

# A Struggle That Transcends Borders

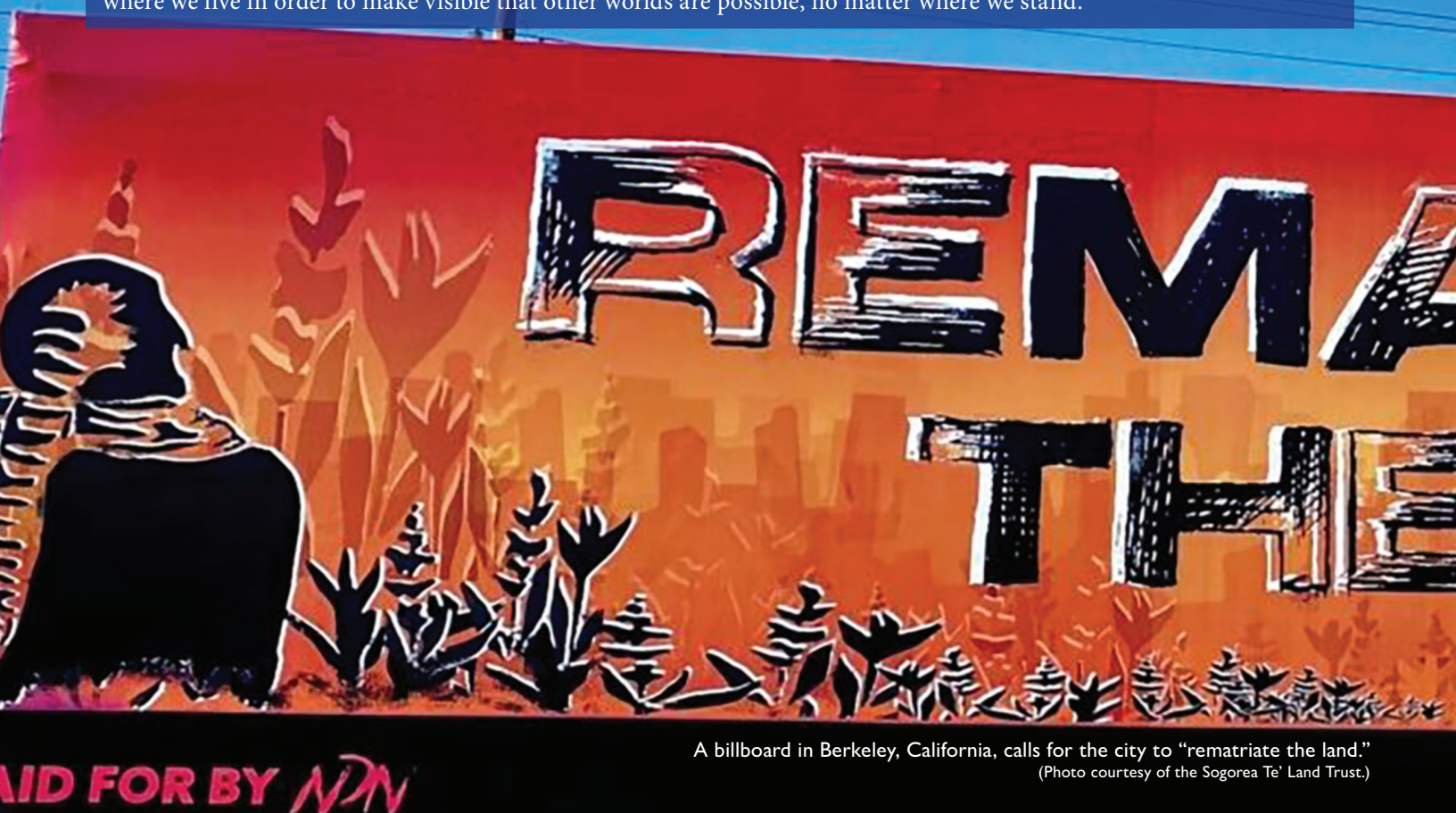
By Diana Negrín

**O**n February 24, 2023, the Center for Latin American Studies at UC Berkeley screened Lucía Kaplan's *La Vocera* (2020), the third of a four-part event series highlighting the struggles for the defense of “territory and life” in Mexico. In her introduction to the film, Dr. Rocío Moreno told the audience that “we don't need to go to Chiapas” to support Indigenous peoples' struggles or to participate in efforts to take care of Indigenous land, because those battles also exist right here in the United States. Moreno is a member of the Coca Indigenous community of Mezcala, located along the coast of Lake Chapala in the state of Jalisco.

Throughout this CLAS-sponsored series, Moreno and I wanted to underscore that the struggles of the South are also present north of the Mexico–U.S. border. The polluted waters, ecocide, and public health crises of the Santiago River in Jalisco exposed in Eugenio Polgovsky's *Resurrection* (2016) have their counterpart in the Central Valley of California, where human lives, soil, and waterways also bear the residues of capital-intensive development projects called *megaproyectos* in Spanish.

Beyond exposing these struggles, we wanted to invite people to consider that transformative grassroots practices for ecological and social revitalization are equally present in the North and the South, despite the dire state of our environmental and sociocultural landscapes. Dr. Moreno's inaugural talk emphasized this shared plight through the decolonial and community-based methodologies that have reinforced the history, foodscapes, and educational autonomy of the Coca people alongside legal battles for land restitution in the town of Mezcala, Jalisco. These same strategies for biocultural revitalization are also being put to work here in the East Bay by the Sogorea Te' Land Trust, an organization run by urban Indigenous women who have worked to recover the sacred land, language, and practices in Huchiun—the ancestral land of the Lisjan Ohlone people.

With explicit recognition of the woman-led work taking place across Indigenous communities, the effort of “rematriation” was intentionally placed at the center of the final conversation between Corrina Gould (Ohlone) of Sogorea Te' Land Trust and Moreno, who also serves on the Indigenous Governing Council of Mexico's *Congreso Nacional Indígena* (CNI, National Indigenous Congress). Sharing their respective communities' history of colonization and resistance, Gould and Moreno both provided a clear invitation to critically re-envision our relationship to the land where we live in order to make visible that other worlds are possible, no matter where we stand.



A billboard in Berkeley, California, calls for the city to “rematriate the land.”  
(Photo courtesy of the Sogorea Te' Land Trust.)