

**“Que Bonita Mi Tierra”:
US Latinx AIDS Activism in Mexico and Puerto Rico**



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217 Noyes Lab

The 1987 establishment of the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) in New York City marked a significant shift in the US AIDS epidemic. With direct-action organizing, ACT UP mobilized against the state's neglect, compelling the federal government to respond with new research and healthcare programs. Soon after, local chapters surfaced throughout the country including Los Angeles. However, for some in the movement—particularly, women and queers of color—the group's biomedical focus deflected attention from the racism, injustice, and poverty that structured the epidemic. In response, Latina/o members of ACT UP/NY established the Latina/o Caucus in late 1989 as a closed group working on issues specifically impacting their communities, including the lack of access to healthcare, needle exchange programs, and HIV-prevention education. Although scholarship has begun to document the role Latinas/os played in AIDS activism, less has been written on the transnational nature of such activism. Through oral histories and archival research, this talk compares how the colonial status of Puerto Rico and anti-Mexican immigrant sentiment mediated the transnational approach, or lack thereof, to AIDS activism by Puerto Ricans in New York City and Chicanas/os in Los Angeles, respectively.

René Esparza is currently a Postdoctoral Research Associate in the Department of American Studies at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County and will begin an Assistant Professorship in the Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Department at Washington University in the fall. His primary research interests entail examining the racial and sexual politics of neoliberal urban social formations. Currently, Esparza is working on a book manuscript, *From Vice to Nice: Race, Sex, and the Gentrification of AIDS*, which tracks the agency of AIDS housing activists and gay rights litigators in shaping urban politics in the 1980s vis-à-vis the racialization of public health discourses and practices. He holds a PhD and MA in American Studies from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, and a BA in Anthropology and Latina/Latino Studies from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.