

– SOLIDARITY IN CLIMATE/IMMIGRANT JUSTICE DIRECT ACTION: Lessons from Movements in the US South

SARA THOMAS BLACK, RICHARD ANTHONY MILLIGAN AND NIK HEYENEN

Abstract

In October of 2012, youth organizers from the immigrant justice and climate change resistance movements in the southeastern US metropolitan region of Atlanta, Georgia, coordinated a direct action tactic framed by a unified narrative justifying collaboration between immigrant and climate justice activists on equal terms. In a continuing collaborative relationship, these organizers embraced mutually strategic narratives rooted in local civil rights history, but rejected common 'global climate justice' narratives used to frame social and environmental collaborative organizing. We examine the departure from 'global climate justice' narratives, which was exemplified by coalition building in Georgia, to argue that scholarship articulating 'global climate justice' as a new context for integrating social and environmental movements must anticipate barriers to these solidarities, especially historical, regional and racialized dynamics of power among organizations engaged in these developing alliances. Based on an investigation of strategic alliances between anti-racist, immigrant justice organizers and climate change activists in the metropolitan areas of Atlanta and Athens, Georgia, we argue that climate justice narratives in both activism and scholarship would benefit from more attention to the particular political and cultural geographies in which diverse forms of climate justice organizing can take hold.

Introduction

In October of 2012, student activists in Athens, Georgia, convened an unprecedented tactical merger of climate change and immigrant justice organizing, garnering attention from national media and sparking dialogues about untapped potentials for climate justice movement building in the United States. The direct action targeted the 19-member Board of Regents (BOR) appointed by the Governor to oversee operations at the state's 31 public colleges and universities. Organizers from the Georgia Undocumented Youth Alliance, Freedom University, Georgia Youth for Environmental Solutions and the University of Georgia (UGA) Beyond Coal campaign—an autonomous Sierra Club affiliate—improvised a collaborative direct action to 'demand immigrant and climate justice for Georgia colleges' during the Regents' meeting at the University of Georgia (Freedom, 2012). The BOR was a shared target of the groups: undocumented youth had been organizing against the Regents' policy 4.1.6, which has banned undocumented students from the five most competitive public universities in Georgia since early 2011, and the Regents were an emerging focus of UGA Beyond Coal's long standing campaign to retire an on-campus coal boiler at UGA. The banner statement for their protest was simple: 'All students on campus, dirty energy off campus'. Organizers disrupted the meeting by shouting this mutually strategic narrative, which was framed around student power and youth leadership, before security officers forced the youth to leave the meeting (Biggers, 2012; Diamond, 2012).

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This article draws on participatory research with organizers of this action and subsequent convergences to analyze the emergence of collaborative organizing between undocumented students and student climate activists in the southeastern US. We demonstrate that the success of these organizers in brokering a coalitional politics for climate justice depended in part on a departure from the 'global climate justice' narratives adopted by mainstream NGOs. The possibilities for progressive alliances of climate change activism with movements for social and economic justice in Georgia are strongly shaped by the historical geographies and political economies of white supremacy that characterize both the southeastern region of the US and the culture of mainstream environmental advocacy and governance. Our fieldwork demonstrated that attention to white supremacist histories along with the histories of anti-racist organizing, particular to the Southeast, is crucial to the development of effective climate justice collaborations that are capable of overcoming the institutionalization of white privilege in existing climate organizing. We argue that attention to such geographically situated particularities provides opportunities for activists to imagine and articulate climate justice narratives that can overcome what seem to be trenchant obstacles to such movement building when it is imagined at global scales only.

Methodologically, we combine ethnographic fieldwork conducted with both immigrant and climate justice organizers at local, state and national scales since 2011 with attention to the historical geographies of social movements in the southeastern US, particularly the civil rights movement. While we draw from a wide range of participatory efforts in both climate and immigrant justice organizing, our empirical evidence relies most heavily on participant action research conducted by lead author Sara Black in partnership with Georgia-based climate and immigrant leadership to further cultivate relationships of solidarity between climate and immigrant justice organizers in Georgia. This article is based on interviews, field notes from a diverse range of actions and meetings held between April 2013 and January 2014, as well as from a workshop convened to develop alliances between immigrant and climate organizers. It illuminates an important incongruence between Georgia activists' articulation of useful climate/immigrant solidarity work and the mainstream US climate movement's aspirations to the same solidarity.

We use this juxtaposition to examine the discourse of global climate justice, a general framework that scholars anticipate will structure the growth of translocal alliances and inter-movement solidarities among social, economic, environmental and climate justice organizations around the world in a new era of globalized resistance to climate change and exploitation. We argue that as this body of scholarship develops, scholars must explore existing dynamics of power among organizations operating in this global climate justice context. Our case demonstrates the importance of understanding preexisting conditions, relationships, histories and reputations among real organizations and movements in cultivating new solidarities for climate justice. Fostering such 'deeper linkages of eco-social contestation' requires nuanced and grounded attention to the often place-based dynamics of power among organizations, actors and movement discourses categorized along lines of race, class, gender and legal status (Bond, 2012: 698). These relational dynamics shape the process of movement building and movement action, and need to be central to the discussion of solidarity and alliances in an era of global climate change and global resistance. To make this argument, we discuss contemporary immigrant and climate solidarity organizing in Georgia by elucidating productive tensions between two undergirding organizational paradigms: southeastern US civil rights organizing history and the national climate community's attempts to cultivate solidarity with immigration activists.

