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ON THE ROUTES OF LATINX MIGRATION IN THE UNITED STATES: PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES FOR INSTITUTIONAL RECEPTION OF UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS

NAS ROTAS DA MIGRAÇÃO LATINA NOS ESTADOS UNIDOS: PROJETOS E INICIATIVAS DE ACOLHIMENTO INSTITUCIONAL PARA IMIGRANTES INDOCUMENTADOS

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ABSTRACT

This work is part two of a study that analyzed the development of non-formal education practices aimed at welcoming Latinx American immigrants in the state of California, in the United States of America (USA), articulating ethnographic writing, narratives of experience, and theoretical foundations of the human sciences. The research sought to understand how community centers and grassroots initiatives contribute to the processes of social inclusion, civic education, and strengthening of the Latinx community in California, especially in regions with a strong migratory presence. The study is based on the phenomenological perspective and critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire, relating dialogue, conscientization, and social transformation to the educational practices observed in the field. Data collection took place between October and December 2025 in the cities of Palo Alto, Redwood City, and San Francisco, in the state of California (USA), through qualitative and participatory research, using participant observation, field diary notes, and ethnographic description. The results show that non-formal education practices play a fundamental role in the integration of immigrants, the preservation of cultural identities, and access to citizenship, revealing the enduring relevance of critical pedagogies as strategies for welcoming, empowering, and organizing society in migrant/immigrant communities.

Keywords: Latin American immigration; Non-formal Education; Ethnography; Freirean Pedagogy; Citizenship Education.

RESUMO

Este trabalho é a parte dois de um estudo que analisou o desenvolvimento de práticas de educação não formal voltadas para o acolhimento de imigrantes latino-americanos no estado da Califórnia, nos Estados Unidos da América, articulando escrita

etnográfica, narrativas de experiência e fundamentos teóricos das ciências humanas. A pesquisa buscou compreender como centros comunitários e iniciativas de base contribuem para os processos de inclusão social, educação cívica e fortalecimento da comunidade latina na Califórnia, especialmente em regiões com forte presença migratória. O estudo se baseia na perspectiva fenomenológica e na pedagogia crítica de Paulo Freire, relacionando diálogo, conscientização e transformação social às práticas educativas observadas em campo. A coleta de dados ocorreu entre outubro e dezembro de 2025 nas cidades de Palo Alto, Redwood City e São Francisco, no estado da Califórnia (EUA), por meio de pesquisa qualitativa e participatória, utilizando observação participante, anotações em diário de campo e descrição etnográfica. Os resultados mostram que as práticas de educação não formal desempenham um papel fundamental na integração de imigrantes, na preservação das identidades culturais e no acesso à cidadania, revelando a relevância duradoura das pedagogias críticas como estratégias para acolher, empoderar e organizar a sociedade em comunidades migrantes/imigrantes.

Palavras-chave: Imigração Latino-Americana; Educação Não-Formal; Etnografia; Pedagogia Freireana; Educação para a Cidadania.

1. INTRODUCTION

“no one is illegal on stolen land”.
(Field Diary,2025)

This work is part two of a research project that aimed to identify the practices of welcoming and social integration offered to migrants and immigrants, especially undocumented immigrants, in the Bay Area, specifically the educational strategies for survival and local

adaptation adopted by them. In part one, the results showed the fundamental importance of immigrants' reference-groups (Gabriel, 2011), language as a device for resistance, adaptation, and survival in the host nation (especially *Spanglish*, that is, the combination of Spanish and English words and languages), and the centrality of field research in the course of the investigation (Lima, 2019).

The field research took place between October and December 2025 in the cities of Palo Alto, Redwood City, and San Francisco, in the state of California, in the United States of America (USA). The research was characterized by a qualitative and participatory approach, using participant observation, field notes, and, above all, ethnography as a theoretical and methodological framework.

Before continuing this study with other relevant points, it is important to recall some specific findings, terminologies, and results presented in the previous text. First, it is important to mention that the terminology "undocumented immigrants" falls within a broader spectrum of other institutional and legal terminologies, such as migrants, refugees, naturalized citizens, and many others. Undocumented immigrants are those who have migrated to the United States and have incomplete or nonexistent documentation, and in this case, seek to regularize their immigration status in the host nation, that is, the country where they currently reside. The term has been used in place of the term "illegal immigrants" because, as widely disseminated by North American activist groups and based on the historical context of indigenous massacres and persecutions, "no one is illegal on stolen land" (Field Diary, 2025; De Genova, 2002).

