Title of Panel: Re-connecting and Re-membering: Spirituality, Resistance, & Resilience in the Fight for Self-Determination and Justice

LeighAnna
Title: Casos de Justicia: The Street Vendor Movement

As a community-based visual researcher, I conducted a 4 year visual ethnography project, including 48 hours of audio and visual interviews with 14 Black and Latina/o immigrant street vendors in a multi-racial coalition to legalize the industry. Los Angeles prohibits the sale of goods, wares, and merchandise on city sidewalks. For Black and Latino street vendors, race, racism, and nativism add an extra level of precarity, as both of these groups experience criminalization and police brutality in Los Angeles (Chief Legislative Analyst, 2014). I partnered with street vendors and a non-profit to create a data-driven fotonovelas (photo-based comic). This artistic method centers the experiences of Black and Latina/o immigrants and invites them into the research process by engaging in the co-production of augmented fotonovelas. Creative expression can be a powerful tool to describe traumatic experiences of criminalization, residential displacement and hyper-policing.

In this project, street vendors claim a digital and textual space to voice their struggles with health and mental wellness, their losses, and victories in gaining a sense of self and empowerment as vendors-turned-activists. Vendors challenge the “illegality” they experience, urging for citywide legalization. Vendors fight to nurture the community cultural wealth, memory, and resistance of their communities. These marketplaces, are seen by vendors, as familial and spiritual sites of learning and congregating. They have developed a strong sense of worth and belonging and are cultivating leadership skills forged out of difficult circumstances that embolden them to fight for legality.