



## Creative Intervention

### Caution

MESTIZO ARTS & ACTIVISM COLLECTIVE  
Salt Lake City, USA



Figure 1. Caution (© Mestizo Arts & Activism Collective)

One of the interesting things is that this image has always been interpreted, and even called, “Caution, we have power.” In reality, the conversation within the group never headed in that direction. It was more of a ‘we are peaceful and we care about each other, our communities, our families and we have a responsibility to each other. “Estamos junt@[x]s pase lo que pase (we are together whatever happens).” Which, now that I come to think about it, could be interpreted as “Caution, we have power.”

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*Caution* was created by young people as a way of making sense of their experiences of xenophobia and racism (Cahill, Quijada Cerecer, Reyna Rivarola, Hernández Zamudio & Alvarez Gutiérrez, 2019; Quijada, Cahill & Bradley, 2011). Specifically we created the image in response to online racist and hostile comments posted below an article in the local newspaper featuring the Mestizo Arts & Activism Collective ([www.maacollective.org](http://www.maacollective.org)). Reading the hostile comments we felt sad and outraged, and decided to create this image “by us and for us” to collectively process and respond to the hate directed towards the Latinx immigrant community. “Theorizing from the flesh” (Anzaldúa 1987) literally and figuratively, *Caution* offered an opportunity to rework cultural narratives that misrepresent our community.

The *Mestizo Arts & Activism Collective* (MAA) is an intergenerational social justice think tank based in Salt Lake City, Utah that engages in critical participatory action research (PAR), placing emphasis upon the particular contribution and access young people bring to understanding their everyday lives. Collectively we co-create spaces of recognition that center the agency of young people of color, immigrants, and our capacity to make change on our own terms ([maacollective.org](http://maacollective.org)). More than a method, critical PAR is an epistemological position grounded in everyday life experience and a commitment to both the “right to research” (Appadurai, 2006) and the right to represent. As cultural representations are key to the criminalization and exploitation of immigrant communities, in our collective creative practice we document and respond to undocumented immigrants’ intimate everyday experiences of racial capitalism, and challenge what we call the “school-to-sweatshop pipeline” (Cahill, Alvarez Gutiérrez & Quijada Cerecer, 2016). In our work, participatory art-making is a critical aspect of our activism and inquiry whereby “people develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which, and in which, they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation” (Freire 1974, xx; Quijada Cerecer, Cahill, González Coronado & Martinez, 2019).

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