While this article depends upon a characterization of the regional history and organizing situation of the southeastern US, we are also conscious of the limiting potentials of certain versions of regionalism, particularly the degrading function of the South

as caricature and the myths of southern exceptionalism that burden understandings of race and poverty across the US (Lassiter and Crespiño, 2010: 7). As Flannery O'Connor once wrote about the reception of her fictional works, which address the pervasive injustices of race and class in the mid-20th-century southeastern United States: 'anything that comes out of the South is going to be called grotesque by the northern reader, unless it is grotesque, in which case it is going to be called realistic' (O'Connor, 1961: 40). Conscious of the aporetic space between stigmatizing the US South as backward and irredeemable on the one hand, and recognizing the rich histories of organizing for justice against the Southeast's peculiar brand of white-supremacist capitalism on the other, we document and theorize the emergence and development of southeastern US climate justice movement building that began in Athens, Georgia, in October 2012.

Variations of climate justice: uneven global frames and scalar solidarities

Global climate change poses the 'most serious threat humanity and most other species face in the 21st century' (Bond, 2011: 1). In the context of the continuing failure of national and international leaders to take meaningful action to address a looming climate catastrophe, activists and scholars around the world have been developing approaches and organizing movements around climate justice—a broad and unsettled concept that brings together diverse strands of activism to confront global climate concerns. One discursive tactic that bridges gaps among these diverse strands is the foregrounding of a crucial dialectic: elites who have benefited from anthropogenic alteration of the global climate along with entities that continue to benefit from climate inaction and denial, on one end, and the marginalized, who face the most dire consequences resulting from this alteration and whose consumption is least implicated in producing the problem, on the other (Bond, 2011; Routledge, 2011: 385; Chatterton, 2013; Chatterton, *et al.*, 2013). Climate justice nominalizes a coalescence of diverse concerns for such a dialectic emerging at a multitude of scales. Attempts to trace the emergence of climate justice organizing look to the global justice movements of the 2000s, which bridged the gap between radical, so-called 'first-world' activism and 'third-world/global-South' resistance to neocolonial and neoliberal violence, perpetrated most blatantly by transnational corporations and the International Monetary Fund. The neoliberal expansion of capitalist exploitation and consolidation of neocolonial relationships of debt and trade as globalization have been accompanied by increasingly globally networked systems of alliances, solidarities and other organizing structures of resistance—a 'series of overlapping, interacting, and differentially placed and resourced networks' through which 'different place-based movements are becoming linked up into much more spatially extensive coalitions of interest' (Routledge *et al.*, 2007: 2575). Though activists have been building and mobilizing the discourse and strategy of climate justice for over a decade (Bond, 2011), a 'theory of climate justice' remains elusive and highly contested (Wainwright and Mann, 2013). Activist interventions at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of the Parties in Copenhagen (COP 15) have served as well-examined watershed moments in the development of a global climate justice narrative that connects diverse politics of the rights of migrants, the destruction of the economic and ecological resilience of the 'global South', the extensive power of and damage caused by the fossil-fuel industries and the abundant critiques of neoliberal development and conservation projects (Reitan and Gibson, 2012; Chatterton *et al.*, 2013; Featherstone, 2013). COP 15 established climate justice as a powerful discourse that received considerable recognition from mainstream media, the coterie of established NGOs working on climate change, policymakers and inter-governmental agencies. Climate justice narratives emerged from forged solidarities and actions and created opportunities for strategic and translocal solidarities among social justice and climate change organizations across scales and continents. As a diverse

array of actors mobilize intersectional climate justice narratives, scholars are working to understand and cultivate the potential of diverse grassroots networks' abilities to contest hegemonic discourses on climate change and reshape them to address global social inequity and economic injustices (Silver *et al.*, 2010; Mason and Askins, 2013).

An important strategic narrative at the global climate justice scale targets mainstream and elite international bodies—those widely held to be the principal actors who will implement climate governance and response—calling on them to reject capitalism-based solutions to climate problems and to insist on an explicit engagement with fundamental injustices that underlie both the causes and consequences of anthropogenic alteration of the Earth's climate (Chatterton *et al.*, 2013). At a global scale, there is a corresponding unevenness between vulnerability to climate change and culpability for it, which is further mirrored at more local and regional scales by an uneven capacity 'to meaningfully influence climate futures and contribute to the process of imagining and enacting alternative futures' (Derickson and MacKinnon, 2015: 305). While much climate justice scholarship focuses on the uneven geographies *between* the global North and South, environmental injustice also shapes landscapes *within* 'affluent democracies' of the global North (Compston and Bailey, 2008; Angus, 2009), where obstacles for national policy (including electoral retribution and the influence of corporate lobbies) have prompted organizations to focus their climate activism on municipal, regional and provincial governance (Linstroth and Bell, 2007). The implementation of a globally conceived model of climate justice emerging from COP 15 by predominantly white, mainstream organizations in North America is complicated by institutionalized forms of whiteness and environmental racism (Pulido, 2000; McLean, 2013). Agyeman *et al.* (2007), among others, have made a compelling case for fusing the climate change and environmental justice movements in the US, both to broaden the coalition of climate change organizers and to rectify the fact that 'little attention has been paid to the environmental justice implications of climate change on the municipal, state, and national levels, despite the increasing currency of environmental justice as a policy principle' (*ibid.*: 144). Our case provides more insight into how fusions of climate change and social justice movements happen on the ground in the geographic and historical context of social movements, where existing systems of environmental racism create disparities of power among actors and institutions, and across the landscape.

