

# Migration, Displacement, and Resistance in the Monument Corridor

Agustín Guerrero

11 May 2021

Geography 167AC: Decolonial Movements in Latin America

Prof. Diana Negrín

Document Organization:

- p. 3-22 IMAGES
- p. 23 NARRATIVE PREFACE
- p. 24-27 NARRATIVE
- p. 28-29 BIBLIOGRAPHY

## PHOTOGRAPH 1A



***May Day Rally (2017)***  
***Meadow Homes Park, Concord, CA***  
***Author: Agustin Guerrero***

## PHOTOGRAPH 1A — DESCRIPTION

This photograph was taken on May 1, 2017 at a locally organized rally and march for International Workers Day. The rally included speakers from the Contra Costa Labor Council, ACCE, Tenants Together, and other local non-profit organizations. The speeches all addressed the issue of displacement; speakers talked about the displacement through incarceration of undocumented residents of Concord, and the displacement of Concord residents, particularly people of color, through gentrification. The event began with a rally in Meadow Homes Park, and the march went through the streets of the Monument Corridor, continued onto the wide and busy Willow Pass Road, and finally arrived at Todos Santos Plaza where more speeches were given. At its height the march seemed to exceed 2,000 people.

---

## PHOTOGRAPH 1B



*May Day Rally (2017)*  
*Monument Corridor, Concord, CA*  
*Author: Gus Guerrero*

## PHOTOGRAPH 1B —DESCRIPTION

This photograph was taken on May 1, 2017 at the May Day Rally located at Meadow Homes Park. This image captures the portraits of a man and a woman. The man is dressed in a Brown Berets uniform and is shouldering a Brown Berets flag. The woman is wearing a United Farm Workers (UFW) shirt that features el águila of the UFW and César Chávez's face. Although the local Brown Berets offer their services as security details for protests, rallies, community events, etc. in the Bay Area, these two were not acting as security at the time this photograph was taken. They were two OG's of "la Causa" making direct links between the struggle for the self-determination of Latinx communities, the struggle for immigrant rights, and the struggle for housing in Concord.

---

---

## PHOTOGRAPH 1C



*Keep Families in Concord (2019)*  
*Monument Impact, Concord, CA*  
*Author: Jennifer Morales*

## PHOTOGRAPH 1C — DESCRIPTION

This photograph was taken on April 22, 2019, at the Monument Boulevard site of the non-profit organization named Monument Impact. This non-profit acts as an intermediary service between day laborers and potential contractors, and it also hosts other programs for immigrant and low-income community members in the Monument Corridor. The banner being painted in the picture reads “KEEP FAMILIES IN CONCORD”, representing the ongoing struggle in Concord for the right to stay and live well in Concord.

---

## PHOTOGRAPH 1D



*Concord City Council Meeting (2019)  
Concord, CA  
Author: Agustin Guerrero*

## PHOTOGRAPH 1D — DESCRIPTION

This photograph was taken on May 29, 2019, at a special Concord City Council meeting on housing. Organizers from the Raise the Roof Coalition—a coalition of non-profit organizations active in Concord that formed to fight for tenant rights and pro-tenant legislation—and Concord tenants, mostly from the Monument Corridor, gathered to make a public comment to demand that the City Council adopt “just cause” legislation and rent control. Tenants shared stories about crowded housing, landlords refusing to make repairs, rent increases, and pest problems. One tenant even shared a story where her landlord threatened to call ICE on her and her family after she asked him to make some repairs in her unit. An interpreter with the organizers was present to translate for monolingual Spanish speakers.

---

---

## PHOTOGRAPH 2A

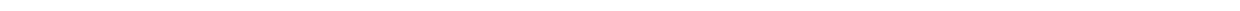


Photo by Brooke Anderson | @movementphotographer

***Caravan for Housing and Racial Justice (2020)  
Concord, CA  
Author: Brooke Anderson | @movementphotographer  
(Source: @raisetheroofconcord)***

## PHOTOGRAPH 2A — DESCRIPTION

This photograph was taken on July 7, 2020, at a car caravan for housing and racial justice in Concord. The caravan drove to Concord councilmember Carlyn Obringer's house and Concord mayor Tim McGallian's house. This caravan happened during the height of the George Floyd uprising, which gave a boost of momentum and interest to the ongoing struggle for immigrant rights, tenant rights, and against displacement in Concord. This photo articulates community activists' feeling that Concord city council is in the pockets of local landlords at the expense of Concord tenants, particularly low-income people of color and undocumented persons.



