



**Muñoz-Díaz, Javier; Ibacache, Kathia, and Gómez, Leila. (2024). *Indigenous Materials in Libraries and the Curriculum. Latin American and Latinx Sources*. London & New York: Routledge.**

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Javier Muñoz-Díaz, Kathia Ibacache, and Leila Gómez—Latinx scholars based at U.S. universities—advocate for genuine decolonization, moving beyond what Tuck and Yang (2012) describe as merely “metaphorical” efforts. They emphasize the importance of integrating and promoting Indigenous literary materials within university libraries and curricula, which are still predominantly shaped by Eurocentric frameworks. Their approach aligns with Aymara scholar Rivera Cusicanqui’s (2012) call for decolonizing practice, which requires collaboration across multiple agents—Indigenous communities, Latinx scholars, librarians, faculty, and Indigenous content producers. This collective effort seeks to challenge how Indigenous peoples are often positioned within academia merely as instructors, informants, or cultural performers, thereby addressing the “geopolitics of knowledge” that maintains unequal power dynamics. They call for political collaboration grounded in the sovereignty and autonomy of Indigenous peoples, advocating for partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities (Keme, 2018) to ensure that Indigenous knowledge systems and perspectives shape academic spaces on their own terms.

They advocate for Indigenous materials created by or in collaboration with Indigenous peoples, rather than merely about them, as a means to dismantle the historical and “structural distortions in library collections and the curriculum about Indigenous peoples” (p. 7). These distortions are rooted in land and material dispossession, racial formation projects, the hierarchical division between Europeans and non-Europeans, and the dismissal of Indigenous intellectual production. Additionally, they propose the repatriation of Indigenous knowledge and materials to their original lands and rightful owners, reintegrating them into Indigenous circuits of knowledge production and distribution, thereby halting epistemological extractivism. They also emphasize community-led “language reclamation” (Leonard, 2017) as a decolonial praxis that goes beyond merely increasing the number of speakers to encompass “the placement of creative language use within a broader frame of cultural practices and political claims” (p. 10). Finally, they argue that teaching Indigenous languages in ways that transcend historical utilitarian approaches offers another path toward decolonizing Latin American studies centers and programs.

In chapter 1, “Building an Underrepresented Collection”, Kathia Ibacache advocates for promoting library collections that engage with Indigenous materials, enabling students to engage with Indigenous epistemologies. Highlighting the gap in works written by Indigenous authors,

Ibacache explores strategies for building “an Indigenous literature and film collection utilizing selection criteria that ensure these collections’ Indigenous agency and perspective” (p. 18). The chapter examines the journey of Indigenous materials into university collections, the roles of various stakeholders, and the importance of fostering interprofessional relationships with publishers, libraries, and *libreros* to provide students access to underrepresented materials. For instance, developing connections with publishers is essential for locating and acquiring these resources. Diversifying traditional book-finding practices also requires collaboration with authors, direct communication with *libreros*, reviewing social media to discover emerging Indigenous authors, and attending conferences and *ferias del libro*.

Ibacache outlines criteria for selecting these materials, including the authors’ self-identification, genre, intended audience, the timelessness of certain classical works, content, and language of publication. For example, some Indigenous authors write exclusively in their native languages for their communities, rather than for a broader audience. Additionally, Indigenous audiovisual productions—such as documentaries—offer valuable resources to foster critical thinking and engagement among university students. Indigenous cinema, however, should be exhibited with the appropriate licenses and supported through university film festivals. In terms of content, many of these materials push readers beyond their comfort zones by presenting realities that challenge prevailing political ideologies. Drawing on the words of Justice (2018), literature must serve as a “window” that allows readers to understand broader contexts, rather than simply reflecting their own experiences.

In chapter 2, “Universities’ Libraries as More Than Repositories of Information”, Kathia Ibacache discusses the role of librarians as ‘cultural brokers’ who make Indigenous materials accessible and visible, thereby fostering students’ cross-cultural skills. The cultural broker librarian goes beyond the curriculum’s demands to open windows to new knowledge by assisting students and faculty in connecting with underrepresented materials that challenge the dominance of canonical texts in society. This librarian facilitates students’ development of transcultural skills by providing access to books by Indigenous authors in multilingual editions. For instance, this approach particularly aids monolingual students in “understanding the content and grasping that languages represent a variety of cultures in the world, including Indigenous cultures” (p. 39).

