching materials).

The additional budget request of $2,867 will be used for two research assistant stipends to help with indexing, library research, and other related activities; a personal document scanner for images and documents located at Central California Women’s Facility (CCWF) and at A New Way of Life (ANWOL) women’s re-entry program; travel to CCWF and ANWOL; and permission to use six images from the San Diego Union Tribune.

Signature of Applicant

Signature of Department Chair

Committee Evaluation:
Committee Recommendation:

Committee Member Signatures:

Date

Date
Criminalization of Latina Migrants and the Construction of Irrecuperability
College of Humanities Research Fellow Proposal
Martha D. Escobar, Ph.D.

Summary of Study

Today the United States leads the world in incarceration rates, currently imprisoning over 2.3 million people. Critical prison scholars argue that as a society we rely on capturing and warehousing bodies as a “fix” to what are actually social, economic, and political problems (Gilmore 2007). Migrant policing is a site where this trend expands through jailing, detention, and imprisonment. I am submitting this proposal to complete my book manuscript, Criminalization of Latina Migrants and the Construction of Irrecuperability, where I center the criminalization of Latina migrants who increasingly find themselves targets of the state. I consider their criminalization in relation to the U.S. prison regime. Prisons regulate society and perform the labor of population control. As sites designed for social isolation, prisons serve to limit the reproduction of captive bodies. Given that the majority of people in prison are poor people and people of color, population control is targeted at these particular classed and racialized bodies. Consequently, Latina migrants’ imprisonment performs as a reproductive control strategy by restraining their ability to have children and by participating in the separation of mothers from their children. Once migrants, whether legal residents or undocumented, are convicted for an aggravated felony, they are considered “criminal aliens,” deported at the end of their sentence, and banned from reentering the U.S. A central argument I make throughout the book is that imprisonment serves to construct migrants as socially irrecuperable under the hegemonic governing logic. I maintain that the gendered criminalization of Latina migrants through the discourse of “public charge” is an essential aspect of neoliberal state governance that enables the expulsion of Latina/o migrants when they are considered national threats or excess within the neoliberal labor market.
The central concern of this study is to provide an understanding of the social productiveness of the criminalization of Latina migrants. In other words, what purpose does the criminalization of Latina migrants serve? The complexity of the project places the proposed book in conversation with various bodies of scholarship and it is precisely the joining of these conversations that makes this a valuable contribution. The first is scholarship on the social construction of undocumented migration, which considers the “productive” labor that making “illegal” bodies performs for U.S. nation-building (Chavez 2007; Coutin 2000; De Genova 2002 and 2005; Ngai 2003). This body of literature maintains that the social construction of “illegality” provides important ideological work to create and sustain migrants, particularly Latinas/os, as flexible and cheap labor. Furthermore, feminist scholars such as Dorothy Roberts (1996), Eithne Luibheid (2002) and Elena R. Gutierrez (2008) demonstrate that migrant women’s sexualities are constructed as racialized national threats, and policing women’s sexuality is central to border control, and thus the racialized constitution of the nation. In the book I draw from these feminist works and argue that “illegalization” is not only racialized but also gendered.

This conversation is furthered by connecting the idea of racialized and gendered “illegalization” as ideologically productive to ongoing conversations of the productiveness of criminalization. In other words, while illegalization makes Latina/o migrants vulnerable to repressive immigration enforcement policies and practices, criminalization serves to make them permanently irrecoverable through the creation of the category of “deportable criminal aliens.” When migrants’ physical exclusion is deemed necessary to manage national interests, such as in the current moment of economic “crisis,” incarceration becomes a productive site where the expulsion of migrant bodies is made possible. The field of critical prison studies has expanded in the last decade and made invaluable interjections to our understanding of the ways that society
racially organizes itself through the criminalization of people of color (Alexander 2010; Davis 2003; Gilmore 1998 and 2007; Rodriguez 2006; James 2000 and 2007; Oboler et. al 2009; Olguín 2010; and Parent 1999). The value of this scholarship is located in the generative national discussion it helped establish on the use of incarceration as a “solution” to America’s “race problem.” This body of scholarship is partially responsible for bringing to the forefront of academic and activist circles the notion of prison abolition as a visionary possibility. Feminist scholars within this field (Diaz-Cotto 2006; Sudbury 2005; Bhattacharjee and Silliman 2002) have greatly contributed to this discussion by centering gender and demonstrating how controlling and disciplining women’s bodies is a fundamental feature of imprisonment that achieves the goal of racial re-organization.