Integrative strategic narratives of climate justice have influenced domestic climate change organizing discourses and tactics in the US. In October 2012—as Georgia's youth were protesting collaboratively at the BOR meeting—the community of national climate justice and clean energy organizers, including leadership at the Sierra Club and 350.org, were prioritizing their capacity for dealing with two interlocked dramas: the impending presidential election and the State Department's decision to permit or reject the Keystone XL pipeline. These climate organizations have many interrelated forms of political power that allow them not only to marshal the conversation around climate politics, but also to speak loudly from national platforms: they have more foundation money, volunteer capacity, access to large media structures and public brands that carry some political legitimacy. The pipeline proposal was as an opportune political moment for these organizations, in part because it offered political space for integrating narratives of global climate change, localized environmental injustice, domestic energy policy and indigenous sovereignty in an energizing, large-scale and singular campaign. The integrative framework of social, environmental and climate justice efforts is valuable to these organizations, to a certain extent because it provides an opportunity to work prominently on common ground with communities of color and frontline communities—solidarity work that is largely absent in the history of the mainstream environmental movement from which these national organizations have emerged as leaders (Agyeman, *et al.*, 2003; Mark, 2013).

Through efforts such as the Beyond Coal campaign (which has largely centered its narratives on environmental justice, frontline communities in cities and zones of coal extraction, such as Appalachian mountaintop removal sites) and the resistance to the Keystone XL pipeline, the Sierra Club has been able to make some headway in its efforts to increase stakeholder diversity and foster a more inclusive organizational culture in recent years (Mock, 2013). Kimberly Wasserman, an environmental justice community organizer from Chicago, describes her partnership with the Sierra Club to win a 2012 victory over two outdated and toxic coal plants:

Unfortunately I think a lot of it has to do with money and power. [Environmental justice] organizations get less than 5 percent of environmental funding out there. There has to be pushback on that, but there also has to be a conversation. When we came together as a coalition, one of the first things we did was have a conversation on power, on race, on class. It's the communities of color that are being impacted [by climate change and pollution]. We created a memorandum of understanding to make sure that we as smaller organizations weren't thrown under the bus, that we weren't excluded from negotiations' (Thompson, 2013).

Wasserman goes on to say that the young staff members she worked with were willing to recognize 'the privilege they [came] from and [were] willing to humble themselves enough to have these difficult conversations and find authentic ways to work together' (Thompson, 2013). The Keystone pipeline issue provides an ongoing opportunity for purposeful, visible and earnest solidarity with indigenous communities and frontline environmental justice communities—a chance to demonstrate that national US climate organizations are finding authentic ways to work with diverse stakeholders on environmental issues despite a history that is marred by failure to do so (Klein, 2011). But these successes in 'outreach' and greater 'inclusion' are also marked by the persistent marginalization of the communities that are most vulnerable to and least responsible for dangerous climate futures, as well as by continuing forms of white privilege (Derickson and MacKinnon, 2015). As discussed at an Environmental Diversity and Inclusion Roundtable organized by the Atlanta chapter of Environmental Professionals of Color in January 2014, acts of 'outreach' and fostering 'inclusion' are not enough to dismantle histories and institutionalizations of white privilege.

In April 2013, both the national Sierra Club and 350.org released landmark statements of solidarity with the US immigrant justice community, remarkably departing from the discourses prevailing two decades earlier, in which neo-Malthusian advocates for population control with a starkly racialized anti-immigrant agenda nearly took over the national Sierra Club board in 1998 (Urban, 2007; King, 2008; Sasser, 2013). The statement by 350.org is characterized by global climate justice language, which is based on the view that immigrants driven to the US are victims of climate change and weather issues in their home countries:

From working with our partners around the world, we know that migration itself is increasingly a climate issue. Many people who have come to the U.S. in recent decades were fleeing impossible hardships at home, including hardships caused by weather-related disasters linked to climate change (Boeve, 2013).

The Sierra Club frames immigrants as a pool of potential climate voters:

To protect clean air and water and prevent the disruption of our climate, we must ensure that those who are most disenfranchised and most threatened by

pollution within our borders have the voice to fight polluters and advocate for climate solutions without fear (Sierra Club, 2013).