Secondly, in a previous study, Gabriel (2011) defined reference-groups as those that aim to structure a person's way of being, thinking, and acting from a very young age, and constitute, in fact, references when they are confronted with a problem in their life. The reference groups of Latinx American immigrants mentioned in the previous text are: the family, the group established in citizenship classes, friendships with other immigrants, the religious group (considering that many frequent religious spaces such as temples and churches), and the institutional groups formed in the projects they participate in. These groups continue to be support networks for sharing useful survival information, such as opportunities, job openings, free distributions of food and non-food items, and other communications.

Third, ethnography and field research constituted the theoretical and methodological basis for this study, as seen in the first text and also evidenced in this writing. Based on Malinowski (1976) and Geetz (1989), this ethnography of migrations, itinerant, disruptive of established epistemologies, seeks to see science, knowledge, and life on the margins of field findings, based on dialogue, on the researcher's contact with the participants, on wanderings and itineraries, on searches that are not always so obvious and that escape institutional and academic formalities.

In this way, the research problem presented in the first text remains: how do non-formal education practices develop in California in the reception of Latinx immigrants?

I begin these analyses by recalling where we left off, an exercise in looking at the past with the eyes of the present in order to move forward. In the following section, I address the movements, contexts,

and support networks that present the forms of institutional reception in which these migrants are inserted, concluding with the presentation of political-educational strategies for the local integration of Latinx immigrants in California based on the theoretical and methodological assumptions of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1967, 1987).

In this context, non-formal education, that is, education that extends beyond formal educational spaces (school, university, academic centers, etc.), becomes a field of pedagogical practices aimed at social inclusion and the development of citizenship amidst ethnic and cultural diversity, a survival strategy for the migrant community. According to Freire (1987), education is a social practice that is not restricted to the school institution, but takes place in communities, in social movements, in spaces of political struggle, and in everyday cultural practices; in other words, a pedagogy as a practice of freedom that understands education as a process of conscientization, that is, of critically reading the world in order to transform it.

I understand, in principle, that these practices, mainly organized in community centers, articulate central principles of Paulo Freire's pedagogy, such as dialogue, problematization of reality, and critical consciousness, based on the dialogue that emerges from the contexts where people live (Freire, 1967). In California, particularly in counties with a strong Latinx presence, such as Los Angeles, Alameda, and San Mateo, Freirean influence manifests in an explicit and unintentional way itself in bilingual programs, cultural circles, and popular literacy initiatives aimed at the emancipation of migrants (Delgado-Gaitán, 1990), such as the Citizenship Classes of the Immigration Institute of Bay Area (IIBA). Understanding the

roots of American non-formal education in this context is fundamental to analyzing how critical and popular pedagogies, inspired by Freire, continue to support projects of citizenship formation and social transformation in migrant communities.

Again, it is important to mention that this qualitative, ethnographic, and participatory work constitutes an account of experience and, at the same time, presents the results of a research project on immigration, developed (together) with the subjects, who became participants throughout its development.

2. MOVEMENTS, CONTEXTS, AND SUPPORT NETWORKS: FORMS OF INSTITUTIONAL CARE

The state of California, as Lovera (2021) points out, is synonymous with superlatives: on the one hand, the region has one of the highest Gross Domestic Product (GDP) rates in the world, home to the largest number of billionaires in America, while on the other hand it has the highest proportional poverty rate in the country.

Furthermore, in the previous study, Santos (2026) mentions that:

> *Throughout the 20th and early 21st centuries, the state of California, in USA, received successive waves of Latin American migrants, particularly Mexicans, Salvadorans, Guatemalans, and Nicaraguans, who today constitute a significant portion of the population in some of its regions (Pew Research Center, 2025, n.p apud Santos, 2026, n.p).*

Despite this data on the region's flow, It was observed that the vast majority of immigrants occupy workspaces (when they are

employed) in positions such as salespeople, supermarket cashiers, fast-food chain attendants, and others, even in some cases having a university degree or having already practiced professions requiring university training in their country of origin, such as lawyers, businesspeople, and teachers. Certainly, all these labor positions are important and deserve recognition for contributing in different ways to society and the individual; however, what is highlighted here is the impact of migration on job opportunities and access to better employment and income conditions. On this point, Fine (2005) notes the following:

> *Millions of immigrants, African Americans, and other people of color labor on the lowest rungs of metropolitan labor markets with limited prospects for improving the quality of their present positions or advancing to better jobs. It is unfortunate but true that immigration status, combined with ethnic and racial origin, has perhaps the greatest impact on jobs, compensation, and a worker's options for redress when mistreated by an employer (Fine, 2005, p. 01).*

It was possible to notice this contrast in our movements between cities. In San Francisco, large luxury mansions alternate urban space with homeless people living in tents on street corners, dealing with intense cold and basic needs that must be met. On the urban fringes (Whitaker, 2002), the scenarios that make up this reality highlight historical and cultural singularities where it is possible to perceive that the marks of this social context constitute the identity of the subjects who inhabit the place itself.