## PHOTOGRAPH 2B



*Eviction at Pine Creek Apartments (2021)  
Monument Corridor, Concord, CA*

## PHOTOGRAPH 2B — DESCRIPTION

This photograph was taken April 30, 2021, at the apartment where a Monument community member was being evicted. Organizers from ACCE and other local non-profit organizations, along with neighbors in the Pine Creek apartment complex, were there in support of the man who was being evicted. At the time this was captured the United States, California, Contra Costa County, and Concord each had different rules barring evictions during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, according to the organizers present, this eviction was one of several that have occurred in Concord within the last few months.

---

## PHOTOGRAPH 2C



***¡VIVIENDA JUSTA YA! (2021)***  
***Pine Creek Apartments, Monument Corridor, Concord, CA***  
***Author: Agustin Guerrero***

## PHOTOGRAPH 2C — DESCRIPTION

This photograph was taken on April 30, 2021, at the Detroit Avenue entrance to the Pine Creek Apartment complex. This image captures a picket of organizers and neighbors showing their solidarity with a recently evicted Latino tenant of Pine Creek. I talked to an organizer, Nicole Z., who told me that it has been incredibly taxing seeing tenants in Concord being evicted. Despite all the headlines about eviction-protection extensions, Nicole says that evictions have continued to happen in Concord. I told her that my parents' neighbors were recently evicted—a Latinx family. She was not aware of that specific eviction, but she used it as an example of the concerning frequency of evictions that have continued to happen in Concord.

---

## PHOTOGRAPH 2D



*Oak Terrace Condos (2021)  
Monument Corridor, Concord, CA  
Author: Agustin Guerrero*

## PHOTOGRAPH 2D — DESCRIPTION

This photograph was taken on April 30, 2021. These condominiums are located on Detroit Avenue, directly across the street from the Pine Creek apartments. This housing development stands out on the street. Most housing on this street consists of older apartment complexes and single family homes. As the activists from the Raise the Roof Coalition have pointed out, the Concord City Council seems to be ambivalent about the displacement of its working class residents—especially people of color—and would rather greenlight projects that attract young people with higher incomes who can pay higher rents, buy homes, and potentially bring in more revenue for the city.

## PHOTOGRAPH 2E



*1500 Monument Boulevard (2021)  
Monument Corridor, Concord, CA  
Author: Agustin Guerrero*

## PHOTOGRAPH 2E — DESCRIPTION

This photograph was taken on April 30, 2021. It is an image of 1500 Monument Boulevard, where there sits a Latinx-owned laundromat, a Mexican-owned taqueria, and a Korean-owned café. All three of these businesses share a building that once housed a city-sponsored center for day laborers to search for work. The building is also a part of a shopping center on Monument Boulevard that is home to mostly Latinx-owned businesses. It has been converted from a place that was meant to invisibilize the Latinx and immigrant working class of Concord to a place that is a part and for these communities. There are restaurants, grocery stores, clothing stores, jewelry stores, a public notary office, places to send and transfer money abroad, etc.

---

## PHOTOGRAPH 2F



*Todos Santos Plaza (2021)*  
*Concord, CA*  
*Author: Agustin Guerrero*

## PHOTOGRAPH 2F — DESCRIPTION

This photograph was taken on April 30, 2021. Captured is the Willow Pass Road and Grant Street entrance to the Todos Santos Plaza, which is also the heart of the downtown area of Concord. The plaza is named after the original settlement, started by Mexican land-grantee Don Salvio Pacheco, that became Concord. In the context of this report, the plaza is an important site for the immigrant rights and tenants movement in Concord. In 2006, the Concord immigrant rights march held a rally at this plaza. Additionally, every May Day march since 2017 has ended with a rally at the plaza. Significantly, each march has started in the heart of the Monument Corridor and ended at the plaza—the core of public space in Concord.