Although these statements illustrate why climate organizers might see a strategic value in immigration reform and solidarity with immigrants, these gestures do not legitimize or even represent the narratives that immigrant justice organizers use to represent themselves and to organize against racialized anti-immigrant policies in the US South. Although employing a global climate justice model is useful to national and powerful organizations with problematically low diversity and difficulty collaborating with marginalized communities, deploying this framework does not in itself unpack the problems of whiteness that have been institutionalized in these organizations (*cf.* Gibson-Wood and Wakefield, 2013). Global climate justice frameworks have been touted as a way of movement building through intersection, but more attention is needed to examine whether the movement is building strength equally for marginalized and well-resourced communities.

Georgia's climate immigrant justice coalition, formed in October 2012, both pre-dates these national statements and reflects an important difference in discursive representation of this solidarity. Georgia's coalition involved the cultivation of solidarity between climate organizers and a marginalized community experiencing injustices that did not primarily involve environmental or climate politics. Climate organizers in Georgia brokered solidarity with immigrant justice activists by following an alternate formulation of climate justice than the one employed by their national partners—a formulation rooted in regional histories, existing relationships, a commitment to actions and narratives that were mutually valuable, and a sensitivity to the whiteness of climate and environmental organizing. The section that follows outlines the development of the collaborative relationships between climate and immigrant organizers in Georgia, presenting the process and results of a participant action research effort in which organizers worked to imagine a coalitional narrative that was mutually strategic for the respective groups.

Collaborative action sparks dialogue: searching for a mutual narrative

We structure this section by focusing on two key periods in the collaborative movement between Georgia climate and immigrant organizers: the first is the original collaborative energy surrounding the direct action at a USG BOR meeting and its follow-up, in October 2012; the second is a convergence to reexamine and reinvigorate these collaborative efforts, followed by a participant action research project to explore and attempt to produce additional coalition work between climate and immigrant organizers, in April 2013. Throughout these stages, some or all of the authors functioned as organizer participants collaborating with other organizer participants. We worked on both the climate and immigrant fronts with peers and collaborators with whom we had working relationships, conducting formal and informal interviews and meetings with individuals and groups. Although both periods described above are anchored by 'main' events (the BOR disruption, the April convergence, and a meeting to commence an intentional research effort), we must characterize this year-long inquiry as a rich process that sprung from networks of relationships and conversations. Our observations are made possible by our working and personal relationships with our partner organizers and our dedication to co-producing information that would inform activism.

– Direct action and improvisation

In October 2012 student organizers with the UGA Beyond Coal campaign and the Undocumented Student Alliance at UGA learned of a BOR meeting happening at the University of Georgia campus and saw an opportunity to escalate their tactics and gain media attention by working together to disrupt the meeting. Students prepared

a narrative for the media that legitimized the unified action of these two groups and the movement networks they represented: 'All students on campus, dirty energy off campus!' In their combined press statements following the disruption, activists said that climate and immigrant justice would always be linked through the 'oil addicted economy built on the backs of immigrants', and that 'immigrant students are being denied their basic rights to education and all students are being ignored on other issues that are most important to them, like climate change' (Biggers, 2012). They were brought together not only by having the BOR as a common target, but also by a common vision of universities as a place for freedom, and by the common demand that the BOR make a commitment to justice, transparency and the inclusion of all youth. This action garnered national press attention when journalist and author Jeff Biggers covered the event in the national online news source, *The Huffington Post*. He claimed that these students were leaders in uniting two movements with a shared vision of justice for all (*ibid.*). The momentum and excitement this created carried the organizers forwards to a second collaborative event on 13 November 2012, when Freedom University and UGA Beyond Coal joined forces to host Biggers at UGA. The event, 'And justice for all—beyond coal and beyond borders', took place in the form of a critical discussion on the intersectionality of the two movements and the critical importance of Georgia as a place for solidarity. Perhaps the most exciting moment of the collaboration between youth climate and immigrant justice organizers at this time (the moment most often recollected by research participants when asked about it), was a pre-event meal shared at the Taco Stand, a local restaurant in downtown Athens. Crowded around taco trays and tables, youth organizers shared stories, celebrated their successes and discussed possibilities for future collaborative direct actions and civil disobedience.

A key to the success of this event was a radical openness to an improvisational strategic alliance that ran counter to the discourse of climate justice taken up at the national level. Instead of foregrounding the specter of climate disaster as an arena where injustices concerning race, migration and environmental justice can be resisted in an integrational way, this alliance drew from regional politics and personal relationships, seeing climate and immigrant organizers representing their causes on equal, mutual footing as peer youth confronting a common target. A lesson from this collaboration is that the filtering down to Georgia from national climate change organizations of a climate justice narrative and strategy taken up from COP 15 was not an effective means for achieving coalitions of solidarity for climate justice. Instead, the local and regional particularities of climate and immigrant justice organizing were much more effective. Besides realizing the national recognition of the importance of this innovative coalitional work, scholars and activists should also recognize the importance of regional differences in the climate justice movement—not only as issues that need to be resolved, but as potentials for improvisational solidarities.