According to Bhabha (1998), there is an identification process that we understand applies to this context, cultural identity, composed of

three conditions:

> *To exist is to be called into existence in relation to an otherness, its gaze or locus.*
> *The very place of identification is a space of division.*
> *Identification is the demand to be for another (Bhabha, 1998, p. 76, our translation).*

In California, the political context can be described as having a Democratic bias with a left-leaning, liberal, and progressive stance, meaning that the government regulates the economy through agendas such as human rights, environmental protection, social justice, and innovation. Understanding this context is fundamental to comprehending the origins of social movements, class struggles, institutional actions promoting human rights, and other claims of rights.

During the *Autumn Quarter* I spent in the region, I was able to observe various organized social movements that opposed the federal government under the Trump administration and its maneuvers, such as the "*No Kings Parade*" and "*No War on Venezuela*" movements.

Figure 1. No Kings



Source: Personal archive (2025)

According to Tilly (2012, p. 135):

> *At the turn of the 21st century, throughout the world, the term "social movement" was recognized as a clarion call, as a counterweight to oppressive power, as a call to popular action against a wide spectrum of scourges (Tilly, 2012, p. 135, our translation).*

These scourges, that is, the catalysts that led people to the streets in the aforementioned demonstrations, were fundamentally the actions of the Immigration Control Enforcement (ICE) service, which has ‘the power’ to monitor and deport immigrants. According to Léon (2026), ICE was created in 2003 in the context of the invasion of Iraq and represented a coalition of the former US customs and immigration services with the mission of combating illegal immigration that threatened the country's security. In recent actions, ICE has used violence and arbitrary actions that go against human rights, dignity, and the commitment to a democratic State of law, a migrant State.

At certain points during my intercity movements, I experienced a prelude to what it's like to live in fear of being deported without any apparent reason by these agents, considering that their actions are violent and brutal, and lack any logical justification for their approach and consequences. With Latin identity in my face and skin color, I always carried my documents with me, as well as emergency phone numbers written on a piece of paper in case my cell phone was also confiscated and I became without communication.

Figure 2. Major news outlets of that time: Stop on Immigrants



Source: Personal archive (2025)

My experiences were transformed into texts, and in them I saw the projection of my anxieties, the plots of my experiences that were converted into research. Both the immigrants and I, in the condition of a migrant (but in a different configuration, not in a context of migration for survival or better living conditions), in the writing of the ethnography, gained the status of 'subjects' to 'participants', and together we compose this narrative. Writing memories and stories makes it possible to project lived experiences into another sphere, to

analyze them from a different angle, and thus perceive other complementary elements and layers constructed *in continuum* (‘in continuity’).

In the field, I am a living subject, an itinerant researcher among times, movements, people, and places. I temporarily inhabit transience, and I surrender to chance, to the open book, to the narratives of people who experience migration, which sometimes contradict what was previously known about the subject, to the marginal findings of research that are not presented in scientific studies, but in newspaper pamphlets, in hallway conversations, in posters around the city that display the indignation of its inhabitants, in the 'noise' of popular demonstrations. Thus, I compose the text, configuring the narrative that is strange, that escapes the rules, that disturbs. I surrender to the text as I surrender to experience.

I am then led to other questions. From the streets (that is, from these popular demonstrations) to institutions, what forms of institutional reception do immigrants receive, and which institutions carry out this reception? This analyses point to two types of social assistance received: emergency actions, which include food distribution, free health services, including mental and dental health, and distribution of non-food items such as diapers and clothing; and non-emergency actions of short to long term, such as legal guidance, referrals to public sectors such as social programs and specific departments, actions to strengthen community-based support, such as groups and support networks, among others.