By bridging the scholarship on the racialized and gendered construction of illegality and the social construction of criminality, in the book I connect the policing and incarceration experienced by migrants in the present-day to a longer history of racialized U.S. captivity. Furthermore, the engagement of feminist scholarship enables us to see women’s migration and imprisonment as fundamentally connected processes. Imprisonment of migrants is a local-national response to the global-transnational phenomenon of migration, and migrant women’s bodies become sites through which the national and transnational are constituted and negotiated. By focusing on Latina migrants’ experiences of criminalization, I advance a critical feminist conceptualization of U.S. captivity that accounts for the centrality of Latina migrant bodies in U.S. governance.

Methodology

In order to gather the data I drew from the experiences of jailed, imprisoned, detained, and deported Latina migrants gathered through an interdisciplinary research methodology
consisting of critical ethnography, archives, media discourse analysis, and interviews. The research was conducted at various sites where criminalized Latina migrants were present. I began the study during an internship with Justice Now, a prison abolitionist organization in Oakland, California. My participation with California Coalition for Women Prisoners, located in San Francisco, California, also provides important insight. Letter correspondence, phone calls, case files, and interviews gathered at these two sites form part of this study. Another significant location is Instituto Madre Assunta, a migrant women’s shelter in Tijuana, B.C. Critical ethnography and interviews gathered during weekly visits over a six-month period are a significant component of the study. Finally, I carried out discourse analysis of Los Angeles Times articles that consider family separation due to immigration policies. The interdisciplinary nature of my methods result from the theoretical grounding of my research in feminist standpoint theory, which posits that knowledge is located and produced via individuals’ everyday life experiences and that women’s experiences differ not only from men (Harding 2004; Hartsock 1983; and Smith 1990), but among women themselves depending on individuals’ positionality (Collins 2000). Thus, I allowed the experiences of Latina migrants to guide the research sites and methods.

*Anticipated Outcome*

The University of Texas Press has offered a book contract for the manuscript, which we are in the process of finalizing. If awarded the College of Humanities Research Fellowship, this will allow me to complete the revision of the book manuscript. Part of the revisions necessary for the completion of the project is updating the manuscript with recently published relevant literature. I also need to include the most recent changes in immigration and incarceration policies, which include Deferred Action for Child Arrivals initiated in August of last year,
changes in California prisons resulting from a Supreme Court ruling for California to reduce prison overcrowding and the consequences of this ruling on incarcerated Latina migrants, and possible changes to immigration policy that President Obama will announce in his February U.S. State of the Union speech. I also need to revise the theoretical framework of chapter six “Emancipation is Not Freedom: A Reflection and Critique of Advocacy Abolition.” The original framework centered a Foucaultian critique of the use of “confession” and I argued that extracting “confessions” from incarcerated people is a strategy used to mark them as either “deserving” or “undeserving” of advocacy work. The new framework will center a Foucaultian critique of prison reform that maintains that reform tends to expand and make prisons impermeable. Finally, I will rewrite the conclusion, “Envisioning and Working Toward Freedom,” by examining more closely the efforts and effects of a women’s re-entry program, A New Way of Life (ANWOL), located in Watts, California and created by a formerly incarcerated woman. The goal of ANWOL is to provide a living environment for formerly imprisoned women that is conducive to their ability to not only be reintegrated, but to thrive in society. ANWOL maintains that no human being is disposable and that everyone has something to contribute to society. In the current version of the manuscript I center ANWOL’s stated mission and objectives, but do not examine the actual effects of the organization. The revisions will center on understanding how ANWOL’s framework shapes the outcome for formerly incarcerated women.