Such a regionally sensitive departure from national narrative and strategy was lacking at two key events in justice organizing in Georgia at the time of this collaborative action. In October 2011, at a general assembly of Occupy Atlanta at Woodruff Park, the stilted format of consensus-based democratic decision making that had become a hallmark of the Occupy movement resulted in a damaging public relations misstep in which a predominantly white group of organizers decided to 'block' the speech of long-struggling civil rights leader and member of the US House of Representatives John Lewis, who then departed as someone shouted, 'John Lewis is not better than anyone; democracy won'. While later interviews with participants revealed that Lewis had not asked to speak and that the decision to block his address was procedural in motivation, video footage of the decision-making process that effectively censured a prominent, local elder of struggles for justice, equality and democracy greatly tarnished Occupy in Georgia for many radical organizers across the state.

Weeks later a similar confrontation occurred at an action against the BOR ban on undocumented students. Undocumented immigrant youth organizers, primarily from Freedom University and the Georgia Undocumented Youth Alliance, brokered a broad coalition of supporters (including the Southern Center for Human Rights, the American Civil Liberties Union and the Southern Poverty Law Center) to formally address the BOR. The strategy, formation of a coalition, narratives and frameworks employed for these and other immigrant justice actions were richly steeped in civil rights history and drew upon the guidance and wisdom of elders from the civil rights movement. Organizers for immigrant justice had to argue passionately in a rally immediately before the students were to address the BOR that, while they were committed to consensus-based decision making and embraced the concept of a diversity of tactics, it would be a terrible outcome if the large number of activists from Occupy Atlanta were to overpower the undocumented organizers' formal address to the BOR by taking over the meeting with a 'human microphone'. Tensions were high, but eventually a compromise was reached and disgruntled Occupy Atlanta organizers agreed to delay their disruptive tactics until the immigrant students had concluded delivering their speeches to the BOR, which had been carefully written and rehearsed. In both of these instances, an unnecessarily stubborn allegiance to a nationally recognized and disseminated strategy for brokering radically democratic coalitions trumped the capacity for organizers to improvise according to local dynamics. What is perhaps most important about the coalition of youth climate and immigrant activists in 2012 and 2013 was the improvisational capacity to avoid such pitfalls and the sense of solidarity and commitment to mutual respect that developed between the two groups.

– Convergence, participant action and commitment to mutualism

In the months following the 2012 BOR action, plans for additional direct and public collaborations fell through because of a decline in the capacity of student and community organizers. Further plans for collaborative spaces were shelved until April 2013, when an Urban Political Ecology service learning class taught by Nik Heynen hosted a small climate and immigrant justice organizer convergence to restart the dialogue. Students hosted representatives from the Georgia chapter of the Sierra Club, the UGA Beyond Coal campaign, the Southern Energy Network, the Athens Immigrant Right's Coalition and Dignidad Immigrante en Athens (DIA). Organizers discussed the capacity of the Georgia networks to find power in inter-movement solidarity beyond the student-focused frame and brainstormed narrative components that compellingly justified collaborative action, producing additional organizing power to be directed towards local targets.

After the April 2013 convergence, lead author Sara Black worked with six core organizers as a facilitator, using a participant action research methodology to explore and examine the strategic value of mutually empowering solidarity and/or coalition work among organizers engaged on Georgia's climate and immigrant front lines. Black worked with organizations represented at the April convergence and in the original BOR action to organize follow-up inter-movement meeting spaces, conduct semi-structured interviews with core participants, participate in organizational strategy sessions to gather participant observations as a volunteer, and coordinate communications and logistics for additional collaborative actions. In collaborative meeting spaces and independent strategy sessions over the course of the project, organizers gathered around tables, shared background information on strategic priorities for the work and imagined what actions could be taken together that would be useful and mutually strategic for the respective organizations. We predominately focused on imagining (and sometimes enacting) public actions, including a UGA Beyond Coal presence at an annual DIA cultural event called Latino Fest, an opportunity to march together at a Martin Luther

King Jr. Day event in Atlanta, as well as inter-organizer teach-ins or training sessions, especially for youth activists.

Building solidarity, cultivating a coalition and identifying strategic outcomes is a long-term organizing project that may carry forward the work of local activists outside the scope of this article. But the most important finding from the progress of this work is that organizers placed significant importance on developing a cohesive and mutually useful public narrative to explain why climate and immigrant justice activists were in solidarity. The need for such a narrative is based not only on constraints of organizer capacity and priorities, but also on the political climate in Georgia, where progressive action often requires a strong, honed and purposefully constructed narrative in order to gain any meaningful traction that can withstand backlash. As a result, much of our meetings and strategy sessions were geared towards addressing this key need. We asked ourselves, 'Why does it make sense that we work together? What motivates these collaborations?'

One of the most common stories that arose in our organizing sessions linked climate change and ecological vulnerability to the economic destabilization of and resulting migration from central and Latin America. Climate change and economic destabilization, organizers suggested, are driven by the same momentum of neoliberal ideology and by institutions that profit from the displaced and the vulnerable. This connection was recognized early and often, but participants did not find this narrative particularly strategic, because when applied to Georgia's organizing and political landscapes, it failed to sufficiently support or even engage with existing undocumented immigrant-rights narratives about anti-racism (see also Armbruster *et al.*, 1995), stepping out from the shadows, the validity of immigrants' presence, and their right to be in the US and in Georgia. The concern with this transnationally scaled frame was that it used the plight of immigrants in a mainstream climate narrative, and would not mutually validate the strategic directives of both movements equally, especially not in the state-level context at which much of the political energy was targeted.