Based on the general aspects identified in the field concerning forms of institutional reception, the aim was, more specifically, to

understand the educational strategies involved in the migration of the Latinx community in California. These strategies include assistance with document revalidation, legal/juridical guidance, creation of social adaptation networks, which includes thematic discussion groups in community centers, creation of *WhatsApp* groups, establishment of religious groups, support with economic/labor issues, such as resume creation and job placement, as well as specific educational projects, such as English classes, citizenship classes, and support in school and academic integration.

Following this direction, a mapping of institutions at the local level was carried out at the local, regional, state, national, and international levels that support the migrant community with initiatives, projects, and institutional policies for welcoming migrants. This mapping does not represent all institutions that carry out humanitarian actions, but it does represent the main coalitions identified. We created an informative table that organizes the information, as shown below:

Table 1. Mapping of Institutions, Projects and Initiatives for Immigrants (USA)

Type	Organization	Scope	Website
Regional and Local Coalitions	East Bay Refugee and Immigrant Forum	A coalition of agencies in the eastern San Francisco Bay Area that provides services to refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants.	https://www.ebcf.org/
	Immigration Institute of Bay Area	IIBA helps immigrants, refugees, and their families integrate into and	https://iibayarea.org/

		contribute to the community. It offers legal and educational services, as well as opportunities for civic participation.	
State Government Agencies	California Department of Social Services (CDSS)	It oversees state programs for refugees, asylum seekers, and victims of human trafficking, including financial assistance, employment services, and programs for unaccompanied minors. The CDSS also supports young immigrants through programs such as the California Newcomer Education & Well-being (CalNEW).	https://www.cdss.ca.gov/
	California Attorney General's Office	Provides information about immigrant rights and protections for California residents.	https://oag.ca.gov/immigrant
	California Department of Public Health	It has a Refugee Health Office focused on providing health-related support.	https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Pages/About.aspx
Non-Profit Organizations	International Rescue Committee (IRC)	A global organization with local offices that offers assistance and services to refugees and immigrants.	https://www.rescue.org/
	Immigrants Rising	A non-profit organization focused on transforming the lives of immigrants through education and broader community change.	https://immigrantsrising.org/

	Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)	An organization that defends the rights of immigrants and receives significant government subsidies.	https://www.chirla.org
	Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)	A national organization with a presence in California that offers support and resources to refugees and immigrants.	https://hias.org/what/resettle-refugees/
	Immigration Center for Women and Children (ICWC Law)	A non-profit legal organization that provides immigration services, including assistance with asylum, DACA, and U/T visa cases, to underrepresented immigrants.	https://www.icwclaw.org/
	Jewish Family Services Silicon Valley	Immigrant integration, workforce, career, and support services in Silicon Valley.	https://www.jfssv.org/refugee-immigrants
Advocacy and Policy Organizations	California Immigrant Policy Center (CIPC)	A state organization that advocates for policies that promote the well-being of immigrants and refugees.	https://caimmigrant.org/
	California Collaborative for Immigrant Justice (CCIJ)	An organization dedicated to finding rapid response telephone lines for immigrants in California.	https://www.ccijustice.org/
	Welcome.US	A national initiative created to inspire, mobilize, and empower Americans to welcome and support those seeking refuge in the United States and help them thrive.	https://welcome.us/

International Organization	International Organization for Migration (IOM	One of the leading intergovernmental organizations managing migration within the UN framework, with a presence in the USA.	https://www.iom.int/countries/united-states-america
	UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency	UN agency with a mandate for refugees, internally displaced persons and stateless persons	https://www.unrefugees.org/

Source: Author's own elaboration (2026).

The work of these spaces represents progress in welcoming immigrants in America, as they are considered subjects of rights who deserve to be visible, respected, and included in national and local public policies. It was noticed that many of the services are offered similarly in different institutions, but this does not represent duplication, considering the different geographic regions where these offices operate, thus encompassing different audiences and areas of coverage. Among these institutions, we highlight the Immigration Institute of Bay Area (IIBA), where we volunteered to learn more about its initiatives and understand how immigrants are welcomed, and we added the Fair Oaks Community Center (FOCC) to the analysis as it served as an entry point into our fieldwork, which will be detailed in the next section.