\*\*\*

The city of Concord has a long history, and any attempt at telling this story should begin and continue with the question of land ownership. The Bay Miwok peoples are the original stewards of the land that Concord sits on, but this fact and the Bay Miwok people's existence has been publicly erased in a process similar to what Saidiya Hartman (2008) calls the "violence of the archive" (p. 1). The Concord Historical Society (CHS) [2020] discusses and reports the discovery of Indigenous "artifacts" as proof of the Bay Miwok's frozen position in prehistory; the Bay Miwok have no history of their own in the CHS's archives, and they are declared to be a people who no longer exist; if one was to take the CHS's absence of any record of the Bay Miwok peoples past and present as truth, perhaps one would simply conclude that the Indigenous people disappeared away alongside the steady march of progress. However, to take a decolonial perspective, the land and its owners must be taken into account for this project. The coloniality of power (Hernández 2018) was created through the violent conquest of the land that is now known as Concord, and the power relations it established is evidenced in the ongoing violent erasure of history, identity, and place of the Bay Miwok peoples.

\*\*\*

Concord is the largest city in Contra Costa County with a population of around 130,000 people (Census Bureau). Although Concord appears to be nothing more than a static suburban city, the pleasantly banal appearance the city has built for itself obscures the relations of power and other social forces that shape the entire city and the people who live within it. Concord is a place defined by migration, displacement, and dispossession; however, as I will try to show in this project, it is also defined by resistance to these phenomena. For the purposes of this project, I have chosen to focus on the neighborhood of the Monument Corridor, and, specifically, the predominant Latinx population in it. My story spans, mostly, from the 1990's to the present day.

In 1986, the California Fair Employment and Housing Commission (CFEHC) held a public hearing on the, “Racial and Ethnic Discrimination, Conflict and Violence in Central Contra Costa County” (California Fair Employment and Housing Commission 1986). The report written after the hearing details various incidents of racist acts against newer nonwhite residents of Concord by longtime white residents, landlords and realtors, the police department, and local businesses. Concord was partly a creation of the New Deal welfare and warfare state; Concord hosts a Naval Weapons Station that began operating during World War II, and much of the suburban housing production began in the post-war period (Dymond 2000). However, the New Deal and the real-estate industry produced and sanctioned the creation of Concord as a working-class white suburban enclave, as evidenced by the findings in the CFEHC’s 1986 report. As nonwhite people began to move into a formerly white enclave, older white residents reacted to this migration with (sometimes violent) resistance. This history helps us understand the Monument Corridor in the 1990's.

As Nevins (2003) discusses in his book, Latinx (specifically, Mexican) undocumented migration to the United States was increasing in the 1990's, and, in response, much of the

politico-ideological discourse reached a consensus that there was a crisis at the border that could only be addressed with more border enforcement and security (de León 2015) and the criminalization of people who crossed “illegally” or chose not to migrate the “legal way”. In 1994, this discourse on “illegal” immigrants—a racial discourse that goes back to the creation of, as Gloría Anzaldúa (1987) puts it, the colonial “open wound” that is the U.S.-Mexico border—came to a head in California in the form of Proposition 187. This racist and nativist public, media, and policy reaction to “illegal” immigration were national-level phenomena, but these forces were also playing out on the local level in Concord.

In 1980, 84% of residents in the Monument Corridor were white, and 9% identified as Hispanic or Latino. By 1990, the Latino/Hispanic population grew to 20%, and the white population decreased to 64%. By 2013, white residents comprised 21% of the neighborhood’s population, and Latino/Hispanic identifying individuals were 57% of the population. From reading newspapers reporting on Concord in the 1990’s, it seems that much of the shift in population was happening in the 1990’s at a time when Mexican migration to the U.S. was increasing. The Monument Corridor not only mirrored this state-level trend in migration, but it also mirrored the state-level reaction to it. Camposeco (1995) reported that in June 1995 the Concord city council approved an ordinance banning street vending and day laborers from looking for work on the street. As Camposeco (1995) reports, much of the impetus for this ordinance came from older residents’ view of the laborers as criminals or undesirables that needed to be removed from public space. By 2000, the Concord city council approved the establishment of a day laborer center on Monument Boulevard (Chang 2000), at the location that Photograph 2E captures. Based on reporting from the time, this city council decision appears to be made in the context of Concord being under the spotlight for racism, activists demanding

services for day laborers, and older residents demanding the removal of day laborers from Monument Boulevard altogether. The day labor center became a perfect compromise—it gave activists a win but it also invisibilized day laborers without addressing any of the structural problems that force people to look for informal work on the street.