This role requires librarians to identify gaps in library collections and curricula, proactively offering “topics of societal importance that may be connected to groups outside the dominant culture” (p. 39). They then share these new acquisitions with faculty, generating interest in incorporating these materials into the curriculum. By doing so, librarians move beyond their traditional role as neutral figures to become advocates for cultural diversity in response to evolving societal needs. The chapter also explores how libraries can enhance the discoverability of Indigenous literature “through bibliographic enhancement data (BIBED)”, thereby improving connections between university members and underrepresented literature. This is particularly important given the challenges in locating these materials within existing collections. The chapter concludes by emphasizing the significance of both Indigenous digital and print materials in library collections. This balance is necessary to ensure that Indigenous works are represented alongside canonical academic texts. The presence of printed materials complements the Indigenous internet collections found in some digital libraries, enriching the overall resources available to students and faculty.

In chapter 3, “How to Decolonize and Indigenize the Curriculum”, Javier Muñoz-Díaz and Leila Gómez examine the “coloniality of the curriculum” (Fúnez-Flores, 2023) and explores what decolonization entails, emphasizing that it goes beyond merely filling representation quotas by acquiring Indigenous texts to balance Eurocentric materials. The decolonization of curricula in Spanish or Hispanic studies departments, as well as Latin American and Latinx studies, begins by challenging the ideology of *hispanismo*, which is part of the “coloniality of power” that restricts the inclusion of Indigenous and Latinx materials. This ideology leads people to believe that the linguistic and cultural expressions of Abiyala emanate from the Iberian Peninsula, promoting the use and teaching of texts in standard Spanish.

To address the prevalence of this ideology, Muñoz-Díaz incorporates Indigenous and English-language materials in his course “Indigenous Peoples in Latin America”, moving beyond a sole focus on Spanish. This challenges the traditional Spanish curriculum, in which Indigenous materials are often subordinated to the Spanish language as part of Spain’s former colonies. Additionally, Muñoz-Díaz screens Indigenous films in their native languages, inviting students to discuss the power dynamics between Indigenous languages and Spanish in the materials presented. Furthermore, to highlight indigeneity within Latin American and Latinx studies, they reflect on the necessity of strengthening the connections between this field and Latinoamericanismo and ethnic studies, as well as embracing “Critical Latinx Indigeneities” (Blackwell *et al.*, 2017). One reason for the marginalization of indigeneity in Latin American and Latinx studies is the ideologies of *mestizaje* and *indigenismo*, which celebrate racial miscegenation and cultural hybridization while simultaneously promoting the “modernization/acculturation of Indigenous peoples” (p. 55).

Another way to engage with Indigenous materials is by embracing Wesley Leonard’s proposal of “language reclamation”, which allows Indigenous communities to showcase their understanding of what “language” and “culture” mean. This challenges “disciplinary boundaries of linguistics or anthropology and the protocols of scientific research and academic writing” (p. 58). For instance, they propose placing Indigenous understandings of topics such as “nature” and “body” at the center of disciplines, including STEM, rather than relegating them to discussions of anthropological cultural “difference and diversity”. Finally, they acknowledge that the decolonial critique is not an easy process and does not advocate for a return to “some sort of Indigenous purity that remains unfettered from the corruptions of coloniality/modernity” (p. 60). Instead, it involves “recognizing how the global pattern of power manifests in each specific historical and sociocultural circumstance” (p. 60).

In chapter 4, “The Power of Healing and Indigenizing Feminism in the Classroom”, Leila Gómez and Javier Muñoz-Díaz propose an Indigenous healing framework that transcends merely fixing individuals to transform existing relationships. It begins by acknowledging the connection between colonialism and land dispossession, as well as the ongoing dynamics of oppression that continue to create land dispossession, epistemic erasure, assimilation, migration, genocide, and the resulting intergenerational trauma. Land dispossession serves as the root of other dispossessions, including those of languages and epistemes, and disrupts Indigenous gender structures.

To deepen the understanding of land dispossession, Gómez teaches about gender and indigeneity, incorporating the voices of Indigenous women from Abiyala and Turtle Island to address both internal and external colonialism linked to settler colonialism. For instance, the film *Daughter of*

*the Lake* (Cabellos, 2015) explores the story of a woman from Andean Peru who maintains a special relationship with Pachamama (the land) and struggles against the dispossession that local peasants face from “the usurpation of the state and private companies seeking to exploit the natural resources of these lands” (p. 65). This film invites reflection on Sumaq Kawsay (the philosophy of Good Living) and women’s leadership in movements for environmental justice. Settler colonialism in the Andes manifests through land dispossession for business purposes, further rupturing Indigenous relationships with the land and inflicting “epistemic, ontological, and cosmological violence” (p. 71).