Strategic narrative framing in contentious politics has an integral relationship with space and place. In an organizing context, strategic narratives are the stories activists tell about their work in public in order to legitimize claims and actions, motivate an audience and build the necessary political power to be effective in specific contexts (Ganz, 2011). Frames are the systems of included and excluded elements of these narratives used to create a specific story that complements a specific purpose or context. Often these discursive systems are based on shared place-based values, identities, histories and experiences. Martin (2003) explores the function of 'place-frames' not only as motivation tools connected to the common experience of people with shared sense of place, but as a discourse that can imagine, define and 'make' place, as well as justify collective action in that place. According to Martin and Miller (2003: 144–45), space 'constitutes structural relationships and networks (including the processes that produce gender, race, and class identities); situates social and cultural life including repertoires of contention; is integral to the attribution of threats and enemies; ... and is central to scale-jumping strategies that aim to alter discrepancies in power among political contestants'. Environmental justice and climate justice politics and accompanying narratives are characterized by scalar ambiguity and fluidity (Williams, 1999; Kurtz, 2003). When organizers and activists work to build power to resist the systems perpetuating environmental injustice, they can create and deploy narratives framed with a scalar element that serves their strategic needs in order to increase access to alliances, resources and political legitimacy (Kurtz, 2003; Roberts, 2007). A global climate justice narrative can potentially legitimize or inspire organizational practices such as coalition building, solidarity work and new discursive output. But this kind of narrative, articulated primarily within the framework popularized at COP 15 and in the

tradition of alter-globalization, was not a satisfactory justification for solidarity work in Georgia.

Georgia organizers recognized the relevance of global economic patterns to understanding the situation of undocumented immigrants in the US South and how it is related to climate change, but rejected this narrative to justify climate immigrant justice solidarity work mostly because it awkwardly situated the immigrant justice efforts in the state under the umbrella of the crisis of climate change and from a disembodied perspective of transnational capital and international trade agreements. Sierra Club staff organizers in Georgia did not want to shift the focus of the coalition to center it on their own strategic priorities, because they would run the risk of appearing to coopt the emotional energy and legitimacy of immigrant youth. Immigrant justice organizers were enthusiastic about intersectional opportunities such as the prospect of educational events about climate change and weather vulnerability. DIA organizers invited UGA Beyond Coal students to speak at DIA's annual Latino Fest, and the Beyond Coal students spoke in English and Spanish about the UGA coal burner and environmental justice. But in terms of developing narratives for a more formal and public coalition, many immigrant justice organizers saw no need to be lumped into a global story of climate change to justify their calls for equal access to education—calls rooted in the legacy of Georgia's civil rights and youth leadership history. The global climate justice narrative that worked well to realign positions of national groups such as 350.org and the Sierra Club was like a weak non sequitur in spaces of coalition building between youth climate and immigrant justice activists in Georgia. Instead, historical geographies of white supremacy and civil rights struggles more adequately situated possibilities for climate justice collaboration between undocumented youth and student climate change activists.

Organizing logic and Atlanta student leadership in the civil rights era

In the long, tumultuous civil rights struggle, Atlanta, Georgia, was the commercial and industrial hub of the South and the most populated city in the state, with the third busiest airport in the country by 1960. Called 'the city too busy to hate' by many from within and outside of the movement, Atlanta was both in the middle of the struggle's spotlight and yet slightly out of focus. The relatively liberal policies of the city's white leadership throughout the 1950s and 1960s did not evoke the same horror as those in Selma or Birmingham and stood in stark contrast to the oppressive violence that smothered resistance in many of Georgia's less visible corners. It was a relatively safe and central city in Georgia for black activists, and home to a thriving black elite and a great concentration of civil rights leadership. Atlanta was accordingly a base for icons such as Martin Luther King Jr. to mobilize national strategies and develop national messages (Tuck, 2001: 123).

However, desegregation efforts targeting the businesses and institutions of the city itself were out of sync with the fervent push for desegregation in other cities, in part because of the elite black and liberal white communities' tolerance of moderate racial policies and their hesitance to engage in disruptive protest when backroom negotiations could still generate tolerable results. Robust student leadership in Atlanta took up organizing direct resistance to segregation via public protests and sit-ins, especially from 1960 to 1964. They clogged jails, shamed the city and butted heads with the black elite, who disapproved of the students' radical action and saw it as potentially wasteful of political capital (namely, functional and relatively positive relationships with friendly white power). As Tuck states:

Ostensibly, the division within the black leadership centered on tactics and the pace of protest. But the students themselves thought that the divisions

were over goals too. Summing up the students' perspective, [student ally] Carl Holman asked, what is best, 'Cadillacs, split-level houses or freedom? To the students, freedom is the highest goal' (Tuck, 2001: 121).