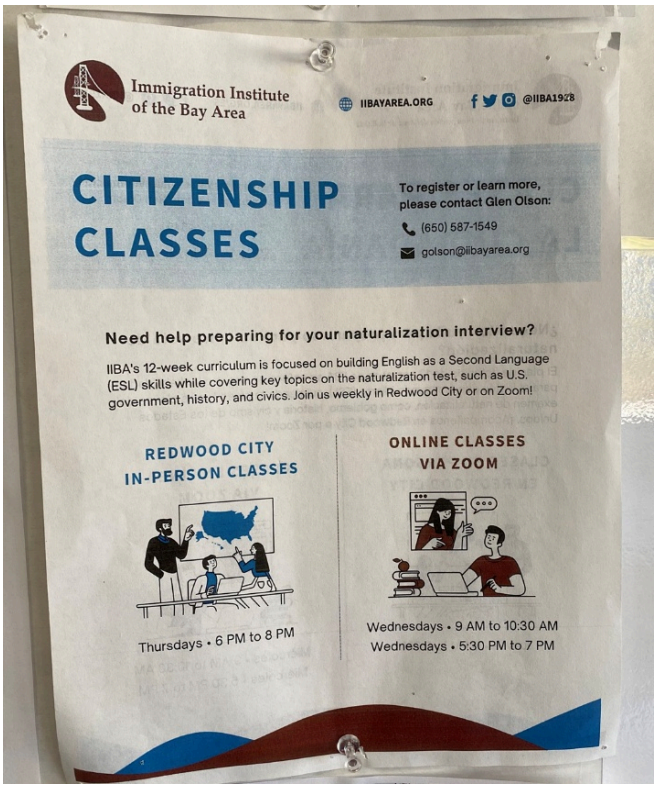
3. POLITICAL AND EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR THE LOCAL INTEGRATION OF LATINX IMMIGRANTS IN CALIFORNIA

When considering my integration into California, I conducted an initial search for organizations that work with immigrants, especially those who are undocumented. This search led me to a variety of

organizational structures, such as local community organizations, libraries, churches and community colleges, independent civil society initiatives such as leagues, neighborhood organizations, and religious initiatives, among others. Furthermore, there was also a need to understand how the regularization of documented status occurs in America, considering the different modalities which I present in section 3 of the previous study, entitled 'Migration Categories, document regularization, and Citizenship in the United States' (Santos, 2026).

In this sense, I arrived at the Immigration Institute of the Bay Area (IIBA), as mentioned earlier. Within the context of the programs relevant to our research proposal, I encountered *Citizenship Classes* and *Asylum Classes*.

Figure 3. Citizenship Classes



Source: Personal archive (2025)

These two programs correspond to educational initiatives aimed at distinct migrant populations, articulated with different positions within the U.S. immigration legal system. Citizenship Classes are primarily directed at legal permanent residents (*green card* holders) who already have formal residency authorization and seek to prepare for the naturalization process, covering topics such as English language, U.S. civics, national history, and preparation for the citizenship interview. Asylum Classes (or asylum-related support programs) are intended for applicants for humanitarian protection, often in a situation of high social and legal vulnerability, who are still awaiting a decision on their cases or are in the initial stages of regularization. While the former operates as instruments of civic integration aimed at formal incorporation into the national political body, the latter often take on a character of welcoming, legal guidance, linguistic support, and institutional mediation in the face of the uncertainties produced by the migratory regime. Thus, although both are configured as educational practices in the field of migration, they express distinct migratory temporalities: on the one hand, the transition to citizenship; on the other, the initial search for recognition, protection, and legal permanence.

During one of the first visits to IIBA, I was greeted by someone at the door who quickly explained the organization and its main activities. I asked if I could participate in the "Free Citizenship Workshops," but I was denied, as only those who meet the legal requirements of being undocumented or having incomplete documentation could participate. I introduced myself as a researcher, and IIBA employee then directed me to the Fair Oaks Community Center (FOCC), two kilometers away, so that I could learn about community initiatives related to welcoming immigrants.

My goal at that time was to attend one of the asylum classes and learn firsthand how the classes, the content, and the dynamics of the program work, by informally conversing with a representative from IIBA or even with the immigrants, without intending to embarrass them.

Upon entering the FOCC, I was informed about some of the programs offered by the center, which will be detailed later. The many posters around the place displayed capacity-building and community engagement initiatives aimed at people of interest, including participation in discussion groups, group listening sessions, community-focused activities, and civic-political development. At that time, I could not participate in any of the center's activities due to the need for institutional formalization of the visit in a document outlining the research and specific objectives. I asked the center employee about general and specific projects related to immigrants, and she handed me several explanatory brochures and said that the center's activities are limited by government funding.

Figure 4. The Center



Source: Personal archive (2025)

This first visit led me to realize, at another time, that initiatives related to immigrants are part of a broad spectrum of working groups that include governmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as independent initiatives, such as churches, projects, and outreach activities related to education, health, and, especially, legal issues.