Muñoz-Díaz addresses the coloniality of gender and sexuality in Gómez’s classes by inviting students to analyze Indigenous sexual dissidence through the film *Retablo* (Delgado Aparicio, 2017), which portrays homophobic violence in rural Indigenous, land-based communities in Peru. He also uses this film to examine power and status differences in communication, encouraging students to pay attention to the languages spoken by the characters—either Quechua or Spanish. In the film, Spanish is portrayed as “the language of authority over bodies and the repression of sexuality” (p. 75). This portrayal helps students move beyond the essentialization of Indigenous peoples by revealing that violence, oppression, and colonization can occur within Indigenous communities. It enables discussions about the “coloniality of gender”, which manifests in how non-white men were co-opted into the patriarchal roles imposed by the colonial system, disrupting more egalitarian or gynocentric gender systems (p. 76). Listening to and learning from the stories of colonized people is a crucial step toward healing. To achieve this healing, “it is imperative to start naming the root harm of colonialism and land dispossession” (p. 78).

In the epilogue, “The Quechua Language Program at the University of Colorado, Boulder”, Leila Gómez describes the experiences associated with the Quechua Language Program at the University of Colorado Boulder. Teaching Indigenous languages lies at the heart of decolonizing education, and the establishment of the Quechua program involved significant institutional efforts and support from various stakeholders.

Key steps in this process included: first, hiring a native Quechua instructor who designs the curriculum and teaches the Quechua language, along with the culture and worldview of its speakers; second, developing accessible teaching materials for students; and third, establishing an interdisciplinary curriculum that encompasses “course offerings, study abroad opportunities, and event planning to better support underrepresented students and Colorado’s growing Latinx Indigenous population” (p. 80). The Quechua language course has the same status as other foreign language programs, allowing students to benefit from enrolling in related cultural content classes that engage with Indigenous peoples of the Americas. This creates “liberating and decolonizing spaces for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, focusing on the examination of the colonial past and present, settler colonialism, land dispossession, and cultural genocide” (p. 81).

Furthermore, the university aims to maintain a vibrant program by recruiting more students and enhancing retention through the organization of academic and cultural events that extend beyond the university. These events invite scholars and activists from Abiayala and Turtle Island to discuss issues related to Indigenous languages, cultures, politics, science, and the arts.

This book is situated within the ongoing discussion about how to effectively decolonize academic institutions in the Global North, which continue to exert colonialism over Indigenous

peoples worldwide. The authors share their firsthand experiences in implementing library and curriculum decolonization efforts. Even though they are not Indigenous scholars, their proposals address a context where historical justice and healing are essential. This involves not only repatriating Indigenous knowledge but also including Indigenous literary materials created by or in collaboration with Indigenous peoples. University libraries are filled with both written and unwritten materials about Indigenous peoples, particularly in research related to the Quechua community. For example, a search for “Quechua” in the UT Austin library collection yields more than 7,500 results. However, none of the materials on the first page are produced by Quechua individuals; rather, they are solely about them. This reflects the historical and ongoing knowledge extractivism prevalent in Global North universities, which the authors rightly connect to historical and ongoing land dispossession.

Beyond merely introducing Indigenous materials as a form of cultural “richness”, there must be a commitment to justice for historically exploited Indigenous communities across the Americas. The authors briefly discuss the absence of Indigenous scholars from Abiyala, noting that their representation in these universities is similarly rare. When Indigenous scholars are present, they often serve only as informants or instructors, lacking the status of faculty professors with decision-making power. Moreover, job positions for Quechua scholars are typically less stable than those of faculty members. A historical demand for justice from these extractive universities should include hiring Indigenous scholars, necessitating the creation of programs to facilitate their access to universities, starting from undergraduate to graduate levels. For instance, it is uncommon to find Quechua scholars; instead, courses about Quechuas are often taught by *mestizo criollos*, Andeanists, *indigenistas*, or North American and European scholars.

Finally, the authors adopt a “decolonial approach” rather than fully embracing the decolonizing frameworks advocated by Indigenous scholars. It may have been more effective to align firmly with a decolonizing approach, taking on the role of allies in supporting Indigenous political claims. Overall, the book is engaging and accessible, making it highly recommended for scholars, librarians, Indigenous language instructors, and activists interested in the global effort to decolonize academia. I found each chapter enjoyable, particularly those focusing on the acquisition of Indigenous materials and the evolving roles of librarians, as they provided valuable insights into how to acquire Indigenous materials from Abiyala.

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### **Author's academic career**

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