Being awarded the fellowship will allow me to carry out the stated revisions and complete the manuscript that will be extremely relevant given the significance that immigration and incarceration assume in society. The book is timely and a valuable asset for both academic and non-academic audiences.
References


## Budget Item

### a  Research Assistants
- Graduate student who will provide support with indexing and other editing.  
  - Amount: $20/hour (40 hours)
- Undergraduate student who will provide support with library research.  
  - Amount: $15/hour (30 hours)

**Total Research Assistant Expenses**  
$1,250

### b  Equipment
- Personal document scanner  
  - Amount: $352

**Total Equipment Expenses**  
$352

### c  Travel
- Two trips to Central California Women's Facility to research impact of prison overcrowding on incarcerated women. This includes gas, lodging, and meals.  
  - Meals (4 days): $180  
  - Hotel (2 nights): $200  
  - Gas (1,200 miles): $180
- Three trips to Watts, California to research impact of ANWOL efforts on recently released women. This includes gas and meals.  
  - Meals (3 days): $75  
  - Gas (300 miles): $60

**Total Travel Expenses**  
$695

### d  Permission to use images
- Amount: $95/image (6 images)

**Total Image Use Expenses**  
$570

**TOTAL REQUEST**  
$2,867
Curriculum Vitae
Martha D. Escobar

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18111 Nordhoff Street
Northridge, CA 91330-8246

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E-mail: martha.d.escobar@csun.edu

EDUCATION
Ph.D., Ethnic Studies, University of California, San Diego, 2010
Dissertation: “Neoliberal Captivity: Criminalization of Latina Migrants and the Construction of Irrecuperability”
Advisors: Lisa Sun-Hee Park, Ph.D. and Natalia Molina, Ph.D.
M.A., Ethnic Studies, University of California, San Diego, 2006
B.A., Chicano Studies and Liberal Studies, University of California, Riverside, 2003

PROFESSIONAL POSITIONS
Assistant Professor, Chicana/o Studies Department (Fall 2011-)
California State University, Northridge

Instructor, Department of History, Social and Behavioral Sciences (Fall 2010-Spring 2011)
Cuyamaca Community College

Associate-in, Department of Ethnic Studies (2008-Summer 2010)
University of California, San Diego

Instructor, Liberal Studies Program (2009-Spring 2011)
United States University

Teaching Assistant, Department of Ethnic Studies (2005-2007, Fall 2009)
University of California, San Diego

Teaching Assistant, Dimensions of Culture Writing Program (2007-2008)
University of California, San Diego

TEACHING AND RESEARCH INTERESTS
Chicana/o-Latina/o Studies, Critical Legal Studies, Gender and Transnational Migration, Nation and Citizenship, Racialized and Gendered State Violence, Critical Race Feminism

FELLOWSHIPS AND RESEARCH GRANTS
2013 American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education National Conference Faculty Fellowship, San Antonio, TX. March 26-30

2009 Latino Studies Research Initiative Fellowship, UCSD

2008-2009 Center for U.S.-Mexico Studies Visiting Scholar Fellowship, UCSD

2008-2009 Women's Studies Dissertation Fellowship, University of California, Santa Barbara (Declined)

2007 California Cultures in Comparative Perspective Fellowship, UCSD

2003-2005 Eugene Cota-Robles Fellowship, UCSD
PUBLICATIONS
Edited Collections


Journal Articles and Book Chapters


"Contemporary Immigrant Rights and Lessons from IRCA." Submitted for review to Latino Studies.


Book Reviews


TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Assistant Professor
California State University, Northridge:
Chicana/o Studies 260: Constitutional Issues and the Chicana/o (Fall 2011, Spring 2012, Fall 2012, Spring 2013)
Chicana/o Studies 361: Urbanization and the Chicana/o (Fall 2011, Spring 2012, Fall 2013)

Instructor
Cuyamaca Community College:
- Chicano Studies II (Spring 2011)
- Chicano Studies I (Fall 2010)

United States University (formerly InterAmerican College):
- Chicano Studies I (Fall 2010, Spring 2011)
- Chicano Studies II (Winter 2010, Spring 2010, Fall 2010)
- U.S. History II (Spring 2010, Summer 2010)
- U.S. History and the Constitution I (Summer 2010)

University of California, San Diego:
- Criminalization of Chican@r@s/Latin@r@s and the U.S. Prison Regime (Spring 2010, Summer 2010)
- The U.S.-Mexico Border in Comparative Perspective (Winter 2010, Summer 2009)
- Contemporary Issues in Immigration (Summer 2008)

Teaching Assistant
University of California, San Diego:
- Dimensions of Culture Writing Program: Imagination (Spring 2008)
- Dimensions of Culture Writing Program: Justice (Winter 2007)
- Dimensions of Culture Writing Program: Diversity (Fall 2007)
- Population Histories in the U.S. (Fall 2009, Fall 2006, Fall 2005)
- Race and Ethnic Relations (Spring 2007, Spring 2006)