The local integration of Latin American immigrants in the United States is a complex process, marked by structural inequalities, exclusionary migration regimes, linguistic barriers, racialization, and precarious work. In this context, political-educational strategies assume a central role, acting not only as mechanisms for the functional insertion of these individuals into the host society, but above all as practices of social transformation oriented towards justice, dignity, and recognition. Inspired by Paulo Freire's Popular Education, especially his conception of education as a practice of freedom, this approach understands the integration of the individual as a critical, dialogical, and emancipatory process (Freire, 1967).

Freirean pedagogy offers a theoretical-political perspective for rethinking educational policies aimed at Latinx immigrants, shifting the focus from compensatory or instrumental education to an education that problematizes the concrete conditions of oppression experienced by these individuals. For Freire, the condition of being oppressed is not limited to the economic dimension, but is also expressed in the denial of speech, political participation, and the right to produce knowledge about one's own reality (Freire, 1967), as is the case in the lives of many of these immigrants.

In the following weeks, I formalized my participation in the Citizenship Classes program offered by IIBA at the FOCC in Redwood City. In this program, immigrants undergoing the process of regularization who seek to become American citizens participate in classes that work in an integrated way on linguistic, civic, and procedural aspects related to the citizenship exam and the interview with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). The program consists of a 12-week curriculum, offered both in person (in locations such as Redwood City, San Francisco, Napa, and Petaluma) and online. Classes focus on: 1) Developing English as a Second Language (ESL) skills, including reading, writing, comprehension, and expression – fundamental elements for the exam and everyday civic life in the U.S.; 2) Topics in U.S. history, government, and civics, content that is part of the required material for the naturalization test; and 3) Interview practice and mock interviews to familiarize students with the format and requirements of the official naturalization process.

In summary, the citizenship classes program aims to provide documented and undocumented immigrants with the opportunity to:

- Learn (and/or improve) English;
- Study U.S. civic education;
- Preparing for immigration interviews;
- Understand pathways to regularization.

The citizenship classes program began in 2003 with a small community class in Redwood City and has progressively expanded due to local demand. Over the years, thousands of immigrant residents have been supported through this initiative, contributing not only to passing the naturalization test but also to increased civic and political participation of new citizens in the Bay Area context.

IIBA integrates these classes with other services, such as citizenship workshops, legal assistance for naturalization applications, and community engagement efforts, adopting a "*no wrong door*" approach where immigrants can enter the citizenship process from different needs and levels of preparedness. Citizenship classes are also part of larger initiatives like the San Francisco Pathways to Citizenship Initiative (SFPCI), a cross-sector collaboration that seeks to expand access to citizenship through workshops, form reviews, and naturalization support events in the Bay Area.

In one of the citizenship classes I attended, the volunteer citizenship educators explained the issues in Unit 4, the House of Representatives:

> *The United States federal government is divided into three branches: Legislative, Executive, and Judicial. The Legislative branch, also called Congress, has the prerogative to create laws, declare war, and draft the federal budget (decide how federal money will be spent). Congress meets in the Capitol in Washington, D.C. (Santos, Field Diary, 2025).*

Adult men and women participate in the classes, in English and from Spanish, using practical everyday examples to facilitate translation. Through this entry point – that is, volunteering at IIBA – we access the life worlds of immigrants, and in hallway conversations, after-class chats, and over coffee together at other times, we discover more details that make up their lives in America under these conditions.

On many occasions while traveling to Redwood City for work with IIBA at the FOCC, I stopped at a nearby Mexican bakery that served homemade bread and hot coffee, warming both my body and the words. On one of those occasions, the young woman who served me, a woman with brown skin, around thirty years old, always very friendly, spoke to me in Spanish, curiously asking where I was from. Below I reproduce in English the conversation we had in Spanish.

- "From Brazil," I explained.

- "From far away! What are you doing here so far from home?" she asked.

- "I volunteer with IIBA, and I do educational work with Latinx immigrants," I said.

- "Oh! That's great! And are you enjoying it here?" she said.

- "Yes. The city is very beautiful and the people are nice. And you, where are you from?" I asked.

- "I'm from Guatemala. The vast majority of people here are from there. There are many of us." – She says proudly, and adds: “Here, I’ll give you a *tamales mexicanos* so you’ll come back and eat with us again.” She says, and hands me a heavy, warm, yellow food. It was a gift.