Presently, the Monument Corridor is quite obviously a predominantly Latinx neighborhood. The day labor center still exists, but now it is incorporated as a service within the non-profit organization called Monument Impact, and it has a new location farther down Monument Boulevard. Although the Latinx community is much more established on Monument now, and overt racism is no longer as out in the open, much of the structural issues that Latinx residents faced have only continued or have gotten worse, producing a situation where Latinx migration is now flowing out of Monument due to displacement/dispossession. In 1999, Khanh (1999) reported in the Contra Costa Times that residents in the Monument Corridor were demanding that the city government address the slum-like conditions of apartments along Monument Boulevard. Much of these apartment complexes exist today, along with new ones, and, according to activists and organizers with the Raise the Roof Coalition in Concord, the problems remain and rent has only increased.

Most of the images I compiled for this project document the ongoing struggle for self-determination, or the right to stay and make place and community in the Monument Corridor. These images also show that this movement of tenants has grown out of the Latinx community in the Monument Corridor who are also, emanating from their lived experience, tying in the immigrant rights movement because they understand that a community cannot make place and feel rooted when ICE agents can abduct community members or landlords can increase the rent and threaten to call ICE if they resist. Much of this struggle has also been taken to the

city government, where the community of Monument is, as Wright (2019) articulates it, revealing contradictions between the use-value (as home for Monument residents) and exchange-value (as sites for new development for potential higher-income residents) and rent increases of the geography. The uneven geographical development (Wright 2019) has produced this situation of potential real-estate capital investment and development (gentrification) of a racialized geography at the complete expense of Monument residents.

The struggle for self-determination for the Latinx community, in this context, means being able to live well and have community and place in the Monument Corridor. Concord, particularly Monument, has been defined by out-migration and in-migrations, many of which were state and capital produced phenomena that produced the racialized uneven geographical landscape that characterizes the present Concord landscape and the struggles that unfold over and on this terrain.

## Bibliography

### Outside Sources:

- E. CAMPOSECO, M. (1995, August 6). PROBLEMS MANY, ANSWERS FEW WHERE DAY LABORERS HUNT WORK. *Contra Costa Times (Walnut Creek, CA)*, p. A01. Available from NewsBank: Access World News: <https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWN&docref=news/1063F95812E24FB7>.
- California Fair Employment and Housing Commission. (1986). Public Hearing on Racial and Ethnic Discrimination, Conflict and Violence in Central Contra Costa County. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.b001126720>
- Chan, C., Lopez, V., Céspedes, S., & Montojo, N. (2015). Concord: Signs of Speculation in the Monument Corridor. *Center for Community Innovation*. [https://www.urbandisplacement.org/sites/default/files/concord\\_final.pdf](https://www.urbandisplacement.org/sites/default/files/concord_final.pdf)
- Chang, J. (2000, August 2). DAY LABORER CENTER SET TO OPEN - CONCORD OFFICE WILL BEGIN SERVING WORKERS FRIDAY, ENDING A FIVE-YEAR CAMPAIGN TO CLEAR THE JOB-SEEKERS FROM CITY STREETS. *Contra Costa Times (Walnut Creek, CA)*, p. A03. Available from NewsBank: Access World News: <https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWN&docref=news/1064A3EC8D10C2AB>.
- Concord Historical Society. (2000). An Early History of Concord, California. *Concord Historical Society*. <https://concordhistory.com/early-history/>
- Dymond, Lura. (2000). *Concord's Dynamic Half Century: The years since World War II*. Heritage Media Corp.

Phuoc Khanh, T. (1999, November 17). A MONUMENT BOULEVARD PLEA. *Contra Costa Times* (Walnut Creek, CA), p. A04. Available from NewsBank: Access World News: <https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWN&docref=news/106402C41BC09EBD>.

Class Texts:

Anzaldúa, Gloria. 1987. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books.

De León, Jason. 2015. *The Land of Open Graves*. Berkeley, CA: UC Press.

Hartman, Saidiya. 2008. Venus in Two Acts. *Small Axe* 12 (2), p. 1–14.

Hernández, Roberto D. 2018. *Coloniality of the US//Mexico Border: Power, Violence, and the Decolonial Imperative*. Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press.

Nevins, Joseph. 2003. *Operation Gatekeeper and Beyond: The War on Illegals and the Remaking of the U.S.-Mexico Boundary*. New York: Routledge.

Wright, Willie Jamaal. 2019. “The Morphology of Marronage.” *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*.