RESEARCH AND WORK EXPERIENCE
2012- Researcher, “DREAMers as Ideal Neoliberal Students,” CSUN, Northridge, CA


2006-2010 Dissertator, *Neoliberal Captivity: Criminalization of Latina Migrants and the Construction of Irrecuperability*, UCSD, La Jolla, CA

2004 Intern, Justice Now, Supervisors Cassandra Shaylor Esq. and Cynthia Chandler Esq., Oakland, CA

2002 Intern, Mentor Summer Research Internship Program, Mentor Dylan Rodriguez, UCR, Riverside, CA

2000- 2002 Student Mentor, Early Academic Outreach Program, UCR, Riverside, CA
CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS


“Immigrant Rights and Lessons from IRCA.” Immigration Symposium, San Jose State University, April 12, 2012.


“Bilingual Education After Proposition 227” (co-presenter). Tomas Rivera Conference, UC

INVITED TALKS AND PRESENTATIONS


“40 Years of Chicano Student Programs.” Chicano Student Programs 40 Year Anniversary, University of California, Riverside. March 2, 2012.

“Criminalization of Migrant Women in Tijuana.” Chicana/o Graduate Student Association Weekly Speaker Series, CSUN. October 10, 2011.


PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES/SERVICE


Spring 2012 Reviewer, “M.A. in Urban Planning Proposal.” California State University, Northridge


Spring 2012- Committee Member, Selene Salas (Chicana/o Studies, Master Thesis) Department of Chicana/o Studies, California State University, Northridge
Spring 2012  Event organizer, “Criminalization of Our Urban Communities” Speaker Series. California State University, Northridge

Spring 2012  Member, Course Recertification Committee. Department of Chicana/o Studies, California State University, Northridge


2011-  Member, Civil Discourse and Social Change. California State University, Northridge

2011-2012  Committee Member, Center for the Study of the Peoples of the Americas (CESPA). California State University, Northridge

2011  Participant, “Forum on the State of Ethnic Studies in the California State University System.” San Francisco State University, San Francisco, CA. October 1

Spring 2010  Advisor, Jacqueline Franco (Urban Studies and Planning-University of California, San Diego, Honors Thesis)


Spring 2010  Peer reviewer for Aztlán (Chicana/o Studies Journal)

2010  Panel organizer, “From Detention and Incarceration to Resistance: (Re)Imagining a Just Society.” Sociologists for Women in Society Winter Meeting, University of California, Santa Barbara. February 6


Fall 2009  Presenter, Ethnic Studies Teaching Assistant Workshop Series, UCSD

2009  Book commentator, 10 de Marzo, La Marcha, by Victor M. Cortes. Book presentation, Centro Cultural de La Raza, San Diego, CA. June 26

2009-2011  Volunteer, Instituto Madre Assunta, Tijuana, B.C., Mexico

2008-  Member, California Coalition for Women Prisoners, Oakland, CA

Fall 2008  Presenter, Ethnic Studies Teaching Assistant Workshop Series, UCSD

2008  Panel discussant, “From the Margins: Youth, Identity, and (Re)defining Higher Education.” Ethnic Studies Honors Symposium, UCSD. June 4

2007-2008  Member, Ethnic Studies Graduate Student Admissions Committee, UCSD

2006-2007  Lead Teaching Assistant, Ethnic Studies 1A-1C Series, Ethnic Studies Department, UCSD

Spring 2006  Coordinator, Ethnic Studies Teaching Assistant Workshop Series, UCSD

2005-2007  Instructor, Leadership and Critical Thinking, M.E.Ch.A. Summer Leadership Camp, University of California Riverside

2003  Instructor, Leadership and Critical Thinking, M.E.Ch.A. Summer Leadership Camp, University of California Riverside

2002  Panel discussant, “Round-table with Activists and Scholars Angela Davis and Gina Dent to Discuss the Budding Movement to Abolish the Prison Industrial Complex.” Critical Resistance Film Festival and Conference, UC Riverside. May 31

2001-  Member, Critical Resistance. Los Angeles, CA

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS
American Studies Association
Critical Ethnic Studies Association
Law and Society Association
National Association for Chicana/o Studies
National Women's Studies Association