– “Thank you very much. I don’t know this food, *tamales mexicanos*. What is it?” I ask, curiously.

– “A corn-based dough with a meat filling, but we also have cheese ones,” she tells me finally.

It is in these moments, in chance encounters, that the research findings become apparent, the additional information that becomes fundamental to the structure of the research. I realize in these moments that many Latinx immigrants in the United States experience the condition of their migrations through linguistic marginalization, fear of deportation, informal work, and lack of participation in processes related to their own experiences. However, practices of solidarity, mutual aid, information sharing, and recognition still remain, such as the act of giving me a typical food or communicating at first sight in Spanish.

Figure 5. Caliente (Hot)



Source: Personal archive (2025)

The political-educational strategies inspired by Popular Education should start from a critical reading of these realities, valuing prior knowledge, migratory trajectories, and experiences as starting points of the educational process. Educational programs based on dialogue, problem-solving, and community participation, such as IIBA's Citizenship Classes, can act as awareness-raising spaces where immigrants cease to be seen as beneficiaries of policies and begin to recognize themselves as historical and political subjects.

In this sense, it was also possible to see other practices that take place at the FOCC, where IIBA Citizenship Classes meetings were held, and which we divided into three main areas of activity: immigration legal services, educational programs, and community engagement.

Regarding immigration legal services, the following stand out: housing rights and issues between landlords and tenants (eviction notices and complaints), Family Preparation Plan, in partnership with Linking Immigrants to Benefits, Resources and Education (LIBRE), legal support and guidance for urgent and emergency situations. Regarding educational programs, we identified Redwood

City Together, a program that brings together different projects and initiatives from the educational sectors (regional schools), public sectors (such as the civil police), and other sectors of civil society, which also includes the United Roots Initiative, Law Enforcement & Community Relations, and others that offer training and workshops for the community in Redwood City and North Fair Oaks, including, among others, immigrants. In addition to this program, the "UnodocuSupport" initiative is also being developed, offering general guidance on document revalidation, including enrolling children in school, accessing job opportunities, and participating in social programs.

Regarding community engagement initiatives promoted by the center: food distribution with the support of partner organizations and information on social food delivery programs, information on housing resources, shelters and other services for homeless people, short-term assistance with rent/deposit/mortgage payments to support remaining in housing, financial assistance for utility bills, assistance in enrolling in ongoing utility payment programs for low-income individuals, diaper distribution program, establishment of mutual aid and support working groups: groups such as Al-Anon, family meetings to share individual and collective issues, "Toys and Books" program, working group for parents, among others, guidance on issues related to people with disabilities through the National Housing Equity Alliance, and the Santa Clara County Rapid Response Network (RRN): 24/7 hotline for emergency deportation defense, in partnership with: Friends of Guadalupe, Catholic Charities of Santa Clara, Pangea Legal Services, LUNA, CARAS, Human Agenda, PACT and Siren.

This analyses suggest that this community center is a catalyst for different projects and initiatives of civil society for people in situations of social risk, whether immigrants or other configurations, in partnership with different organizations, in favor of different forms of help to the community of Santa Clara County and surrounding cities.

With regard to Stanford University, there is an activity in the administrative field, linked to the Stanford Immigration initiative and linked to the Bechtel International Center department, with support for immigrants in mixed status ("undocumented", "DACA-affiliated", "DREAMers", etc.). Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, also known by the acronym DACA, is a US policy that protects young undocumented immigrants, known as "DREAMers", who migrated to the US as children, granting them temporary protection against deportation and work authorization for two years, renewable. The university must provide a range of benefits to DACA applicants and undocumented immigrants, such as tuition waivers, scholarships, and access to specific initiatives like the Immigrants' Rights Clinic, Undocumented Student Services, and Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS).

Furthermore, I also highlight the Stanford Jail and Prison Education Program (SJPEP), a volunteer program involving graduate students and professors through interdisciplinary educational courses in incarcerated communities in jails and prisons in the San Francisco Bay Area. Incarcerated individuals participating in the project receive a certificate upon completion, which helps them obtain benefits such as sentence reduction, in addition to the educational benefits of learning and socialization. During my participation in several meetings, we perceived a need for Spanish speakers due to the large

number of incarcerated individuals who speak Spanish and have limited English proficiency. Therefore, the incarcerated Latinx population is also a group of interest to be considered in future outreach efforts.

