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## **Constructing Spaces of Queer Latinidad in Peru through Artivism and Testimonio**

“I wanted to know how many of us there were... where in the country we were”  
– *Dani*<sup>1</sup>, following a book presentation in Lima.

In this work, I look at the construction of queer space and identity in a LGBTQAI organization in Peru. This activist collective – which I call *Voces Libres* – is based out of the capital city of Lima and, over time, has become an important representation for LGBTQAI communities across the country. Since Peru is an incredibly diverse nation that lacks both laws to protect LGBTQ communities and education in understanding these issues at the governmental level, activists are playing a fundamental role to create spaces of knowledge and resistance to state violence. *Voces Libres* illustrates the intersections of this paradigm in many ways, along with the nuances of identity formation related to *latinidad* and queerness. Thus, my research explores the contradictions and possibilities of space, identity, and politics in three ways. First, I look at the ways activists from *Voces Libres* think about queer identity, and how this construction relates to their use of arts and testimonies in their activism. Second, I observe how knowledge is being transmitted within LGBTQ communities and beyond them, particularly as it relates to migration, identity frameworks, and definitions of both people *and* space. Here, I pay attention to how *Voces Libres* articulates what they call a “transfeminist lens” of politics and identity. Third, I look at how the activists of *Voces Libres* create safe spaces inside a city that does not have any ‘gayborhood’ or any places designated as ‘safe’ or ‘friendly’ towards LGBTQ people.

To do this, I use data from ethnographic field work in Peru, semi-structured interviews, and content analysis of their website, Facebook page, and the book publications the organization has. I will also focus in reviewing information they have collected or distributed to communities inside of Peru, as well as the LGBTQAI themed plays they have produced, which are emotional and educational narratives of LGBTQAI experiences within the country. These ones are an example of a type of artivismo that *Voces Libres* engages in. Here, it is important to analyze what aspects of the participants’ lives they find relevant to tell in the play and how they focus on the stories and body experiences as a way to educate the population. By engaging in this type of analysis, I show 1) how the group conceptualizes queer Latinidad, and more broadly, 2) how art can influence activism, and 3) to see its relation politics and LGBTQAI advocacy in Peru. Through this work, I demonstrate that the intersections of race, gender, sexuality and migration are important aspects to shape LGBTQ Peruvian activism. Further, I offer new perspectives on how such identities complicate Global South constructions of space, place and identity.

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<sup>1</sup> Pseudonym