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Part 2 | Session 4 | 02 May 2024 | Decolonizing What Was Known as Mexican Anthropology

Ricardo F. Macip (Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla) hosted by Dorothy Zinn (Free University of Bozen-Bolzano)

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The script entitled “The reification of race” can be downloaded as a PDF below.

Abstract

Taking two twenty-five-year periods, one from 1969 to 1994 and another from 1995 to 2020, I reflect on the decolonizing attempts and discomforts in what was known as Mexican Anthropology. The first one starts with the radical takeover by a generation of professional anthropologists against state sponsored “Indigenist Thought”, the second after the crumbling of the “paradigms” that same generation was able to make canonical by the very same exercise of critical anthropology and the “Zapatista Uprising”. If the critical turn after 1968 claimed to side with the ethnographic subjects that were sources of intervention, pointing out their historical colonial status, the way it was done “naturalized” other forms of theoretical othering, alienation, and representation that broke down in 1994. The Zapatista Uprising and most social movements it precipitated have incorporated anthropological reflection as a metadiscoursal recourse and put its practice at odds, striving for renewed forms of cultural politics. This has happened within a decolonial bargain, which far from complete is in the making.

To advance my argument, I will make brief considerations to the contrasting meanings of anticolonial, postcolonial, and decolonial uses in Spanish while passing from reading in French to English as main means of translation. I will also consider the basic canon of critical "Mexican national identity" before presenting some emerging voices that are shaping the current debate. With the advent of the pandemic everything turned upside down and remains on hold.

Suggested reading:

Bartra, Roger 2002 "Tropical Kitsch in Blood and Ink" IN *Blood, Ink and Culture: Miseries and Splendors of the Post-Mexican Condition*. Duke University Press, Durham. Pp: 15-43.

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