These initiatives and institutions comprise the dynamics of educational projects in the San Francisco Bay Area. These projects, initiatives, and other collaborations in support of the Latinx community, under the lens of Freire's popular education, propose a political-pedagogical ethic based on respect, listening, and hope: a collective construction where the individual is the protagonist. Local integration is not limited to economic or cultural inclusion, but is configured as a process of conscientization, in which Latin American immigrants build autonomy, protagonism, and the collective capacity to transform the structures that oppress them through learning, the sharing of knowledge, and the social construction of their realities through the lens of non-welfare-based education, but one that fosters capabilities, recognition, and opportunities. Education, understood as a practice of freedom, is a fundamental strategic axis for public policies committed to truly democratic and emancipatory integration.

4. A CONCLUSION WITH MANY QUOTATION MARKS

In the humanities and social sciences, it is common to produce a conclusion when writing the results of an investigation. Results, in their etymology, are a form of conclusion. It is to arrive at the evidence, the findings, what was discovered during the research. But, as I highlighted in the first work and problematize again here: how can I conclude such a complex subject, with several layers, and which continues to unfold in other events in the present day?

I explored the migratory movements of Latinx immigrants in California, addressing their migration from the perspective of political and educational strategies for their local integration. In this way, I addressed the movements, contexts, and support networks that provide institutional support for these migrants. This included mapping institutions, projects, and initiatives for immigrants in the USA, concluding with a presentation of political and educational strategies for their local integration in California based on the theoretical and methodological assumptions of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1967, 1987), drawing from my experience as a volunteer Citizenship Educator at IIBA. Finally, I arrive at some concluding remarks.

First, it is possible to highlight and identify that education as a practice of freedom implies linking the educational field to broader social struggles. Freirean political-educational strategies for the local integration of Latinx American immigrants must engage with social movements, community-based organizations, unions, and support networks, strengthening popular education processes that extend beyond the walls of formal institutions. This articulation contributes to the construction of citizenship, even in contexts of incomplete migratory status (undocumented), by fostering critical awareness of labor rights/reforms, access to public services, health, housing, and local political participation.

Secondly, Stanford University's actions, through its initiatives, represent an extension of academic activities beyond its walls, with a strong social contribution. This role of outreach education should be replicated by other institutions, as it possibly helps to build a more inclusive society that promotes human rights and makes a significant contribution to other sectors of the city.

However, even considering the institutional efforts that deserve recognition for their initiative and welcoming attitude, it is important to mention that the university occasionally also faces structural problems, such as a lack of funding for these and other programs and initiatives, a lack of continuous dialogue regarding the inclusion and retention policies of immigrants in postgraduate studies and throughout the campus, as well as feelings of fear, institutional insecurity, and many other challenges with a few or no institutional support that immigrants face when living in the region and also in the university context, seen in practice as linguistic insecurity, documentary barriers, and high financial costs related to life in California. Stanford University has a great name, influence, and financial resources for numerous initiatives and has the potential to do much more in favor of inclusive immigration policies.

Third, IIBA Citizenship Classes function as a project where it is possible to perceive the non-explicit implementation of education conceived in the mold of Paulo Freire, that is, popular education where the subject is the protagonist and helps to construct and constitute the way the curriculum of the classes is taught, the language used, and the pedagogical tools implemented. Drawing from their own experiences, the classes are structured according to the needs and abilities of the participants, even with pre-defined content.

Finally, considering the migration of undocumented Latinx Americans in California requires recognizing that human mobility transcends the legal and administrative boundaries that have historically sought to confine it within regimes and norms. Between borders, documents, languages, and forms of belonging, emerging subjects who daily reorganize their identities, experiences, and

strategies for existence in contexts marked by surveillance, precariousness, and, simultaneously, the production of networks of solidarity, resistance, and reconstruction of life. The migratory experience of these people reveals ethical, affective, and epistemological dimensions that challenge traditional categories of nationality, citizenship, and social integration.

However, questions remain that require further investigation: how do the autobiographical narratives of undocumented migrants reconfigure notions of mobility and belonging? How do intergenerational experiences produce new forms of Latinx American diasporic identities? How do educational, religious, community, and social practices contribute to the formation of networks of protection and recognition? And, furthermore, what epistemologies emerge from the experiences of those who live between permanence and the constant mobility that they are part of? These questions point to the need for future research that, beyond interpreting migration, is capable of listening to the multiple voices that constitute it, understanding human displacement perhaps as profound processes of social, cultural, and existential reinvention, beyond the geographical crossings in which they are embedded.

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