While moments of intergenerational unity punctuate the four years of student-led direct action protest, more often than not, 'the generational division resembled internecine warfare rather than mere tactical disagreement' (*ibid.*: 122). The division also had implications for the distribution of organizing resources in the black community—'control and finance'. Then student leader Julian Bond 'sharply criticized the "adult" half of the Student-Adult Liaison Committee for controlling protest finances and diverting money to the NAACP, "much against [students'] will"' (*ibid.*: 121). Critically, this had a major impact on students' access to both financial and human resources, and 'undermined the effectiveness of student protest' (*ibid.*: 123).

As a general model, grassroots movement organizers choose and enact tactics that align with broader strategic methods or avenues, underwritten by a (presumably) shared theory of change, all for the purpose of accomplishing selected goals. Goals and strategies are place-specific and exhibit dynamic scalar characteristics, both in the theories and knowledges that inform organizers and in the potential implications for their success or failure (see Zinn, 1964; Payne, 1995). So for the Atlanta students, segregated businesses were one local space of contestation where they could confront the cultural and institutional behemoth of segregation and white supremacy. Sit-ins were one tactic used in concert with others (such as boycotts) to apply pressure to targeted businesses. For these tactics to have an effect across the political arena of the city, state and national bodies of power and intervention, students operated in regional networks and accessed national press to share images and bring attention to this segregated city masked by a moderate reputation. However, students thought the impacts of change in Atlanta could have transformative effects across the whole South, sending ripples of hope to other cities, boosting morale by setting precedents. It was predicted that 'as goes Atlanta, so goes the South' (Tuck, 2001: 111).

A crucial component of community organizing logic is that tactical and strategic decisions are not merely a product of the place and scalar spatiality of contests, but also of the specific relationships, experiences, knowledges and positions of organizers in the room and the audiences they choose to engage. Movement-building best practices and directions are up for debate; they are the product of dialogue among participants and are therefore highly context-specific (see Payne, 1995; Robnett, 1997; Ransby, 2003). In Atlanta, youth and student organizers, elite black community leaders and the progressive white community were hardly in agreement about direct action tactics and other disruptive protests, and the students' decision to mobilize was a source of contention within the black community, which potentially stymied efforts to radically overhaul the white power structure. Not all black organizers, after all, included fundamentally dismantling this structure among their realistic priorities.

Many of Georgia's civil rights legacies are remembered monolithically through the iconography of key leaders and key moments, erasing the 'theories, philosophies, and knowledge of organizing responsible for these monumental episodes' from 'within the radical imaginary of the larger movement' (Heynen and Rhodes, 2012: 394). These organizing logics were characterized by 'an emphasis on building relationships, respect for collective leadership, for bottom-up change, the expansive sense of how democracy ought to operate in everyday life, the emphasis on building for the long haul, the anti-bureaucratic ethos, [and] the preference for addressing local issues' (*ibid.*, quoting Payne, 1995: 364). The centrality of these organizing logics to many radical movements emanating from the civil rights era must be understood in order to see the full picture of how radical change is enacted in the Southeast.

Such an understanding is notably lacking from the conceptualization of immigrant justice solidarity work at the national scale, but it is a central component of immigrant justice activism in Georgia. Freedom University, for example, is not only modeled on the Freedom Schools of the civil rights movement, but also focuses on civil rights history in its curriculum, drawing on the assistance of elders from the 1960s civil rights struggle for leadership and support (Peña, 2012). While environmental justice has become an increasingly important part of mainstream environmental organizations and governance in the US, these kinds of grassroots organizing connections to the civil rights movement have not often gone along with the merger of environmental justice and mainstream environmentalist agendas. Urban (2007) attributes the Sierra Club's past failure to embrace the intersectionality of climate and immigrant justice to the organization's privileged political position as a moderate authority on environmental issues and to its membership's characteristically white demographic. 'Systemic privilege', she says, 'accounts for the stunning inability of mainstream [environmental] discourse to meaningfully grapple with interlocking systems of power, privilege and oppression, including colonialism and neo-liberal globalization, much less the role of US economic and political policies in creating the very conditions that compel immigration into the USA in the first place' (Urban, 2007: 256). The Sierra Club has changed dramatically in the nearly 20 years since its heated 'immigration wars' and has embraced narratives of intersectionality, as is evident in their work on the Keystone XL pipeline issue. But the act of embracing and representing intersectional narratives does not necessarily serve to dismantle the Sierra Club's privileged position. While organizers in Georgia were searching for a narrative that mutually legitimized each movement, the national statements of solidarity were structured by a narrative frame that they deemed problematic.

Lessons from Georgia on organizing and global climate justice

Climate crisis is an issue that affects every person on Earth—some much more dramatically than others. Climate crisis activism may have enormous effects on shaping the course of global and local responses to climate change, but the power to shape climate discourse and to control the allocation of organizing resources (especially financial resources) is not equally distributed across the spectrum of justice activism institutions and narratives. In the case of the Atlanta student movement, a division over the strategies, tactics and fundamental goals of resistance to segregation and white power sometimes resulted in resources being shunted away from black student organizers to organizations that the black elite saw as less radical. These same dynamics are present in mainstream environmental movements that consume the vast majority of financial resources to support organizing work and have the ability to pick and choose what fights to engage in, what methods to legitimize in pursuit of the fundamental goal of resisting climate change and the fossil-fuel economy. The national climate movement, embodied by the Sierra Club and 350.org, is directing resources towards resisting the expansion of fossil-fuel infrastructure, such as the Keystone XL pipeline, and making efforts to confront their organizational privilege as they relate to frontline communities and communities of color. But whether or how these efforts radically challenge the systems of privilege that these organizations have long benefited from remains to be seen.

What will future activism alliances convened under global climate justice narratives look like on the ground? What *should* they look like in order to truly mobilize just and effective solidarities? Can they function elsewhere as they might in Georgia, prioritizing mutually beneficial organizational strategy, prioritizing relationship building, contextual knowledge and, where possible, clustering around tables in classrooms, trailers and taco shops? Or will we see characteristically white and well-funded

environmental organizations legitimized by the urgency of climate destruction and empowered by global climate justice solidarity opportunities—taking center stage? These questions merit the attention of scholar activists following the development of globally situated networks of resistance and require the close examination of context-specific organizing traditions, goals and knowledges.

Based on our organizing sessions in Georgia, some future steps for our collaborative project might be rooted in a second narrative that regularly arose from the dialogue: the ‘enough is enough’ narrative. Organizers often referenced Georgia’s legacy of civil rights activism and student leadership in civil rights organizing as an energizing and powerful context for fighting against the litany of aggressions perpetuated by the state and the university system on civil rights and progress. For instance, in addition to institutionalizing racist policies and setting a low institutional standard for sustainability, the Georgia university system doesn’t pay all staff a living wage, does not enable staff to participate in labor unions and does not extend benefits equally to partners of faculty and staff in same-sex unions as they do to those in heterosexual unions. By nesting collaborative spaces in a narrative lamenting the absurdity of these multiple injustices, some organizers envision a context of critique that draws strength from the unity of progressive voices saying ‘enough is enough’. This frame includes more actors and issues but is structured around a focused system of state-level targets—the BOR and state legislature—and broadly criticizes resistance to basic progressive ideas.

This broadening of the frame allows for conceptualizations of more inclusive coalitions in Georgia and fits in with narratives of local organizers who are pushing inter-movement collaboration outside of this project. For instance, some groundwork began in late 2013 to start a campaign called ‘Lift the ban, raise the wages’, which brought together local economic justice networks and undocumented youth organizers to push for a more just university system for low-income workers and people of color. A student working with the Undocumented Student Alliance founded a network called Interactivists, in order to pool organizing resources among UGA’s more radical student groups and to make space on campus for critical and progressive voices to gain support and energy.

But climate organizers have had difficulty seeing their role in these kinds of spaces. Organizers with the Georgia chapter of the Sierra Club work with institutional support and momentum that can make it difficult to be nimble with resources and strategic reframing, especially as they are occupied with attempting to prevent the expansion and continuation of coal infrastructure in the state. One recurring question in dialogues about the value of collaboration has been the purpose of coalition building. We discussed whether formal coalitions should be limited to aggregating and coordinating strategic power for groups with shared targets and shared strategic avenues (such as a notable Georgia chapter of the Sierra Club partnership with the Georgia Tea Party to support pro-solar policies—the Green Tea Coalition) or if formalized coalitions based on solidarity despite a lack of strategic overlap are powerful in and of themselves (Schwartz, 2014).

Despite limited organizing capacity and resources, those involved in the climate and immigrant collaborative project in Georgia have remained committed to developing inter-movement literacy and personal and professional relationships within each community. The next step for collaborations most commonly discussed during our formal research phase was a training space or teach-in for climate and immigrant justice organizers to share their stories of motivation, validation and energy both on a personal and at a movement level, in order to deepen their connections to and understandings of each other, as well as to reinvigorate the creative dialogue for potential collaborative tactics.

As scholars grapple with the definition of a transnational climate justice movement that integrates global justice networks and narratives, organizers in Georgia recognize the potency of the knowledge of each other and of interpersonal space as a place to build power in a specific political context. They work to digest global narratives of inclusivity and to produce local spaces that harness this knowledge and transform it into locally actionable narratives. These kinds of local spaces, created by organizers who are earnestly interested in legitimizing and advancing each other's work, might prove to provide powerful opportunities for movement integration and action, creating a more inclusive socio-ecological justice frame from the grassroots level upwards.

Sara Thomas Black, Department of Geography, University of Georgia, Geography-Geology Building, 210 Field Street, Room 204, Athens, Georgia 30602, USA, saratombblack@gmail.com

Richard Anthony Milligan, Department of Geography, University of Georgia, Geography-Geology Building, 210 Field Street, Room 204, Athens, Georgia 30602, USA, richard.milligan@gmail.com

Nik Heynen, Department of Geography, University of Georgia, Geography-Geology Building, 210 Field Street, Room 204, Athens, Georgia 30602, USA, nheynen@uga.edu

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